

Translation and Text Transfer

An Essay on the Principles of Intercultural Communication

Anthony Pym



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More than just a linguistic activity, translation is one of the main ways in which intercultural relationships are formed and transformed.

The study of translation should thus involve far more than merely defining and testing linguistic equivalents.

It should ask what relation translation has to the texts that move between cultures; it should have ideas about why texts move and how translated texts can represent such movement; and it should be able to inquire into the ethics of intercultural relations and how translators should respond them.

In short, by relating the work of translators to the problematics of intercultural transfer, translation studies should take its rightful interdisciplinary place among the social sciences.

But what kind of conceptual geometry might make this development possible?

Refusing simple answers, this book sees the relation between translation and transfer as a complex phenomenon that must be described on both the semiotic and material levels. Various connected approaches then conceptualize this relationship as being causal, economic, discursive, quantitative, political, historical, ethical and epistemological... and indeed translational. Individual chapters address each of these aspects, placing particular emphasis on phenomena that are mostly ignored by contemporary theories.

The result is a dense but highly suggestive and hopefully stimulating vision of translation studies.

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Smut and weaponry are two areas in which we've improved. Everything else has gotten worse. You can't get good bread anymore even in good restaurants (you get commercial rolls). Melons don't ripen, grapes are sour. They dump sugar into chocolate candy bars because sugar is cheaper than milk. Butter tastes like the printed paper it's wrapped in. Whipped cream comes in aerosol bombs and it isn't whipped and isn't cream. People serve it, people eat it. Two hundred and fifty million educated Americans will go to their graves and never know the difference. That's what Paradise is — never knowing the difference.

Joseph Heller, Something Happened!

Fidelity is ethical, but also, in the full sense, economic.

George Steiner, After Babel

Preface to the revised version

Translation and Text Transfer was first published in 1992, as a rewrite of my Masters dissertation *Divagations for a Political Economy of Translation*, completed in 1980. The basic ideas thus date from some 30 years ago.

Those basic ideas were then rewritten again in my 2004 book *The Moving Text*, where they were framed by localization theory. In that book, the term “transfer” became “distribution” in order to avoid confusion and to stress the sense of material movement, and I would hope the terminological shift can be read back into the older text as well. The 2004 book also added many considerations that pertain to the localization industry.

So why return to the old book now? First, because I can make it available for free. Second, because it was not all bad, and it was not all carried into the 2004 version. And third, because some of the very fundamental issues of translation theory are still subject to debate, particularly among Asian colleagues, and I feel that contemporary discussions are badly served by some of the simplified oppositions that have persisted (domesticating vs. foreignizing, equivalence or transformation, etc.).

In that new context, the old book might say something like the following: 1) it is possible to carry out a technical analysis of the ways translations function as a discourse; 2) there is nothing reductive or simplistic about the workings of equivalence as a social illusion, and 3) despite the strong logics at work in translational discourse, history pervades all. After all, this was originally a search for a political economics, in the most noble nineteenth-century sense of the term.

There is also, no doubt, a certain vanity involved in reviving an old text, importantly as an implicit plea for personal justice. I do not appreciate benighted commentators telling me that, for example, my theories tell translators what to do, or that the concept of intercultures is a surrogate for neutrality, or that I fail to see the creativity of translators. Rather than respond directly to such comments, I prefer simply to point to what I was saying on these points some 20 or 30 years ago.

This revised edition retains all of the original text, making only stylistic corrections. I am a little amused at how dated it all sounds, particularly in the references and examples: Marx was still important in the 1980s (hence the political economics), “La Movida” was something people could still relate to, and it made some sense to argue with Peter Newmark. All those things have changed (I later learned to respect Newmark). But the book might yet have its word to say.

Tarragona, December 19, 2009

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INTRODUCTION

WRITINGS on translation differ in accordance with the publics they address. This text is addressed to researchers mainly concerned with intercultural relations, since its first aim as an essay—as a largely speculative attempt to make sense of a vast and confused domain—is to suggest ways in which translation, seen as a form of intercultural communication, could connect with wider international problematics. I have not set out to tell anyone how to translate; I would be upset if the principles proposed were regarded as a definitive theory of all forms of intercultural communication; I have been happy to write about my subject from along the mostly unstable borders between several social sciences.

Writings on translation also differ according to their points of departure. Epistemological priority might be accorded to authors, tongues, discourses, source texts, target texts, translators, readers, clients, purposes, cultures, or anything else deemed vaguely pertinent to what translators do. The principles drawn from the point of departure then usually determine the way all other elements are seen. In this essay, in keeping with my declared aim and targeted public, I have given epistemological priority to *text transfer*, understood as the simple moving of inscribed material from one place and time to another place and time. Text transfer might be seen as similar to the movement of merchandise as the material part of trade, or it could be approached through the model of technology transfer or even expertise transfer. I believe all these associations form a materialist semantic field of extreme interest to the epistemology of translation. Although often ignored or considered banal, the principles of material transfer in fact concern many of the processes and conditions to which translators respond. Some of these principles might thus be expected to open the way for a dialogue between the study of translation and the study of more general intercultural relations, especially those integrating the hard historical realities of economics. Moreover, dialogue of this kind will hopefully show that even the most abstract concepts of translation also concern very down-to-earth problems like having enough to eat, or indeed knowing what you are eating.

In an attempt to promote a broad interdisciplinarity, I have worked from a basic dichotomy between transfer as *material* movement and translation as a *semiotic*

activity, with the two related in such a way that translation not only responds to transfer but can also represent or misrepresent its materiality. This complex relation between the material and semiotic levels runs through several theoretical registers. Any originality in the project lies in repeated insistence on transfer as a fact of the material economy, where things really do move, and my suspicion of the semiotic realm, where movement and distance are habitually eclipsed (the pure signifier indicates only the absence of the referent, not its distance). Texts are transferred from place and time to place and time; their values change; but most translations are semiotically consumed without their receivers ever knowing the difference.

Although the models required for the study of translation have traditionally been excluded or overlooked by the social sciences, I believe they deserve to become more crucial as we approach the end of the twentieth century. Each reference to “a given culture” as a naturally discrete unit presupposes a form of closed sovereignty now of limited heuristic value. As increasing interdependence incorporates nation states into wider cultural networks, individual countries are becoming more and more multicultural within themselves, and revived nationalisms are markedly international phenomena. Wholly systemic categories are no longer able critically to address these processes, quite simply because what is happening concerns non-systemic passages across frontiers and not a rationality that can be arranged around centers. Translation has always been a fact of frontiers. Its data and models might thus help the social sciences to address the history and ethics of intercultural relations.

These basic ideas were first presented in dissertation form in Australia in 1980, at a time when linguistics was still a dominant social science, albeit at a post-structuralist avatar. To talk about transfer was a way of making language move; to write about translation was a way of developing the conceptual geometry appropriate to movement in a peripheral culture; and to insist that translation was an activity working across space and time, to insist on an unfashionable materiality, was to reflect upon the historical “tyranny of distance” Blainey perceived as characteristic of Australian culture. This peculiarly localized background means that my ideas have not been developed in any substantial contact with the translation research published in the 1980s. I have nevertheless tried to indicate some points of agreement and disagreement with more recent approaches, mostly through a series of lengthy asides, commentaries and notes added to the original train of thought.

I should also mention that I have survived for several years as a professional translator and university teacher of translation in Spain. There is thus a certain practice at the base of my theorization; these propositions are not merely day-dreams filling in the before and after of my humble salaried existence. Although I

work in apparent calm, I know the texts in front of me are really moving and are destined to escape from my control. Although I mostly work alone, I can feel my linguistic choices struggling with the forces by which transfer creates distance and cultures create belonging. And although the translation decisions I must take are apparently minor, always too hurried and never adequately remunerated, it is perhaps not entirely false to say that each of them should be made for all humanity. These propositions are no doubt terribly academic, but they have helped me to see translation as a purposeful activity in which fidelity is ethical, economic, and ultimately to a profession, beyond the criteria of any immediate sender, receiver, client or country.

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Parts of Chapter 1 have been published as “Paraphrase and Distance in Translation” in *Parallèles: Cahiers de l’Ecole de Traduction de Genève* 8 (1987). Chapter 2 is a version of “An Economic Model of Translational Equivalence”, also published in *Parallèles* 12 (1990). Chapter 3 is mostly from “Discursive Persons and Distance in Translation”, published in *Translation and Meaning, Part 2*, ed. Marcel Thelen and Barbara Lewandowska Tomaszczyk, Maastricht: Rijkhogeschool, 1992, 159-167.

TRANSLATION DEPENDS ON TRANSFER

Transfer and translation work on distance

IF THERE are any closed cultures, we know nothing about them. This might sound merely pious, but if it can be accepted that we do not live within closed cultures—that our own culture is open and is engaged in exchange with other open cultures—, it is also possible to accept that everything we know about cultures beyond our own has come to us, has been appropriated or assimilated, through processes of transfer and translation.

Similarly, and as a necessary consequence, everything we believe or suspect we do *not* know about other cultures has been at least prefigured by processes of transfer and translation.

It might then be concluded that transfer and translation operate on the semiotic distance between known and unknown signs. This could be what they do as general activities. But as for what they are or should be as practices conditioned by historical factors, as for the way they relate semiotic and material distances, the matter is a little harder to grasp.

Happily there are a few basic principles concerning the way transfer and translation are related as specific practices. The purpose of this essay is to formulate a few of the more obvious¹ principles.

¹ An initial example of theoretical impertinence:

“The untranslatability of languages, of mentalities, reveals the heterogeneity of societies, of families of peoples, of contexts and levels of civilization. The categories live and die with their peoples.” (Marcel Mauss, *Œuvres* II, 150; cited and commented by Meschonnic 1973, 309).

The possibility of such a statement depends on contemporary access to—or suspicion of—categories which are supposed to have died when the people first using them disappeared. But if the categories had really died they would not be available as proof of untranslatability. It must be concluded that what was closed remains closed, what is dead is dead, and whatever was untranslatable remains unavailable for comment. But the very existence of the statement suggests that texts—some texts—can move and remain meaningful beyond the temporal and spatial limits of individual societies, taking certain codes with them and thus finding a kind of afterlife. Mauss presupposed untranslatability and manipulated it as proof of cultural relativism as absolute distance. But his statement in fact depends on a degree of translatability, and thus turns axiomatic relativism into a question of distance.

My initial proposition is that if there were no material transfer, if texts were not moved across time and space, there would be no translation. This suggests that translation can be seen as a response to transfer. However, I also wish to propose that translations represent and often misrepresent the time and space crossed by texts. Transfer and translation thus open up two quite different ways of approaching the distances they work on, the first based on responses, the second on representations.

In this chapter I shall work first from transfer, and then from translation, in order to formalize a general approach to the union of the two.

Transfer is a precondition for translation

The English nominalization “translation” is derived from *translatus*, past participle of the Latin verb *transferre*, “to carry over or across”.² It is from no more than the past participle—by definition coming after the event itself—that we have the nomen actionis “translating” (*translatio*) and the nomen agentis “translator”. English would seem to have lost the association these words once had with the less specific and more material sense of *transferre*. Our common terms are really only articulating translation as “the translated”, as the completed *result* of translational work. Contemporary terminology thus tends to ignore the wider process that might nevertheless be recovered and nominalized, from *transferre*, as “transfer”, to be understood here not in its psychological sense but simply as the physical moving of something from one place and time to another place and time.³

² The OED notes that the derivation of *translation* from *transferre* was perhaps reinforced by the Old French *translater*—from the medieval Latin *translatare*—, which began to replace *transferre* in the early twelfth century (Durling 1989). This further supports the general argument that the sense of physical transfer has been lost in the Western tradition (despite a certain potential recuperability in the German *Übersetzung*). In Spanish, it is possible to follow a similar separation of concepts, the verb *traducir* (to translate) replacing earlier notions closer to the present *trasladar* (to carry over or across). The anthology of Spanish translation theory compiled by Santoyo (1987) reveals the following forms: *transportament / traslatacio* (1367), *trasladar / traslado / trasladaçion* (1415), *traslacion* (1428), *traduccion / traduzir* (1438), *translation* (c.1440), *traduçidor* (1446), etc. Although Folena (1972, 102) gives 1493-95 for the appearance of the Spanish *traducir*, Juan de Mena's *traduzir* of 1438 would seem to be an earlier correlative of the other unitary terms Folena dates from the same years: the Italian *tradurre* (1420), the French *traduire* (1480) and the Catalan *traduir* (1507). Prior to these forms, the reigning concepts were indeed from *translatare / translatus*.

This tradition, even lost or concealed, differs radically from what Jackson (1990, 259) describes as the Japanese sense of translation as a “turning over”, “reversing” or “flapping” of a text, where the translational object is divided into inner and outer rather than immediate presence and distanced absence. I am unworried about fidelity to Western tradition.

³ In the present context, the term “transfer” has more to do with economic uses like “technology transfer” or “capital transfer” than with psychological, psychoanalytical, pedagogical, cybernetic usages in which nothing actually moves. It also has an interesting legal sense, which becomes meaningful when translation is related to the ways texts belong (if texts can be owned, they can presumably be transferred from one owner to another). However, in

In this light, translation can be seen as a special kind of response to things that have been transferred or are meant to be transferred.

In the next chapter I shall describe how this particular kind of response is defined by equivalence. For the moment I simply want to argue that, on the level of general abstract concepts, *translation depends on transfer*. Let us investigate a few possible objections to this proposition.

First, it might be complained that since no text need actually be moved in order to be translated, translation can take place independently of transfer. But insistence on one-to-one solidarity—demanding one act of transfer for each act of translation—has little to do with what I mean by translation's *general* dependence on transfer. Just as no person is an island and no culture is entirely isolated, no translator ever works entirely alone or in a strictly one-off situation. Even when translators are not aware of responding to any particular act of transfer, they will necessarily be using linguistic and cultural knowledge accrued from previous translations, depending on previous transfers, which are themselves responses to previous translations, and so on in a series of links that unavoidably chain the particular to the general.

Skeptical minds might then interpret the connection between transfer and translation as a question of chickens and eggs. Yet the relation in this case has none of the cyclical causality of genetic or generative metaphors. In its epistemic dimension, the dependence of translation on transfer is decidedly one-way. This is because although translation depends on transfer, transfer does *not* depend on translation. That is, if there were no translation, there could still be transfer; but if no text were ever going to move, there would be no reason even to think about translation as a purposeful activity. Whatever the material circumstances, no matter whether the translator is situated before or after the actual movement of a text, the concept of transfer precedes the concept of translation. This is a general principle. It has several practical consequences.

Let us suppose that because of this general dependence, translators commonly have ideas concerning the transfer which has taken place, is to take place or, in a teaching situation, could take place with respect to the text to be translated. In other words, translators must and do have ideas about the purposes of transfer. If

order to stress the term's material aspect, I have elsewhere referred to "transportation" (1987); here I prefer "transfer" simply because of its etymological role as the basis of "translation".

It should be stressed that the term here has nothing to do with "transfer mechanism" as in Nida (1964, 146 ff.), where it functions as a behaviourist surrogate for what happens in the translating mind or machine. As Wilss notes (1977, 63), "transfer" has been used both as a synonym for the translation process and to denote a partial phase of translation. Here it is neither. "Transfer" in the present context is rather a precondition for all modes of reception, one of which is translation.

such ideas are necessarily based on previous transfers and translations—since there is always already contact between the cultures we know—, accrued general ideas about where a translated text should go and how it could be received can adequately inform the translator’s work quite *independently* of the actual movement or reception of any particular text.

This is why it would be quite naïve to suggest that material transfer were immaterial to translation, as if intercultural virginity were the necessary condition of immaculate equivalence. Or again, the idealist notion that there can be translation without transfer is like saying that there can be poetry not written for a reader. The world is no doubt full of miraculous conceptions, unread poems and apparently immobile texts, but these particular cases do not annul the general qualities of sexuality, poetry and translation as modes of communication. Texts are only translated because they are transferred.

Transfer thus has *logical* priority as a necessary precondition for the general practice of translating. If nothing has moved or is going to move from A to B, then there is no reason to translate from the culture of A into the culture of B. If someone is translating or has translated, then something has moved or is meant to move.

Examples bearing on transfer and translation in Spain:

a) Although airplanes transfer passengers, cargo and pilots, they do not require any translation of the pilots’ language, since international aircrews use English as their *lingua franca*. A major air crash in Tenerife was reportedly caused by a Spanish pilot’s English being misunderstood by a Spaniard. The disaster thus resulted from transfer without translation.

b) Since printing costs are lower in Spain than in most other west-European countries, Spanish publishers can use a certain economy of scale to print full-color books for foreign-language clients, keeping the same illustrations and just replacing the text where necessary. Economic imbalance thus gives rise to a transfer situation requiring translations. Translators are sometimes employed by the client publisher but more usually by the Spanish publisher, with the client then undertaking extensive editing of the result. The second combination is the more common because, thanks to a further economic imbalance, translators’ rates are usually lower in Spain and professional translators’ associations are mostly ineffective. Transfer in this case not only requires translation but also tends to determine the material location of translators.

c) Spanish academics at a symposium on translation history presented papers in which, in a particularly self-serving way, many of them criticized the poor quality of published translations. For each mistake, they usually proposed the “correct” version or at least an improved translation, and often an invocation of untranslatability. That is, they presented alternative translations that appeared to be free from the constraints of any real transfer situation—no deadlines, no salary problems, no demanding client, no economic imbalance, no financial prohibition of non-translation. Is there then translation without transfer? But in this case the pertinent transfer was the movement of texts from the professional translator to the academic critic, from the open marketplace to a university symposium. If this transfer is mostly hidden, it is no doubt because

one of the functions of such symposia is to perpetuate the illusion of translation without transfer, as well as several peculiar notions concerning ideal equivalence, the resulting mythology of untranslatability, and hence the apparent need for academic criticisms of translations.

Exactly what is transferred?

It is easy enough to say that a *text* is what is transferred. But exactly what is a text? How do we recognize one when we see it? And how do we recognize the fact that it has been or is being transferred?

In order to answer these questions properly, we need a clear idea of the kind of transfer pertinent to translation. Apologies might be necessary for basing my explanation on a passage from a deservedly little known novel set in Western Australia. It concerns sheep, aborigines and communication:

“Patrick turned away from the ewe to look about the cave, seeing the handprints left by the aborigines, for a purpose unknown.

‘My hand is twice as long as that one,’ said Jane, pointing to a small handprint low down on the back wall.

‘It’s a child’s,’ he said, and they felt strange and sad at the thought of the dead piccaninny who had perpetuated himself in this way.” (Randolph Stow, *A Haunted Land*, 1956, 126-7).

Here there are two acts of transfer. The first is the movement of the receiving subjects—Patrick and Jane—deeper into the cave, from a scene of death in natural reproduction—a ewe dying after lambing—to a scene of intercultural communication as artificial reproduction. The second movement is the transfer of rock-marks across time, from the unknown moment of their production to the moment of their reception by Patrick and Jane. Both movements are important, but they have quite different qualities. Patrick and Jane are subjects; their movement opens up possibilities of reception and thus possibilities for the translation of the things they come into contact with. The rock-marks are objects; their movement through time opens up possibilities of them being received and thus translated by the subjects who cross their trajectory. Subjects can receive and translate; rock-marks cannot. Which is why translation studies should generally consider translators to be subjects—or mechanical extensions of subjects—who work on transferred objects. Few theorists would disagree.

This simple principle underlies the rather more interesting proposition that translation studies should accord more priority to the movements of objects than to those of subjects. That is, although the study of intercultural relations has to pay

considerable attention to the subjects transferred through trade, migrations, wars and explorations, the specific study of translation finds its privileged point of departure in the objects transferred, quite possibly by the same trade, migrations, wars and explorations. For intercultural relations, it could be important that Patrick and Jane moved, that western eyes encountered pre-industrial cave-space. But for translation studies, which is only interested in Patrick and Jane insofar as they are or could become translators, it is more important to know about the movement of what they found.

Now, having identified the kind of transfer that interests us, how can we identify whatever it is that moves in the process of transfer? What are these rock-marks?

Although theories of translation rarely talk about transfer as such, they do tend to make assumptions about what can ideally be taken from one culture to another. For some, there is no real movement, since the one mark always approximates the same pre-existing “meaning” or “concept”: if the handprint meant “hand” when it was made and it means “hand” when received by Patrick and Jane, how could one say that anything has moved? Universalist semantics wants us to believe that everything was always already there. In this way, blindness to transfer does away with the basic reasons for translation. For other theories, however, there *is* real movement in the sense that the mark functions as “information”, “signification”, a “message” or even “enlightenment”, bringing *new* meaning to the particular receivers Patrick and Jane. This approach can at least explain why there should have been an act of transfer and thus the possibility of translation. But does it really matter what the mark might have meant before it reached these new receivers?

Patrick and Jane do not know what meaning or concept the mark had for its producer. Nor do they really care. But they can be fairly sure that the original meaning or concept had little to do with a dying ewe as a symbol of natural reproduction, if only because sheep were introduced to the land at about the same time as Patrick’s great-grandfather migrated there. A radically changed context means that meaning in production cannot be equated with meaning in reception. But should we then abandon all talk of meanings and concepts? Should we say that the mark is something entirely new in its situation of reception?

Patrick and Jane recognize the mark as being meaningful. However, this is not the kind of meaning that Leonardo found when looking at the forms of clouds or decaying walls, nor that of a geologist who might find in the cave certain inscriptions of gold mineralization. Patrick and Jane know this particular piece of rock is meaningful because it has been marked by another *subject*. It is not a natural piece of rock. It is of the same substance as the surrounding rock but its form indicates

that it has been intentionally inscribed, that it bears the trace of purposeful work. Ochre liquid spat from an absent mouth outlined an absent hand placed against this rock; the production of this archetypal mark was both oral and manual. Without knowing why the inscription was made, the potential translators recognize it as an inscription made for some purpose. This is thus not a natural object; it is what Rossi-Landi (1975) describes as an artifact; or more provocatively, it is what we might insist on calling a *text*, an object endowed with *meaningful materiality*.⁴

When Patrick and Jane recognize this part of the rock as being meaningful, what happens to the natural rock itself? When Jane focuses on the shape and size of the hand, is the rock material suddenly without consequence?

It has become commonplace in linguistic and literary theory to define a text as an intangible complex of semiotic relations, insisting that its status as an object of knowledge not be confused with its material support—a text is said not to be a book—and sometimes declaring that it only completely exists when concretized in reception (after Ingarden 1931). According to such definitions, the text here would be no more than the hand-shape, a structural relation between certain conventionalized curves and lines, with the rock material acting as a merely transitory support. If the form were in relief, it could be inked and transferred to another support, perhaps a sheet of paper; if Patrick were a photographer, it could be transferred to film. And if such simple reproduction were all that was involved, one could happily talk about structure as that which is transferred from rock to paper or film; one could adequately regard the text as a question of forms, a semiotic complex, indifferent to questions of substance or support.

But can texts—including oral texts⁵—ever exist without the materiality of a support? Does their status as an object of knowledge ever not presuppose a level of substance? The kind of transfer that goes from rock to paper or film requires that the supports come into material contact or proximity with the inscribed form. When, as in the case of the rock-mark, such simple transfer is across time instead of space, the contact between form and support is continuous. But the principle of necessary materiality is the same in both cases. It is impossible to find a text devoid of a support, be it rock, electrons, genes, sound waves, or whatever else is

⁴ My use of the term “text” radically contradicts approaches which see textuality as a process. Halliday, for example, states that “the quality of texture is not defined by size” (1978, 135), whereas the hand example should make it clear that, for the present essay, the size of a text is extremely important. More generally, definitions of texts as a process are difficult to apply in fields where they are necessarily framed by other processes, in this case translation. Either a text is recognised as a finite object, or, it must become virtually synonymous with translation itself. Léon Robel takes this second approach to its logical conclusion when he defines a text as “the sum of all its significantly different translations” (1973, 8). But what then would “it” be?

⁵ Cf. Derrida’s reasons for placing “l’écriture avant la lettre” (1967, 20 ff.). The fixity described here might also be described as the “graphème” in which Derrida found his point of departure.

able to go from one point to another. The nature of the support can change—from rock to paper, from paper to voice—, but at no point is the text liberated from the materiality of things that move. To imagine otherwise is to pretend that texts fall from the sky and exist forever.⁶

Patrick and Jane are not just concerned with the hand-shape or with the text as form. They find a text whose materiality indicates it has come from another time. Flaking ochre and weathered rock must say more about the handprint's age than does the simple absence of its producer. Reception is concerned with a text which is both hand-shape and rock, form and material, since both these aspects are necessary if the receivers are to conclude that the absent producer is now long dead.

This textual materiality allows Jane to attach importance to the physical dimensions of the text—the hand-shape is of a certain size—, then use comparison to attribute meaning to that size—the shape represents a hand smaller than her own. Transfer thus enables a process of interpretation, a comparison, a figuration of the absent producer, a potential utterance and a complex contextual meaning as an artificial alternative to natural reproduction. For Patrick, as for most of Stow's heroes, writing will sublimate sexuality as transfer of the self. More importantly, no one need insist that ancient piccaninny had any such meaning in mind.

Transfer in this case enables a process of interpretation which borders translation. Jane projects the absent producer through comparison with her own hand as text; she relates the imagined piccaninny to herself. Simple transfer might thus be enough for some form of knowledge to be produced through intercultural communication.

But is there any translation here? Is there any strictly translated text? If the second, interpretative hand had not been evaluated as significantly larger than the transferred text, if it had not been conceptually attached to the interpreting subjectivity known as Jane, then it might have been possible to consider it as a translation. Or again, perhaps one could consider Patrick as a potential translator, the translated text then being his phrase "It's a child's". But the deictic "it's" separates the object transferred from the subject translating, in the same way as sheer size separates the textual hand from Jane's interpreting hand. For these reasons, Patrick

⁶ In insisting on the materiality of texts, I make a practical distinction between "text" and "discourse". I prefer to restrict use of the term "discourse" to the active articulation of the I-here-now and ensuing positions. More exactly, I would follow Bakhtin (1952-53) in assuming the unit of discourse to be the "utterance", the limits of which are marked by a change of speakers or by the silence of an implied "dixi", such that the length of an utterance is in fact determined by continued implication of the "I-here-now" locating a particular speaker. On a more general level, a discourse is a kind of action which does not necessarily involve movement, whereas a text is a kind of thing which necessarily moves. My interest in transfer forces me to turn my definitions towards things.

and Jane cannot be seen as translating the hand; they simply comment on it as an object external to their own time and place. There is a difference between translating a text and just talking about it or producing a similar text.

Translations are quite difficult to achieve; they are very particular kinds of communicative artifacts. As we have seen, not all acts of transfer need give rise to complete acts of translation. And as we shall see in the following chapters, translations moreover require fulfillment of a series of specific conditions which go well beyond transfer, including a certain kind of belief on the part of the person receiving the translated text.

* *
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Exactly what is transferred? For the purposes of translation studies, the privileged object of transfer is the text, independently of whatever meaning, information, message or signification might have been attributed to that text prior to transfer. But the text must be recognized as inseparable from material support, since it is only through materiality that its transfer can become significant.

The principle of meaningful materiality involves theoretical consequences well beyond our immediate concerns. It is possible, for example, that coherence and cohesion presuppose a continuity of material support both before and during reception, even when this continuity is not realized because of broken or ruptured transmission. It is conceivable that fanfares of intertextuality should be limited by quite reasonable criteria of historical contiguity: if there is to have been some kind of transfer from one text to another, then the two texts concerned must at some time have shared the same locus. But the important point for our present purposes is that the necessary materiality of texts condemns them to displacement. Indeed, not only are texts always available for transfer, they are by definition unable to avoid being transferred, through time if not always through space.

Translation can be intralingual or interlingual

It is often assumed that the kind of transfer most pertinent to translation is that which takes place exclusively between different languages. This restriction of the field assumes a radical division between interlingual and intralingual transfer. Unfortunately there is no such division, simply because there are no natural frontiers between languages. The kinds of translation that can take place between idiolects,

sociolects and dialects are essentially no different from those between more radically distanced language systems. Consider, for example, the various transformations necessary to rewrite in the English of Queen Elizabeth II a text from American English, working-class Liverpoolian, Shakespeare's English, Chaucer's English, the French of François Mitterrand and Japanese.⁷ Although one would expect to encounter a need for increasing transformations with increasing cultural distance, there is no strict cut-off point at which wholly intralingual rewriting can be said to have become wholly interlingual. Those who travel on foot or have read the diachronic part of Saussure know that there are no natural frontiers between languages.

Since "language A" and "language B" are insufficient descriptions of the two places minimally involved in translation, some alternative vocabulary must be sought.⁸ A Chomskyan "ideal speaker-listener in a completely homogeneous language community" (1965, 3) would clearly be inadequate for much the same reasons as "language A": since there are many more languages in the world than countries to house them, the fact of bilingual and polyglot communities must be recognized and incorporated into any global approach to translation. Similarly, since numerous languages are spoken in more than one community, it must be admitted that texts can be transferred from one community to another and yet not require translation because the original language of the text is able to seek out its appropriate receivers.

Neither "language" nor "community" are sufficient criteria for the description of the kinds of places minimally involved in translation. A certain retreat to the bunker is necessary, in this case to the suitably vague term "culture".⁹

⁷ Simple examples of intralingual translation from Queneau's *Exercices de style* (1947):

- a) "L'était un peu plus d'midi quand j'ai pu monter dans l'esse." (Vulgaire)
- b) "A l'heure où commencent à se gercer les doigts roses de l'aurore, je montai tel un dard rapide dans un autobus à la puissante stature et aux yeux de vache de la ligne S au trajet sinueux." (Noble)
- c) "Autobus. Plate-forme. Plate-forme d'autobus. C'est le lieu. Midi. Environ. Environ midi. C'est le temps." (Analyse logique)

⁸ What is especially to be resisted is the identification of homogeneous metalinguistic schemata with fantasies of a kind of natural, everyday, normal or standard language that would or should be deprived of polysemy, ambiguity, connotation and all possible rhetorical devices. The most common utterances are in fact usually the most formally complex and the least semantically denotative, and thus offer no sound basis for unthinking distinctions between "primary and secondary modelling systems" (Tartu School) or, more dangerously, "natural and literary languages" (Balcerzan 1970, 6.) As Greimas has astutely argued with respect to both van Dijk's "Text in L" and Arrivé's apparently opposed translinguistics, this kind of theoretical assumption "depends on a rationalist misconception which sees discourses in natural language as being supported by an implicit logic, and on the old positivist conviction that words firstly say what they really mean and discourses carry out a fundamentally denotative function." (1972, 9)

⁹ "...differences between cultures cause many more severe complications for the translator than do differences in language structure" (Nida 1964, 161). "Deshalb sei 'Kulturkontext' der Obergriff, dem auch 'Sprache' unterzuordnen ist." (Holz-Mänttari 1984, 37)

That is, the kind of transfer I consider pertinent to translation is that which takes place between different cultures.

But what then is a culture? How might one define the points where one culture stops and another begins? The borders are no easier to draw than those between languages or communities. One could perhaps turn to a geometry of fuzzy sets or maybe even deny the possibility of real contact altogether, but neither mathematics nor ideological relativism are able to elucidate the specific importance of translation as an active relation between cultures.

Although questions like the definition of a culture are commonly thought to lie beyond the scope of translation theory, their solution could become one of translation studies' main contributions to the social sciences. Instead of looking for differentiated or distilled cultural essences, it could be fruitful to look at translations themselves in order to see what they have to say about cultural frontiers. It is enough to define the limits of a culture as *the points where transferred texts have had to be (intralingually or interlingually) translated*. That is, if a text can adequately be transferred without translation, there is cultural continuity. And if a text has been translated, it represents distance between at least two cultures.¹⁰ In this way, translation studies avoids having to link up all the points of contiguity in the way that political frontiers do. After all, there is no obvious reason why points of contact and exchange between cultures should form continuous lines. Culture is

¹⁰ Discovery procedures and why "culture" need not be defined:

It is possible to imagine a translation theory in which all the terms are so well defined and interrelated from the outset that there is in fact nothing left to be discovered. This is the impression I have when negotiating the rigor of German theoretical texts. The categories are presented and described, suitable examples are found and systematized, and the inevitable conclusion is that the object—translation or some particular part of translation—can indeed be conceived of in this particular way. But is anything actually discovered? More often than not, the reasons for a particular approach are lost in the hidden ideologies of scientific objectivity, which then becomes its own justification. Although there is a certain elegance in the construction of such systems, it is ultimately preferable to leave certain aspects open or undetermined, so that something might be found, and so that what appears to be determined, the initial hypotheses we feel sure of, may be open to possible denial by future data. Scientism is all very well, but it should also involve a discovery procedure. Hence our privileged lacuna, the undefined term "culture", the place where the most important problems have to be solved, where there is most to be discovered.

Why not define this term? First, because an approach based on intercultural relations cannot afford to assume definitions that are overtly culture-specific or tailored to limited political aims. The very loaded nature of "culture" in this respect might be gathered from the comparative history of the German *Kultur* and the French *civilisation* (Ladmiral & Lipiansky 1989, 103-116), or again, it is not gratuitous that a functionalist approach like Holz-Mänttari's begins from a functionalist definition of culture like Malinowski's. Closed definitions thus lead to closed results, with all the certitude of self-fulfilling prophecies.

Second, the question of intercultural relations strictly does not concern "a given culture". Its object is a plurality of cultures, a plurality which must be considered anterior to cultural singularity or identity. To define the singular case and then to double it and suppose the result to be an intercultural relation would be just as shortsighted as it is to define translation as a case of bilingualism and then to set about doing comparative linguistics. From this point of view, we have no need to define the singular term "culture" because its plural form has already been incorporated into our definitions of transfer and translation, and it is thus through transfer and translation that individual cultures can manifest their existence and nature, independently of our analytical desires and expectations.

not geo-politics. Transfer and translation concern situations of contact and exchange, not lineal separations.

According to the solidarity of these definitions, specifically intercultural transfer is a precondition for general translation, and translation itself therefore logically indicates both the existence of intercultural transfer and the points separating the cultures concerned.

Instead of using preconceptions about cultures in order to form preconceptions about translations, it is thus possible to use facts about translations in order to locate contacts and differences between cultures. Indeed, to do so could be conceptually elegant.

How many cultures to a community, or communities to a culture?

a) The language of many sciences is now exclusively English, no matter where the actual scientific activity is carried out. This situation is reducing the need for translations, since the scientists speak and write directly in English where necessary. According to the above definitions, these sciences are thus becoming cultures in themselves, increasingly independent of their everyday contexts. Indeed, the frontiers crossed by scientific translations tend to be those separating the specialist from the wider public, such that scientific translation is becoming a synonym for vulgarization or respect for an outdated nationalistic identification of language with community. This example suggests that, in general, a unified monocultural stratum can be formed through non-translation. A further example would be the non-translation of the Koran, which, in separating those who understand from those who do not, forms a broad monocultural stratum embracing many different communities.

b) “They wrote out all the Mordecai’s orders to the Jews, and to the satraps, governors and nobles of the 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush. These orders were written in the script of each province and the language of each people and also to the Jews in their own script and language” (Esther 8:9). Thus the multicultural communities of Xerxes’ empire were held together by translation, so that individual cultures might survive and Purim be celebrated ever since by the Jews.

c) Between these two extremes—extensive monocultures revealed by non-translation; cultural frontiers revealed by translation—there are bicultural communities where it is difficult to decide if translation crosses a cultural frontier or not. When the Spanish Moriscos (from 1492 to the definitive expulsion in 1609) used Arabic characters to write in Romance—Castilian, Aragonese, Portuguese, Catalan or Valencian—, many of their texts were in fact loose translations from the spiritually untranslatable Koran (Vespertino Rodríguez 1990). The Moriscos did not know Arabic, so their translators transferred elements of their cultural past into Romance. But they used Arabic script, the script of the sacred Koranic language, as an outward manifestation of continuity with this cultural past: the words were different but the letters were the same. In this case, translation not only crossed a frontier but also symbolized a bridging of the same frontier.

However, historical analysis suggests that the real frontier here was not the linguistic interface crossed by the translators but the different script by which the Moriscos proclaimed their dis-

tance from the Christians surrounding them. When expelled from Spain, their literature remained in Romance but was written in Latin script, to further proclaim their cultural difference, this time from the Arabic-speakers surrounding them.

Translation can be approached from transfer

These few comments on the nature of transfer provide us with two basic ways of approaching its relation with translation. On the one hand, translation is partly knowable through the analysis of texts which have been translated (or, more ambiguously, through the past-participle form “translated text” or TT, which, from the perspective of the translating translator, can also be read as “target text”). On the other, to know why and how any particular translational operation was or should be carried out, we have to look at the factors involved in the transfer from a distanced or even imaginary source text (ST) to the place of a manifest TT. We have to ask what came from where and for what reason; and where, why and to whom the translated text is to go.¹¹ Two complementary approaches are thus available from the outset: one is textual (translation as representation), the other is extra-textual (translation as response).

Almost everyone interrogates translation from the first of these perspectives, making vast use of semiotic science and diverse cultural convictions but in fact basing their observations on no more than translated texts as representations. However, the second set of questions, deceptively simple, can often subvert the conclusions thus reached.

Here, for instance, is a text visibly translated because a writer on translation has enabled us to compare it with a French source:

TT: For remember this, France does not stand alone, she is not isolated.

ST: Car la France n'est pas seule! Elle n'est pas seule! Elle n'est pas seule!

Peter Newmark (1977, 169) has carefully considered the relationship between these two texts, helpfully pointing out that the translator has paraphrased the source text. Newmark also insists that this kind of translation should not be al-

¹¹ Why not ask why (not)?

Armin Paul Frank's complex question for research in translation history is: “Wie (=innere Übersetzungsgeschichte) und von wem wurde was wie oft und unter welchen Umständen (=äußere Übersetzungsgeschichte) übersetzt?” (1989, 6). Answering the “how” of “internal translation history” would thus correspond to what we are calling textual analysis; the remaining factors, Frank's “external history”, are clearly extra-textual. It is interesting to note that Frank's approach fails to ask “why?”.

lowed in the case of citations from “authoritative” texts. There can apparently be no legitimate reason for presenting these paratactic and perhaps hysterical French negatives as if they were stable hypotactic English logic. But let us consider the example a little more closely.

A sympathetic linguistic analysis might have tried to locate speech norms that allow the French an exclamatory voice not so readily available in English. A transformational approach might then have suggested that the repeated negatives were derived from obsessive suppression of the idea that France was in fact isolated. Could it then be that the parataxis had to be transformed because it represented a fear pertinent only to an uncertain future seen from the moment of utterance? Could the translation have some justification after all?

But linguistic analysis alone cannot properly explain this TT until transfer analysis reveals that a considerable jump has been made from a speech given by General de Gaulle in 1940 to a biography published by Major E. L. Spears in 1966. The real fear involved in 1940 could not fully be transferred away from its moment of production—we know who won the war—and could at best achieve a weak representation in translation. Confronted by an inevitable loss of discursive force on this level, the real question should be why Major Spears bothered to translate at all. Why should he have made de Gaulle speak English in 1966? Why was it important to have it known that de Gaulle himself produced this utterance? Why should a biographer remind readers that that non-isolation had been important to the France of 1940 before it was presumably of some importance in the Britain of 1966?

In this way, the analysis of transfer leads to the fundamental question to be asked of all translated texts: why?

It is not difficult to argue that, as the centre of the Commonwealth was becoming a satellite of the European Economic Community, questions of identity and national pride were becoming increasingly vexing and a military biographer would have good reason to render some very careful translations. Just as military France had needed Britain, so economic Britain needed France. Moreover, this Britain of 1966 did not need a vision of France that included discursive violence, historical paranoia or excessive Gaullist pride. Closer to material movement than was his analyst, the translator knew that words said in time of war should not be repeated—nor too literally translated—in time of peace. However, unfortunately for the translator and his country, de Gaulle was also something of an expert in transfer analysis: he had used this same principle to block Britain’s EEC entry in 1963

and was to do so again in 1967. Translators are not alone in their responses to transfer.

Transfer can be approached through translation

The above example should serve to illustrate why an adequate approach to translation requires something more than linguistics. The idea that translation involves more than mere language is of course by no means new, but my argument here is not quite the same as those who stress the importance of extra-linguistic semiotic systems, cultural knowledge or intuitive competence. What worries me is the fact that linguistic models—like the semiotic and pragmatic schemata that have been added to them—fail to conceptualize transfer as a bridging of material time and space. No movement is visible as long as the analyst places two texts side by side, calls one a source text and the other a target text, and attempts to compare the language used in both. The results of such analyses might be of interest to linguists, but they will not necessarily have anything to do with translation.

The most brutal way to subvert textual analysis is to work from the level of extra-textual coordinates, as has been done above with the introduction of the distance between France in 1940 and Britain in 1966.¹² This is to analyze translation from the perspective of transfer. But is it equally legitimate to approach transfer from the simple relation between two texts, or even on the basis of one specifically translational text? How might such an approach be founded?

The most subtle way of incorporating transfer into what can be said about a translated text is to consider the logic of that text's absent alternatives. If a translator has produced a certain TT₁, their work can be represented as a choice *not* to produce the alternatives TT₂, TT₃,... TT_n. I think it would be fair to say that Major Spears produced his TT as a conscious negation of the far more obvious literalism blithely recommended by Newmark: "For France is not alone! She is not alone! She is not alone!". So much for the obvious.

Now, any series of possible TTs is necessarily bordered by two radical alternatives which are themselves always possible and pertinent:

¹² Does it matter where De Gaulle was speaking from?

It might be objected that since De Gaulle's speech was uttered in London, the ST position should be described as Britain rather than France. However, as shall be elaborated in our survey of the ways in which texts belong, the ST location implies a bond between first-person and second-person positions; in this case, between geographical London and geographical France. Our use of "France" as the ST position is thus a rough shorthand for a more complex situation.

- non-transfer, or the absence of both ST and TT in the place of reception (let us call its negativity X)
- transfer to reception, but without production of a TT (which inspires the interrogative symbol Y, to be read as the basic question “why?”).

That is, Major Spears could have ignored the cave of de Gaulle’s speech altogether (X) or he could have presented contact and yet decided not to translate it (Y).

From the perspective of translation, transfer can now formally be described as the movement from X to Y. But exactly where does this movement take place?

The symbols X and Y represent two particular positions at which things could have happened but did not happen. X would mean that a certain text could have been transferred to a certain point but was not. And Y would mean that the text was indeed transferred but was not translated. Working from translation, we thus locate transfer through conceptual negation rather than through reference to spatio-temporal coordinates. It is important to appreciate how this negation works.

If a text or reports of a text have not been transferred to a certain point, how can anyone at that point know that the text could have been transferred there? Indeed, how could anyone know the text exists? In all honesty, X can only represent the position located through conceptual or theoretical negation of an act of transfer which has actually taken place. Only once Spears has effective access to de Gaulle’s text can it become meaningful to consider what would have happened if such contact had not been made. Only through transfer can the point of non-transfer X be projected as the necessarily re-created position of a text at its source.

Similarly, the position Y can only be meaningful as the negation of a translation which could have been carried out. That is, it is only meaningful as a point locating the place of a potential translator. One could of course trace the trajectory of a hand painted in a cave, saying that the transferred text could have been translated at any point over the past 50 or 500 years. But then Y would be little more than a simple description of transfer as a continuum of potential but unmanifested translations. It is far more fruitful to insist that the position Y is a particular point actively pertinent to translation. It is the specific point reached by the transferred text at the moment when it becomes the initial object for a potential translation by a subject. It is the rock-hand as it appears to the potential translators Patrick and Jane.

When the positions X and Y are thus located through conceptual negation, their theoretical significance far outweighs that of their coordinates in time and space.

They become fixed positions only in the sense that they refer to specific stages in a text's capacity to provoke meaning or to be translated. In this light, it is fair to refer to texts with these capacities as occupying these positions. We may follow common usage in describing a text in position X as a "source text" or "ST" (despite the fact that the notion of "source" tends erroneously to suggest direct access to this position, assuming indemonstrable degrees of originality or inspirational production). And since there is no common-usage term for the position Y, we are forced to retain the term "transferred text", symbolized as "Y text", to be understood as a text at the logical moment immediately after transfer and immediately prior to translation.

My pedantry on this point is due to two concerns. First, I am trying to open the way for a theory able to address phenomena like pseudotranslations or translated texts for which the ST and Y texts are entirely imaginary.¹³ According to the above definitions, the fact that a text is read as a translation is sufficient basis for projecting both the X and Y positions and thus for analyzing the text as a translation independently of the existence or non-existence of a source text. A baser materialism would have to exclude such phenomena. Second, I want to avoid the problem of the exact geo-political location of the position Y, the position at which transfer provokes translation, or translation responds to transfer, depending on the approach adopted. The process of translation is essentially indifferent to the physical location of the translator, who can be surrounded by ST culture, TT culture, or, by facsimile machine or modem, neither of these. Like Thomas Mann declaring (at Pacific Palisades?) "Where I am, there is German culture", or like de Gaulle broadcasting French resistance from London, the translator can carry a culture to any point on the globe. Moreover, since the generality of translation is set up by transfer, the place of the translator incorporates at least two cultures and their contact, independently of the geographical centering of the cultures themselves. From this perspective, it is idle to ask exactly where the position Y is located. It is enough to accept it as the imaginary negation of a translated text, and thus as the point pertinent to the question "Why was this text translated?"

The two radical alternatives X and Y now enable us to give a more formal definition of the relation between transfer and translation, dividing the entire process into three distinct moments:

¹³ Numerous examples are to be found in Romantic and post-Romantic literature, including texts by Swinburne, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Beardsley, Payne, Pushkin, Mérimée, Judith Gautier and Pierre Louÿs. Levy (1969, 76) adds "English" detective novels and westerns written by "continental" Europeans.

- Transfer: the movement from X to Y, from absence to presence in the place of the translator, supported by the corresponding movement of text.
- Translating: the transformation of Y into TT, of textual presence into translated presence, available as negation of the alternatives TT₁, TT₂, TT₃,... TT_n.
- The translated text: the actually selected TT manifesting a translational relationship between itself and its antecedents.

Approaches to translation differ significantly with respect to which of these possible points of departure they choose to privilege. The users of the verb *transfere* privileged transfer and tended to take the rest for granted. Twentieth-century pedagogical, psychological, cybernetic and even purpose-oriented approaches appear to focus on the moment of translating and take transfer for granted. Linguistic and literary approaches are traditionally concerned with normative criticism of the translated text, being for the most part uninterested in understanding how, or in response to what, a Major Spears might have worked.

Confronted by this tripartite relativism, my choice of a merely double point of departure no doubt requires some justification.

How these approaches are used in this essay

As much as I am interested in what goes on in the translating brain or machine, I have absolutely nothing of importance to say about the matter. This alone is reason enough for approaching translating from the outside. But I am also skeptical as to how much of real value can be said from the inside.

The basic theory of choice between alternatives is obviously no more than an external reconstruction of something that is presumed to have happened. It should not be confused with everything that *can* happen when the translator actually gets down to work. The translating brain is very much a black box about which hypotheses can only be based on what goes in and what comes out. But then, if the input is what we have described as Y and the output is TT, this kind of analysis is in fact based on the relation TT:Y, the relation expressed in the ambiguous past participle of “that which has been translated”, manifested by the TT, coming after the event itself. That is, analysis is in fact based on the *third* of the points of departure listed above. Alternatively, if translating is approached as a specific work situation, the various plays of influences and purposes forming that situation find

their point of departure not in the translating brain itself, but in the intercultural determinants on Y, the why and wherefore of transfer. In answering the question “why?”, the analysis of purposes is based on the position Y, on the extra-textual side of translating, the *first* of the above points of departure.

Approaches to translation thus at best skirt around the summit of translating itself, tending to seek more accessible slopes on either the textual or extra-textual sides. In recognition of this difficulty, I prefer explicitly to avoid assumptions about what happens in the inner intimacy of translators.

Since my overall purpose is to move from traditional translation studies towards wider social sciences, the order of the following chapters will go from the textual to the extra-textual, from the analysis of translated texts to the analysis of transfer. It would be possible to do otherwise, to begin from transfer and then attempt to generate translation, in the way that simplistic analyses of base economic relations once attempted to generate superstructural institutions. Such an approach would perhaps be conceptually easier and entirely appropriate for the analysis of an individual translation, but decidedly confrontational as a general critique, since it would mean insisting that ultimate truth lies on one side of the mountain and not the other. Although more difficult, an approach going from translation to transfer has the advantage of allowing one critically to adopt and undermine certain traditional assumptions, demonstrating the relative weakness or blindness of theories which exclude the fact of transfer. The order I shall adopt is thus less confrontational, but perhaps more subversive.

In this spirit, the following three chapters undo or rework traditional approaches to translated texts. These chapters correspond to the TT’s relational value (equivalence), discursive status (there is no translational first person) and quantity (which hides the position of the translator).

I shall then suggest ways in which translations can be read as responses to transfer. This requires two chapters: one on how transfer itself can change the status of texts (since texts can “belong” to social groups or situations) and another on how transfer can be carried out by social groups on an intercultural level (thanks to intercultural regimes which facilitate and regulate text transfer).

The two approaches thus form a critique followed by an explanation of the critique. They are not to be distinguished as descriptive versus normative theory. Nor do they necessarily converge on the place of the translator. Instead, they come together as two different levels on which the union of transfer and translation can be analyzed.

Since transfer and translation both work on distance, they can be brought together under a general formula describing this double analysis, hopefully as suggestive as it is neat:

$$\frac{TT : Y}{Y - ST}$$

Together, these four terms claim that translation is able to relate two kinds of distance: that represented by a translated text in relation to a transferred text (TT:Y), and that manifested by transfer itself (Y–ST) (“position of transferred text, minus position of source text”).

Above the line, in the world of visible signs, Major Spears’ translation (TT) represents de Gaulle’s speech as it existed in Britain in 1966 (Y). This representation is expressed by the relation TT:Y. Below the line, in the world of moving objects, we know that de Gaulle’s text crossed the time-space between France in 1944 (ST) and Britain in 1966 (Y), thus creating the distance expressed as the difference between these two points (Y–ST). The formula says that the first level (TT:Y)—the relation that is a result of translational practice—represents the second level (Y–ST)—the result of transfer.

If we want to know why Spears chose to translate de Gaulle’s speech as if it had been written, hypotactic and unfrightened, we should thus carefully consider the situation of the transferred text—why should de Gaulle be translated in 1966?—and relate this situation to the distance between France in 1944 and Britain in 1966. On both these levels, the pertinent aspect of the distance represented is “absence of war-time situation”. Spears’ translation can be analyzed and appreciated as a representation of this distance. It can thus be understood on its own terms, although it should not necessarily be praised as ethically astute.

The above formula relates the objects of knowledge with which we are concerned. It enables us to say what translations do as representations of distance and as responses to transfer. But it is a rather unstable formula. There is no guarantee of any constant ratio between these two levels; there is no superpower to insist that all translated texts must represent or respond to all acts of transfer in the same way. The line here is no more than an illusion of authority, interrogated and transformed—through the double appearance of Y—by translation as a diagonal cutting of both universal comprehensibility and incomprehensible cultural specificity. Of course, in the incertitude created by this double interrogation, in the lack of firm ground in heaven or at home, it is very possible and indeed common for translated

texts to suggest that there is no transfer at all, that there is no distance between cultures, or that there is no real intercultural communication. I believe that such approaches open the way for relations which, in creating artificial paradises from the hiding of differences, or real conflict from the hiding of everyday exchange, are often as benighted in conception as they are pernicious in practice.

The above formula is thus not neutral with respect to its object. In insisting on the pertinence of transfer, in basing intercultural relations on the distance created by the movement of objects, this double approach must ultimately argue against the false authority of translated texts which suggest they were always already there, and against non-translated texts that suggest they can exist nowhere else.

EQUIVALENCE DEFINES TRANSLATION

Equivalence could be all things to all theorists

ALTHOUGH descriptions of the relation between the input and output of translational work often refer to notions of equivalence, the term would appear to be the great empty sign of such exercises. Equivalence has been extensively used to define translation, but few writers have been prepared to define equivalence itself. Indeed, it is quite possible that the term in question means all things to all theorists: since it is usually taken to be the result of successful translating, its content as a theoretical term is probably nothing more or less than the theory in which successful translating is defined. Equivalence thus perhaps means achieving whatever the ideal translator should set out to achieve. Yet this is a mere tautology: equivalence is supposed to define translation, but translation would then appear to define equivalence. One senses that something more substantial needs to be said about equivalence itself.

Historical research is of little avail here. The brief survey offered by Wilss (1982, 134-135) simply presents guesses suggesting that the English term “equivalence” entered translation studies from mathematics, that it was originally associated with research into machine translation, and that it has or should have a properly technical sense. But Snell-Hornby has used comparative historical analysis to argue against the possibility of any such technical sense, claiming to have located some 58 different types of equivalence referred to in German translation studies (1986, 15). Moreover, even if one could locate substantial common factors underlying all these variants, there is surely no guarantee that history or etymology alone will lead to the most fruitful future definition. A slightly more creative approach is required.

In what follows, I want to suggest that equivalence-based definitions of translation are fundamentally correct; but I also want to show that they say rather more

than the sterile tautologies they ride on. Despite all the problems with historical usages of the term, despite recently fashionable attempts to ignore it altogether, I believe that equivalence in its most unqualified form—definitionally *ideal* equivalence—does indeed define translation. But to reach this conclusion, to discover what is being said but not heard, it is necessary to discard several false or inadequate notions of equivalence. We must disregard the way structuralist linguistics once used the term to suggest a symmetry of “equal values” between discrete systems; we must turn to the economics of exchange in order to distinguish equivalence from assumptions of natural use values or functions; we must see how equivalence can actually operate within a dynamic translational series based on the primacy of exchange value; and finally, we must appreciate that equivalence is not a predetermined relation that translators passively seek, but instead works as a transitory fiction that translators produce in order to have receivers somehow believe that translations have not really been translated. In all, if equivalence is ideally to define translation, we must take steps to redefine ideal equivalence.

I should stress that my subject in this chapter is no more—and no less—than equivalence as an ideal. We shall later find reasons for challenging its limits and for qualifying its lesser modes. But for the moment, what interests me is the silence of the great empty sign itself.

Equivalence is directional and subjectless

The following are fairly representative equivalence-based definitions of translation:

“Interlingual translation can be defined as the *replacement* of elements of one language, the domain of translation, by *equivalent elements* of another language, the range [of translation].” (A. G. Oettinger 1960, 110)

“Translation may be defined as follows: the *replacement* of textual material in one language (SL) by *equivalent material* in another language (TL).” (Catford 1965, 20)

“Translating consists in *reproducing* in the receptor language the *closest natural equivalent* of the source-language message.” (Nida and Taber 1969, 12; cf. Nida 1959, 33)

“[Translation] *leads* from a source-language text to a target-language text which is *as close an equivalent as possible* and presupposes an understanding of the content and style of the original.” (Wilss 1982, 62)¹⁴

Many further definitions could be added in this vein (cf. Koller 1979, 186 ff.). But the main variants in any longer listing would tend to concern more the nature of what is supposed to be equivalent (“elements”, “textual material”, “functions”, “communicative effect”, etc.) than the nature of equivalence itself, which, within this decidedly twentieth-century tradition, is simply assumed to exist.¹⁵ Indeed, in some circles, the assumption is so amorously present that one hesitates to question its grounding. Even Quine’s definition of indeterminacy, despite all its efforts explicitly to question contemporary presuppositions, feigns to be upset about the same text leading to different translations “which stand to each other in no plausible sort of *equivalence* relation however loose” (1960, 27). But who told Quine that wholly determined translation should depend on equivalence? Is it not strange that equivalence thus appears in the definition of both what we know about translation (determinacy) and what we suspect we do not know (indeterminacy)? But what then is equivalence itself, however loose?

It might of course be assumed that the term means exactly what it says: a relation of equal value. But such a reading would contradict the similarly widespread although perhaps less obvious features I have put in italics in the above definitions:

- In all these definitions, the term “equivalent” is used to describe only TTs, the products resulting from the translating process. It is not used to describe the ST, the abstractly initial material, nor the Y text, the textual material as it arrives in the place of the translator. This one-sided use implies an asymmetry

¹⁴ Cf. the earlier German version: “Übersetzen ist ein Textverarbeitungs- und Textverbalisierungsprozess, der von einem Ausgangssprachlichen Text zu einem *möglichst äquivalenten Zielsprachlichen Text* hinüberführt...” (Wilss 1977, 72).

¹⁵ “Skopos” and relative indifference to equivalence:

It should be recognised that this tradition by no means represents all of twentieth-century thought on translation. Followers of Vermeer or Holz-Mänttari seem happy to relativise the ideal of equivalence and sometimes simply to ignore it altogether (as in Nord 1988). If pushed, this block of “Skopos” or purpose-based theory would no doubt reject the role of ST as sole retainer of the factors determining whether or not equivalence has been attained. But should a purpose-based approach then entirely reject the function of equivalence itself? If the translator decides to produce a certain kind of TT, or an “Arbeitsgeber” or “initiator” imposes such a decision, some aspect of the resulting TT will still be believed to be equivalent to at least some aspect of ST. The simple reason why theory should continue to talk about equivalence is that clients and readers, if not all translators, still believe that it is a measure of the specificity and value of translated texts.

that must be considered at least odd if associated with a relationship of presumed equality.

- The verbs employed or implied (“replace”, “reproduce”, “lead to”, etc.) not only refer to processes, but are decidedly unidirectional in nature. Translating goes from Y to TT, and if the process is reversed it is called “back-translation”, as a kind of underhand reversal of the correct way of the world.¹⁶
- The described processes are also peculiarly subjectless: it is obvious that somebody or something must be doing the “replacing” or “reproducing”, but this person or thing appears to have no expressed place in the translational process. Although there must be at least some notion of location implied in terms like “replacement” and “lead to”, the subjectless nature of this place suggests that no one particularly cares who or what is doing the work.

Taking all of this together, we find that the term equivalence is commonly associated with the end result of translating as a one-way process occurring in an apparently subjectless place. Equivalence is directional and subjectless. I believe that these distinctive features are highly useful for the definition of translation. Moreover, their implicit asymmetry presents significant problems for certain less definite ideals like equivalence as an affair of “equal values”. The first of these problems is the nature of value itself.

Equivalence is asymmetrical

Although “value” is generally not a technical term in contemporary translation studies, it does make frequent and prolonged appearances in Saussure’s *Cours de linguistique générale*, widely held to be one of the foundational texts of modern linguistics and often cited in arguments against translatability. Saussure describes linguistic elements as having values corresponding to their mutual oppositions:

“Modern French *mouton* can have the same signification as English *sheep* but not the same value, and this for several reasons, particularly because in speaking of a piece of meat ready to be served at the table, English uses *mutton* and not *sheep*. The difference in value between *sheep*

¹⁶ Equivalence opposes originality:

Belyea argues that recognition of “equivalence” has replaced the more strongly directional vocabulary of “transfer-ence” and “should emphasize translation as a creative process closely akin to that of ‘original’ writing” (1980, 43). Yet the above definitions indicate that it is almost impossible to talk about equivalence without calling on a directional verb to describe translational work. Because of this directionality, the notion of equivalence remains fundamentally incompatible with criteria of originality.

and *mouton* is due to the fact that *sheep* has beside it a second term while the French does not.” (1916,115)

Saussurean value is thus positional and relative within a fixed tongue, since “in language there are only differences without positive terms” (120). It is important to stress Saussure’s distinction between, on the one hand, “value” as the entire semantic potential left to an element by the presence or absence of neighboring terms, and on the other, “signification” as the particular use made of that element in a given situation. This distinction is clear in the example of the chess game, where the value of the knight is described as its capacity to carry out any number of moves within the limits of certain rules, its signification then being the import of each individual move. So far, so good.

Since Saussurean value refers to the relative positions of elements within an entire tongue, the fact that different tongues divide semantic space in different ways theoretically denies the very possibility of different elements being of equal value. Vendryes even considered equivalence to be contrary to the nature of the tongue as system, arguing that as soon as two elements become “equivalent” within the same system, one of them is forced to disappear (1923, 381).¹⁷ It is then not surprising that Saussure’s synchronic linguistics excludes not only questions of equivalence but also all reference to one-way processes and to places of lesser dimensions than tongues. Saussure does not talk about translation. For example, he chooses not to tell us that the difference in value between “sheep” and “mutton” is due to the historical situation in which Anglo-Saxon servants presented what they called “sceap” to their Norman masters, who called the same object “moton”. The positional values of the terms were changed—were exchanged—as soon as the meat approached the master’s table and intercultural communication was established. It is only through asymmetric situations like this—which clearly involve translation and quite massive material transfer (of meat, of armies), as indeed does Saussure’s description of the example—that the linguist has access to the comparable terms enabling him paradoxically to demonstrate that equal values (and thus “transla-

¹⁷ Equivalence and the occupation of semantic space:

The prime example given by Vendryes—the grammatical “equivalence” of the French *passé composé* and *passé simple*—concerns a phenomenon not of absolute loss or exclusion, but of social displacement, the *passé simple* embodying a value of literariness and social power based on the restricted social space of its contemporary usage. The basic argument—that “equal values” internal to tongues are transitory historical phenomena—similarly runs into problems when confronted with examples like the continued maintenance of two imperfect subjunctive forms in Spanish. Phenomena of occupied semantic space are more evident when sociologically based. Chakalov (1977, 75) describes how, during the Bulgarian nationalist revival, all appeals were to the “people” rather than to the “nation”. Thus, the “National Bank” became the “People’s Bank”. But when there were really banks for common needs, the place of the name had already been taken, forcing use of the term “Popular Banks”.

tion” itself) are strictly impossible. But the pertinent translation had taken place centuries before!¹⁸

If linguistic notions of value¹⁹ should thus suggest that there is no such thing as equivalence, it is because they are logically posterior to beliefs in precisely this possibility. Just as Saussure received his example from the asymmetrical social relations of the Norman conquest, so all comparative or contrastive linguistics necessarily receive their data from situations of transfer and translation. A theory of translational equivalence has very little to learn from the Apollonian lines drawn by linguists or their structuralist acolytes. Equivalence is not symmetrical.

Marianne Lederer goes shopping:

“A word out of context, on the level of the tongue and thus not yet in a message, is like a 50-franc note which has yet to be materialized as something bought. As long as the 50-franc note is not spent, it is potentially groceries, books, a train-ticket or whatever. But its actual materialization can only be one of these virtualities.” (Lederer, in Seleskovitch and Lederer 1984, 24)

Although the analogy basically concords with Saussure’s example of the chess piece, it has several added peculiarities. First, it interestingly refers to a fixed quantity of signifying material: Is it really so important to specify that this is a 50-franc note, or that a TT has two or ten pages? Second, the value of the note is not its potential *use* as a material object, but what it can be *exchanged* for. Linguistic value is thus seen as a kind of economic exchange value, although Lederer does not say where one should look for a market where words can be exchanged for their referents, nor exactly how to think about materialization when, in the place of translation, words are exchanged for words, and francs are exchanged for pounds, dollars or pesetas. The analogy is on the right track, but more thought is needed.

¹⁸ Philosophical sheep and mutton in François Vezin's Heidegger (1986, 519):

Vezin's decision to import the term *Dasein* into French is not merely based on the absence of such a term in the tongue, but on the history of previous translations. *Dasein* was used in German in 1650-1750 to translate the Latin *existencia* and the French *existence* (“*existencia Dei*” becoming “*Dasein Gottes*”). So why should *Dasein* then not be translated back into French as *existence*? Because of a further transfer: the term *Existenz* has also existed in German since the seventeenth century. Translation decisions are thus based not so much on linguistic constraints, but on the accrued results of previous translation decisions, which sometimes appear to share the permanence of the tongue.

¹⁹ “Valeur” in French linguistics:

Saussure's conception of linguistic value as being at once positional and based on potential uses has been retained by Guillaume: “la valeur reconnue étant celle que la forme prend en système. Cette valeur est une; mais dans son unicité elle condense une multitude de valeurs d'emploi, qui, elles, se produisent dans le discours” (1946-47, 26). The term may also be found in Vendryes: “La portée d'une langue tient au nombre et au degré d'éducation de ceux qui la pratiquent. Voilà pourquoi les langues celtiques ont moins de valeur que les langues romaines ou germaniques” (1923, 377). All of which serves to suggest that equivalence is even more impossible.

Value is an economic term

Scant attention has been paid to the fact that Saussure's uses of the term "value"—and indeed his fundamental distinction between synchronic and diachronic linguistics—were developed from analogies with economics, or more precisely from comparisons with the most prestigious social sciences of his day, political economy and economic history:

"Here [in linguistics] as in political economy we are confronted with the notion of *value*; both sciences are concerned with a system for equating things of different orders—labor and wages in one, and a signified and a signifier in the other." (79)

According to Saussure, labor is to wages what the signified is to the signifier. But are these things of different orders really being "equated"? An economist who equated the value of wages with the value of labor would not get very far when trying to explain profits or capitalism. Does linguistics get very far if signifiers are just equated with signifieds? I suspect not, at least not with respect to phenomena of variability and dynamic change. Nor can translation studies make many advances while TTs are simply equated with STs. But Saussure takes up the problem in a second comparison:

"A value—so long as it is somehow rooted in things and in their *natural relations*, as happens with economics (the value of a plot of land, for instance, is related to its productivity)—can to some extent be traced in time [...]. Its link with things gives it, perforce, a *natural basis*, and the judgments that are based on such values are therefore never completely arbitrary; their variability is limited. But we have just seen that *natural data* have no place in linguistics." (80; italics mine)

This is a strange commentary. Here we see that the main point of comparison is the peculiar way nature appears to guarantee the equations of economics. Saussure seems to believe that economic value is determined by a commodity's "natural" embodiment of uses. Then he correctly does all he can to reject this naturalist basis from his linguistics. However, the commentary is strange because no economist who had read Adam Smith would have confused value with this natural basis. In fact, most economists would have agreed with Saussure's basic arguments against natural data.

Since the problem of natural value continues to haunt translation studies (Nida's definition, for instance, refers to "the closest *natural* equivalent"), it is worth con-

sidering what economics really has to say about the matter. After all, economists have been discussing these problems for centuries. Perhaps they can help us avoid a few elementary confusions. Here is David Ricardo giving textbook examples in 1812:

“Water and air are abundantly useful; they are indeed indispensable to existence, yet, under ordinary circumstances, nothing can be obtained in exchange for them. Gold, on the contrary, though of little use compared with air or water, will exchange for a great quantity of other goods. Utility then is not the measure of exchangeable value, although it is absolutely essential to it.” (1812, 1-2).

The role of natural data here is clearly limited to use values. To say that an object is useful is to say that it can be exchanged. But natural use value itself has no strongly quantitative relation to actual exchange value. It is a function belonging to a space prior to properly economic activity. In fact, after the moment of necessary recognition, utility is of little interest to economics. The real value to be explained is that pertaining to exchange.

How can this distinction be applied to linguistics and translation? Surely use value is limited to recognizing, for example, that “mouton” has utility in French and “sheep” has utility in English, or that a 50-franc note can be used in France but not in Britain. That is, there are certain separate spaces within which each term has utility. But mere use can tell us nothing about the actual value these terms might have when they enter a mutual space, when they exist at a point of contact between the two domains concerned, as when Anglo-Saxon meat is served to the Norman master or Ms Lederer tries to go shopping in London.

What does it mean to say, as do communicative and contextual semantics, that meaning is use, or even that meaning is use within certain frames and scenes? Surely all that is being said is that the space pertinent to some kinds of use is smaller than that of entire tongues. But it is still no more than a space. It is not a point of contact or exchange. Within the natural spaces concerned, only water can be used as water, only mutton as mutton, only francs as francs. Use-value theories of meaning thus do not really rise above the identity equations underlying Saussurean mutual exclusion.²⁰ All they do is accord a term a domain or series of pos-

²⁰ Exchange-value according to Baudrillard:

Baudrillard argues that use-value is necessarily a hypothesis projected from within the system of exchange-value, since it is only through abstract, undifferentiated labour that the values of different objects can be compared (1973, 12 ff.): “Exchange-value induces the appearance of use-value as its own anthropological horizon” (1973, 19). Use-value is thus “a ‘naturalising’ ideological double of the exchange-value system” (1972, 164), a deceptive double associated with false notions of the primacy of production corresponding to social needs (1973, 9-13). Amongst other arguments against “meaning is use”, see Searle (1969).

sible domains (as with the chess piece). Such theories can only say that a T_1 is of value because its use does not correspond to $T_2, T_3...T_n$. Which is simply to say that it exists naturally and cannot be equivalent to any other term. Obviously, an equivalence-based definition of translation studies can have no place for such theories.

In order to talk about value as something more than a sterile identity equation of space with use, we must find another way in which T_1 can be related to the series $T_2, T_3...T_n$. It is not enough to rely on simple comparison and mutual exclusion. The relation must become more dynamic.

An instance of how this can be done might be to look up the dictionary definition of a term, then the definitions of the defining terms, and so on until, according to certain theories, the exercise will exhaust the entire dictionary and take so long that the tongue itself will have changed, the dictionary will have to be rewritten and the process should begin again. The series of terms generated by such semiosis will concern not passive comparison between areas of utility, but active interrelations of *exchange*.

Interestingly enough, Jakobson described this same process in the following terms: "The meaning of any linguistic sign is its translation into some further, alternative sign" (1959).²¹ Which is to say that translation generates series of *exchange values*.

It is then in the analysis of exchange, not use, that economics provides us with a model of equivalence able to avoid making translation impossible. Rather than consider Saussure's positional problems of natural mutton and natural sheep happily separated by the Channel, translation studies should enter the active situational problems of Anglo-Saxon servants and Norman masters (or competing British and French farmers) who have to negotiate and exchange mutually recognized values before getting down to the undeniably useful business of eating sheep, mutton, or the non-equated leftovers.

Equivalence is an economic term

There is undoubtedly a certain ideological underpinning to approaches which see translation as a mode of relation between social systems and stress twentieth-century use-value theories of "equivalent effects". Our century has seen sociology

²¹ The interpretant at Harvard: Jakobson's theory is presented both as a version of Peirce's theory of the interpretant and as an implicit explanation of the activities of Quine's jungle linguist. (Quine's original article was also published in the Brower volume edited at Harvard in 1959.)

overtake speculation; the law of the market has undone philological illusion; and, at least for Newmark, translational functionalism has accompanied the triumph of base consumerism (1981, 38). It would seem that formal nineteenth-century exchanges have sunk to the level of economic expediency. Against this background, there is a certain perverse pleasure to be gained from citing a nineteenth-century economist in order to explain why equivalence does not really concern use values.

An incisive analogy:

Marx's analysis of commodities is simple enough: "quantity x of commodity A" = "quantity y of commodity B"; or, in terms appropriate to the first International as a meeting of mostly Jewish tailors, "20 yards of linen = 1 coat". Here is the commentary:

"The linen expresses its value in the coat; the coat serves as the material in which that value is expressed. The former plays an active role, the latter a passive role. The value of the first commodity is represented as relative value, or appears in relative form. The second commodity *functions as equivalent, or appears in equivalent form.*" (1867, I, 63; italics mine)

Marx stresses that no one commodity can assume both the relative and equivalent forms of value at the same time, since the value of the linen is only recognized "when it comes into a communicative situation with the coat" ("sobald sie in *Umgang* mit anderer Ware, dem Rock, tritt"). The coat is thus that which "brings value" ("der Träger von Wert"). There is no question of this being an identity relationship. Nor is there any question of this kind of economic value being, as Saussure had supposed, "somehow rooted in things and in their natural relations". The nature of the materials involved is unimportant to their expressions of value. Value is here purely a result of the relationship between the commodities and the communicative but subjectless place ("Umgang") in which this relationship is possible. The relationship is moreover explicitly situational and may be repeated with respect to numerous other commodities. The coat may be equivalent to 20 yards of linen this week and 15 yards next week; to five umbrellas, three pairs of shoes or two pairs of trousers, or any combination of these quantities and qualities, within the spatial and temporal limits of the markets that the coat can reach. The coat can thus potentially enter into a translational series with any number of other items, each time occupying the equivalent position but never having its nature reduced to that of a definitive and obligatory equivalent of any other item. In this sense, equivalence depends only on what is offered, negotiated and accepted in the exchange situation; it is decided each time by what the seller and the buyer situationally believe to be of value and worth exchanging. It is never an exclusive relationship between the natural qualities of linen and coats; there is no suggestion of

cause and effect such that whenever a seller offers twenty yards of linen a buyer should exchange a coat.²²

In short, according to this model, each relation of equivalence is a transitory convention, a momentary link in process of potentially endless exchange. More critically, it is a fiction, a lie, a belief-structure necessary for the workings of economies and the survival of societies.

If we now write “transferred text” (Y) and “translated text” (TT) in the place of “linen” and “coat”—not entirely metaphorically, since some texts are indeed bought and sold, and weaving can be as textual as it is textile—, certain clear correspondences appear between the model of exchange and the definitions of translation cited at the beginning of this chapter. The relationships are in both cases one-way and non-reciprocal equivalence is in both cases expressed in only the latter of the two positions available; and the very possibility of this relationship—the very possibility of an equivalent form—depends on an apparently subjectless locus in which both sides of the relation can be at once mutually present and mutually distinct.

That is, equivalence can be defined in terms of exchange value, expressed as a relationship between texts (TT:Y) and determined in the specific locus of the translator as a silent trader. This is what was being said but not heard.

Equivalence is not a natural relation between systems

The suggestion that equivalence-based definitions of translation unwittingly define their object in terms of simple exchange could justify common usages of the word “equivalence”, but it by no means justifies all that is said by the contemporary theories incorporating these definitions.

Most notions of dynamic or functional equivalence are based on a correspondence between use values which are rumored to exist in distinct languages, societies or cultures, understood as independent systems. Translation is seen as a matching of one use or function with another, rather than as a productive function in itself. The economic definition of equivalence, on the other hand, enables us to focus on value as something manifested through the translation of texts in situations of contact between interrelated cultures. Equivalence is to be understood as emerging from active interrelations, determined by what translators actually do, and not

²² Holz-Mänttari associates equivalence with the cause-effect model “if x in ST, then y in TT”, which she believes has to be surpassed (1990, 71). But the belief-structure we are talking about here does not necessarily have anything to do with actual causes and actual effects.

by abstract comparisons between falsely discrete and passive systems. The methodological importance of this point is rarely appreciated.

Since translation is an interrelational activity, it is slightly contradictory to suppose that it can be analyzed in terms of non-relational categories. And yet this is precisely the kind of contradiction found in overtly Marxist approaches to translation. When Otto Kade states that untranslatability is the result of the non-correspondence between “two historically developed societies” (in Koller 1979, 156), the fact that no two societies have developed in the same way would logically suggest that translatability and thus equivalence are impossible. Dialectic acrobatics apart, there is clearly something fundamentally wrong with this supposedly Marxist but in fact eminently Saussurean mode of argument.

Marx’s critique of use value is perhaps more interesting than the twentieth-century abstractions that have followed him. He saw exchange not as a capitalist plot, but as a result of concrete intercultural communication:

“Just as a Manchester family of factory workers, where the children stand in the exchange relation to their parents and pay them room and board, does not represent the traditional economic organization of the family, so is the system of modern private exchange not the spontaneous economy of societies. Exchange begins not between individuals within a community, but rather at the point where communities end—at their boundary, at the point of contact between different communities.” (1857-58, 882)

The importance of the frontier curiously reappeared when Marx was searching for analogies between money and language, considered difficult because “ideas do not exist independently of language”. However:

“Ideas which first have to be translated out of their mother tongue into a foreign language in order to circulate, in order to become exchangeable, offer a somewhat better analogy; but the analogy then lies not in language, but in the foreignness of language.” (1857-58, 163)

Exchange value is thus opposed to the idealism of “naturally arisen communal property”, just as translation can be opposed to “naturally arisen common languages”. As cultures become increasingly interrelated, the foreignness that appears on the frontier tends to overtake relationships based on the false homogeneity of traditionally discrete systems. Exchange overtakes use.

Equivalence has become unfashionable

One of the paradoxical effects of the historical increase in intercultural communications is that, through the rise of non-linguistic cultural and historical studies, there is nowadays declining interest in translational equivalence. As it becomes more and more obvious that equivalence is not a natural relation between systems, writers on translation are becoming increasingly inclined to act as if there were no such thing as equivalence at all, throwing out the proverbial baby with the bathwater. The result is that the theorists usefully brought together through the many citations in Koller (1979) can be identified and historically distanced as believers in what is now a fairly reactionary notion of equivalence.

There are at least two good reasons why restrictive ideas of equivalence should have become unpopular.

First, historians of translation are showing that many equivalence-based theories unnecessarily exclude much of the richness of the past. Jeanette Beer correctly points out that, for medieval translators,

“...structural equivalence between source and translation was not of prime importance. By the criterion of appropriateness to target audience a treatise properly could become poetry, epic became romance, and sermons drama—or vice versa! Such dramatic changes in form serve as irritants to those modern theorists who, for the sake of anachronistic criteria, categorize a millennium of translative vitality as one thousand years of non-translation.” (1989, 2)

Second, the sheer quantities of weakly authored material nowadays to be translated have brought about significant changes in the professional tasks of many trained translators, who are writing summaries, providing linguistic consultation services, producing new texts for new readers, or processing computer-generated translations. Strict quantitative equivalence to Y is often no longer considered as important as the efficiency of TT, to be assessed as a new text designed to serve a new purpose.

Both these arguments are justified and fruitful. But do they mean that equivalence itself has disappeared? Is not the modern or medieval priority accorded to “appropriateness to target audience”—amongst many other operative criteria—in itself a valid basis for equivalence on a particular level? Translations written as edited reports for a specific reader—as suggested by Mossop (1983) and detailed by Gouadec (1989, 22-29)—do not necessarily break with equivalence, given that what is exchanged, what the specific reader ideally wants and receives, is ultimately a representation of *that part of Y which is considered to be of value in the*

particular exchange situation concerned. Equivalence has thus by no means disappeared. It is still what happens, on one level or another, whenever a translated text is received as if it were a merely transferred text; it is still there whenever translation is distinguished from non-translation; it is still implicit in the way a TT signifies its antecedents, even in cases of pseudotranslations, where no antecedents exist.

What has changed is not so much the way TT represents Y, but the way this representational relation was once considered a natural fact.²³ As the model of exchange makes clear, equivalence is artificial, fictive, something that has to be produced on the level of translation itself. But it *must* be produced. Whether one likes it or not, just as the exchange value of Ms Lederer's banknote is a question of communal belief necessary to keep economic relations alive (economists know that most of the note represents non-existent wealth), so translational fictions of equivalence remain essential for the maintenance of countless acts of intercultural communication. Their negation or denial should not be thought a simple task.

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Equivalence thus neither descends from above nor blossoms from the soil. It is a fiction without natural correlative beyond the communication situation. Yet naturalist assumptions continue to obfuscate its role as an active mode of interrelation. As José Lambert (1978) has remarked, the kinds of equivalence presented in formal theory ("functional", "communicative", "semantic", etc.) tend not to correspond to the notions of equivalence implicit in non-normative descriptive studies. The large-scale paradigms based on precarious abstractions from use habitually fail to perceive that they themselves depend on the equivalence which can only be

²³ The real changes are perhaps not in translation, but in authorship:

The suggestion of a return to Medieval ideas runs aground on the rocks of authorship. There can be no doubt that equivalence must be offset by a strong notion of authorship, rooted either in religion—the divine authorship of sacred texts—or in property relations and the prohibition of plagiarism. Where notions of authorship are weak, translators may name the world as they see fit and thus have no real need to be restricted by natural equivalence. Where such notions are strong—as is the case in Newmark's myth of "authoritative texts" (1981, 1988)—, equivalence becomes very restrictive indeed. The problem with the contemporary situation is that years of analytical focus on texts, reception, intertextuality and communicative transactions have led to a certain death of the author on the level of theory, whereas real-world authors continue to be very much alive, productive and protected by major editors, distribution networks and international copyright laws which accord them considerably more potential power than is in the hands of the individual receiver or translator. Thus, whilst contemporary theorists can proclaim translation as a form of creative writing—or, as the 1990 Belgrade FIT conference naïvely proclaimed, that translation is a "creative profession"—, real-world authors are by no means willing to retreat from the scene and surrender to medieval plagiarism.

found through exchange, through translation as a communicative process. They thus falsely convert translators into “equivalence seekers” (Mossop 1983), ignoring that, as Koller puts it, translating itself is the production (“Herstellen”) of equivalence and translators are ultimately the people who say what should or should not be proposed to the receiver as an equivalent (1979, 186-193).

But if definitions of translation can consistently omit all reference to the person or thing determining equivalence, exactly who or what is the translator?

“I AM TRANSLATING” IS FALSE

The translator is anonymous

IT HAS BEEN astutely lamented that, in accordance with the principle of ideal equivalence, the translator remains “nobody in particular” (Belitt 1978).²⁴ Of all the symbols and saints used to represent the profession—Janus or Jerome, forked tongues or true interpreters—, the figure of “nobody” is of particular theoretical profundity.

Some translators have of course expressed and exerted strong personal identities. Yet there must remain doubt as to whether their particularity was not in conflict with their work as translators. Reading a Hölderlin version of Pindar probably has more to do with reading Hölderlin than with establishing any strict relation of equivalence with Pindar. Or again, active appreciation of the subjectivity and work of a Jerome or a Luther effectively blocks the reading position necessary for ideal equivalence to what might be projected as “the” Bible. In principle, if translated texts are to be received and believed as ideal equivalents of their antecedents, translators themselves must remain anonymous and their work must remain unevaluated as individual labor.²⁵

²⁴ Cf. the phrase attributed to Matthias Claudius, “Wer übersetzt, der untersetzt”, he who translates effaces himself (cited in Berman 1984, 280). The circulation of such sayings seems to be one of the functions of translation theory, for better or for worse.

²⁵ Two cases where translators almost say “I”:

a) Robert Lowell's version of Rimbaud's “Ma Bohème” (1958, 87):

“Tom Thumb the dreamer, I was knocking off my coupled rhymes.”

This “I was”, together with the addition of “coupled”, allows one to refer to Lowell's own prosodic practice, particularly his translation of Phèdre. But if such a reference is made, the text is no longer read as a translation.

b) An example commented by Susan Bassnett-McGuire (1980, 56-57):

ST: Petrarch: “Rotta è l'alta colonna e'l verde lauro
Che facean ombra al mio stanco pensiero” (Sonnet CCLXIX)

TT: Wyatt: “The pillar pearished is whereto I lent
The strongest staye of myne unquyet mynde”

This means that, although equivalence is certainly the result of work, its social function depends on the practical anonymity of this work; it can only function for as long as the receiver is indifferent to the translator's subjectivity. Equivalence itself may well be analyzed in terms of exchange value; its false naturalness may be reduced to mere assurance of potential use; but no aspect of applied or misapplied economics gives the slightest indication that the principle of equivalence will allow translators to be appreciated in terms of any individualized labor value. A labor-value theory of equivalence would be a contradiction in terms.

Translation might thus be described as a potentially scandalous activity in which people work to produce an output which is ideally thought to have the same value as the input, leaving their labor without value in itself.

Or is this view merely a projection of bad theory? After all, physical translators are individuals, with individual bank accounts which should be individually affected to the extent that the value of their work is at least financially quantified. Should the anonymity posited as a correlative of ideal equivalence then be seen as no more than the way in which *certain* translations are read by *certain* people?

Careful consideration should be accorded to the two economies at work here. On the level of material production, translators are no different from most workers, transforming previous products to produce new products, receiving remuneration for the labor expended in the transformation process, and sometimes receiving a certain percentage in proportion to something called "value added", the difference in value between input and output. The exact financial remuneration varies widely according to the social context in which the work is carried out, since standard rates and product qualities vary considerably according to the local labor market and the presence or absence of effective professional organizations. On the semiotic level, however, translation is defined by a relation of equivalence which denies the very possibility of any such value added²⁶, since the output is supposed to

Petrarch was lamenting the deaths of Cardinal Giovanni Colonna and of Laura (il verde lauro). According to Bassnett-McGuire, "Wyatt's translation stresses the 'I', and stresses also the strength and support of what is lost. Whether the theory that would see this sonnet as written in commemoration of the fall of Cromwell in 1540 is proven or not, it remains clear that the translator has opted for a voice that will have immediate impact on contemporary readers as being of their own time."

But there must remain doubt as to whether such a reading is strictly translational, or an extended political use of literary allusion. Some translators are more interesting as authors than as translators.

²⁶ Value-added and non-equivalence:

A certain unwanted value-added may result when the semiotic and the material fail to fuse, as is revealed by frustrating experiences like trying to understand an inadequate English translation of, say, an instruction manual accompanying a foreign machine. The reader who wants the machine to work has constantly to discount the usually unmentioned translator's value-added from the actual exchange-value of the manual as a representation of hopefully useful instructions. Semiotic knowledge of labour-value in this case implicitly questions the translator's competence.

be directly exchangeable for the input. As we have noted, this direct exchange situation is moreover indifferent to the actual material location of translators in one market or another. There are then two distinct economies at work, the first organizing the production and distribution of textual material, the second governing the semiotic representation or reproduction of this process in terms of value.²⁷

The distinction between these two levels would present no problem if they were really separate. Unfortunately, since ideal equivalence on the semiotic level denies value added, it necessarily hides translational labor value or converts it into non-value, thereby exerting habitually nefarious influences on translators’ financial remuneration and professional psychology. Because the two economies are interconnected, the anonymity of the translator should be taken seriously.

Several quite fundamental questions need to be raised here. For example, if ideal equivalence means that the translator must remain anonymous, what does it mean for other potential first and second persons? How do receivers recognize a text as a translation if they can only recognize the translator as anonymous? What might be the discursive form of such reception? And what are the conditions, if any, under which the anonymity associated with ideal equivalence can be challenged so that translators might have something of value to say?

The utterance “I am translating” is necessarily false

How does one know that equivalence is pertinent to a given text? A simple answer would be that the text “says so”. But not all texts say so in the same way, and it is not at all clear that the saying actually belongs to “the text”. In some cases the indicator is material or situational in others, it is properly semiotic.

Examples of material and semiotic economies in a Spanish museum:

a) In an eight-page brochure for an art museum, the title page is in Spanish (“Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno”) and the in-text is in English (describing the “Atlantic Centre of Modern Art”). There is no explicit indication that the English text is at all translational. It reaches very exactly the bottom of each page; it contains no visible linguistic interferences; it bears no men-

²⁷ More on material and semiotic economies:

I can write a sonnet in English and say it is “from the Portuguese”, inviting it to be read as a translation. The reader who accepts this invitation will activate the semiotic value of my work as a translation. To all intents and purposes, the sonnet, as a signifying object, will be a translation and may be analysed as such. Even if the reader wishing to pursue such an analysis should then ask to see the original, I can have my sonnet translated into Portuguese and then present the result as the original. To all intents and purposes, as a signifying object, it will be the original. However, if the reader's curiosity should be aroused by Anglicisms in the Portuguese and material investigation—of qualities of paper, dates of typewriters or whatever—should conclusively demonstrate that the English text was archeologically anterior to the Portuguese, then the English text could not be considered a translation, neither materially nor semiotically.

tion of a translator. If I had not translated it, I could not guarantee its status as a translated text. And yet it might reasonably be assumed that, since the museum is in a Spanish-speaking community, its Spanish name is logically anterior to its English name and this particular text is therefore likely to be a translation addressed to English-speaking museum-goers. Although there are certain semiotic clues, the only decisive indicator here is situational and derives from the material economy of art and tourism in Spain.

b) An English-language catalogue produced for the same museum contains an absurdly lyrical text on the art of collecting, preceded by the name of its Spanish author and followed by a little note saying “Translated from the Spanish by...”. Here there is no reasonable doubt. Independently of factors like its material location or the possible non-existence of either author or translator, the text is translational. The decisive indicator is in this case properly semiotic, although its function also depends on non-contradiction from situational determinants.

It is perhaps a little perplexing to find that these material and/or semiotic indicators are strictly neither internal nor external to the text proper. They belong instead to a border region between the material and the semiotic, to the published thresholds which comprise objective cover pages and become meaningful though limit-signs. They belong to the “paratext” (to follow the terminology of Genette 1987, who nevertheless overlooks the paratextual place and role of the translator).

The first and most important principle of this paratextual status is that these indicators should be *excluded from the part of the text that is presented as “ideally equivalent” or of exchangeable value*. Although the indicators point to the translational nature of the value concerned, they are placed outside the equivalence relation between TT and Y. The translational paratext thus functions as a kind of instruction for use, saying “...the absent Spanish text translates as...”, thus necessarily excluding the possibility that it is itself a TT. If the indicator of equivalence is to function, it must itself be a non-translation.

That is why the discursive person who says “I am translating” cannot be translating at the moment of utterance. This paradox has consequences not only for the first person of translated texts, but also, as we shall see, for the implicit second and third persons of translation as a discursive act.

But this phenomenon should be analyzed step by step.

Can interpreters say they are frightened?

If, in the consecutive or simultaneous situation, the text “J’ai peur” (de Gaulle?) is rendered as TT₁ “I am frightened”, it could be misunderstood as the translator talking about their immediate condition. One way of avoiding ambiguity would perhaps be to jump straight to the third-person TT₂ “The speaker is frightened”. But

this could equally be misunderstood as the translator commenting on the speaker’s immediate condition. In this case, the one way to make sure that the fear is unambiguously the speaker’s is to frame it as indirect speech, as in TT₃ “He says that he is frightened”. The indirect speech of TT₃ might thus be seen as an elaborate form of the particularly unsuccessful translational utterance TT₁, making explicit a certain kind of paratextual operator—a discursive form or “instruction for use”—that is otherwise normally implicit (“He says that...”). Although it is clear that successful translation need not be transformed into indirect speech in order to be understood, the relation between the two discursive forms remains of at least analytical interest.

John Bigelow (1978) has suggested that translation is indeed a peculiar case of indirect speech whose specificity is based on the form “translates as”, analyzed as an operator which is at once quotational and productive of new information. The following are simplified versions of two of the steps by which he attempts to generate the discursive form of translation:

(1) Ludwig said, “I must tell you: I am frightened”.

(2) Ludwig’s words translate as, “I must tell you: I am frightened”.

The paratextual shift from (1) to (2) represents the basic progression from a text received as direct speech to one received as a translation. Although Bigelow draws attention to the fact that whereas (1) refers to a person, (2) refers to a linguistic entity, he then adds that “this departure from the general format for other hyperintentional sentences is of minor significance and introduces no new problems of principle”. I beg to differ.²⁸

It is of considerable importance and interest that the translational operator “Y translates as TT” refers to things (words) rather than to discursive subjectivity (a person). This is for two main reasons. First, although a spoken version of (1) would remain as fundamentally ambiguous as the translational “I am fright-

²⁸ Reported speech does not get rid of equivalence:

My disagreement with Bigelow on the specificity of the translational operator also concerns Mossop’s 1983 article “The Translator as Rapporteur”, in which there is a somewhat naïve assumption of a relation between translation and reported speech based on reversible shifts between first- and third-persons. Mossop appears to see translation emerging from exchanges between direct and indirect discourse: “If the shift of ‘my’ to ‘he’ is reversed, the result will be a translation...” (1983, 251). Interestingly enough, although this view is recognised as simplistic and partly corrected in a later paper (Mossop 1987, 20, n. 6), it still leads to conclusions which are exactly opposed to the operator described by Bigelow. Mossop tries to use the notion of reported speech in order to get rid of translational equivalence. And yet Bigelow shows that the same notion can adequately describe the way equivalence works.

ened”—one or both first persons could be attributed to the reporter—, the properly translational operator of (2) successfully removes this ambiguity. Second, the same ambiguity could partly be resolved by explicit third-person substantivizations such as “The situation is frightening”, thus indicating that the translational operator is associated with the third person not only in its verbal form but also in its specific discursive function. The transition from (1) to (2), from subjectivity to things, represents a move from unsuccessful to successful translation. This principle is moreover coherent with the reasons why translation studies should accord priority to objects rather than subjects.

Why translators seek refuge in the third person:

A student attempting consecutive translation had some difficulty locating appropriate pronouns. The speaker was making repeated references to “notre Centre”—in fact the Centre Pompidou in Paris of which she was one of the directors—; the translator consecutively grasped this as “our Centre” (adding “I am speaking for her”) and “her Centre” (adding “the Centre where she works”), before settling on “the Pompidou Centre” and then “the Centre” (without addition). The problem of first-person pronouns was happily resolved by retreat to the neutral space of an unattributed third-person term, a name. The TT “Pompidou Centre” belongs neither to the ST speaker, nor to the translator, nor indeed to Georges Pompidou.

What is the essential difference between (1) “Ludwig said” and (2) “Ludwig’s words translate as”? It is not just a difference between a person and the words said by that person. In referring to Ludwig’s action in the past tense, (1) positions a first person (non-Ludwig) in the present; it positions its I-here-now in relation to the reported speech. By contrast, (2) uses an eternal and subjectless present (“translates as”) to project its action as necessary and valid at all times and places, in the absence of the first person and perhaps even of all persons. Its I-here-now has no relation to the reported speech. The essential difference between the two operators is thus that (1) positions an I-here-now for a semiotic reporter-translator to stand on, whereas (2) completely eliminates the possibility of situating the translator. This is as it should be, since if the translating subject could manifest itself in relation to a discursive I-here-now, the utterance “I am translating” could be true. Since I believe the utterance to be necessarily false, I accept the operator “translates as” as the discursive form of the way ideal equivalence functions in reception.

Second persons can be anonymous

If (1) positions a first person and (2) does not, it is to be expected that this difference will have consequences for the position and role of a macrostructural second person, the implied receiver (cf. Iser 1978). It is perhaps useful to refer here to two of Bigelow’s initial examples:

(3) Ludwig said, “Du musst wissen: ich fürchte mich”.

(4) Ludwig said, “I must tell you, I am frightened”.

Bigelow points out that the operator “said” is purely quotational in (3) but partly productive of new information in (4) since it does not quote Ludwig’s words exactly but “reports them in a fashion closely resembling that of indirect speech”. The move from (3) to (4) is a further step towards successful translation. But why should this transformation have been introduced? We could suppose that Ludwig wished to address a friend who did not know German (several hundred other situations would be equally plausible). Before the translation is carried out, the friend cannot occupy the position of the implied receiver. The purpose of the translation is to enable him to do so. In this sense, every act of translation must be for an implied receiver—a discursive second person—in some way excluded from the non-translational text.

I should stress the major distinction being made here between the macrostructural level of discourse and the level of linguistic form. The above move from “Du musst wissen” (literally “*You* must know”, with the linguistic *second* person) to “I must tell you” (linguistic *first* person) is certainly interesting as an indication of the way equivalence can respect local conventions, but the differences between these two forms have nothing to do with translation itself as a discursive act. It is enough that, on the level of discourse, both these tags call the attention of an implied receiver, quite independently of their linguistic first-person or second-person status.

Now, what is interesting here is that translational status itself functions as a similar tag. The non-translational nature of (3) indicates that its implied receiver understands both English and German. The implied receiver of (4), on the other hand, understands English but not necessarily German. That is, the translational choice of a language or languages always implies the minimal profile of a translational second person. The status of the text as a translation thus functions in a way

similar to a pronominal utterance, but without the linguistic pronoun. Nobody is going to specify that the translated text is for “dear reader, you who understand English but perhaps do not understand German”. There is no need to mention this paratextual “you”. It is enough that the text be presented and initially received as a translation.

But is it not strange that translational discourse, like a bad riddle, should function like a personal pronoun and yet have no personal pronouns of its own? Why is this so? On the one hand because, once the text has been adequately adapted to a new second person, any naming of that person is entirely superfluous: the second-person position has been integrated into the translational status itself. But it is surely also because, if a specifically translational second person is named, it must be distinguished from the specifically *non-translational* second person of an *untranslated* text. Such a distinction cannot be manifested because mention of a new second person would necessarily activate the *distance* from a previous second person, bringing to the surface the problematic realities of transfer and the discursive intervention of a first-person translator who is supposed to have no voice. For this reason, translation gives the profile of a second person but negates the deictics associated with linguistic pronominal forms. The choice of a certain language or code alone implies a certain directionality and opens space for a certain kind of receiver, but must do so in silence.

More elegantly, one could say that the utterance “I am translating” is no truer than is its extended form “You are reading the translation I am now doing”. The translational second person must be as anonymous as the translator.

This analysis should further explain why translational discourse is happier referring to words rather than to subjectivity, to neutral objects rather than to positioned first or second persons. If the translator’s position is to be without linguistic manifestation, so must the first and second persons of properly translational discourse.

It might be objected that our analysis has unfairly extrapolated from peculiarly oral cases like “I am frightened”, where the ambiguities are perhaps due not to the nature of translation in general but to the specific situation of consecutive work, since the translator’s physical presence induces a special risk of misattribution. It might be argued that the proper situation for translators is, after all, to be invisible; unlike children, they should be heard but not seen. Yet there are many cases where purely written translation requires the same suppression of first-person and second-person positions. In EEC reports on the Spanish economy, for instance, terms like “nuestro país” (*our* country) or “nuestra economía” (*our* economy) are usually rendered as “Spain” or “the Spanish economy”, restricting first-person pronouns to

expressions of personal opinion where it is clear that the "we" is exclusive and not inclusive. Is this an isolated stylistic norm?²⁹ In noting that the Jerusalem Bible is a Christianization of the Hebrew text, Meschonnic observes that the Tetragrammaton formulae "Yahve *my* Lord" and "Yahve *your* Lord" are translationally transformed into "*the* Lord" (1973, 419). The divinity that belonged to a people has become a Christian God available to all, just as the economy that once belonged to Spaniards is now exposed to the neutral nouns of EEC policymakers. According to Meschonnic, "the religion of the Son has always wanted to kill the Father". But surely there is a spirit common to them both, middle ground for negotiation through translation?

Third persons allow translators to talk

The discursive form or operator "translates as" is clearly as much a fiction as is the translational equivalence it proposes. Words do not translate themselves; they are translated by humans in society. And since humans in society are historical, words are translated differently according to different times, places and situations. In suppressing the I-here-now of its first and second persons, the translational operator attains a neutrality manifestly devoid of concrete correlative. Indeed, a stubborn realist might doubt that "translates as" is the form of equivalence in reception. Surely what we normally see in paratexts is more like the following:

(5) WORDS BY LUDWIG
Translated by Bigelow

²⁹ Written norms from Christiane Nord:

"Translational conventions are culture-specific. If you say that "stylistic norms require that terms like 'nuestro país'... be rendered as 'Spain', I think you are referring to an English stylistic norm (or rather, as I would say, translational convention – is it really the only accepted possibility of translation?). I remember having been told the same old thing when I was a student: "en nuestro país" should be rendered as "in Spanien". (The "should" indeed points to a norm.)

"But today, I think this is exactly where functionalist theory comes in. If you want to convey to the target reader the conventional style of the ST, you would render the phrase as 'in Spanien' or 'in Spain', but if you want to produce an intentional reference to an emotional relationship between the sender and his country, you might say (at least in German) 'hier bei uns in Spanien' (not 'in unserem Land', because here the first person indeed may be interpreted as inclusive rather than exclusive, and not 'in diesem unserem Land' because this is a phrase permanently used by Chancellor Kohl...)" (Letter, November 1990)

Okay. My simple point is that even the most generous acceptance of alternative conventions must turn to the third-person specification ("in Spanien") in order to remove the ambiguity of the translational I-here-now ("hier bei uns"). As for whether or not translation conventions are culture-specific, my simple answer is that, if they are, they shouldn't be (the point is taken up in chapter 7).

Is this title-form any better as a translational operator? Its status is no doubt just as peculiar, but it is more explicitly a paratext, a threshold situating a translated text. It is composed of three names—Title, Author and Translator—and the connector “by”, which is not the same in its two appearances: “BY LUDWIG” is defining; “by Bigelow” might be relative (preceded by a comma) but is possibly also defining (not necessarily preceded by a comma). That is, the text thus introduced can be approached as the classic WORDS in its eternal form, such that the work of the translator is merely “relative” value added, without consequence for the receiver who begins from an initial “Let’s see what Ludwig has to say”. Or the text can be approached as Bigelow’s particular version of a known original, this second “by” then being defining and the particular receiver asking something like “Let’s see how Bigelow translates (as opposed to some other actual or possible translator)”. On the level of the title-form, there will always be doubt as to the relative or defining nature of the translator’s presence. That is why the properly translational operator, which continues to be operative within the text itself, should not be confused with the common form of translational paratexts. Reading a title page and reading a translation are fundamentally different activities.³⁰

As the physical receiver enters the text and ideally conforms to the profile of the implied receiver, the named persons—author and translator—are immediately transformed into either a first person—in the case of certain modes of authorship—or absent third persons. The ambiguity of the translator’s relative or defining presence disappears. If the “relative” reception strategy has been selected and the translator is a wholly unwanted presence merely disturbing access to the eternal WORDS, the operator “translates as” becomes a wholly necessary fiction enabling the reader to forget the uncertainty of the paratext, inducing the classical “willing suspension of disbelief” typical of all fiction. And if, alternatively, the reader has selected the “defining” option and is interested in seeing how Bigelow translates, then the third-person status of the operator serves at least to remove linguistic doubts about personal pronouns: in accordance with ideal equivalence, such a reader is free to look for Bigelow’s voice behind every linguistic element *except* the persons “I” and “you” in the text (we shall test this principle immedi-

³⁰ Mossop on the way translations are read:

“The entirely appropriate goal of writing a translation which ‘sounds like English’ should not be confused with an attempt to actually fool [the reader] into believing that he or she is reading an original. Translations should in my view always be clearly identified as such, with the translator’s name where appropriate...” (1983, 257)

But translation is based precisely on ways of catering to readers who find it more efficient to be fooled, and this has nothing to do with the ethics of paratexts. As Mossop himself realizes in a later paper, “...even if these overt markings are noticed, their presence tends to disappear from consciousness as the reader becomes absorbed in the text.” (1987, 4)

ately below). In both cases, the third person is the discursive mode best suited to the reception of the translated text.

The operator “translates as” thus makes third persons out of the subjectivities involved in translation. And as Benveniste (1966) has argued—after Arabic grammarians—, the third person is the one who is absent; it is a non-person, a thing and not a subjectivity.

Does anyone speak Redford’s language?

The above analysis has strongly associated ideal equivalence with suppression of the translator’s first person and with various retreats to the neutral space of third-person terms. But can the translator’s presence also be hidden *behind* the *first* person?

In film dubbing from English into Spanish, code-referring utterances like “Do you speak English?” are commonly rendered as “¿Hablas mi idioma?” (“Do you speak my language?”). Here the problem of self-reference in translation is solved by avoiding the third-person name (“English”/“inglés”) and retreating to the neutral if highly ambiguous space of a first-person pronoun. No one can really say if the “I” of the resulting “my language” speaks Spanish, English or, in a vaguely utopian projection, all languages at once. Reference to the translator’s situation would appear to have been avoided by the construction of a very peculiar first-person pronoun. Does this then contradict the general tendency for translators to seek refuge in third-person terms?

Let us approach through a slightly simpler example. In the film *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, two bank-robbing heroes, played by Redford and Newman, move to Bolivia where they are faced with the problem of having to learn enough Spanish to exercise their profession, robbing banks. But in the Spanish version of the film they already speak very good Spanish. Why should they now have to learn this same language? Perhaps the translators could have made them learn English, but this part of the film is very definitely set in a visual Bolivia. So the Spanish adapters hijacked the storyline for two or three sequences: Redford and Newman now decide to learn *French* in the hope that they will not be recognized as Americans. When they enter a Bolivian bank, the rudimentary Spanish of Y is replaced by rudimentary French in TT. The neutral space of the third term “French” conceals their identity, not from the bank officials—who take about two seconds to recognize them as Americans—, but from the viewer of the dubbed film, who is

supposedly spared an upsetting reference to the fact of translation and thus the presence of a translator.

Use of the apparently neutral translational world “French” thus conceals two conflicting first persons: the “I” who is the English-speaking bank robber and the potential “I” who is the dabber into Spanish. The solution “French” thereby avoids locating the specifically translational second person who would otherwise be identified as a Spanish-speaker unaddressed by the original film.

Why might such a reference have been upsetting? After all, translated versions of *Pygmalion* and *My Fair Lady* make prolonged and repeated references to the English language, setting up the acceptable—since accepted—convention that the TT language is to be treated and named as if it were really English. The fictional “as if” of this contradictory self-reference can assume conventional status when structurally prolonged, when it becomes part of a fictional world where two “I”s can become one. The *Butch Cassidy* example, however, concerns a language with only transitory status in its fictional context, without sufficient narrative space to set up conventions of its own. The difficulty has more to do with a moment of *code-switching* than with actual content. It concerns not a language, but a *frontier* between languages.

Until now we have assumed that the operator “translates as” has as its correlative the homogeneous content “words”, ascribed to one sole author and thus implicitly to one sole language. But this is a dangerous assumption. Derrida (1987) has correctly criticized translation theory for too readily assuming texts to be monolingual, but one needs no cabbalism to see the point: Maurice Blanchot some time ago pointed out the translational status of Hemingway’s characters who, by speaking Spanish in English—inserting the occasional Spanish term and adopting Spanish syntax—, create a “shadow of distance” that can then be translated as such (1949, 186). Does translation only deal with words in one language? I suggest that the internal distance described by Blanchot and picked up by Derrida could be applied to our present example as follows:

- (6) Redford’s code-switching translates as code-switching from Spanish into French.

Interpreted in this way, the solution “French” is really no more astounding than the fact that the English “It’s Greek to me” translates as “Das kommt mir Spanisch vor” (“It’s Spanish to Germans”). The linguistic content of Redford’s first person is not in any one language, nor in all languages. It is an asymmetric interlingual frontier.

If we now go back to the original example “Do you speak my language?”, it is clear that the content of the utterance is not whatever language the first person speaks, but whether or not the situation calls for code-switching. Indeed, since the question “Do you speak English?” can be rewritten as “Is this a situation requiring code-switching?”, the transition from Y to TT does not necessarily throw up any problematic first person at all: there is no translational schizophrenia, only cultural disjunction.

Once again, the translational operator overrides problematic first and second persons in order to set up a world of third-person terms.

Third persons can conflict

In the Spanish version of the BBC series *Fawlty Towers*, the waiter Manuel is not from Barcelona—as he is in the English version—but from Italy. The translators obviously strove to avoid an embarrassing reference to certain English preconceptions about Spanish culture (although they were apparently unconcerned about a negative image of Italian culture). Problems of self-reference in translation do not just concern languages but entire cultural codes, the way different cultures see each other and themselves. Faced with this kind of problem, translational discourse tends to prefer neutral worlds where there are no first or second persons, and no marked terms that might belong to such persons. But do mere names always allow such neutrality?

Quine’s treatment of potential synonyms borrows from Schrödinger the example of a mountain-climber who has learned to apply the name “Chomolungma” to a peak seen from Nepal and “Everest” to a peak seen from Tibet (1960, 49; corrected in the French translation, 1977, 87). The mountain-climber believes these names refer to different peaks until the day his explorations reveal that they are in fact one and the same. This equation presumably solves all problems of reference. Moreover, since the two names continue to exist, “Everest” translates as “Chomolungma” in the south, “Chomolungma” translates as “Everest” in the north, and no strictly semantic problems should be expected to ensue. However, beyond the Himalayas, translators have to choose between the peak as named from the north and the same peak as named from the south. The name itself cannot be neutral. The choice of “Everest” implies that the Tibetans were authors and the Nepalese bad translators, whereas “Chomolungma” places the authors in the south and the bad translators in the north. As I too often discover when deciding the English names of Catalan/Spanish towns—are there still German names for towns in the

west of Poland?—, the use of certain third-person terms necessarily positions the author of the term, and therefore its translator.

I have so far claimed that the anonymity of the translator is generally protected by the third-person nature of translational discourse. But here, in cases of conflict between third-person terms, it must be admitted that ideal anonymity can be successfully challenged. This form of disclosure is moreover of some importance for the ethics of translation, since it is in the choice between third-person entities, in the selection of one external term or another, that translators can hope to exert influence on the way cultures perceive each other.

This poses obvious problems for the workings of ideal equivalence.

A curious third person left in Yugoslavia:

“The accused driver called Zof, *which was evidently short for his funny surname understandable in this part of the world*, walked barefoot on Mostar cobbles bearing visible traces of torture.” (Dragoslav Janjic, *The Moving Target / Pokretna Meta*, 1989, 20, italics mine).

Ideal equivalence should be challenged by the question, “Who says ‘this part of the world’?”

Ideal equivalence can be challenged

Should we be surprised that, even within translation, there are limits to ideal equivalence? Not really. After all, the kind of challenged anonymity found in third-person conflicts has long been reflected in the way certain theories describe the way a translation can signify its antecedents. When Levy (1969) distinguishes between “illusionary” and “anti-illusionary” translation, or House (1977) develops the parallel notions of “covert” and “overt” translation, the object of theorization is in fact the tension between equivalence as an ideal—ideally “illusionary” and “covert” to the extent that it hides real work—and certain ways in which actual translational work can be manifested without necessarily entering the realm of non-translation. The very existence of such categories indicates that the anonymity of the translating translator is not always complete. This suggests that the translational operator is not the only formal determinant on legitimately translated texts. There must be other factors, other ways in which translational subjectivity can slip through the grasp of equivalence and yet remain translational.

Rather than simply assume the validity of Levy’s or House’s categories, I find it more interesting to ask how it is possible that some translations can become “anti-illusionary” or “overt” without losing their status as translations. What aspects of transfer and translation can become significant without necessarily destroying the qualities of ideal equivalence?

But before answering this question, let me briefly summarize the discursive significance of equivalence and its relation to translational anonymity.

* *
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Over the last few pages I have described equivalence as a fact of reception, as a mode of the exchange relation TT:Y proposed by the operator “translates as”. As such, its material location is between TT and the receiver willing to adopt a certain suspension of disbelief. Equivalence exists for a receiver who is willing to believe that, to all intents and purposes, TT is ST and this voice saying “I” is the voice that said the same “I” in another place and time, in another culture, even though it is otherwise clear that the text concerned is really the work of a translator and that ST is really only available in its transferred form Y. Thanks to the operator “translates as”, innumerable flesh-and-blood receivers have momentarily forgotten about their real place in the world; they have willingly occupied the similarly anonymous position of the implied receiver of translated texts; they have accepted TT as the ideal equivalent of its antecedents.

But we have also seen that the only way to maintain such illusions is to hide all the specific mediations involved—the particular translator, the particular receiver, the times and places marked by the transfer from ST to Y—, and to do so through the falsely universal operator “translates as”. In this way, equivalence should suppress not only the translator but also the material fact of transfer across distance.

Let us now go back to the general formula for the way translation represents distance:

$$\frac{TT : Y}{Y - ST}$$

For ideal equivalence to function, the value of TT:Y should be 1 and the value Y–ST should be rigorously non-significant. That is, the translated text should represent no distance and the implied receiver should ideally be unconcerned by the actual distance covered by the act of transfer. Any attempt to attribute other values above or below the line will break this fiction of ideal equivalence.

As a kind of general signpost to the path we have followed and the destinations awaiting us, let me now draw up an initial list of circumstances under which ideal equivalence is likely to be challenged:

- When the translator manifests a position through third-person choices (as we have seen above)
- When the quantitative ratio TT:Y deviates significantly from the value 1 (analyzed in chapter 4, on quantity)
- When the distance Y–ST becomes significant for the receiver as a positive value or as zero (as suggested above and developed in chapters 5 and 6, on belonging and transfer).
- When TT transgresses a norm or becomes an object of translational analysis or theorization (dealt with in chapter 7, on historical ethics, and chapter 8, on theory).

Despite the apparent restrictiveness of the operator “translates as”, these four possible circumstances—there may be more—open up a spectrum of relative equivalences and contradictory equivalences, a range of phenomena which surround ideal equivalence and yet do not make the utterance “I am translating” true.

QUANTITY SPEAKS

Quantities replace the translator

MATERIAL economies know no such thing as non-quantity: all commodities, including all texts, are of certain sizes and at relative distances from each other. In discourse, however, as in monetary systems, there exists a basic point of reference that is rigorously non-quantitative and indifferent to the relative distance of all other terms. This point, the position we have called the I-here-now, is the non-dimensional zero from which discursive distances are measured (cf. Bühler 1934, 102 ff).

To the extent that all human languages would appear to have elements that function as personal pronouns (Benveniste 1966, 261), all speakers can identify with this singular point of departure. Equivalence-producing subjectivity, however, which in principle has no personal pronoun and thus perhaps no human tongue, is unable to express the non-quantitative point from which its utterances depart; it has no I-here-now. However, as we have seen, translational subjectivity can still be expressed through the third-person quantities of the relation TT:Y. That is, translating translators can express their subjectivity from the space between two stretches of text, between two quantities.

The translator's peculiar position between quantities may be approached through T. S. Eliot's classical description of poetic creation:

“The poet has something germinating within him for which he must find the words; but he cannot know the words he wants until he has found the words; he cannot identify this embryo until it has been transformed into the right words in the right order. When you have found the words, the ‘thing’ for which the words had to be found has disappeared, replaced by a poem.” (1953, 17)

This searching for the right words in the right order is no doubt an important part of translating. Yet even when the translator might believe the right words to have been found, the “thing” these words are meant to replace remains sitting there, as a material Y text which, at least for the translator who wants to remain a translator, simply should not disappear. Of course, if it did disappear, the translator could become an author and speak from a new I-here-now, but he or she could no longer regard the result as a translation.

The obstinate presence of the Y text thus makes it difficult to maintain any strong notion of equivalence while translating. This is one of the reasons why individual translators tend not to believe too enthusiastically in equivalence and may indeed privately shun it as an unnecessary falsehood. The basis of comparison is all too available; the translator knows how many alternative TTs have been suppressed or could prove superior in the future. In sum, translators as individuals might well be in a position to claim that their actual activity has nothing to do with equivalence at all. But is this position of importance to anyone except individual translators?

To the extent that translated texts are destined to move away from the individual translator and towards a receiver for whom that translator is in principle anonymous, the collective interest of the translating profession should have more weight than transitory doubts. It is thus fair to regard ideal equivalence as a guiding principle of translation in general, regardless of private dissent. And since translations are ultimately condemned to create some kind of equivalence in the space of reception, the attainment of equivalence may adequately describe the outward aim of the professional translating subjectivity itself, independently of whether or not physically individual translators actually accept that such equivalence has been attained. Storytellers need not believe in their fictions in order to establish fictionality.

This perhaps pedantic distinction between general and individual perspectives helps us to locate some of the surprising ways in which equivalence is related to questions of textual quantity. Unlike the receiver of TT, the translating subject does *not* perceive equivalence as an immediate relation between two quantities. Equivalence-while-translating, if there is such a thing, must instead be a kind of triangulation between these quantities and a suppressed I-here-now, a point of non-quantity. For the translator, the basic but unexpressed operation is not “Y translates as TT”, but “I am translating Y as TT”. However, since this truth cannot be expressed as an operator or verb function within TT, the only way it can be recuperated is through the comparison of quantities. Relations between quantities thus replace and represent the professionally anonymous translator.

Quantity is of practical and theoretical importance

The importance of quantity is often unappreciated or even entirely ignored in translation theory. Structuralists and their manifold heirs effectively relegated questions of substance to a kind of retrograde positivism, as if the nineteenth century had said all there was to say about material quantities. But despite the numerous theories that continue to be based on the myth of relations without support, many aspects of translational practice happily still depend on how much text is to be produced and how its proportions are to be distributed in the space and time of reception.

Quantity in translation concerns the distribution of textual rhythms, not only in regular verse but also the rhythms that beat most deeply within cultural identity, within the most poetic and sacred dimensions of belonging (Meschonnic 1986). Quantity is also the problematic underlying the more disturbing rhythm of superprinters in the National Security Agency, churning out more than 22,000 lines of recorded and processed conversation per minute, far more than can be humanly translated (Laurent 1986). Or the sexual rhythms mimicked in erotic language, exhausting synonyms and metaphors in virtuoso efforts to last the distance and perhaps to write future generations. Quantity is moreover the editorial problem of fitting texts into pages, flowing around brochure pictures, to the exact bottom of this or that column. It is the key to successful interpreting, which is also editorial in that texts must be fitted into limited temporal space. Or again, it is the main criterion in film dubbing and sub-titling, where linguistic values should ideally correspond to the shape and duration of moving mouths or the available space on the screen. In all these areas—the poetic, the sacred, the sociological, the erotic, the commercial, the printed, the spoken and the photographed... what is left?—, criteria of textual quantity can have priority over questions of strictly qualitative representation.

This does not mean that one should believe everything that quantities have to say. When the Y text “Amérique du Sud” is dubbed as TT “Mexico” because the lip movements are similar (Nida 1964, 178), the kind of quantitative equivalence thus established blatantly misrepresents geographical difference. But theorists of ideal equivalence have been relatively unconcerned by such problems, probably because the very function of ideal equivalence is to hide whatever it is that quantity might have to say beyond the equation $TT:Y=1$.

Ideal translational equivalence does not deny the existence of two quantities—indeed, it depends on their presumed existence—, but it does suggest that, since Y and TT should have the same inherent qualities, there should be no difference between their dimensions. Translating is thus perhaps the only kind of work with respect to which the quantitative difference between the input Y and the output TT is mostly believed to be non-significant. And yet there usually is a difference.

If no account is taken of these differences between quantities, translatability becomes an abstractly facile concern. When Katz, for instance, attempts to base translatability on the naturalist semantic hypothesis that “each proposition can be expressed by some sentence in any natural language” (principle of effability), he must first declare that length is not a semantic consideration (1978, 205). As difficult as translating may be, Katz assures us that it can always be done, given world enough and time. But world and time are fairly important pragmatic considerations. As Keenen (1978) argues in his reply to Katz, a sentence of a hundred or so words might well be a very precise semantic translation of a five-word proposition, but it will by no means be universally accepted as a worthwhile translation. Effective translation is not necessarily restricted to the absolute equivalence relation $TT:Y=1$, but it must depend on some kind of reasonable relationship between the quantities of TT and Y.

Equivalence is absolute, relative, contradictory or not at all

In what follows, I propose to take the simplest quantitative relations ($=$, \neq , \approx , $>$, $<$) and see how far they can reveal categories of ideal and less-than-ideal equivalence, thus hopefully making translations talk about what it is to be a translation. The working hypothesis is that, thanks to the fundamental nature of the operations and the mostly overlooked importance of quantity, translation itself will manifest an internal organization that has escaped approaches based on more complex or less pertinent terms.

Certain initial distinctions can be based on the material presence or absence of Y and TT texts in the space of reception. Four cases are to be considered here: transliteration (Y without a visibly distinct TT), double presentation (Y with TT), single presentation (TT without Y) and multiple presentation ($TT_1, TT_2 \dots TT_n$, with or without Y). These are then four quite different reception situations which can be defined in terms of the fundamental duality of presence and absence, independently of any awareness of transfer or translational subjectivity.

Equivalence would seem to behave quite differently in each of these situations, basically because the quantities involved replace the translator in different ways:

- a) *Transliteration*: Obviously—perhaps too obviously—, if Y is presented without any visibly distinct translational covering, the translator is conspicuous by a certain refusal to work and there is no quantitative difference between Y as a transferred text and TT as a translated text. The result is *absolute equivalence* ($TT=Y$, thus $TT:Y=1$).
- b) *Double presentation*: If TT is presented alongside the transferred text Y and the two are visibly non-identical, then the space in which the translator has worked is at least overt in the sense that it is there for all to see and minor differences cannot be hidden. The optimal general relation is in this case what might be termed overt or *strong relative equivalence* ($TT:Y\approx 1$).
- c) *Single presentation*: When TT is presented in the absence of Y, fewer questions are likely to be asked, the illusory possibilities of equivalence are much greater and receptive awareness of a translating subjectivity is more likely to be eclipsed. This is the ideal situation for an amorphous form of *weak relative equivalence*, since it is only from the position of reception that quantity TT can be projected onto a virtual Y (thus, for the translational second person or implied receiver, $TT:Y\approx 1$).
- d) *Multiple presentation*: An important modification of the above modes is when a TT_1 exists in the presence of $TT_2\dots TT_n$. That is, there are at least two different translations of the same text.³¹ In such cases it is usually the more recent TT which is considered the better or more equivalent version (principle of translational progress), although values of pseudo-originality might cause this relation to be reversed. Either way, the situation involves *contradictory equivalence* in reception (for the translational second person or implied receiver, $TT_1:Y\approx 1$ and $TT_2:Y\approx 1$; but $TT_1\neq TT_2$).

³¹. In principle, the presence or absence of the Y text in the space of reception should not fundamentally alter the nature of contradictory equivalence, since this mode of reception makes it possible to read the Y text as if it were a TT.

There would appear to be little more to say on the level of simple presence or absence. But are the actual quantitative differences between Y and TT then without any significant thresholds?

A significant threshold is breached in court:

“In a New Jersey homicide trial, the prosecutor asks whether the testimony of a witness is lengthier than the translation. ‘Yes,’ responds the Polish interpreter, ‘but everything else was not important.’” (Alain Sanders, “*Libertad and Justicia for All: A shortage of interpreters is leaving the courts speechless*”, *Time* 29 May, 1989).

Even when Y is entirely opaque for the actual TT receiver, its physical appearance can continue to support equivalence on the minimal condition that the quantities of the two texts are more or less the same ($TT:Y \approx 1$). Although the limits of this “more or less” are necessarily approximate, they remain of practical importance. Newmark (1981, 130) refers to a Danish pedagogue who, perhaps like perplexed court prosecutors, assumes that a translation is likely to be good as long as it has about the same length as the original. That is, if TT is significantly shorter or longer than Y, suspicion is aroused, the translation will probably be checked and the translator’s name might even be noted. Translational subjectivity will thus become manifest, for better or for worse.

The “more or less” of relative equivalence is thus not necessarily blind. Most editors are quite aware that English translations are normally shorter than their German originals, since there are several principles of (assumed or real) compensation written into the structural features of the tongues themselves (German illocutionary particles are compensated for by more expressive word order in English; German compounds are unworried by length, whereas English is relatively unworried about the creation of neologisms to abbreviate compounds). For the purposes of the pedagogue or editor who has to accept or check translations, such principles operate as trivial normalizing conditions, in themselves of no significance for the value of the work.

However, beyond these normalizing conditions, are there situations where TT can legitimately be considerably shorter than Y (principle of authorized reduction)? Can other TTs be significantly longer than Y (principle of authorized expansion) and still remain translational? If so, how might such thresholds be determined?

To the extent that these limits are operative beyond the virtually obligatory level of linguistic compensation, they must be assumed to be determined by certain

choices—including the choice to transliterate—made by translators under certain intercultural conditions.

The challenge such choices present for ideal equivalence can be approached in terms of several types of thresholds: the points at which absolute equivalence ($TT:Y=1$) could give way to relative equivalence ($TT:Y\approx 1$), and the points where relative equivalence is itself broken by outright reduction (deletion) or unacceptable expansion (addition).

I propose to investigate these thresholds on the basis of the four fundamental reception situations outlined above.

A. *Transliteration (absolute equivalence)*

The proper name is sometimes improper

The strategy of transliteration—transfer without visible translation—potentially leads to the exact quantitative relation $TT=Y$ and thus to strict or absolute equivalence $TT:Y=1$. That is, the transliterated or transcribed text is exactly as long as the transferred text. But is it still possible to talk about equivalence in such cases? Can Y really be read as a TT ($TT:Y=1$), or is TT in such cases no more than a zero-value without pertinence for translation ($TT:Y=0$)? Indeed, given that the relationship is often perceived as one of identity, is it possible to talk about values or a properly translational work process at all?

As can be gleaned from comments by Borges³² and Derrida³³, most cases of transliteration are at base problems of proper names or lead to textual results that can be analyzed as if they were proper names. Why, for instance, should a “shekel” be left as such in the Bible or a “gentleman” be “in English in the text”? Although

³² Absolute equivalence considered through a reading of Borges' story “Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote” (1939): The classic test case of non-translation is Pierre Menard, the fictional twentieth-century figure who set out to translate Don Quijote, studied all the details of Cervantes' life, began to eat and speak like Cervantes, and finally translated the novel into its original seventeenth-century Spanish. The result of the translation was thus exact quantitative equivalence. But was the process really translation or just transliteration? Two points need to be made:

First, Menard engaged in quite massive translational work to achieve quantitative exactitude—he learned to write like Cervantes—, and it is precisely because there is a narrative frame recounting this work that he can be regarded as a translator. The twentieth-century text can thus be regarded as a TT .

Second, the point of maximum ideological conflict is in Borges' title “Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote”. Since a translator cannot be an author, Menard cannot be Cervantes, and, hang it all, there is surely only one Quijote. Or can there be more than one?

There can be no doubt that the ST produced by Cervantes had quite a different contextual value and function to the Y -text received by Menard: Cervantes' Quijote had an oppositional value in relation to Medieval romance, whereas Menard's point of departure already had an oppositional value in the context of twentieth-century ideas about authorship. The framing of the story thus attributes a significant value to the material distance $Y-ST$, even though this value is not represented in $TT:Y$, which in this case has the value 1.

However, the real expression of translational value is to be found in the paratext. The difference which breaks identity is between the proper names “Cervantes” and “Menard”, a difference in turn supported by both an ideological distinction between author and translator, and the spatio-temporal distance between two social contexts. In the prose of the world, the problem of absolute textual equivalence merely hides a problem of the proper name.

³³ Absolute equivalence may also accumulate authority. For example, where Mallarmé is cited in French in the middle of Benjamin's essay “Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers”. Derrida has glossed the transliteration in the following way: “He [Benjamin] allows it to shine like the medal of a proper name [comme la médaille d'un nom propre]” (1985, 213). But more than a simple result of non-translation, this extended proper name functions as a kind of seal of approval, an imprimatur falsely gained from a master long dead. The proper name is present to the extent that the French text may be considered relatively opaque to the German reader, such that its function is potentially reduced to “agreement from Mallarmé”. In this way, the authority of the French poet is transferred to the German writer, presumably able to read and understand, but arrogantly unwilling to translate. The subject of the sentence following the citation is “was in diesen Worten Mallarmé gedenkt” (1923, 58)—“what Mallarmé had in mind with these words”—, implying that the shining untranslated medal is not only an award for hard aesthetic service, but also, for readers excluded from the epiphany, a dark cloak beneath which Benjamin could enter an absent head and manipulate almost any interpretation he liked.

the referents concerned can no doubt adequately be described in visibly translated discourse, the foreignness of the foreign term is recognized as distinguishing the distanced concept, like a proper name distinguishes the relative independence of a new-born baby.³⁴ Yet this clearly does not imply that no proper names can or should be transformed. Transliteration may determine absolute equivalence, but it is not automatically ideal translation. Let us indulge in a few examples to demonstrate the point.

Ezra Pound was very aware that “there is no surety in shifting personal names from one idiom to another”, basically because names are already translations of very particular perspectives:

“Sannazaro, author of *De Partu Virginis*, and also of the epigram ending *hanc et sugere*, translated himself as Sanctus Nazarenus; I am myself known as Signore Sterlina to James Joyce’s children, while the phonetic translation of my name into the Japanese tongue is so indecorous that I am seriously advised not to use it, lest it do me harm in Nippon. (Rendered back *ad verbum* into our maternal speech it gives for its meaning, ‘This picture of a phallus costs ten yen.’)” (1918, reprinted 1954, 259)

Some proposed cases of absolute equivalence are in fact unwitting transformations. The eighteenth-century island “Otaheite”, for instance, meant “This is Tahiti”. According to Garcilaso Inca de la Vega—itself a name to be considered—, “Peru” comes from “Pelú”, the name of the first Indian to be interrogated by Spanish conquistadores, who mistook the question “What is the name of this land?” for “What is your name?”. In the case of Tahiti, a certain authorship has since been restored to the native islanders. In the case of Peru, the translation has perhaps become an improper proper name. In both cases the supposedly absolute equivalents were in fact authoritative impositions, or rather, impositions of mistaken authority on the part of translators.

Other uncovered names require openly partisan selection akin to questions of diplomatic recognition: “Taiwan” or “China”, “Cambodia” or “Kampuchea”, “South Africa” or “Azania” (cf. Newmark 1981, 72; 1988, 216). The same holds for questions of disputed discovery (“Desnos’s disease” = “maladie de Grancher”,

³⁴ Non-English English terms “in English in the text”:

The phenomenon $ST \neq Y$ has its familiarly frustrating aspects for English speakers, notably in the foreign use of English terms as improper proper names. I am told that in contemporary Polish a “cocktail” is a milkshake, a “banquet” is a reception and in tennis a “handicap” is an advantage; when I translate from Spanish, “crack” usually becomes “economic recession (crash)”, “play-back” means singers miming their songs on television; in French a simple test of commutation suggests that “C’est too much” does not mean the same as “It’s too much”, although the whole lot may be trop.

noted in Newmark 1988, 199). In the case of names of people, distance and partiality can be regulated by the simple selection of family or given names, the bestowal or deletion of titles, or strategies of morphological adaptation. The Biblical “John” (the Baptist) is necessarily brought closer by the ecclesiastically authorized series “Jean”, “Juan”, “Joan”, “Johann”, etc., thus allowing an individual author like Oscar Wilde (in his play *Salomé*) to create exotic distance by calling him “Iokanaan”, destined to be read as a back-translation of the translated series. Thomas More translated himself as “Morus” and may be further translated as a knight or a saint, but he was none of these for the first Spanish translation of *Utopia*, where he appeared as “tomás moro”, a lower-case Moor. One cannot avoid choosing who has the right to produce the name, and the name of the father does not always have priority.

The quantitative identity associated with transliterated names should thus be treated with considerable suspicion. It should not be regarded as an automatic index of untranslatability (the starting point for Mounin 1964), nor as a sign of universal comprehension (for Lotman and Uspenki 1973, proper names are untranslatable because they do not have to be translated). Exact quantitative equality should instead be analyzed a special kind of translation, to be understood in terms of the absolute equivalence established between a transferred text Y and a transliterated text TT. As is revealed by cases of isomorphism like “i vitelli dei romani sono belli”³⁵, which can be read in either Latin or Italian, the combination of transfer and transliteration does indeed concern translation whenever cotexts or contexts are radically changed. Or more specifically, *an apparently untranslated term in an otherwise translated text must be received as a term which has at least been processed translationally*. Absolute equivalence is thus established between a manifest text and a virtual text, both of which look exactly the same and occupy exactly the same position.

Curiously enough, the combination of transfer and transliteration also concerns the location of a translational subjectivity. Each time quantities are exactly equal and in a situation of possible translation, each time Y is presented without visible TT covering, this presentation indicates the location of a potential translator who, although deprived of an I-here-now, has adopted a position by refusing to intervene. Thus, almost paradoxically, absolute equivalence points towards a translational subjectivity.

³⁵ Example from Rossi-Landi (1975, 75). In Latin: “Go, oh Vitellius, at the sound of war of the Roman god”; in Italian: “The calves of the Romans are beautiful”.

Levy (1965, 81) distinguishes transliteration (Mr Ford → Mr Ford) from substitution (Mr Newman → Herr Neumann) and loan translation (Everyman → Jedermann). For our present purposes, the simple existence of such alternative strategies serves to indicate that absolute equivalence—Levy’s transliteration—is the result of a choice and thus a product of properly translational work. It also indicates that the choice is made by someone and thus depends on a more primary distinction between the proper names of author and translator, the two positions from which, as we have seen in the case of Everest-Chomolungma, the name can be selected.

Quantity replaces the translator. But exact quantitative equality—symbolized in the uncovered proper name—indicates the place of the translator with respect to an author, on one side of the mountain or the other

However, the main problem with absolute equivalence is that it is rarely acceptable equivalence. As Aristophanes’ poets discovered with their scales, semantic content also has its specific weight, and in most cases the extreme geographical imbalance between the referents of “Amérique du Sud” and “Mexico” is more important than any phonetic approximation.³⁶ Absolute quantitative equivalence normally has to be sacrificed in favor of some kind of *semantic* isomorphism.

Other kinds of equivalence are necessary.

³⁶ *What students can be told about names:*

Despite theory, the choice between absolute equivalence (transliteration) and relative equivalence (visible translation) is fairly basic and constantly problematic for students of translation. As a teacher, I try not to present solutions, but I do suggest criteria like the following:

a) Think about your readers and whether or not they need or are interested in the exact form of Y. Example: A tourist to Spain does not care what the Ministry of Finance is called, but a prospective businessman will probably need to know that it is “Economía y Hacienda”.

b) If the material distance of ST is important (Y-ST is significant), specify the location of the name. Example: ST “Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores” should usually become TT₁ “the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs”, and never TT₂ “the Foreign Office”.

c) In the case of cognate languages, consider whether or not there is mutual transparency between Y and TT. Example: “Ministerio de Cultura” and “Ministry of Culture” are so mutually transparent that transliteration is often the more elegant and least confusing solution.

d) Recognize reciprocal sovereignty wherever possible. Example: If you want the Chinese to call London by its name, why not call “Peking” “Beijing”? Similarly, since the Federal Republic of Germany renounced its claim to the Polish Länder in 1990, why should the German “Danzig” not become “Gdansk”?

e) In view of the above, do not feel obliged to respect tradition for the sake of tradition. Why should the Spanish “Carlos Marx” not become “Karl”?

f) Unexplained abbreviations or acronyms are a bane. In-text explanations should be given upon the first appearance.

g) Inventions or footnotes are signs of defeat (a principle which might also be applied to theoretical texts like the present one).

B. Double presentation (strong relative equivalence)

Relative equivalence presents asymmetry

Double presentation, the showing of both Y and TT as distinct texts, can be understood as immediate minimal representation of the distance Y–ST.

To the extent that a receiver may or may not be able to understand the transferred but untranslated Y text, there would appear to be two obvious subordinate possibilities for double presentation: Y may be opaque or transparent. Having hurriedly assumed the validity of these possibilities, a theorist like Mossop would then have to find out if and when the Y text was actually read.³⁷ In practice, however, this is a false dichotomy, since the macrostructural second person implied by the mode of presentation is at once able to understand something of Y (if not, there would be no reason for its reproduction) but not all of it (if understanding were total, the only possible reasons for the translation would be pedagogical, and wastefully pedagogical at that). In principle then, double presentation implies a reception situation in which the transferred text is only relatively opaque or relatively transparent.

Why should this mode be particularly well suited to relative equivalence? Quite simply because the fact of double presentation raises significant doubts about the possibility of absolute equivalence. Obviously, if equivalence were certain, there would be no reason for reproducing the transferred text Y; and if it were entirely impossible, there would be no way of producing a translated text TT. Double presentation thus necessarily questions the principle of absolute equivalence as a guarantee of translatability, and does so even before exact quantities are calculated or actual texts are read.

However, if relative equivalence is thus signaled by double presentation, it is not signaled in the same way for both the texts involved. There is a principle of asymmetry by virtue of which the embodiment of value will be unequal, no matter which of the texts is the longer.

³⁷ Mossop on how translations are read (1987, 4):

“Only if one can and does read the original soon after reading an idiomatic translation will one be aware of its being a translation: the narrator of the original will clearly be quite different from the narrator of the translation, no matter how good the translation, because the difference in graphic appearance will make one constantly aware of the cultural difference.”

But surely this double “graphic appearance” is sufficient indication in itself, with or without “narrators”. And why should anyone have to actually read the original in order to know that there is an original? More to the point, why should anybody except a translation critic, teacher or theorist read the original “soon after reading an idiomatic translation”? Mossop's is a theory for theorists.

This basic principle can be expressed as follows: *If two texts are presented as being in a relationship of relative equivalence, the implied receiver will necessarily consider the more opaque text to have been transferred across the distance Y–ST and will see that text as embodying more value than does the more transparent text, assumed to be the TT.*

It should be stressed that this asymmetry is purely a function of the exchange situation at the base of the translational relationship; it does not imply any detailed evaluation. For example, when Benjamin writes

“Auch im Bereich der Übersetzung gilt: εν αδχη ην ο λογος, im Anfang war das Wort.” (1923, 59)

no physical reader is obliged to prefer the uncovered Greek Y [“in the beginning was the Logos/Word”] to the German TT [“in the beginning was the Word”], but the exchange situation itself indicates a preference. After all, if the German were just as good as the Greek, why should the Greek have been transcribed? Logically, the Greek text must be worth more than the German because, in addition to a slight quantitative difference, its presence in a foreign form embodies the considerable labor expended to bring it across centuries and cultures.³⁸

The above principle of asymmetry seems to hold in all cases of approximate quantitative equality. It would moreover appear to be commutative in the sense that it is indifferent to the order of presentation (Y,TT; or TT,Y). However, it should be stressed that this basic principle of presentation always depends on the maintenance of some kind of reasonable relationship between the quantities of Y and TT, such that the receiver can accept that $TT:Y \approx 1$, without undue distractions. Several minor thresholds should be considered here.

What happens in cases where TT is clearly shorter than Y but does not quite break equivalence? Consider, for example, the possible intralingual translation “Orthohydroxybenzoic acid (salicylic acid)”. Does not the longer Y text sound more scientifically exact and thus of greater scientific value? Is it not more opaque and thus in some way superior to the shorter, more vulgar version? But does this

³⁸ Why should Benjamin take the trouble to indicate that, in the beginning, “in the beginning” was in Greek? In the context of his essay, it is surely to indicate that at least part of the Word was and remains elsewhere, in between the Greek and German languages, perhaps in the spirit of Hölderlin's translations from Pindar, certainly beyond the worldliness of Goethe's “Im Anfang war das Tat”. But double presentation is no simple question of an eternally stable symmetric interface: whereas Hölderlin forced Greek syntax into German, making the text at once translational and opaque, Benjamin's transliteration plus translation remains a visual separation and comparison between two distinct items, only one of which is translational. Double presentation thus establishes a relation of relative equivalence.

possible reception mean that the principle of asymmetry is then valid in all cases of significant quantitative discrepancy ($Y > TT$, but $TT:Y \approx 1$)?

There must be some doubt as to whether such a translation actually accords greater value to greater length or is merely employing normalizing conventions to correlate two distanced levels of discourse. Since this latter hypothesis would suggest that the phenomenon depends on the dimensions of the transfer situation involved, we should consider at least a few of the possible variants.

Now, if this hypothetical transfer is over a *short distance* and the receiver is thus close to the values of scientific discourse—for example, in a teaching situation—the potential analytical value of the longer and more opaque term is likely to be appreciated and the principle of asymmetry may indeed hold. But a *mid-distance* interlingual version of the same example—“acide ortho-hydrobenzoïque (salicylic acid)” —has quite a different effect, since it overtly refuses criteria of quantitative equivalence and is able to suggest that the French term is perhaps pompous or unnecessarily long. The visibly shorter TT does not break equivalence, but its effect is potentially ironic.

A further example of translational irony would be sub-titled opera arias, where short TTs like “Don’t go!” typically correspond to a great deal of Y-text singing. In a mid-distance or even long-distance situation, ungenerous minds tend to find the result quite comic, although relative equivalence might yet escape unscathed. It simply depends on how near or far the receiver is from the values of opera.

Thus, although the asymmetrical distribution of value in such cases certainly concerns relative quantities, it also requires a certain codification of the transfer situation.

Since the categories of this codification will be taken up in the next chapter, it should suffice for the moment to present as hypotheses the general principles drawn from the above examples.

Here then are two rather peculiar phenomena which occur within the realm of double presentation. First, *when the quantitative relation is approximately equal such that $TT:Y \approx 1$, the attributed value of Y tends to be greater than that of TT.* However, *when the quantitative relation is $Y > TT$ (but $TT:Y \approx 1$) and the transfer is mid-distance or long-distance, there may be an ironic inversion of this evaluation such that TT is apparently worth more than Y.*

Black irony from a socialist paradise:

Ferri-Pisani’s appropriately obscure text *Antipodes: L’Australie, Paradis Socialiste* (1934) begins with the following sentence:

“Le Commonwealth (ou République) d’Australie date du 1er janvier 1901.”

One supposes that, for the implied French reader, the Y text “Commonwealth” is more opaque and perhaps of more (exotic?) value than the TT “République”, although the underlying “res publica” could be rendered quite adequately as “common wealth” and relative equivalence might remain unchallenged. But this particular equivalence was very relative. In 1975, the fact that Australia called itself a Commonwealth and not a Republic meant that its Governor-General (the representative of Queen Elizabeth II) could dismiss a freely elected government. Some Australians now believe that “République” is worth much more than “Commonwealth”. Note that the distance Y–ST below the line (France 1934—Australia 1975) has significantly altered values above the line; mid-distance transfer has altered the way the translation can be read.

But do the above principles apply when TT is visibly much *longer* than Y? Surely it is here, more than in Y>TT, that the principle of asymmetry would seem to extend beyond the limits of defensible equivalence?

Relative equivalence tends to paraphrase (“La Movida” moves)

The range of possibilities for Y<TT can be demonstrated through the following presentation of the one Y text (“La Movida”) within TTs which vary from a superficial evocation of untranslatability to extended paraphrase:

- (1) “La Movida c’est intraduisible. La Movida, c’est la société espagnole tout entière qui choisit d’avancer.” (Elisabeth Schemla, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, Paris, 5-11 July 1985)
- (2) “[...] the phenomenon known as ‘La Movida’ (‘The Happening’).” (*Newsweek*, European Edition, 5 August 1985)
- (3) “[...] ‘La Movida’, was wörtlich übersetzt ‘Die Bewegung’ heißen würde. ‘Aber mit Vorwärtsgehen hat das nichts zu tun’ sagt selbstkritisch der Maler El Hortelano. ‘Es ist mehr wie ein Schluckauf, der einen auf der Stelle schüttelt’.” (Charlotte Seeling, *Geo*, Hamburg, November 1985)

The transferred text “La Movida” is related to a series of longer possible equivalents: TT₁ “intraduisible” [untranslatable], TT₂ “choix d’avancer” [choice to advance], TT₃ “(The Happening)”, TT₄ “Die Bewegung” [The Movement], TT₅ “ein Schluckauf” [a hiccup], and many more, since the above passages are in fact fragments from three fairly long articles. But what becomes of these strictly translational relations (TT:Y) when, as here, different amounts of text are used to suggest equivalence on one level or another?

The German commentary is explicitly longer than any approximately absolute equivalent, since it proposes and discounts TT₄ “Die Bewegung”. Yet the French

commentary, in declaring Y to be untranslatable and then immediately translating it, merely imitates the German procedure in an implicit way, arriving at similar doubt about the equivalence of TT₂ “choix d’avancer”. Much the same procedure underlies the *Newsweek* version, where the presentation of Y and the bracketing of TT₃ “(The Happening)” could be read as “there is no equivalent for this term, but it means something like...”. In short, the English-language approach involves essentially the same strategy as the German and French rejections of simple attempts at equivalence. The differences between these examples lie not in their procedures as such but in the quantities of interceding text used to convey doubt about ideal equivalence.

What consequences do these mediating quantities have for the implied reader’s perception of “La Movida”? It would seem that the longer TT texts accord Y far more value as an original form than does the immediately substitutive TT₃ “(The Happening)”. The relative quantitative equivalence of the *Newsweek* translation—the shortest TT—in fact suggests that the Spanish term has no originality beyond its function as a touch of local color: “La Movida” is made to look like a much belated Spanish version of a term belonging to the American 60s; it has become a kind of bad translation in itself, ironically reversing the principle of asymmetric equivalence. Happily, a more recent *Newsweek* article redresses the injury, using textual expansion to put “La Movida” back onto the authorship side of the mountain, thus revealing that there was no linguistic reason for referring to “Happenings” in the first place:

- (4) “[...] in the years after 1975, Spain celebrated *La Movida*, a sense of explosive artistic, cultural and political excitement.” (*Newsweek*, European Edition, “Spain’s Weary Generation”, 30 October, 1989)

In 1985, as Spain was deciding to enter NATO, Americans were not particularly interested in translating anything more than a superficial Spanish culture based on American precedents. In 1989, however, during national elections following Spain’s presidency of the EEC, the same magazine saw fit to accord Spanish culture a recent history of its own, with corresponding TT quantities.

These examples suggest a correlative of the general principle of asymmetry: *the more the TT quantity exceeds Y, even beyond $TT \approx Y$, the greater the value accorded to Y*. Unlike the general principle, however, here it *does* matter how much more TT there is than Y. Here the logic of asymmetry goes beyond the leeway of relative equivalence.

Why this should be so can perhaps be explained in terms of the washing powder commercial in which a housewife is offered two packets of product TT in exchange for one packet of product Y, and of course stays with the latter because it must be the genuine article. If the logic of marketing were pushed a little, it is even possible that she would not accept three or even four packets of the inferior product TT: they would be too difficult to carry home. Only product Y puts ideal quality into an ideal size, and the more TT is offered in exchange, the greater the implied value of Y.

Attentive television watchers will have noticed that the above illustration of translational exchange just managed to reverse domestic marketing principles: double presentation has just sold the relatively *unknown* washing powder, without there being any question of taking it home and trying it out first. Only in cases of translational irony will TT win out as the tried and true home-grown product.

Why translational paraphrase tends to stop at sentence level

The final question to be asked with respect to double presentation concerns the upper limits of textual expansion. The “Movida” example suggests that paraphrase can be analyzed as a legitimate—if sometimes unhappy—mode of translation. But are there limits beyond which TT expansion is no longer translational?

It can be observed that in order to continue beyond the rejected TT “Die Bewegung”, the German rendition of “La Movida” has to incorporate a subjective voice. It cites the painter El Hortelano, presumably coming from somewhere within the content of the Spanish term. The extended French text (continuing the fragment reproduced above) does the same, citing a Spanish banker and then unnamed Spanish sources to make “La Movida” equivalent to an acceptably French concept: “...the latest news is that ‘La Movida’ has taken another name, awaiting the next: *postmodernisme*” (my translation from the French). In both cases, paraphrase of the one term beyond the limits of the sentence requires location of an authoritative subject external to the translating subjectivity. That is, continued paraphrase of a Spanish term requires citation of a Spanish source (a painter, a banker, or “the latest news”). If no such external subject were indicated, the second sentence—the second verb form, as a rule of thumb—would have to use an operator like “in fact means” or “sometimes means” or “could mean”, implying a modulated subjective authority incompatible with the translator’s suppressed pronoun. This means that, since the translator’s falsely objective “Y translates as TT” cannot simply accumulate paraphrases and seriously propose them all as equivalents,

someone, some authoritative subjectivity, some author, has to say “*I say* ST means TT”. A translator who fails to choose a definitive TT the first time round, with the first sentence or verb form, fails definitively to establish equivalence and must turn to or invent the verb of an author.

Thus, since translators are not supposed to be authors—since “I am translating” is necessarily false—*paraphrase extended beyond the sentence tends to break with the situation of translational exchange, becoming a discourse of addition or non-equivalence*. As a legitimately translational procedure, paraphrase is common but necessarily short-lived.

C. *Single presentation (weak relative equivalence)*

Single presentation hides at least one quantity

Single presentation (TT without Y) makes the significance of relative quantities more difficult to grasp, quite simply because one of the quantities is absent. Indeed, if single presentation is strictly defined as a mode of translation which denies the implied receiver all material access to Y, it is by no means evident how the quantity of TT can be of any significance at all. Translators can and often do omit large stretches of text or add numerous private fantasies, and no receiver need be any the wiser. Moreover, since the definition of single presentation allows for pseudotranslations, one must also talk about cases in which the Y text is singularly unavailable for quantitative comparison because materially non-existent. In such cases, how can quantity have anything at all to say?

Cases of eloquent absence are rare but revealing. Consider, for instance, Jerónimo Fernández's knightly epic *Don Belianís de Grecia* (1547, 1579) which, presented as a pseudotranslation from the Greek sage Fristón, ends with the pseudotranslator asking anyone finding the lost original to continue the tale.³⁹ Don Quixote, who sincerely lamented the hundred-and-one serious wounds received by Belianís in the first two books of the epic, nevertheless much appreciated Fernández's astute way of thus "ending the work with the promise of a never-ending adventure" (Cervantes 1605, 72). An absent quantity can always promise more.

However, there must be doubt as to whether such cases of explicit reference to an absent untranslated quantity allow the presented text to function as a translation. Surely the never-ending ending is more paratextual than properly translational? But then again, is not this question in itself indicative of a threshold?

It must be agreed that when a translation is read strictly as a translation, the equivalence operator should ride over any half-suspected discrepancies and nobody should know or care about what might have been left behind. The social conventions determining the limits of relative equivalence remain unexpressed for as long as they are respected, or, more exactly, for as long as the resulting TT can be

³⁹ "[...] mas el sabio Fristón, pasando de Grecia en Nubia, juró había perdido la historia, y así la tornó a buscar. Yo le he esperado, y no viene; y suplir yo con fingimientos a historia tan estimada, sería agravio; y así la dejaré en esta parte, dando licencia a cualquiera a cuyo poder viniere la otra parte, la ponga junto con ésta, porque yo quedo con harta pena y deseo de verla." Jerónimo Fernández, *El Libro primero del valeroso e inuencible Príncipe don Belianís de Grecia*, (Partes I & II), Burgos, 1547, (III & IV), 1579.

believed to be equivalent to the absent Y text. If no doubts are raised, no one need be any the wiser. But when significant doubts are raised, a threshold has been reached.

This means that single presentation can only really be investigated through cases in which social conventions have not been respected or the TT itself indicates certain quantitative discrepancies. Happily, Jerónimo Fernández was not alone in presenting the traces of such differences.

Simple signs indicate expansion and addition, abbreviation and deletion

There are several basic paratextual signs that allow quantity to gain at least minimal significance in cases of single presentation. Translators' notes or added terms in square brackets mean that the TT is presumably bigger in these places; a row of dots across the page or three of them between square brackets indicate that the TT is quantitatively smaller than the Y text and then there are peculiar possibilities like the bracketed question-mark "(?)" used by Mossop (1983, 248) to indicate that an omitted Y passage made no sense anyway (although this latter example would seem to induce non-equivalence to the extent that it presents a questioning subjectivity). Like the never-ending ending, these signs allow translated texts to be read in terms of their quantitative relation to absent transferred texts, thus providing an obvious way of approaching the thresholds of single presentation.

Why should such signs exist? It is not always because TT has to be longer or shorter for the purposes of just fitting into a page. These signs also respond to the non-quantitative criteria involved in strategies of explanation and simplification, in movements between the implicit and the explicit, or in dealing with problems of excessive semantic density. Formalization of these phenomena thus requires that Y texts be attributed a minimal notion of content.

Let us assume that the transferred text Y and the translated text TT, which have fixed sizes, each has a relatively stable content or semantic material when in the place of the translator. We shall symbolize these quantities of semantic material as "sY" and "sTT". Even before questions are raised about the exact nature of this content—and many questions do need to be raised—it is possible to analyze TT:Y in terms of four relationships between textual quantity and semantic material:

- Expansion: Approximately the same semantic material is expressed by a greater textual quantity ($TT > Y$; $sTT \approx sY$).

- Abbreviation: Approximately the same semantic material is expressed by a smaller textual quantity ($TT < Y$; $sTT \approx sY$).
- Addition: New semantic material is added to Y, with a corresponding increase in textual quantity ($TT > Y$; $sTT > sY$).
- Deletion: Semantic material is removed from Y, with a corresponding decrease in textual quantity ($TT < Y$; $sTT < sY$).

In theory, the first two relations lie on the properly translational side of the relative-equivalence threshold; the latter two involve non-equivalence and possibly pseudotranslation or non-translation. But can these abstract relationships really be analyzed as separate strategies? And how, in cases of single presentation, should one go about determining the thresholds between expansion and addition, abbreviation and deletion?

A careful approach is needed, starting from the most visible manifestations of these relations.

Caveat: Nida unhelpfully calls expansion “addition” (1964, 230-231):

“Although we may describe the above techniques as involving ‘additions’, it is important to recognize that there has been no actual adding to the semantic content of the message, for these additions consist essentially in making explicit what is implicit in the source-language text. Simply changing some element in the message from implicit to explicit status does not add to the content; it simply changes the manner in which the information is communicated.”

Similarly, Nida calls abbreviation “subtraction”, even though it “does not substantially lessen the information carried by the communication” (1964, 233).

As much as I would like to respect established terminology, what words does Nida give me to describe processes of addition and deletion which *do* affect semantic content?

Notes are expansion by another name

The translator’s note is of interest here as a mediation between double presentation and single presentation. A typical note like “In English in the text”, although manifesting considerable aesthetic indolence and usually of absolutely no practical consequence, does at least serve to indicate that a particular TT fragment can be read as a transliterated text for which no translation has been deemed necessary. The note enables the text to be read as both a Y and a TT, as simultaneously single and double presentation. As such, the note-form may act as a general introduction to single presentation.

Translators’ notes usually present or explain transferred fragments, offering a partial double presentation that nevertheless allows the receiver to opt for single-

presentation strategies. Parts of the Y text are there if the receiver is interested, but their distancing from the corresponding TT indicates that no one is obliged to find them. Notes can be at the bottom of the page, the end of the chapter, the end of the book, in a supplementary glossary or even in specialized dictionaries. In principle, the more the notes are physically distanced from the associated text, the more reception is likely to be in terms of single presentation.

Translators' notes have deservedly become unfashionable. First-year university students of translation tend to strew them all over the place, explaining every half-shaded detail, insulting the implied receiver's intelligence with massive overtranslation, and perhaps reflecting initial frustration at suppression of the translator's discursive position. Thankfully, students tend eventually to accept that receivers are to be presumed intelligent until proven otherwise, that not all details are pertinent to adequate TT comprehension, and that there are several hundred more cunning ways of directing the receiver's attention. But why do they still think I am joking when I describe footnotes as confessions of defeat? Why do students' jaws drop just a little when it is explained that certain footnoted information can equally well be inserted into the text? It seems that first-year students share a common misbelief in equivalence as quantitative equality (as if all equivalence were absolute). The insertion of in-text explanations is thus felt to be cheating, even when the semantic material to be explained is demonstrably implicit in the Y text. It takes some time before notes are appreciated as simply less elegant ways of expanding textual quantity.

Nevertheless, as much as I prefer my students to avoid notes and to insert explanations into their translations, I must recognize that there are no hard and fast rules about such details and that, pedagogically, my personal preferences should be balanced against solid arguments in favor of notes.

One could argue, pedagogically, that notes offer two potential advantages. On the one hand, they help keep the translated text deceptively clean, readable and quantitatively equivalent. On the other, they enable the translator to approach maximum fidelity to semantic content, since the notes themselves are in principle relatively free of quantitative constraints. It is in this spirit of partitioned fidelity that Nabokov called for "translations with copious footnotes, reaching up like skyscrapers to the top of this or that page [...]" (1955, 512).

These two advantages set up and manipulate a very misleading dichotomy, since the spatial partition they depend on is incompatible with the temporal progression of textual reception. For example, Milosz has reportedly had to retreat to a footnote to explain that the terms "government" and "people", which have apparently

become pejorative in Polish, were nevertheless positive when used in Lincoln's "government by the people and for the people".⁴⁰ If the note is not read, then misunderstanding is likely to result. And as soon as the note *is* read, it is bound to increase the semantic density of the translated text and thus annul the initial reason for the separation of note and text. This makes notes difficult to justify. In practical terms, the only real advantage of notes is that they might not be read. Which is indeed a fairly dubious advantage in cases where they were deemed necessary in the first place.

Arguments for and against notes could probably go on indefinitely. But the simple point I want to make here is that translators' notes and in-text expansion both have much the same effect on textual density. That is, notes are just a special case of expansion. Demonstration of this only requires a few examples:

Footnotes to Paul in tongues:

A series of footnotes gloss the Biblical passage about "speaking in tongues" (1 Corinthians 14) as "speaking in tongues, in other languages" (*New International Version*, 1979). The notes significantly expand the TT. That is, for relative equivalence, 1 unit of Y \approx 2 units of TT; or TT:Y \approx 2. The translators have in fact used notes to double the meaning of the text, interpreting Paul's words as a sociological theory of translation. However, the gloss does not annul the more common belief that Paul—in the lost original, in another translation, in the next translation, or in the TT without notes—was talking about a divinely inspired ability to speak in all languages at once. The expansion thus invests the absent original with two parallel readings, not only producing increased textual complexity in the space of TT, but also projecting greater semantic density on ST.

The textual expansion of Australian drovers:

The term "drover", a tired commonplace of Australian literature, can be rendered in Spanish as "pastor" (shepherd), "vaquero" (cowboy), "ganadero" (cattle-owner/ grazier) or, as in the Spanish version of the classic film *The Sundowners*, "conductor de ganado" (literally, cattle-driver). And yet it is at once more and less than all of these: the term applies to work with either sheep or cows, has nothing at all to do with westerns, excludes ownership, includes movement from place to place, and predates "driving". But the economies and social structures of Hispanic culture would seem never to have produced drovers and thus have no exactly corresponding term. In Spanish translations of Australian short stories (ed. Pym 1992), two of which are entitled "The Drover's Wife", the rather unhappy solution to this problem was to insert the phrase "uno de es-

⁴⁰ "In the stirring ending to the speech, Lincoln said the 'government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth'. That was the rub, Milosz said.

"In the decades of communist domination in Poland the word 'government' and especially the word 'people'—as in 'the People's Republic'—have become dirty words.

"Milosz struggled to find an alternative but had to fall back in a footnote explaining that in 1863 in Lincoln's America, 'people' was not a dirty word and 'government' was not necessarily a bad thing." (*The European*, August 17-19, 1990).

tos ganaderos trashumantes” (“one of those itinerant sheep/cattlemen”) with the first appearance of the term, thereafter using the simple word “ganadero” and trusting that contexts and the reading imagination would retain the necessary disambiguation. To do any more would have been to obstruct the narrative workings of the texts as literature, or to suggest that their value was more sociological than aesthetic.

This simple example might illustrate why textual expansion is often a necessary part of translation. But there is also the correlative: the initial expansion was used to invest the term “ganadero” with a complex semantic value that it did not have previously. The term was made to say more in less textual space; the Spanish language was slightly altered; the effect of the strategy was to increase semantic density. The expansion thus had the same effect as a footnote.

Abbreviation and deletion can be difficult to justify

Abbreviation and deletion are generally more difficult to justify than expansion and addition. A trivial reason for this lies in the fact that quantity is commonly the basis for determining the actual price of translated texts. Whatever the value of their work, freelance translators tend to be paid so much per line or page. In such circumstances, any translator who willfully seeks to improve a text by reducing the initial quantity is simply going to lose money. The economy of this part of the profession habitually fails to recognize the labor of the file.

There are other reasons as well. Just as no one likes to be excluded from a secret, the more one feels excluded from the implied second person of a text, the more value one tends to attribute to that text. One of the rarely repeated secrets of simultaneous interpreting is that, no matter how impenetrable the incoming Y text, no matter how lost you are, you should try not to leave prolonged silences in the outgoing TT: as long as the receivers are getting a fairly continuous non-contradictory text, they will not be too worried about what they are missing. If, on the other hand, the receivers are confronted by substantial gaps in the interpreting, they will begin to doubt the value of the translation as a whole and will inevitably feel frustrated at having missed out on precisely the part that would have most interested them. As much as the interpreter’s silence might have been in the interests of not conveying any false content, the silence itself is likely to do more damage to the status of the TT than would a few reasonably informed guesses. For similar reasons, when in real trouble, interpreters should blame all gaps on technical faults. The social logic of secrets makes deletion very difficult to justify by any other means. Overt deletion is likely to promote distrust.

The same is true of written dots, be they across the page, between brackets or editing a quotation. Surgery scars create doubts about the health of the surviving body—something must be missing.

That is, since the citizens of democracies believe they have a right to know everything, it is usually better for undemocratic translators to delete unseen, or not at all. But does this mean that there is no ideologically valid justification for abbreviation and deletion?

As reduction of waste, abbreviation is obviously not as difficult to justify as is outright deletion. In a world of deadlines, complex bureaucracies and technological text production, translators are increasingly called upon to write summaries and reports, compressing source materials in accordance with the needs and interests of highly specific receivers. At the same time, this inevitable restriction of the TT public means that abbreviation often resembles simple deletion in that it provokes potentially unhealthy phenomena of second-person exclusion.

Sigla and acronyms, to take the most obvious cases, are a cultural bane. Living in Paris but excluded from the inner mysteries of French culture, I must have written “Cedex” on several hundred letters without knowing that it was an acronym I spent about three years catching an “RER” train without knowing what the letters stood for.⁴¹ Then there are the virtually uncountable euronyms—524 of them are listed in a 1990 EEC glossary—which separate the European Community from most of its citizens:

“The European in the street is not thrilled to be told that this week two ICGs start—one that could turn the ERM into an EMU, another that might bring EPC, and conceivably even WEU, within the EC.” (*The Economist*, 15 December, 1990).

Zipf’s law may well allow frequency of use to explain abbreviation, but frequently *restricted* use tends to justify no more than esoteric secrets, of dubious social virtue. In translation, which presupposes transfer away from the centers of maximum frequency, abbreviation must inevitably seek its legitimacy in terms of a second person who is suitably informed. However, as a personal plea against a world of opaque officialdom and stratified communication, I would ask that full and translated versions be given at least once in each TT, usually upon first mention of each siglum or acronym.

Thus, although abbreviation has a certain economic justification, it should not always be considered socially desirable.

As for deletion, the arguments are a little more complicated.

⁴¹The *Petit Robert* has since solved these quotidian mysteries: Cedex = “Courrier d’Entreprise à Distribution Exceptionnelle”; RER = “Réseau express régional”, the suburban and regional extension of the Paris underground.

Authoritative subjectivity allows addition and deletion

It is by no means easy to distinguish between expansion and addition, abbreviation and deletion. According to the above formalized definitions, expansion and abbreviation should involve semantic material which is itself neither significantly expanded nor abbreviated. This means that addition must be of material which is in no way implicit in the Y text, and deletion must be of material which is in no way implicit in the TT text.

But it is very difficult to say exactly what is or is not implicit in a text. Cunning readers can pull rabbits out of the most unlikely hats, and if a rabbit is considered worth adding to a text, it is presumably also worth reading into that text. Rulings for and against implicitness ultimately depend on authoritatively limited interpretation, and thus on an authority with a specific position in time and space.

Some additions avoid this problem to the extent that they could not have been written by the author of the ST and thus cannot be considered expansions of the TT. Such material could concern events that took place after the author's death, references to posterior works, critical variants, indeed all the textual items in which translators cease to translate and become editors or critics, thus escaping criteria of equivalence. Since such additions necessarily emanate from a subjectivity posterior to the author of the ST, they cannot be attributed the anonymity of a translator. Precisely because they assume a non-translational subjectivity, they are additions and not expansion. That is, additions may have been written by translators, but the translators were not translating at the time.

In this way, close analysis of implied first persons should be able to distinguish between expansion and addition.

But how could such an analysis be applied to cases of deletion? Since dots and brackets tend not to be eloquent about their subjective sources, the only way of knowing who has deleted is to look for an authoritative defense of the deletion.

As we have seen, democratic principles make it extremely difficult to justify the omission of content. To find authoritative support for deletion, it is perhaps easiest to turn to aristocratic politics. Peter the Great wrote the following introductory notes to a Russian translation of the *Georgica curiosa*:

“Since the Germans are given to filling their books with all kinds of stories for the sole purpose of making large books, none of this was worth translating except the essential points and a brief introduction. But so that this introduction may be more than idle glitter, and for the readers’ greater illumination and edification, I note that I have corrected this treatise on agriculture (erasing all that serves no purpose) and present it so that all books will be translated without use-

less stories, which only waste the readers' time and make them bored." (cited by Lotman 1979, 54)

Whatever the ethics of such justifications, in this case we can be fairly sure that the TT is shorter than the Y text because of deletion and not mere abbreviation. But we can only make this distinction on the basis of a paratextual authoritative "I", Peter the Great, who is in no way to be confused with the actual translator. The treatise has been "corrected" through deletion; what remains can thus be assumed to be both equivalent and authorized.

Although the subjectivity authorizing deletion is necessarily extra-translational, it can yet be very close to the translator. The following "I" is from the middle of Wace's *Roman de Brut*, which may be regarded as a translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (Durling 1989, 9)⁴²:

"Then Merlin spoke the prophecies
Which you have, I believe, heard,
of the kings who were to come
and who should govern this land.
I don't want to translate this book
since I myself don't know how to interpret it.
I wouldn't want to say anything
unless it were as I myself would say."

In refusing to translate at this particular point, the first person manages to say not only "I have been (and will be) translating", but also that the content translated is to be trusted. The effect of explicit deletion is to project a non-said text, which may then authorize that which is said, as if the translator were a fully-fledged author. But the content so authorized is by definition distinct from the passage in which the first person appears—strictly speaking, the passage is paratextual—and

⁴²

Dunc dist Merlin les prophecies
Que vus avez, ço crei, oïes,
Des reis ki a venir esteient,
Ki la terre tenir deveient.
Ne vuil sun livre translater
Quant jo nel sai interpreter;
Nule rien dire ne vuldreie
Que si ne fust cum jo dirreie.

Durling translates the last line as "unless it were just as I should say", introducing a notion of external obligation and reducing the role of the first-person pronoun. Her final comments are nevertheless judicious: "For Wace, translation is a vision of truth which allows the author to add or delete material. It implies interpretation based on the author's own erudition, is suggestively linked to paternity, and is not discussed as a product of patronage." (1989, 30).

therefore remains properly translational. Two distinct voices thus come from the same name: on the one hand, Wace is a translator who wants to translate nothing but the truth on the other, he is as much an author as was Peter the Great, since he takes it upon himself to decide what is or is not worth translating.

Now, how is it that when oral translators leave obvious gaps, the effect of deletion is not to authorize their text but to cast doubt on what has been translated? What is the difference between deletion in the hands of Wace and deletion by a conference interpreter? The answer is to be found in the status of the subjectivity involved. The simultaneous interpreter remains anonymous and thus open to either radical trust or radical doubt, whereas some translators—minimally visible in that their products are written—have been able to become authoritative in their own right, mixing trust and doubt to the extent that they assume an individuated identity, taking some of the responsibility that might otherwise have been left to authorities like Peter the Great and their censors, challenging the limits of equivalence.

French translators of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries often adopted similar authorization, basing their selection criteria on audience acceptability. Letourneur's well known introduction to his 1769 translations of Young give the aim of translation as:

“...to appropriate all that is good in our neighbours, leaving behind all that is bad, which we need neither read nor know about.” (cited by West 1932, 330; D'hulst 1990, 115)

Here the “I” of the authority, censor or individual translator is explicitly based on the “we” formed by the professional translator and his public. That is, although the translator in this case acts individually—the rest of Letourneur's introduction is mostly in the first person—he does so in the name of the entire receiving culture, assumed to be superior to the ST culture. It is interesting to note that the translator in this case actually claims to delete very little (“...just one or two fragments by a Protestant disclaiming the Pope...”) but in fact cuts out everything considered half objectionable on aesthetic or theological grounds and relegates it to his “Notes”. The function of the introductory paratext is thus partly to instruct the reader not to read the notes, or at least—more prudently—not to consider the translator in any way responsible for any blasphemies that might be concealed there. Was everything bad really “left behind”? If, as we have remarked, translators' notes are a form of expansion, their combination with deletion may become a way of dividing

a translational subjectivity troubled by problems of censorship and public authorization.

In principle, authorization should work indifferently for both deletion and addition, since if one can decide what is not worth translating, one can also decide what would have been worth translating if it had been written. Letourneur did in fact admit to several minor stylistic additions, although his presumed mandate did not extend to the limits claimed by Abraham Cowley in another well known introduction, written in 1656:

“I have in these two odes of Pindar taken, left out, and added what I please; nor made it so much my aim to let the reader know precisely what he spoke, but what was his way and manner of speaking.” (cited by Nida 1964, 17)

The strategy of deletion is in this case inseparable from addition, since the theory concerns the liberty to betray both quantity and content in favor of a personalist conception of style.⁴³ Cowley’s repeated first person is apparently sufficient justification for these radical changes, since his actual content is in fact another first person, an individual “way and manner of speaking”. In theory, no external authority should be necessary for this intersubjective one-to-one communion. But Cowley did not really get away with it. His individuated subjectivity failed to attract sufficient authorization to escape Dryden’s 1680 distinction between his “imitations” and a properly translational discourse based on modes of relative equivalence (analyzed by Dryden as “metaphrase” and “paraphrase”). One of the operational criteria of addition and deletion must thus be the authority and ability to maintain the translational status of that which is neither added nor deleted. When this status is radically questioned, the subject responsible for the text risks losing the authority necessary to establish relations of equivalence. The result is sometimes less than translational.

⁴³ As T. R. Steiner notes (1975, 25), seventeenth-century English translation theory was based on the notion of the individual poet and not on wider notions like the culture or language of the source and target cultures.

Expansion and addition can run into political trouble

It is possible that *fully authorized deletions only take place in situations where the TT culture considers itself superior to the ST culture*. This historical hypothesis no doubt deserves more investigation than can be offered here.

But what is more worrying is that the inverse hypothesis seems to be unfounded: It appears less than probable that fully authorized *additions* only take place when the TT culture perceives itself as *inferior* to the ST culture. The main problem with this second hypothesis is that, once authority is granted, deletions and additions tend to happen *together*, in the same translation, signed by the same translator. Cowley, for instance, claimed *both* modes of liberty. So it is difficult to make any generalization about the relation between the cultures concerned.⁴⁴

A more interesting historical hypothesis might be based on the status of expansions and additions within the receiving culture. If authorized deletion can be interpreted as a form of censorship, the authorization of addition can become a question of considerable political import. Indeed, if the thin boundary between expansion and addition partly depends on the authoritative status of the translating subjectivity, only those with effective social power can decide, in each situation, what is to be regarded as (justified translational) expansion and what is to be rejected as (unjustified untranslational) addition.

History offers at least three significant cases of institutional conflict between notions of expansion and addition:

a) Fray Luis de León:

“He who translates has to be true and faithful [...] so that those who read the translation can understand the entire range of meanings they would have if they were reading the original, and they may thus select the meaning which they find the best.” (1580, 12)⁴⁵

In declaring his total fidelity, Fray Luis ostensibly effaced his personal responsibility for erotic elements in his translation, the *Cantar de los cantares* (Song of Songs), displacing responsibility to the mind and imagination of the receiver, as have many latter-day defenders of pornography.

⁴⁴ Does Y < TT indicate felt inferiority within the TT culture?

If limited to phenomena of textual expansion, the hypothesis becomes interesting although not wholly convincing. Reversing Letourneur's principle, it seems logical that a culture which perceives itself as being inferior to another will take pains to leave nothing behind, translating and elaborating the smallest details of “superior” texts. Unfortunately, when this hypothesis is tested on the basis of the translation of verse by prose (necessary expansion), the European nineteenth century fails to conform: the central “superior” cultures translated in prose or prosified verse, whereas those on the periphery tended to translate in formal verse. In the age of positivism, prosification was associated with progress, thus annulling simple hypotheses about expansion and inferiority.

⁴⁵ “El que traslada ha de ser fiel y cabal [...] para que los que leyeren la traducción puedan entender la variedad toda de sentido a que da ocasión si se leyese el original, y queden libres para escoger de ellos el que mejor les pareciere.” The very real problem of the under-determined nature of the *Song of Songs* is usefully commented by Adams (1973, 56-61).

Unfortunately, the Inquisition disagreed with this theory, declared the translator at once responsible and irresponsible, and imprisoned Fray Luis in 1572 for this and other concerns with fidelity. The text was later published.

b) Etienne Dolet's *Axiochus* :

“[...] death has no hold over you, for you are not yet at the point of dying; and once you have died, death will still be powerless against you, since you will no longer be *anything at all*.” (cited by Lloyd-Jones 1989, 369; italics mine)⁴⁶

The addition of the last three words, suggesting (correctly?) that Plato did not believe in the immortality of the soul, earned Etienne a trial and an execution in 1546. But perhaps he was not really afraid of death.

c) Luther explained by Nida (1964, 29):

“Luther translated: ‘...dass der Mensch gerecht werde ohne des Gesetzes Werke, *allein* durch den Glauben’ (Romans 3:28). This word *allein*, making the last phrase mean “through faith alone”, quite understandably provoked the ire of Luther’s enemies, who insisted that he was adding to the Scriptures. Luther, however, contended that the added word was fully justified by the theological significance of the passage as well as the grammatical structure, even if it were not to be found in the original.”⁴⁷

In each of these cases, the difference between expansion and addition is a question of conflict between the translator and a rather important institutional authority. In the last analysis, only authority determines what is or is not justified expansion.

Now, to return to our problematic hypothesis, can expansion be interpreted as a sign of felt inferiority? Perhaps there should be no simple reading in this sense, since the limits of expansion, which require authorization, thus also concern a potential questioning of authorities, which surely often lie within receiving cultures and have little to do with any ST. And yet, considered carefully, even the more spectacular and complex cases—Luis de León, Dolet, Luther—are oppositional precisely to the extent that they place authority more with an idealized ST—Plato as text, the Bible as God’s word—than with the institutions of the receiving culture. A certain critical cultural inferiority is thus implied, and may remain a hypothesis of interest.

⁴⁶ “[La mort] ne peult rien sur toy, car tu n'es pas encores prest a deceder; et quand tu seras decedé, elle n'y pourra rien aussi, attendu que tu ne seras plus *rien du tout*.”

⁴⁷ Luther's influence on translations of the Bible was to support not only textual expansion, but also extensive explanation presented as additions. Elman (1983) notes that the Kralice Bible (1579 and 1593) presents commentaries between brackets; the Geneva Bible (1560) has them in italics; the Halle Bible (1722) has them in smaller letters than the text.

D. Multiple presentation (contradictory equivalence)

Some translations become originals

What I have termed contradictory equivalence is the result of situations in which it is difficult to consider a TT_1 as a relative equivalent of Y because its function is partly blocked by TT_2 , TT_3 ... TT_n , which may be either physically present or well known by the receiver. We have already come across some examples of this phenomenon. When the Y text “La Movida” is translated as TT_1 “Die Bewegung” [The Movement] and then as TT_2 “ein Schluckauf” [a hiccup], the translational series splits equivalence between the two possibilities, informing the receiver that neither TT_1 nor TT_2 is entirely satisfactory. Much the same creation of doubt is achieved when Y content is split through translators’ notes, which might also be analyzed from the perspective of contradictory equivalence.

When contradictory equivalence becomes a prolonged mode of reception, it must be regarded as a serious challenge to the translational status of the text concerned. But it is more often a transitory situation, a momentary doubt put to rest in the place of reception itself.

In theory, the receiver can resolve contradictory equivalence by regarding either TT_1 or TT_2 as the “better” or “more ideally equivalent” translation. This is done according to two suitably contradictory principles, one of them based on progress, the other on pseudo-originality.

The principle of translational progress says that *the most recent TT tends to be regarded as the most ideally equivalent*. In the German “Movida” example, the order in which the TTs are presented means that maximum value is accrued in the last-mentioned version, “Schluckauf”. The linearity of the translational series is such that each TT which is proposed and then rejected passes its positive value on to the next TT, creating a sort of accumulative interest released in the last term of the series. In principle, the more terms in the series, the greater the value of the final TT. But this logic is obviously subject to major situational constraints, since although a TT like “Schluckauf” can function as a good equivalent of “Movida” within this particular translational series, it will not necessarily do so independently of the series. The value invested in the term can only be released within the sequence of German TTs.

Translational progress also has its historical projection, since any new version of a previously translated text implicitly presents itself as an improvement. After all, if a text like Wollschläger’s German *Ulysses* (1975) were not somehow “more

equivalent” than Goyert’s previous German version, why should it have been undertaken and published? According to this common-sense principle, versions of the most translated texts should be coming progressively closer to ideal equivalence. But such sense is perhaps not quite so common, since progressive approximation to the ideal $TT:Y \rightarrow 1$ (here ideal equivalence of form *and* semantic material) would then be inversely proportional to the concomitant increase in the distance crossed by transfer ($Y-ST$). This in fact means that the further one is from the original production of a text, the more one’s translation can be equivalent to that text. Which is at least an interesting notion of progress.

Clearly, principles of translational progress do not always correspond to the real way of the world. The main reason for this is that previous TTs rarely disappear as automatically or as gracefully as they should. They remain in cultural canons or receivers’ minds, becoming pertinent points of departure in themselves, representing transfer not in terms of $Y-ST$ but as TT_2-TT_1 . That is, some translations complicate matters by becoming pseudo-originals.

Germans are extremely lucky to have a very good second translation of *Ulysses*. The French badly need a second translation but are unlikely to get one, since the first French version, which is very different from Joyce’s own text, nevertheless received the author’s imprimatur, benefiting at the same time from Larbaud’s largely undeserved prestige and even influencing the final form of the original.⁴⁸ It has thus attained pseudo-original status, so far blocking future development of the translational series. But such blocking is not necessarily eternal: Goyert’s now surpassed German version also received Joyce’s authorization; luckily, its status as an equivalent was publicly contested in the press.⁴⁹

The principle of translational progress is thus to some extent contradicted by a *right of first possession*, such that the equivalent which is historically first pro-

⁴⁸ Why the English *Ulysses* is plural when read from the perspective of the French *Ulysse*:

Although Joyce’s manuscript is undoubtedly the first word, and not necessarily the last. Indeed, it seems that the last word of the novel is literally of mixed origin. In 1920, the final section of *Ulysses* was translated by Benoist-Méchin, then aged twenty, for presentation in a talk to be given by Larbaud. According to Paci, “The translator did not know how to express the final “I will”. He put “Je veux bien”, but it seemed inadequate, so he added a “oui”. Joyce at first had doubts about the addition, considering the last word of *Ulysses* a question of extreme importance. But he then became convinced that “yes” was a better word, and added it to the English text” (1968, 250). The translation thus became part of the original.

It is also true that the author himself became part of the French translation, revising the translated manuscript. But the Spanish translator Valverde found it impossible to follow the French version, judging it to be nonsense (“un disparate”) and blaming Joyce’s desire to show off his knowledge of French slang and jargon: “It is strange that what is often considered a guarantee of the value of the French translation is precisely the reason why it is of little value” (1972, 24).

⁴⁹ *Frankfurter Zeitung*, October 26 and December 6 1957. Arno Schmidt criticised inaccuracies in the translation; Goyert responded (Gorjan 1970, 209).

duced will be accorded special consideration as a candidate for authorization. For example, the Spanish translator of Adorno's essay on *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* could not agree with the initial Spanish translation of Spengler's title, but could not avoid recognizing its historical authority as a precedent:

"The term *Untergang* is rendered herein as *ocaso* [sunset, ending] in every context in which what matters is the conceptualization of Spengler's thesis. Only in citations of Spengler's *book* have we used *decadencia* [decadence], which was the term preferred by the translators of *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*." (Sacristán 1984, 25)

The Spanish reader of the essay is thus condemned to alternation between a TT₁ recognized as authoritative and a TT₂ presented as progressive, although coexistence of the two principles is in this case in keeping with the function of the essay as a progressive critique of Spengler's authority.

Perhaps the most common cases of contradictory equivalence are those arising from modern translations of the Bible, particularly in English, where the King James Version is very much a pseudo-original carried around in a collective cultural memory. When the *Good News Bible* states "Then God commanded, 'let there be light'—and light appeared", few English speakers could resist misreading it as a bad translation of "and there was light". Commenting on this example, a recent article states:

"If the original version of that line, which Coleridge considered 'the perfect poem', haunts Christians, it is because Good News has murdered it. Clearly, whatever else may be sacred, poetry is not." ("Language Debased: Modern English Abusage", *The Economist*, 22 December 1990).

Both Coleridge and *The Economist* appear to refer to the King James Version as a sacred source text (an "original version"), *not* as a translation. Contradictory equivalence may thus lead to an imaginary *reversal* of ST and TT positions. As Buber noted, the passage of time makes all writing seem a palimpsest of a more original text, and this is true "not just of translations but also of originals". For the modern reader, argued Buber, "even the Bible in Hebrew reads like a translation, and a bad translation at that" (cited by Kloepfer 1967, 83).

To the extent that they can block or even reverse translational series, pseudo-originals negate the principle of progress. But what do they do as representations of transfer, figuring the distance Y–ST? If the principle of progress means that one

can come closer to ideal equivalence as one goes further away from the moment of original production, what might a pseudo-original have to say about such distance?

Littré's *L'Enfer mis en vieux langage françois* (1879) or Pézard's Pléiade translation of Dante into archaized French (1965) may be read as overt and partly ironic attempts to write pseudo-originals, since they both use archaic language. But what they do as representations of distance has not universally been appreciated. Meschonnic (1986, 78) criticizes Pézard by arguing that Dante was not archaic for his contemporaries and so should not be archaic for the modern reader. In what kind of French, asks Meschonnic, would the translator have rendered Homer? (Littré had in fact already answered: Homer should be translated into thirteenth-century French.⁵⁰) However, if Pézard's TT cannot be equivalent to the fourteenth-century Dante (ST), it can yet establish a level of equivalence based on transfer to the twentieth-century Dante (Y). But how does this relate to contradictory equivalence?

If an archaizing translation is truly archaizing, its manifest TT₁ should refer to an implicit TT₂, the text that the translator and the receiver would otherwise have exchanged as a non-archaic equivalent. When, to take an almost random example, Pézard gives the TT₁:

“Ce seigneur des très hautes chansons,
qui sur tous les autres vole à guise d'aigle” (1965, 904)

a contemporary French reader will recognise the contextual import of the last phrase but will inevitably mentally translate it into a modern French TT₂ like “à la façon d'un aigle” or “comme un aigle”, which in fact has greater quantitative equivalence to the Italian Y text:

“Quel Signor dell'altissimo Canto,
Che sovra gli altri, com'Aquila vola” (*Inferno* IV, 95-96)⁵¹

Prosodic justifications apart, it would clearly be wrong to argue that archaic translation in this case approaches equivalence with the Y text itself, which is in fact quite readable in terms of twentieth-century Italian. Equivalence is with neither ST nor Y. Pézard's archaism instead provokes awareness of the distance TT₂–TT₁, po-

⁵⁰ Littré's justification (reprinted in d'Hulst 1990, 98-101) is that of parallel points in historical development, expressed in terms of the “general conformity between the heroic age of the Greeks and the heroic age of the modern era” and demonstrated by the use of formulae in the two recitative epic traditions.

⁵¹ I in fact take these lines from d'Hulst (1990, 195), who cites Pézard's version in a footnote as if were the official or undisputed French translation of the Italian text, without further comment.

tentially running parallel to the distance Y–ST and thus proposing equivalence not to a text, but to transfer, to the temporal distance of Dante.

It matters little that there was no French language in Homeric times or that the King James Version is chronologically posterior to the Hebrew Bible. The essential value of these archaizing or archaized pseudo-originals is not that they are condemned to misrepresent archeological orders, but that they take the distance Y–ST from the level of transfer and convert it into a value on the level of translation. That is, they use contradictory equivalence to represent the fact of transfer.

Some translations last as monuments

Benjamin claimed that translations themselves are the most untransferable texts, since their peculiar intertextuality has meaning adhere to them with “all too extreme fleetingness” (1923, 61). Translations are supposed to be temporary; they do not last as long as originals; they are disposable, like paperback books and ball-point pens. Contradictory equivalence nevertheless allows some translations to outlive their translators, becoming hardcover fountain-penned pseudo-originals in themselves, overcoming the fragile mortality of most common forms of equivalence.

Does this pseudo-originality necessarily imply a strong subjectivity? Is it a serious threat to the translational status of the texts concerned? The above examples would seem to suggest quite the reverse. Split or diffuse equivalence tends to obfuscate the translator’s discursive position; many of the great pseudo-originals were written by several hands, without a unified subjectivity; and archaizing translation by definition requires a certain suppression of the I-here-now, avoiding the cultural traits of the translator’s historical locus. Indeed, the more such translated texts are discursively distanced from the place of their production, from the potential I-here-now of the translator, the better they may age in step with their projected originals. Translational pseudo-originality should thus not be confused with the direct volition of an auctorial subjectivity. Translators do not become authors. The pseudo-original instead survives on its own, traversing time as a monument to self-suppressed subjectivity.

Eliot explained poetic creation in terms of the disappearance of the “thing” words are meant to describe. But he also explained creativity in quite translational terms, referring to anterior texts which refuse to disappear: “the existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves”. Moreover, for Eliot, the right to enter this ideal order of texts required “a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinc-

tion of the personality” (1919, 294-96). Perhaps the ideal extinction of individual personality is translation.

So much for what quantity would appear to say.

TEXTS BELONG

Transfer and translation work against belonging

ONE OF the recurrent shortcomings in general approaches to translation is that we are all constantly prepared to say how translation works but we rarely stop to ask what it might be working *against*. If, according to a not uncommon Manichean vision, translation were all goodness and enlightenment, what would then be the badness and ignorance it should oppose? And even if translation were found to be less than ideal, where should we look to find the values it lacks? In short, what is the opposite of translation?

I have so far avoided this problem by associating minimal non-translation with transliteration (the text is transferred but not visibly translated). But this is a facile evasion of the issue since, as we have seen, the decision not to translate is still a translational decision; it puts no illogical spanner into the works of translation as a process; its minor elitism is entirely describable in terms of the basic principles of translational quantities. Transliteration might be a degree of apparent non-translation, but it is certainly not anti-translational.

A far more formidable opposite lies not within translation as such, but in the negation of *transfer*, in denial of the necessary precondition for any translational situation. Maximum anti-translationality—a word not to be repeated—is surely to be found somewhere in *non-transfer*, in the state of texts whose movements are so restricted that they almost never become candidates for properly translational treatment. Translators are most successfully thwarted by the material they cannot get their hands on; translation can fail because some aspects of texts are difficult to transfer to a Y situation and sometimes impossible to convey to the situation of translational reception. The fundamental task of translators must thus be to work against the bonds restricting the movements of texts; they must attempt to attain

some kind of maximum transcultural mobility towards a specific receiver. In short, translation works against constraints on transfer.

Why should there be constraints on the transfer of texts? Quite simply because—reading “transfer” in its juridical sense—certain texts are felt to belong to certain people or to certain situations, making the movement of those texts a question of bestowing some kind of ownership or right to full textual meaningfulness. Seen in this light, constraints on transfer can be thought of as bonds of belonging.

Here I am not particularly concerned with the mechanical reproduction of texts or with the way a strictly legalistic sense of belonging might be formalized in terms of copyright laws and international publishers’ agreements. I am more interested in the way texts themselves resist reproduction and transfer, undergoing a transformation of values when moved from their apparently rightful place. I am concerned with the way texts themselves are felt to belong, whatever the influence of external decrees.

In English, this belonging can be thought of with or without a subjective compliment; that is, in terms of specific direct ownership or in terms of a situational adequacy analyzable as collective ownership. Texts can belong to someone, or they might simply be felt to belong in a certain social place such that they do not belong when they turn up elsewhere. Eliot’s search for “the right words in the right order” can be seen as an idealization of situational belonging; the experience of correcting students’ translations is sometimes counterproof of the same belonging, since “the wrong words in the wrong order” often conform to every teachable rule but are still felt to be out of place. We know that texts belong because sometimes they simply do not belong.

How does belonging actually affect the transfer and translation of texts? Any substantial response would have to consider and account for various modes of belonging itself. In what follows, I shall briefly look at the discursive function of texts as they enter actions (forming explicit and implicit performatives); I shall touch upon several notions of social embedding through contiguity, secrecy and forgetting; and I shall openly recognize the powerful binding role of tongues. If it can be shown that belonging in general is anti-translational, these various specific modes of belonging should enable us to say something of interest about what kinds of constraints translation has to negotiate. Awareness of these constraints should then in turn provide some insight into the eminently pedagogical problem of why certain aspects of translating are more difficult than others.

There are no solo performances

Explicit performatives are no longer performative once translated. An utterance like “I declare the meeting open” may well be translated as “Je déclare la réunion ouverte” or “Se abre la sesión”, but only the first, non-translational version—whatever its tongue—can actually open the meeting. This is a simple example of a text that belongs in one place and not in another, denying full meaningfulness in the translational situation. We could say that translations of performatives are necessarily constative, or, to adopt the terminology of Christiane Nord (1988), the *instrumental* status of the non-translated text becomes *documental* when translated. In a sense, the instrumental text—the performing performative, the text as action—is owned by the people who originally open the meeting, and cannot be owned in the same way by those who receive only a report of it.

This is not a trivial example. In their hard discursive core, all contracts, treaties and official declarations are extended performatives. That is why they often require a clear distinction between original and translational versions, ensuring that problems of interpretation bear only on the non-translational text. Such translations are explicit auxiliaries to their originals and cannot become effective performatives.

In terms of translatability, the instrumentality or effective performance of performatives obviously has nothing to do with language choices. It does not matter which language is used to open the meeting, since only the *first* language to be used will be the one to belong. What resists transfer is not language, but the text’s situational ability to become part of an action. We are concerned only with this ability to resist transfer.

Now, although performatives do not concern tongues they do very much concern discourse. Austin noted that properly performative verbs are marked by an asymmetric relation between the first-person indicative active and other persons (1955, 63) and that, in English, this peculiarly performative first person cannot be used with present continuous forms (47). That is, “I declare the meeting open” is performative, but “*You* declare the meeting open” and “*I am declaring* the meeting open” are not. The grammatical singularity of explicit performatives is thus intimately associated with the I-here-now, partly explaining their peculiar power to belong to their situation of original production. Moreover, since performatives are linked to a discursive feature that is by definition unavailable to the translator—the translator has no I-here-now—, a translated performative can only be expected to lose instrumentality.

Of course, this is not a sufficient explanation of why performatives belong in certain situations and not in others. The place within which performatives are instrumental also depends on selection and transfer to an appropriate implied receiver or *second* person. Despite the necessarily unique opening of meetings, examples like Pope John Paul II's Christmas blessings manage to remain performative in numerous languages because each blessing is directed to a different "you" invited to participate in the performance.⁵² Criteria of transferability stand or fall on the basis of this relation to the second person. And yet relatively little has been made of the implied receiver of performatives.

When Austin transforms the implicit performative "Go!" into the explicit performative "I order you to go!" (32), the restitution concerns the second person just as much as the first. Similarly, when a universalistic level of performance is projected onto an implicit operator like "I say..." (the performative operator implicit in all utterances), it would be equally legitimate to rewrite the operator as "I tell you that...", incorporating the second person who, after all, has no reason to be excluded. This means that the discursive person most directly involved in the workings of performatives is not really the "I" of the I-here-now, but an inclusive "we" ("I" plus "you"). The most general implicit operator should thus probably be explicated not as "I say..." but as something like the mathematical "let", rewritten as "let us ('I' plus 'you') suppose that...". Alone, the first-person singular can make as many propositions in as many languages as it likes, ordering and organizing the world to suit its own desires. But a particular proposition can only become a non-hypothetical performative when an implicit "we" incorporates a second person.

There are several quite obvious reasons why the second person is necessary if performatives are to be instrumentally performative. It should not be forgotten that someone has to receive and understand the text; someone must be prepared to accept the speaker's social power and right to perform. The second person or implied receiver creates space for this someone—a physical receiver—to understand and

⁵² Are the Pope's performances above transfer? If we consider the Pope's multilingual name or the Papal Christmas blessings delivered by Karol Wojtyła in numerous languages, it is possible to analyse the utterances as if they had been generated by translational processes and yet, exceptionally, retained the full discursive force of an ST, as if no transfer had taken place. Each particular utterance must be considered performative and thus non-translational to the extent that it addresses a specific collective second -person. In this case, it might be said that each individual utterance belongs to the collectivity designated by the choice of language, and that they are thus simply parallel texts rather than translations. This means that certain possibly translated utterances can remain performative, but at the price of assuming their own first- and second-persons, thus sacrificing their status as equivalent forms. Each of these utterances delimits its own place of effective performance, and this place would be violated if wires were crossed and the utterance were directed to an alternative second-person. Which is why performatives are a problem of transferability.

accord authority to the first person. Such a second person, able to make a performative perform, can be described as potentially “participative”.

There are several parallel theories that should be noted here.

In terms of Arendt’s categories, a performative structure may well be a happy “fabrication”, but it cannot become an “action” until at least two persons are involved (1958, 188ff).

Or again, according to a similar terminology, if things are to be done with words and the words are to be received and understood, it follows that, as Bakhtin–Voloshinov argued, “every act of understanding is dialogic” (1930, 167).

Participation and dialogue are the conditions of having a text belong in a certain situation as a performative. Yet democratic idealism should not be considered universal. Some degree of non-reciprocal authority is usually also operative, since the first person can only perform if the second person recognizes the right to perform. That is, if the first person is to do things with words, the second person must initially consent to listen to things within words, and there is no rational guarantee that this consent will be reciprocal. As Austin recognized, the belonging of performatives is based on an *asymmetric* “we”.

One final reminder before we leave successful performatives: Perhaps obviously, the existence of discursive positions does not mean that there are always real people available to take up those positions. As a text, *Finnegans Wake* projects an implied receiver able to concretize maximum polysemy, but it might fairly be supposed that no flesh-and-blood reader except perhaps Joyce has been able fully to occupy that position. A distinction must thus be maintained between the asymmetric “we” which discursively presupposes or invites participation in textual performance, and the social participants—actual senders and receivers—to whom the text as real performance can be attributed.

Distance can break performance

Since the discursive second person is defined simply as a potentially participative “non-I”, there is in principle no distance between the two positions concerned. If the performance is to be fully performative, both “I” and “you” must be mutually present.

Unfortunately, beyond the world of discursive positions, there is always time and space between the entities filling the “I” and the “you”. This extra-textual distance interests me because it might be able to determine thresholds beyond which certain texts cease to be properly instrumental. The isolated question “What is the

time?”—a key example for Bakhtin’s dialogic principle (1930, 164ff.)—is not only discursively unique in terms of the “now” of each performance, but also implies the presence of a *receiver* located very close to the I-here-now. That is, unavoidable factors like the distance involved in the passage to a real receiver, the processing of the message, the formulation of a reply and the sending and reception of the reply should, according to discursive logic, not involve any time at all, since the “now” of the question sent should correspond to the “now” of the reply received. And yet it is obvious that the entire double transfer process must take time and the two “now”s cannot be the same. The discursive logic is at odds with the fact of material distance.

For how long can discursive logic win out? For how long can participants pretend that there is no distance between them, that the “now” of the question is referred to by the “now” of the reply? Within a few seconds perhaps, if the speaker’s requirements do not include extreme exactitude. But a minute would create an anomalous and slightly absurd situation, and it is difficult to imagine a situation in which the isolated question could be written. The utterance “What is the time?” can only be transferred away from its “I-here-now” within certain pragmatic limits; it has a certain *elasticity*, a capacity to stretch out and remain valid as meaningful communication. But beyond a certain point, this elasticity will be broken and communication will be defeated by distance. The utterance will reveal its limited transferability.

It is possible that the relative transferability of a text can be analyzed simply by isolating and assessing all those elements that refer to or imply an I-here-now calling for participation by a second person.

Hegel discovers transfer (1807, 151):

“To the question, ‘What is the Now?’ we reply, for example, the Now is night-time. To test the truth of this certainty of sense, a simple experiment is all we need: write that truth down. A truth cannot lose anything by being written down, and just as little by our preserving and keeping it. If we look at the truth we have written down, look at it now, at this noon-time, we shall have to say that it has turned stale and become out of date.”

But exactly who is this “we”, beyond the supposedly naïve consciousness? And why is the “now” of night-time marginally more transferable than the “now” of “What is the time?”

Transferability has second-person thresholds

The analysis of language as action has its limits. After all, not all texts require the same kind of immediate response as “What is the time?”. If I write and send a let-

ter in search of a reply, the second person should presumably be located beyond the range of my voice but not beyond the range of my expected lifetime or the value of the stamps put on the envelope. In this case, it would make no sense to ask for the time. However, if I should write a novel like Robbe-Grillet's *Les Gommés*, where time receives a cotextual literary structuration, I would in principle be content and even gratified to think that I might reach a reader beyond my life span, beyond calculated transmission costs, beyond all earthly possibility of participative reciprocity, and it would indeed be meaningful to have one of my characters ask "What is the time?"

Participative second persons can be sought on at least three levels, associated with three different degrees of transfer:

- *Shared transfer*: For some texts, the implied receiver calls for an actual receiver who is situationally present so that a reply can reach the sender and discursively *share the same I-here-now*. That is, the reply should ideally be in the same present tense ("The time is...", or "Do you mean that...?"). Transfer beyond this restricted and usually oral situation will leave the text decidedly out of place. (Example: "What is the time?")
- *Referential transfer*: Where the physical receiver called for by the implied receiver need not share the same I-here-now but should be able to *refer to at least one of these coordinates*, transfer may well extend beyond short-distance situational constraints. But if some reply is required—if the text is not indifferent to the location of the second person—, factors of age, space and time impose practical constraints on transferability. (Example: my monthly letters to my mother)
- *Indefinite transfer*: Some texts need neither reply nor reference to an I-here-now they can in principle be transferred indefinitely, within the constraints of world and time. (Example: *Les Gommés*)

The thresholds between these three modes are obviously imposed on a practical continuum that goes from short-distance to mid-distance to long-distance transfer, regulating the degrees to which increased distance may break initial elasticity.

It might prove possible to relate these thresholds to particular text-types, perhaps along the lines of the categories Reiss (1971) adopts from Bühler, originally based on the three linguistic persons. But such correlations are more apparent than real, since transfer-based analysis concerns the position and role of the second person within an inclusive "we"; it is in principle indifferent to the relative dominance

of first or third persons or to relative focus on form, content or effect. In fact, the problem of text-types could turn out to be something of a red herring in this context. Although it is true that the limited elasticity of certain texts restricts their ability to remain properly instrumental after various degrees of transfer, there is no fatal determinism at stake: a text can be transferred beyond its initial elasticity and assume a new performative status; or the same discourse can be rewritten, with the same pronominal structure but with more elaborate coordinates, in order to heighten its transferability. That is, texts can be transformed in order to pass over one threshold or another, and the modes of rewriting need not affect text-type models based on criteria other than those of transferability. This is one reason why I do not expect much help from text linguistics on this point.

Textual worlds increase transferability

The possibility of breaking bonds of belonging and yet maintaining instrumental status clearly has something to do with referentiality and the existence of codes shared by separated sending and receiving positions. But it would be inadequate to describe transferability as a quality of the referents or the codes themselves. Its conditions are not strictly semantic; its investigation does not present problems as to whether or not we really understand the intentions that originally gave rise to the utterances. Transferability has much more to do with how well the text itself can function as a semantic world.

Let us accept that the question “What is the time?” is relatively untransferable because its referent—the time—is highly specific to the “now” of its I-here-now and because its assumed code—mechanical clock-time—is not as universally available as the sun and the moon. Now, accepting these restrictions, is it possible to imagine modes of textual presentation in which the same question could become eminently transferable? Obviously, the utterance could be part of a mathematical problem, explicitly conditioned by a series of cotextual astronomical observations and interpretative codes such that the reply should always be the same; or, as we have noted, the explicit cotext of *Les Gommés* uses similar principles to structure clock-time in terms of an Oedipal code, able consistently to provide the question with far more than its isolated meaningfulness. In such cases, transferability is significantly increased by textual presentation not only of a general semantic world, but also of the asymmetric “we” for whom the utterance is initially meaningful. Untransferability can thus be understood as a result of the absence of such cotextual presentation; it ensues from dependence on unexpressed or implicit context.

More metaphorically, if a text cannot be taken away from its owners, it is sometimes possible to convert the owners into signs and to transfer them along with the text.

Several objections might be raised here. It could be said that the isolated question “What is the time?” is relatively untransferable because it refers to a fixed reality belonging to a world external to the discourse itself, whereas the possible mathematical or literary cotexts make the question transferable simply because they are fictional representations of that world. Are we then confusing reality with fiction? But surely the information sought is in neither case external: it is merely an encoding of the I-here-now internal to the utterance itself. In relatively untransferable cases like the naked “What is the time?”, the appropriate codes remain unsaid and implicit; the I-here-now cannot be moved and the implied receiver’s response must be specific. In relatively transferable examples like *Les Gommages*, the codes are inscribed and explicit; both the I-here-now and the implied receiver’s response remain constant and can be moved with the text. From the perspective of translation studies, the apparently greater reality of codes like clock-time is simply a function of their common use and acquired naturalness within certain cultures. Their transferability does not concern any assumed fictionality—clock-time is just as much a convention as is Oedipal fate—; it is simply a question of what is implicit or explicit in the text concerned.

Transfer may call for explication

In principle, *the more explicit the codes, the more transferable the text and the weaker the belonging to an original I-here-now*. This can be understood in terms of Bernstein’s distinction between universalistic and particularistic meanings:

“Universalistic meanings are those in which the principles and operations are made linguistically explicit, whereas particularistic orders of meaning are relatively linguistically implicit. [...] Where orders of meaning are particularistic, [...] then such meanings are less context independent and more context bound. That is, tied to a local relationship and to a local social structure [...]. Where meanings are universalistic, they are in principle available to all because the principles and operations have been made so explicit and public.” (1970, 164-5)

Bernstein’s use of this distinction is broadly based on observations of class language: working-class speech tends to use implicit codes and is more context-bound dominant-class language is generally more explicit and context independent. This sociolinguistic projection is highly pertinent to translation studies in that

it breaks down the all too frequent assumption that transfer starts and ends with “given” societies or “given” tongues. Since societies and tongues are very heterogeneous and badly delimited entities, principles of transferability should be quite subtle and sensitive to complex local conditions. Heterogeneity does not stop at class barriers: upward and downward social mobility create numerous internal modes of transfer by which it is possible to go from one order of meaning to another. The context-dependent “What is the time?” might be rewritten as a context-independent mathematical problem; the shorthand codes used in scientific theories could be rewritten as explicit prose descriptions in works of divulgation; a literary text may use multiple explicit codes to recuperate and regenerate the implicitness of unelaborated spoken language... And if all else fails, the transferability of a text can be enhanced by attempts to make its implicit codes explicit through monumental and reactionary academization in an extra-textual space, in the way that standardization of the French language was partly an attempt to ensure the transferability of neo-Classical drama written in that language. Through all these movements, the same basic principle holds: the more explicit the codes, the more transferable the text.

Absolute explicitness is rarely transferred

Absolute explicitness can be understood as textual completeness, as the ideal presentation of all the axioms, definitions and descriptions needed to understand the exact meaning of each proposition made. This ideal would require the creation of a specific self-contained world wholly inscribed in the text, assuming no prior knowledge and making no presuppositions of extra-textual material. Such a text would remain meaningful and stable throughout even the longest cultural trajectory.⁵³ But it would be fair to say that there exists no such text, or at least, that a text as willfully explicit as Russell and Whitehead’s *Principia Mathematica* (1910-13) must effectively defeat its transferability by becoming so painstakingly dense as to be relatively unimportant beyond fairly immediate cultural horizons. If everything is put in the text, what participation is left to the actual lives of non-textual readers?

Some distinction must thus be made between that which can be transferred and that which has no reason to be transferred. Unlike the perverse density of the *Prin-*

53 Elaboration and stable transfer according to Michel Serres (1974, 11): “It is possible that science is the set of messages that remain optimally invariable throughout any translation strategy.”

cipia Mathematica, the relative explicitness of Euclidean geometry has enabled its stability to be maintained throughout a long series of intercultural transfers and adaptations, basically because it remains an important tradition for pedagogical purposes (Barnes 1977, 42-43). So there are certain practical limits to textual explicitness: the transferred text must remain of some importance to the social interests promulgating the transfer, and excessive density or textual length can sometimes destroy this value.

Belonging may be a tone of voice

The movement from implicit to explicit meanings, from the particularistic to the universalistic, is also a movement from first-person and second-person bonds to the neutrality of the third person. This is why the very fact of transfer forces translators to seek and elaborate the anonymity of third-person worlds, doing away with the I-here-now as far as is humanly possible. But some particularistic meanings still refuse to be transferred. The Bavarian “Mia san mia” (“we are we”), for example, is no doubt best rendered as “Bavarians are Bavarians” (or even “Bavarians will be Bavarians”, on the model of “boys will be boys”), but this third-person utterance has obviously lost its Bavarian particularity. The words no longer accomplish the act of being Bavarian. Indeed, one senses that the words are no longer instrumental once transferred and translated.

How is it that a phrase with no explicit performative and no obviously restricted I-here-now can nevertheless so strongly resist transfer? Is it merely because of the first and second persons inscribed in the semantic “we” of “mia”, or is it because of the particular quantitative form of the term itself, the peculiar shape of the mouth required to pronounce it, a special intonation and certain sliding vowels which only slide so and are intoned thus in a highly localized part of the world? The words themselves belong to the “we”; they will probably continue to belong to participative Bavarians whatever their referential or discursive status. In this sense, their distinguishing traits carry, implicitly, a sociolinguistic “we” defined by untransferable familiarity. The utterance activates this familiarity; it activates all that remains unsaid because already understood, all that is felt to be performative, understanding but not saying “I declare myself to be Bavarian” and “I declare the ‘you’ of my inclusive ‘we’ to be Bavarian”, as well as “I declare the ‘you’ excluded from my ‘we’ to be non-Bavarian.” And so to the hills.

As much as language might appear to be public property—the *res publica* of the Republic of Letters—, most specific uses of language indicate some degree of be-

longing to a “we”. This collective first person could be a culture, a social group, a profiled sender and receiver, and sometimes an individual sender like the Joyce who is both the implied author and reader of *Finnegans Wake*. Belonging can depend on a tone of voice, an accent, or an endemic choice of words. And in theory, the stronger the belonging, the less transferable the text.

Belonging may work on implicit knowledge

The following is an Australian aboriginal chant recorded at Groote Eylandt in 1948:

“Nabira-mira, Dumuan-dipa, Namuka-madja, Aï-ājura.”

The text has been rendered as follows:

“At the time of creation, the Nabira-miras, father and son, tried unsuccessfully to fish with spears. Their spears were changed into the cliffs called Dumuan-dipa, and they themselves became the cliffs known as Namuka-madja, close to the island of Aï-ājura.” (Mountford 1956, 62-63)

As a translation strategy, this could be described as absolute equivalence plus expansion, since all the surface elements of the Y text have been transliterated in the TT. The added quantity is used to explain what the four proper names, each of them repeated in the translation, could have meant in the projected original. That is, ST context has become TT context; there has been a radical movement from the implicit to the explicit. Everything appears to have been rendered. Indeed, the TT allows one retrospectively to read the four proper names of the aboriginal chant as forming an English-language text, as a kind of back-transliteration. Such would be maximum translation as cultural appropriation. But has everything really been transferred?

Since the chant has no explicit I-here-now, it is difficult to analyze its belonging in terms of performative verbs. And since its surface language can be read as forming an English text, there is no reason to assume that these sounds in themselves convey any sacred or specifically aboriginal sense of belonging. But the chant unmistakably belongs more to the aboriginal tribe than to the people of the translator Mountford, if only because it is through the repetition of such ritual texts, through repetition of the spiritual time when humans and land features were interchangeable, that the participating aborigines affirm their institutional status as

the tribe of what the Dutch named Groote Eylandt. It is not difficult to see the proper names as representing ancestral dreamtime characters whose continued natural presence gives the tribe at least spiritual authority for its existence on the land. The translator and his readers can no doubt understand and explain the basic structure and social function of the chant; some translators and readers might even believe in the narrative content thus attributed; but only the absent aborigines of the recorded text could fully participate in the discursive action by which they reaffirm what we might see as their ownership of land, and what they would prefer to see as their belonging to the land. In a sense, without any recourse to pronouns or specifically performative linguistic forms, the cultural knowledge presupposed by the chant enables its participants to sing their specially instrumental version of “Mia san mia”.

Gladys Corunna on the transfer of untransferable categories (in Morgan 1987, 306):

“I suppose, in hundreds of years’ time, there won’t be any black Aboriginals left. Our colour dies out as we mix with other races, we’ll lose some of the physical characteristics that distinguish us now. I like to think that, no matter what we become, our spiritual tie with the land and the other unique qualities we possess will somehow weave their way through to future generations of Australians. I mean, this is our land, after all, surely we’ve got something to offer.” In opposition to Mauss’s belief that “the categories live and die with their peoples” (see note 1), dying peoples must place hope in the fact that their “we” can always become something else.

Belonging may work on forgotten knowledge

One further point should be made here. The textual implicitness associated with an element like a proper name does not necessarily mean that all participants in the corresponding performance are able to say exactly what the proper name signifies. Many elements are left implicit because, although they have gained familiarity through repetition—and perhaps because of excessive familiarity—, they are no longer fully understood. In the case of Australian aboriginal songs, von Leonhardi found that “most of the men sing the chants without understanding them, and women and children witness sacred rites without having knowledge of their meaning; but the old men, who carry the traditions, know precisely what these acts mean, in all their details, and are able to explain them” (in Lévy-Bruhl 1935, 114). The initiated can thus guard the secrets of belonging, but the texts will still belong simply because they are felt to be familiar or are associated with childhood, with the family or with tribal tradition. Although European nursery rhymes have simi-

larly had their meanings confined to specialist works of reference and research, they are still felt to be “ours” and are still passed on to future generations.

Such belonging without knowledge is very much a problem of translation. It might explain why I experience considerable difficulty when trying to translate hackneyed Australian terms like “the bush” into Spanish: I simply do not know what these words really mean in Australian culture (the culture of which I nevertheless consider myself a “native informant”). As a general term, “the bush” has been repeated so often and everyone is supposed to be so aware of what it means as a mythologized anti-city that no one bothers to explain its exact boundaries. Does the bush include desert? Does it necessarily exclude farmland? If one “goes bush”, does one necessarily go to *the* bush? Answers vary. If there ever was an exact meaning, it has been forgotten or covered over with myth.

The bonds of belonging thus depend not only on the collective knowledge that enables certain elements to remain textually implicit, but also on the forgotten knowledge that has enabled implicitness to become familiar and tend towards ignorance. In this second case, the translator’s task is all the more difficult because there is textual indeterminacy well before the moment of translating. The best the translator can do is often to reproduce this same indeterminacy, the same cultural lacunae, as a trace of the other’s belonging (cf. Pym 1992b).

Indeterminate belonging in Patrick White’s “Down at the Dump”, into Spanish:

“Do we [Australians] know exactly what our words mean? Can we identify ‘the stench of crushed boggabri and cotton pear’? Which years are associated with ‘Customlines’ and ‘Breath-o’-Pine’? What is meant by ‘There’s some boys Sherry knows with a couple of Gs’? Translation is often a negotiation of details that are mysteriously only half-known in the source culture. It is sometimes necessary to resort to strategies rarely repeated in the textbooks: when in doubt, bluff or leave it out. I must admit that I was not sure enough of ‘cotton pear’ to reject ‘acanto’ (prickly thistle); ‘Breath-o’-Pine’ became ‘Centella’ (a common detergent product remembered by Spaniards who also remember ‘customos’, the Spanish version of customlines); and as for ‘Gs’, they have become ‘coches’ (cars), but will probably disappear if not confirmed.” (Pym 1989a, 667)

Two years after publishing these questions in Australia, I still have serious doubts about “Gs”, and Patrick White died without replying.

The tongue carries forgotten belonging

The analysis of belonging is important not only as a way of approaching a dynamic conception of cultures, but also as a partial explanation of the peculiar powers retained by language systems as tongues. Although translation is not an exclu-

sively linguistic phenomenon, it is very difficult entirely to ignore the special power that tongues have over the way translators work. As important as it is to know how many kilometers or centuries lie between a Y text and its place of maximum belonging, affective possession is usually more immediately altered by a jump from one language to another. Tongues would thus appear to have the potential to become symbolic places in themselves.

One explanation of this peculiar power lies in the external symbolization of tongues as entities subject to collective ownership. If a tongue can be taught and thus transferred, then it can be sold, bought and possessed, as is implicitly recognized in the question “How many languages do you have?”. But the possessive aspect of the symbolization and transfer of tongues nevertheless remains a mostly metalinguistic affair, concerning what can be said about the tongue rather than what the tongue itself might have to say. Such overdetermination can equally affect ways of dressing, color patterns, music, warfare, or indeed any other communication system. External symbolization is thus more likely to express existing bonds—power relationships which exist outside the tongue—rather than explain why the tongue as such should occupy a privileged place amongst communication systems.

Of the numerous attempts to explain the power lodged within the tongue itself, at least two are worth retaining. The first is a principle of translatability, as found in Hjelmslev:

“In practice, a language is a semiotic into which all other semiotics may be translated—both all other languages and all other conceivable semiotic structures. This translatability rests on the fact that all languages, and they alone, are in a position to form any purport whatsoever; in a language, and only in a language, can we ‘work over the inexpressible until it is expressed’.”
(1943, 109)

Hjelmslev’s position should not be associated with naïve axioms of unlimited expressibility and creativity, which not only fail to explain why languages are difficult to translate, but necessarily attract at least a few voices of reasonable dissent: Bakhtin–Voloshinov, for one (or two), believed that the semantic fields of music and painting could not adequately be structured in any tongue (1930, 62). Emphasis should instead be placed on the value of what Hjelmslev cites from Kierkegaard as the possibility of “working over the inexpressible until it is expressed”. A labor-value principle of effability would enable the statement to be relativized in the following way: “...in a tongue, translation from other communication systems is always possible and involves considerably less labor than that required to trans-

late from a tongue into any other communication system". The formulation is perhaps not as lapidary as Kierkegaard's, but seems less likely to invite facile evasions of its consequences.

If translation into a tongue is easier than translation into any other communication system, a simple principle of least effort would suggest that the contents of all media, all means of expression—and thereby all the various fields of human activity—are most likely to find their common ground expressed in the space of the tongue. Despite synaesthesia, despite cinematographic montage, despite an age supposedly given to visual communication, it is in language that a color can most easily enter into syntagm with a mathematical function, that rocks can become contiguous with metaphysics, and that the past can become worry about the future. Like a vast marketplace, the tongue enables exchange relationships to be established between the most diverse materials, between the most disparate levels. The result of this massive convergence is a certain fusion and confusion, not only of the contents thus brought into contact, but of the lexis itself, whose corresponding principles of thrift and modulation lead to homonyms and synonyms, the fundamental instruments of semantic contamination generating fleeting metaphor and ever more subtle and intricate connotation. Part of the privilege and power of the tongue thus ensues from its capacity to tap numerous different aspects of human activity and to overlap, superimpose and even bury them within more complex wholes. The general result of these processes may be described as embeddedness.

The second possible explanation of the tongue's peculiar power has already been touched upon in our consideration of the I-here-now: only tongues, it seems, systematically incorporate the basic instrument necessary for the asymmetric expression of subjectivity:

"It is remarkable that amongst the signs of each tongue, whatever its type, era or region, there are always 'personal pronouns'. A tongue without expression of the person is unthinkable."
(Benveniste 1966, 261)

This is by no means an idle observation, especially when aligned with Benveniste's explicit restriction of active pronouns to asymmetric first and second persons, and his recognition of this same asymmetry in performatives requiring "authority of the speaking subject" (1966, 273).⁵⁴ If the basic structure of asymmetric

⁵⁴ With respect to the primacy of pronouns: There is at least one dissenting voice. Although Humboldt went out of his way to list personal pronouns amongst the most primitive facts of language, Jakobson insisted they were extremely suspect intrusions, being "amongst the latest acquisitions in child language and the first elements to be lost in aphasia" (1957, 180).

subjectivity is one of the intrinsic elements of languages, it is surely no accident that the tongue should be symbolized as a privileged means of expressing belonging.

The tongue thus at once binds together countless aspects of social life and incorporates the essential structure of that which can potentially move between different aspects of social life, the discursive subject.

Transfer and translation themselves might not be especially linguistic, but their opposite or opponent—the belonging of texts—certainly is.

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We have seen several of the many ways in which bonds of textual belonging can operate, creating resistance to transfer and translation. A text can belong to a specific “we” through its status as an effective performative, through surface markings indicating specific group ownership, through incorporation of specially semanticized implicit material, through the indetermination of certain implicit material, or through its formulation in one or several symbolically overdetermined tongues. All texts activate some if not all of these mechanisms to one degree or another. Which is to say that all texts to some extent belong to a complex social “we”.

However, few texts are so extremely owned as to be untransferable. The modes of belonging outlined above do not normally reach the level of “cultural specificity”; they do not depend on immutable non-corresponding linguistic categories or impenetrable epistemological precepts; there can be no question of associating the fact of belonging with any sterile dichotomy between relativism and universalism. It should be stressed that the degrees of attachment to a specific “we” vary considerably and are open to considerable transformation and manipulation. This is especially true in politics and publicity, the discourses most directly concerned with the formation and identification of inclusive/exclusive first-person plurals. A theory able to mistake belonging for epistemic relativism is also likely to trust the fundamental myths of politicians and publicists. This is one reason why, as a humanist wary of exclusive collectivities, I prefer to analyze belonging in terms of the mechanisms outlined above.

Embeddedness is complex belonging

As we have seen, implicitness, and thus a good part of belonging, can be related to repeated use and accrued familiarity. According to Zipf's law of abbreviation, the most frequently used linguistic items will tend to be the shortest, with a high semantic density per quantity of textual material and thus a high degree of implicitness. But just as implicitness is only one mode of belonging, in-situ repetition over time is only the most simple of the many ways in which textual material can historically achieve abbreviation and resist transfer. Different modes of belonging usually occur simultaneously, in different parts of the same text or to varying degrees for different participants, such that resistance to transfer is commonly of a complexity that bears little resemblance to mechanisms of simple repetition.

By in-situ repetition I mean cases like the aboriginal chant repeated generation after generation on Groote Eylandt, or perhaps the circulation of schoolboy jokes, which constantly revolve around the same taboos. Such repetition tends to produce results like a restriction of the circle of receivers, certitude, genre stability and thus a certain homogeneity within the participative "we". This is the simplest way in which a text can become attached to a group of people. But can belonging can also be the result of complex, changing and fundamentally heterogeneous social relationships? It should be noted that a text that is often repeated by the same participants in the same situation can gain a degree of implicitness without necessarily becoming untransferable: the chant *can* be translated; schoolboy jokes travel around the world and across generations. But when a text has been repeated in numerous different situations, when it has circulated across contiguous or overlapping social contexts and accrued different but related layers of meaning, the embeddedness ensuing from the variety of possible participants surely makes that text much more difficult to transfer. In the first case—restricted repetition—the singularity or stability of the situation usually means that universalistic meanings are recoverable. In the second case—repetition in different but contiguous or overlapping situations—meanings tend to be particularistic because only half understood by many participants. It is thus quite wrong to associate maximum non-transferability with cultural closure or social homogeneity, especially of the kind presupposed by exponents of "cultural specificity".

Continuing this argument, relative embeddedness can be associated with a diffusely collective and profoundly ideological "we", since it depends on modes of participation which cut across the division of labor. As much as the specialization of the sciences and the internationalization of markets progressively work against

embeddedness, there are other discursive organizations—politics and publicity, but also religion, the family and Taylorist production—which work to open and maintain passages from one field to another, creating no more than the illusion of a closed semantic space in which all are compelled to use the same terms and to speak the same vaguely understood language. Such, perhaps, is the type of complex embeddedness which best resists transfer.

Significant examples from the significantly limited transfer of AIDS:

The abbreviations AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome), HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) and TMP-SMX (trimethoprim and sulfamethoxazole) can all be found repeated in various articles in the *New England Journal of Medicine* over the period 1988-1990. Repetition and abbreviation suggest that the terms in some sense belong to participants in these articles. And yet the degree of belonging is clearly not the same for all three terms. “TMP-SMX” rarely goes beyond medical situations, except when there is public debate about the cost of these drugs; the term might be said to belong to specialists, but this very restriction means that it is readily transferable to specialists around the world, most of whom feel no need to translate the abbreviation (the Spanish form is “TMP-SMX”). “HIV” does have more widespread usage but tends to be restricted to participants who know what the letters stand for (although news reports are full of the semantic redundancy “the HIV virus”, as if the “V” stood for something else). This siglum thus tends not to accrue extensive non-specialist layers of meaning, but is nevertheless usually transformed (“VIH” in Spanish). The term “AIDS”, on the other hand, is used and repeated well beyond strictly medical articles; it has value in many social groups where people have forgotten or are unable say what the letters stand for; it may mean the curse of God, a CIA plot gone wrong, the persecution of minorities, a tragedy, a challenge, an expense... or all these at once, since the term circulates from social group to social group, taking on layers of meaning whose very complexity is in each case a measure of embeddedness and thus untransferability. In its specialist pathological sense, “AIDS” is no doubt “AIDS” wherever it occurs. But in the sense in which the term can culturally belong to its participants, “AIDS” is one thing if you have it, and quite another if you do not; it is one thing in Britain, where circulation of the term is conditioned by the fact that most sufferers are male homosexuals, and quite another in Spain and Italy, where most sufferers are intravenous drug users. The specialist sense can be transferred and thus translated (significantly, as “SIDA” and not as “AIDS”); but the circuits of cultural embeddedness are more difficult to transfer, and thus of a belonging that is far more difficult to understand, to explain, or to translate.

There is an apparent paradox here that requires a brief note: How is it that the intracultural circulation of texts, which is surely a mode of transfer, can create cultural embeddedness, which is by definition a mode of resistance to transfer? Can this paradox be explained without having to assume cultural closure or intersocietal discontinuity?

Clearly, there are two different kinds of transfer involved here. The first movement is from a restricted context to a heterogeneous series of contexts, from specialist usage to general usage, from relative independence to relative embeddedness (e.g. what “AIDS” means across American society). The second movement then has as its starting point a situation of greater heterogeneity and relative embeddedness, and will probably seek reception in a more restricted context (e.g. what “AIDS” means to Susan Sontag). This second movement thus in principle involves much greater resistance to transfer. There is no overwhelming paradox or contradiction between these two kinds of transfer. The first simply complicates things for the second.

Michel Bréal on the acceleration of embeddedness and two kinds of transfer:

a) “[One of the causes of the modern acceleration of semantic change] comes from industrial production. Thinkers and philosophers have the privilege of creating new words of impressive amplitude and intellectual allure. These words then enter the critic’s vocabulary and thereby find their way to the artists. But once received in the painter’s or sculptor’s studio, it is not long before they extend to the world of manufacture and commerce, where they are used without constraint or scruple. Thus, in a relatively short time, the language of metaphysics feeds the language of advertisements.” (1897, 116)

b) “Metaphors do not stay forever chained to the tongue in which they are born. When judicious and striking, they travel from language to language and become the heritage of humanity.” (1897, 146)

As one of the most perceptive linguists of the modern city, Bréal saw not only that particularistic meanings tend to develop from universalistic meanings, but also that the movement of terms from field to field can lead to rapid embeddedness, to culture as fashion, and thus to an acceleration of semantic change. This same movement may then be such that some new terms—Bréal naïvely assumed them to be the metaphors of most value—will travel beyond the tongues of any one city. In this way, rapid embeddedness could possibly work to the advantage of a certain intercultural transferability, the term gaining a kind of centrifugal force that eventually shoots it out into another culture, although the value of what is thus transferred is quite another question. Example, obviously: “La Movida”.

Cultural embeddedness conditions translational difficulty

The problem of the relative difficulty involved in translating different texts concerns two quite distinct domains: the training of translators, in which texts have to be selected for courses at various levels, and the remuneration of translational work, where different rates are sometimes presumed to correspond to different degrees of difficulty.

Unfortunately, these two domains are commonly confused. Since technical and specialized translations are deemed the most valuable in terms of the supply-and-demand economy within which translators are paid, it is assumed that these same texts must be the most difficult from the pedagogical point of view, where supply-and-demand has little to say.

But analysis in terms of the relative belonging and embeddedness of different texts suggests that the real scale of difficulty is more likely to be precisely the reverse, since technical and scientific texts are in principle relatively explicit and untouched by complex social embedding.

Using this kind of analysis, translational difficulty might partly be defined as a quality of the Y text—not the mythical ST—immediately prior to the moment when the translator begins to translate. A text to be translated is obviously not more or less difficult simply because the translator is good or bad or because the translator's client is liberal or demanding. The kind of difficulty we are concerned with here has nothing to do with one-off shortcomings. But it has everything to do with how much the text presupposes its place of production and how easily it can enter the proposed place of translational reception. The kind of difficulty we are interested in is thus a function of the directionality and relative completeness of a text when in the Y position.

The hypothesis to be investigated is that translational difficulty is determined not by the actual operations that take place in the transition from Y to TT—the number of such operations is better seen the *manifestation* of difficulty—, but by the relative ability of a text to escape embeddedness and belonging.

If the problem has been formulated correctly, the most transferable texts should also be those which are most easily translated. One way of drawing out the consequences of this hypothesis is to compare it with the observations and conclusions of other analyses, particularly those applied to pedagogical situations.

A syllabus project prepared by the Barcelona translation school (Neunzig et al. 1985, working from Reiss 1975 and Arntz 1982) presents a “text difficulty profile” based on no less than fifteen criteria, with four categories for each criterion. Most of these criteria are fairly self-evident, including the reference to high information density as a feature of difficult texts. But there is no criterion for legitimate reduction or expansion, no consideration of ways of creating or overcoming embeddedness, and thus no reference to the strategies by which embeddedness might be altered in translation. This significant absence—based on the assumption that translational equivalence always requires quantitative equality—underlies some fairly dubious principles like the following:

- Subject matter: “general” texts are held to be easier to translate than “specialized” texts.
- Social location: communication between a non-specialist sender and a general public is easier than communication between specialists.
- Register: “everyday” language is easier to translate than “technical” or “literary” language.
- Distance: “cultural and temporal proximity” presents less problems than does extreme cultural and temporal distance.

Although only the last of these points refers explicitly to intercultural transfer, failure to consider embeddedness can be seen as a common denominator leading to shortcomings in all four criteria.

What is a “general text” if not a culturally embedded text, of considerable translational difficulty to the extent that it is used in or draws on numerous different contexts? The Barcelona analysts are not alone in their failure to understand this. Jean Delisle, for example, openly recommends the use of such texts in the teaching of translators, since “initial training in the use of language is made unnecessarily complicated by specialized terminology” (1984, 25). This sounds quite reasonable. But in saying this, Delisle falsely assumes that “general texts” are automatically free of terminological problems, as if magazine articles, publicity material and public speeches were not the genres most susceptible to embeddedness, textually bringing together numerous socially contiguous and overlapping contexts in their creation of complex belonging. A specialized text may well present terminological problems—the translator might have to use dictionaries or talk with specialists before confidently transcoding the English “tomography” as French “tomographie” or Spanish “tomografía”—, but this is surely far less difficult than going through the context analysis by which Delisle himself takes seven pages or so to explain why, in a newspaper report on breast removal, the expression “sense of loss”—superbly embedded and indeterminate in English—cannot be translated (for whom?, why?) as “sentiment de perte” (1984, 105-112).⁵⁵ No truly technical

⁵⁵ On Delisle's sense of loss:

Delisle's elaborate analysis of how his students translated this text and how they should have translated it is made slightly absurd not by his initial assumption that “pragmatic” texts like newspaper articles can be translated independently of any specific purpose or any specific client or reader. But the fact is that newspapers articles and the like are rarely translated as such; they tend to require rewriting for a particular newspaper, for a particular public. Subtle semantic distinctions are of little consequence when applied to a text that no real-world translator would be called upon to translate.

terms are as complex as this most vaguely “general” of examples! The extreme difficulty of such texts involves negotiation of the nuances collected from the numerous situations in which an expression like “sense of loss” can be used and which, for reasons which escape purely linguistic logic, have never assumed the same contiguity with respect to “sentiment de perte”. In foregoing the use of specialist dictionaries and collaboration with specialist informants, believers in the ease of “general texts” risk condemning students to the far greater and more mysterious difficulties of perpetual indetermination through embeddedness. The outcome tends to be not only professional guilt in those apprentice translators who are not quite as well embedded as are the ST and the TT, but also a severely inaccurate impression of the translator’s profession, since truly general texts, which must be recreated afresh if parallel embedding is to be produced, are rarely translated, except in the training of translators.

The above argument against presuppositions of general subject-matter can be repeated for the Barcelona school’s similarly dubious projections of general readers or the false naturalness of an “everyday” discursive register. At base, these are simply different manifestations of the same lack of realist thought, since the very generality of the general mostly denies any reason for transfer and thus cannot adequately explain translation as a purposeful activity.

However, Barcelona’s fourth criterion, which attempts to articulate difficulty according to distance, does indeed address the fact of transfer and the problem of belonging. At first glance it is only common sense to say that it is easier to translate from a familiar context than from distanced modes of belonging about which virtually nothing is known. As has been argued above (with respect to “What is the time?”), there are theoretical reasons why increases in the distance Y–ST tend to break the performative capacity of texts and result in relative untransferability. But is good common sense always borne out by common practice? Is performance theory always pertinent to translational difficulty? The answer is perhaps not as obvious as it seems, especially since it has been suggested—by George Steiner (1975), Seleskovitch and Lederer (1989, 137) and indeed in the above discussion of contradictory equivalence—that certain modes of translational difficulty may in fact be *inversely proportional* to the distance crossed in transfer.

Proximity can be more problematic than extreme distance. As we shall see in further analysis of “La Movida”—which continues to move in the next chapter—the French translation of the Spanish term, although geo-culturally the closest, was by far the most complex and drawn out, and thus presumably the most difficult to produce. This might be understood in terms of a basic home truth like “familiarity

breeds contempt”, or a less common economic truth like “common borders breed agricultural competition”. It is mostly forgotten that the cultures best known by the translator are also likely to be the cultures about which TT receivers have the most preconceptions and often misconceptions. The closer you are to a culture, then the more you are likely to be aware of the complicated mechanisms of belonging that make that culture’s embedded texts difficult to transfer. If one knows almost nothing about such embeddedness, texts may well radically change their value in transfer, but they will effectively become far less complicated to translate. In questions of cultural distance, a certain ignorance might be bliss. Despite performance analysis, complexity would thus seem more likely to result from cultural proximity than from extreme distance.

Does this conclusion contradict our comments on performatives and belonging? I think not. Consider for a moment the essential difference between short-distance transfer (“La Movida” from Spain to France) and longer-distance transfer (“La Movida” from Spain to *Newsweek*). In the first case, complexity results from the numerous levels on which the two cultures are connected and interact both before and after the particular transfer concerned; the transfer situation itself has something of the heterogeneity of intracultural movements; the receivers of the translation are likely to adopt a participative attitude towards the text. In the second case, however, where there are far fewer contacts and the transfer is directed towards a more restricted and possibly more ignorant public, receivers of the translation tend to be positioned as passive consumers and the concealed problems of embeddedness and belonging become almost irrelevant. There can be no doubt that a text like “La Movida” will retain more of its original belonging in cases of short-distance transfer, but this is precisely why proximity creates more problems for translation. In the case of long-distance movements, where transferable belonging tends to zero and purposes are more highly focused, translated texts may be grossly exotic, inappropriate and appropriative (“The Happening”), but they will be considerably easier to produce.

The question of relative distance can thus be interpreted as another version of the false dichotomy between general and specialist texts, general and specialist publics and general and specialist language. There is no substantial reason why proximity should fall on the “general” side and long-distance transfer on the “specialist” side. The more correct conclusion is that maximum translational difficulty is associated with maximum generality.

These are not merely perverse arguments. According to my own experience—and allowing that I work in active collaboration with clients and specialists—, it is

easier to translate a technical text than a newspaper article; it is easier to address a closely profiled receiver rather than a general public; it is easier to translate Australian aboriginal texts into Spanish than to describe Protestantism to Catholics; and it is strictly impossible to find any text written in everyday language.

If one seriously wants to analyze difficulty, it is more useful to consider degrees and modes of transfer and belonging than common-sense illusions of naturalness.

The liberty of extreme distance according to Borges:

“The language of Whitman is entirely contemporary. It will be centuries before it is dead. Only then will we be able to translate in with complete liberty.” (Spanish translation of *Leaves of Grass*, 1969, 22)

But then, when the English language has died, who will be left to own Whitman?

Texts belong

Embeddedness or the collective belonging of texts is ultimately resistance to the movement of texts. The way to overcome this belonging is then textual elaboration or explicitness, the bringing to the surface of presuppositions and the reasonable cleaning away of connotations. It follows that, in order to make a text more transferable, additional work must be invested to make it more explicit, just as an additional initial charge is required if electricity is to be transferred over a considerable distance. It also follows that, if this additional work has not been carried out at the point where transfer begins (ST), it can to some extent be put in at the point of translation (Y). That is, translation itself can heighten the transferability of texts, not only for immediate TT receivers, but also for the future receivers of all further TT versions.

If texts belong, transfer and translation work against belonging, in favor of increased potential movement.

But what then is the actual movement of texts? And why, seriously, should anyone want to take away something that belongs somewhere else?

TEXTS MOVE

Movement is change

IF TEXTS can be said to belong to certain people or to certain situations, then transfer away from these people and situations must change the nature of the belonging, gradually turning degrees of familiarity into degrees of foreignness. But the changes brought about by transfer can go much further and become far more abrupt, since socially or linguistically embedded values are inevitably transformed in accordance with jumps to new social or linguistic circumstances of reception. Either way, gradually or abruptly, simple transfer induces changing values.

Simple transfer changes values:

- a) "In Loma, for example, straightforward transliteration of 'Messiah' turns out to mean 'death's hand', and hence the transliteration has to be altered to the form 'Mezaya', so that it will not be a misleading form." (Nida 1964, 233)
- b) There used to be a Spanish brand of potato crisps called "Bum" (pronounced "boom", perhaps related to a strange Anglicism for French parties). One suspects that the transfer of several million English-speaking tourists put an end to it.

If simple transfer can modify the value of a text, can translation then be seen as a response to such modifications? If so, a transfer-based approach should have consequences not only for the analysis of translational difficulty (as outlined above) but also for questions concerning the social conditioning and role of translation as a purposeful activity. If the approach is valid, a sociology of translation would have to be based not directly on what translators do, but on transfer as the process by which their work situation is initially set up.

In this light, transfer assumes a vital complexity involving questions well beyond the simple picking up and carrying off of an object. How should one conceptualize groups of transfer acts? What rationality or determinism might lie behind

transfer movements in general? Are there any rules limiting the time, place and directions of text transfer?

Answers to these questions should start from a few very basic and commonly overlooked principles.

Texts do not fall from the sky

To the extent that they require material supports, texts move in time and space. Sitting on library shelves, they move through time⁵⁶; manually, mechanically or electronically reproduced, they can be moved through space; translated, they can move from culture to culture. However, precisely because texts require material supports, their movements are not eternal. Countless millions are lost every day. And since their survival is a complex selective process, it is possible to talk about constraints which, in making it easier for texts to move in some directions rather than others, might be seen as a social conditioning of translation.

The texts that reach the translator do not fall from the sky. They are all Y texts, each with an implicit question-mark asking why it has come from a distanced place, why it is to go to another, and why the ensuing constraints on transfer should be obeyed or subverted in the space of translation.

Textual movements are not natural needs

A general relation between transfer and translation has been recognized by Gumbrecht in his definition of “reception” as:

“...the processes by which a certain number of texts from the general supply are selected in accordance with the needs of a society...”

which is then followed by the moment of translation proper:

“...and are then either used in the traditional way or adapted to new uses by means of the techniques of translation.” (1974, 206)

⁵⁶ Movement and life according to Larbaud (1946, 84): “L’immobilité du texte imprimé est une illusion optique”. The aesthetic consequences deserve serious consideration in our age of technocratic schemata: “notre métier de Traducteurs est un commerce intime et constant avec la Vie...”.

Although Gumbrecht is quite correct to see translation as a process conditioned by the selection of texts—you have to get hold of the text before you can translate it—, there are several problems with the way he describes this relation:

- Since the material movement of texts is not eternal, the notion of a “general supply” is as inadequate as are conceptions of general texts and general readers. Texts do not just appear: some are extremely hard to find; others are difficult to avoid; and there are numerous social and cultural interests involved in the relative ease with which they reach the hands of translators and other receivers.
- The process of simple “selection” is similarly vague in that it does not recognize the plurality of possible agents. It might be assumed that the receiving culture is responsible for the selection process, but this would be to overlook all the means by which texts can effectively be preselected and sent by a source culture. It would be difficult to believe that Moctezuma selected Cortés’s devious greetings from a general supply, or that Australian aborigines actively sought the official proclamation of the Sydney Cove colony.
- The selection process is supposed to be based on the “needs” of the receiving society. But some societies apparently also need to *export* texts. In Spain, Canada and Australia, for example, there are official grants and subsidies for the translation of national texts into foreign languages. In cases like France and Catalonia, however, financial assistance is given for translations *into* the local language. This means that a sufficiently cunning translator could receive no less than three subsidies for the movement of a text from Catalan into French (money from Barcelona, Madrid and Paris), but nothing for a translation in the opposite direction. In these circumstances, it would be naïve to assume that texts are freely selected in accordance with the wishes of only the receiving society, as if cultural consumption were an entirely natural process unaffected by official or external stimulation.⁵⁷
- Gumbrecht would then see translators as being employed to adapt texts to “new uses”, which would appear to be as natural as the social needs determining the arrival of the texts to be translated. But I have argued that translators are mostly employed to produce equivalence; they work within an exchange-value system which is quite independent of natural use values. Even in the study where Gumbrecht’s definitions appear—a sociological explanation of medieval Span-

⁵⁷ Wider problems associated with the notion of social needs: As noted by Leenhardt (1979, 112), the implicit stimulus-response model is fundamentally inadequate to the numerous mediations that the social sciences have to account for. A more direct critique concerns the way the administratively-determined “social needs” were used to control the internal supply of commodities in the more rigid socialist systems.

ish translations of French and Latin romances—, the supposed primacy of use values appears to be contradicted by the accompanying comment that the thirteenth century was “an age in which the source of utterances rather than their intrinsic probability determined their value” (1974, 215). According to this principle, why should the thirteenth-century translator not have been more concerned with creating illusions of equivalence to authoritative sources (be they foreign or local) than with providing natural use values? Gumbrecht’s initial terms are at least questioned by his findings.

In short, the notion of translation as selective and transformational reception, like the “polysystem” hypotheses which similar approaches have espoused, is fundamentally inadequate to the way the movement of texts conditions translational work. It limits its vision to situations in which ST belonging can be considered inoperative. But most translation is conditioned by relative material distances across which texts move in some directions but not in others its locus is an intercultural situation where the constraints of belonging are operative to varying degrees, exerting influences and defining strategic positions. It is not enough to look at only the receiving culture; it is not sufficient to trust, as did Vossler, that “all translations are made at the instigation of a linguistic community’s instinct for self-preservation” (in Kloepfer 1967, 74; Lefevere 1977, 97). Translation by definition concerns relations between several cultures; it is by no means immune to processes of cultural hegemony, annexation or even suicide. The type of analysis most appropriate to the general situation of translation must thus incorporate strong notions of transfer—especially purposeful directionality—as phenomena partly determined beyond the TT culture.

But should one then maintain that all translational texts are purposefully directional?

Parallel texts are not really translations

Linguistic contemplation may pleasantly amuse while one waits for a breakfast tea to brew. Consider the following instructions found in-situ on a teabag ticket:

Allow to infuse Temps d’infusion 3-5min. Ziehdauer
--

Linguists might ponder the peculiar verbal form of the English, the fact that the German would have the water drawing out the tea whereas the notion of “infusion” instead sees the tea invading the water, and so on. But since all three texts appear on the same piece of paper and there is no explicit performative, there is nothing to indicate which of them is to be considered an ST or Y text (extra-textual indicators of Englishness are deceptive: this particular tea appears to have been packed in Belgium). As such, the texts lack the directionality necessary for any one of them to be considered a translation. There is no distance Y-ST, or, to be more exact, Y-ST is in this case 0. Strictly speaking, the teabag ticket is not translational.

This is not to say that the example has nothing to do with translation or a lack of transfer. Transfer is obviously pertinent in the sense that the teabags in question must be designed to enter at least three different cultures, as well as the Spanish culture in which I bought my sample. This pertinence is moreover not at all lessened by the texts having been produced before the moment of actual material displacement. In the case of the “mouton”/“mutton” example from Saussure, transfer took place many centuries before the presentation of the parallel texts. Here transfer takes place *after* the production of parallelism. But since the spatiotemporal position of translators is in principle indifferent to the quality and quantity of their work, this consideration alone does not stop parallel texts from becoming translations.

Nor is the example lacking in equivalence, since the mode of presentation, implying controlled reference to a shared context, would for many receivers guarantee the relation $TT:Y \approx 1$.

The problem with this example is that, if we go back to the formula for the way translation represents distance

$$\frac{TT : Y}{Y - ST}$$

the values ascribed in this case would give

$$\frac{1}{0}$$

which, if I remember my basic mathematics, is an infinite value. This suggests that, from the point of view of a rigorous definition of translation, parallel texts are infinitely ubiquitous and thus strictly directionless. They might remain of interest

to lexical semanticists anxious to liberate themselves from contexts or to fill in lonely breakfasts, but they are of no real import for a theory of translation. Our time is better spent with examples of determinate directionality.

Why “La Movida” moved

The example of “La Movida”, presented and analyzed above with respect to the significance of quantity, can also be approached from the point of view of transfer. Here again are the texts:

- (1) “...‘La Movida’, was wörtlich übersetzt “Die Bewegung” heißen würde. ‘Aber mit Vorwärtsgehen hat das nichts zu tun’ sagt selbstkritisch der Maler El Hortelano. ‘Es ist mehr wie ein Schluckauf, der einen auf der Stelle schüttelt’.” (*Geo*, Hamburg, November 1985)
- (2) “La Movida c’est intraduisible. La Movida, c’est la société espagnole tout entière qui choisit d’avancer.” (*Le Nouvel Observateur*, Paris, 5-11 July 1985)
- (3) “...the phenomenon known as ‘La Movida’ (‘The Happening’).” (*Newsweek*, International Edition, 5 August 1985)

Why has the same uncovered term “La Movida” been accorded different values, different TTs, different modes of equivalence in each of these texts? Because, quite simply, the term is not the same in each of these places. Its referential value is perhaps constant, but the simple fact of transfer, of displacement away from the ST locus of Madrid, means that Y₁ (“La Movida” in Hamburg), Y₂ (“La Movida” in Paris) and Y₃ (“La Movida” in New York) have different exchange values even before different translators and different languages try to represent those values.

The transfer of “La Movida” thus concerns three different material distances (Y₁–ST; Y₂–ST; Y₃–ST), producing values represented and transformed by several different semiotic relationships of equivalence (TT₁:Y₁... TT_n:Y₃). It is worth considering how these translations work in terms of the cultural consequences of transfer.

The German rendering is the most explicit. The literal TT “Bewegung” [movement] is proposed only to be discarded in favor of the negation of “Vorwärtsgehen” [going forward]. The paraphrase thus carves out a semantic space for movements which neither advance nor imply regression or reaction. The naming of this

space is then left to citation of the ST milieu itself: the painter El Hortelano claims that “La Movida” is like a hiccup [“Schluckauf”] and the cotext later confesses that in Madrid “no one knows and yet everyone understands what is meant”. The German reader is given to understand that one cannot properly understand. Significant cultural distance is produced on the basis of material transfer.

The *Nouvel Observateur* strategy is similar in several respects. Representational adequacy is denied and reference is thus made to the ST milieu, but here the final gloss is positive rather than negative: “‘La Movida’... is the whole of Spanish society choosing to advance”, thus formulating precisely the “moving forward” that the German representation chose to deny. However, the French cotext then further positions the question of choice within Spanish society itself, claiming, as it does two pages later, that the supposed advance has taken place against the background of what we could translate from French as “the eternal Hispanic duality of isolation and openness, casticism and cosmopolitanism”. In less universal terms, this “advance” is the post-Franco opening of Spain. To describe this opening, the French journalist forgets about hiccupping painters and instead cites a very serious banker: “‘We have been living artificially,’ says Carlos March, ‘sheltered by extreme protectionism. As a result, we are still a backward country.’”⁵⁸ The representation of “La Movida” is now squarely located in the semantic field of “going forward” or “staying behind” (“avancer”/ “être arriéré”); it has become a question of what English inevitably calls “development”. The article then launches one final assault on the untranslatable: “Spain’s history has enabled it to jump over the industrial stage and slide into post-industrial society.”⁵⁹ And from “post-industrial”—the article was written in 1985—it is only one short step to a further term which, through the peculiarly French efforts of Lyotard and Baudrillard, had gained a post-industrial sense unexploited in previous American usages: we have already cited the final step: “...the latest news is that ‘La Movida’ has taken another name, awaiting the next: *postmodernisme*.”⁶⁰ One senses that the French exchanges have reached their goal.

The *Newsweek* example is rather more direct in its strategy of annexation. Although the cotext once again cites unnamed protagonists “many of whom identify with the so-called ‘new expressionist’ or ‘postmodernist’ movement”, the term considered the most apt for immediate representation is “The Happening”, which,

⁵⁸ “‘We have been living artificially,’ says Carlos March, ‘sheltered by extreme protectionism. As a result, we are still a backward country.’”

⁵⁹ “Spain’s history has enabled it to jump over the industrial stage and make a complete entry into post-industrial society.”

⁶⁰ “...the latest news is that ‘La Movida’ has taken another name, in anticipation of the next: *postmodernisme*.”

as we have noted with reference to the lack of intervening quantity, evokes little more than a belated Spanish adoption of an American cultural past.

If left on the semiotic level, these three readings would merely suggest that each receiving culture finds what it wants to see in “La Movida”. There are probably several hundred translation analyses—of Homer, of the Bible—that never get beyond this kind of conclusion. But should one be surprised if Hamburg, the political home of Green ideology, sees “La Movida” as a negation of development ideology? Could Paris, as the traditional if challenged home of avant-garde intellectualism, do anything but seek proof of its own theses on “*postmodernisme*” (no matter how historically absurd its claim of absent industrialism might be with respect to Catalonia and the Basque Country)? And it is only natural that Americans associate their historical aesthetic vocabulary with an apparently vital democracy, no matter how much the United States supported the Franco dictatorship in the days of real Happenings. This kind of analysis reveals nothing that was not known beforehand.

Let us accept that each translation responds to a specific interest. But how could one pretend that these interests exist in mutual isolation? Is it possible to ignore the very material context which places all these examples in relation to Spain’s proposed EEC entry (January 1986) and her uneasy decision to remain a member of NATO (March 1986)? How could one forget that the semiotic distances presented in translations are based on material distances and interrelated by active transfer?

The extent of this transfer was limited. In Australia, where articles from *Newsweek* are regularly reprinted in a once nationalist magazine called *The Bulletin*, the corresponding edition published a text on Spain’s economy but chose to omit the article on “La Movida”. The American article no doubt made its way to an editor’s desk in Sydney, but it died before reaching the printer. This is then option X, non-transfer, the absence of both Y and TT. Australia noted Spain’s imminent accession to the EEC but was apparently unconcerned about any cultural implications. One could thus formulate the hypothesis that transfer of “La Movida” was in this case limited to general news magazines in cultures which, because of geographical or economic proximity, were directly affected by Spain’s cultural relations with other European countries.

In the case of *Newsweek* itself, which reaches a European public for whom English is mostly the language of business, transfer must thus have responded to more than simply economic interest. Distance was likely to be problematic on the cultural level itself (presumably, members of this public were likely to meet real live

Spaniards and appreciated a small stock of reasonably informed conversation pieces). But the immediate rendering of “La Movida” as “The Happening” quickly reduces the material distance involved to almost unquestioned equivalence, leaving the naked Y as a marker of little more than local color. Translational representation has all but eclipsed the material distance Y–ST.

From this perspective, the more interesting strategies belong to the cultures which, closer to Spain, were more directly concerned by the EEC entry. As we have noted with respect to translational difficulty, proximity can make the representation of distance a far more complicated affair.

In German, the language of an industrial economy which has long enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with Spanish labor and beaches, there is no real conflict at stake. The culture of “La Movida” retains its right not to move forward; its relative lack of industrialization becomes a mark of local color to be respected as such; all goes well as long as a hiccupping Spain, extremely advanced in its refusal to advance, presents no real challenge to German industry or Green ideology. The material distance is to be retained on the semiotic level.

The French, however, too close and too much in agricultural competition with the Spanish, allow no merely exotic hiccups. The selection of the verb “avancer” should be read as a refusal of not only several available Anglo-Germanic conceptualizations (“to happen”, “to move without advancing”), but also the available French alternatives (“bouger”, “se remuer”, “s’animer”, etc.). Distance here is not a problem of differences between two languages. Nor is its reduction a purely linguistic affair. The Parisian paraphrase takes pains to avoid the real point of conflict—the agriculture of southern France—, thus performing ideological acrobatics in an attempt to meet Spain at some vague “post-industrial” point in the future, where neither industry nor agriculture will stir problematic proximities. To write on contemporary Spanish aesthetics as a guide to protectionist history, to suggest that “post-modernisme” has the same meaning on both sides of the Pyrenees⁶¹, is thus to suggest future compatibility whilst side-stepping present conflict. Contemporary distance will eventually be reduced. And French aesthetics might even be rejuvenated.

The French example thus presents an inverse relationship between the material distance Y–ST and the represented distance TT:Y, indicating that the translational

⁶¹ A momentary eclipse of distance in Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* § 294: “Trois degrés d’élévation du pôle renversent toute la jurisprudence, un méridien décide de la vérité [...] Plaisante justice qu’une rivière borne! Vérité en deçà des Pyrénées, erreur au-delà.”

representation of distance can radically contradict the actual material distance crossed in transfer.

This kind of analysis shows that transfer processes are far less natural or inevitable than notions of needs or general supplies would suggest. If mere translators can actively misrepresent material distance, then transfer is surely not strong enough to impose any absolute social determinism on translation. Indeed, transfer itself must be seen as a weakly determined phenomenon which in turn weakly determines translation. Or again, in its weakness, transfer should be seen as able to respond actively to material conditions, just as translation has been shown to be able to respond actively to transfer.

Texts are like sails raised to the wind

There is no doubt a certain rationality in the above movements of “La Movida”. As the non-transfer X indicates, not all texts are transferred in all directions all the time. There are moments, places and directions that are more or less appropriate; there are degrees of belonging that make certain acts of transfer easier than others. This relative ease or difficulty enables us to talk about the social conditioning—or weak social determinism—of transfer. But what is the exact nature of this conditioning?

The first point to be made here is that acts of transfer rarely occur in isolation. The situations in which Quine’s jungle linguist found himself confronted by an untouched culture are, on this planet, as good as exhausted. In all but very exceptional cases, criteria of precedence point to existing cross-cultural pathways; individual acts of transfer are easier to carry out when they follow established directions. According to this simple principle, the more traveled the route, the less effort has to be put into the journey.

But individual routes are no more isolated than are individual acts of transfer. In the “Movida” example, it was no accident that three news magazines addressed the same information at approximately the same time. The editors of these publications read each other and respond to the same major international events (in this case the approaching Iberian extension of the EEC). They themselves form minor networks for the transfer of information or, in this case, cultural curiosities of at least passing interest. Within such networks, each transfer opens the channel a lit-

tle wider for further transfers, just as each new route creates new possibilities for associated routes.⁶²

With the progressive division of labor, of the professions, of the sciences, transfer networks are no doubt becoming increasingly specialized, each developing its own geo-economic forms and modes. And yet they remain to a certain extent interdependent, on one level because of the more general interests associated with financial and political networks (“La Movida” only moved because Spain was going to move into the EEC), and on a more basic level because of the shared nature of the technology used for the transfer of texts: from shoes to satellites, the one means of communication can serve texts in several different fields at the same time, thus helping to shape common directions by deviating, to a greater or lesser extent, what might previously have been more direct or specific communicative purposes. If I fly from the Canaries to Australia, mass transfer makes it easier—though geographically longer—for me to pass through London, even though I rarely have any desire to visit England. Thanks to a similar logic, many nineteenth-century Russian, German and even English texts were translated into Spanish from French, simply because Paris was the point of mass convergence for literary transfers.

If one can thus talk about the social conditioning of transfer, one must also add principles by which transfer can escape from the direct control of individual societies. Texts do not always go exactly where and when their senders or receivers want them to go; they can be intercepted, delayed, detoured, blocked and destroyed; noise enters the passage of information, contexts change, and the Y text received can differ significantly from the ST sent.

There is no absolute control:

There should be no conspiracy theory of absolute power over transfer or non-transfer. When living in a Rhodesia supposedly under siege from an international embargo, I worked alongside geologists who exchanged journal articles with other experts, in the Soviet Union.

And Austrian locomotives pulled trains full of wheat from South Africa to Zambia, marked “Swaziland-Malawi”.

⁶² Australian-rules football finds several routes into Spanish: Unaware of any precedents, my class set about translating Australian-rules football into Spanish, only to discover that there were in fact precedents. Most of the positions could be described in terms of soccer or rugby; the actions were evident or called for self-evident neologisms (“a mark” = “una recepción”, etc.); and the remaining difficulties (equivalents for “ruck”, “rover” and “ruck-rover”) were overcome through analogy with Anglicisms already used in basketball (“pivot”, “base” and “pivot-base”), thus incurring a slight but not inelegant deviation according to a pre-established network (since the term “pivot” has recently been transferred to the vocabulary of Spanish soccer). Although the individual sport was quite probably new to Spanish culture, the previous transfers of soccer, rugby and basketball made comprehension and translation of Australian-rules football relatively unproblematic.

If the interests are great enough, information and food can slip through most forms of official closure.

There is a certain randomness:

- a) Many nineteenth-century Japanese prints reached Europe as packing-case filler, since they were considered of no value in Japan. In Europe, they helped to revolutionize *fin de siècle* aesthetics. One could thus say that the texts were transferred according to some kind of market logic, from a culture in which they had little value to another in which they came to be highly valued. But there was no such rationality at work. The only necessary social condition was that Meiji Japan accept European traders, so that the prints could then accidentally hitch a ride out.
- b) To take an obverse example, Clarín's historical novel *La Regenta* was not translated into French or English in the nineteenth century because it was not highly regarded within the Spain of the time. In cultural affairs, despite the example of Japanese prints, a high domestic value can assist international transfer.

When describing the social conditioning of transfer, it is obviously not sufficient to assume the prior existence of a coherent purpose expressed in every act of transfer and then re-expressed by every translator. Purposes go awry, even before translators enter the scene. Some more subtle model is needed.

El Hortelano did not choose Madrid 1985 as the place to describe "La Movida"; he did not choose to have his description or his term sent to airport newsstands. It just happened that, with all the commodities and ideas that are constantly moved across the planet, there was a particular historical moment in which a series of economic, social, aesthetic and editorial conditions came together to enable this particular transfer to take place, coming together to overcome the constraints of belonging. Indeed, there were so many determining factors that, although El Hortelano's description is signed, actual transfer of the text is of necessity anonymous. No individual person, no one society, can determine the point of least resistance, the ideal moment for an act of intercultural transfer. Only when the network is appropriate and the right circumstances arise can the transfer then take place. The kind of conditioning most apparent in transfer is that expressed by the model of the ideal moment.

Lukács on value, winds and sailors:

"The wind is a natural fact which, in itself, has nothing to do with the idea of value. But sailors have always quite correctly talked of favorable and unfavorable winds." (1976-81, II, 353)

“Humankind is a being that responds [...]. In order to respond to the wind by the raising of sails, one requires the necessary intervention, the entry into active practice, of the ideal moment.” (378)⁶³

Networks are complex, quantitative and contradictory

The term “network” tends to suggest a binding web, a pattern of linkages enabling communication and circulation within a fixed area, producing and reproducing the embeddedness of belonging. It is in this sense that Even-Zohar, for instance, defines a “system” as a “network of relations” (1990, 27); it is in this sense that the supposed systemicity of networks might then be applied to literatures, languages and cultures corresponding to given communities. According to such an approach—which is by no means unjustified—the spatiotemporal form of a network will more or less conform to the geography and history of a community, with dense centers, sparser links towards the frontiers, and border-posts where different networks interconnect, in the same way as different organisms might interconnect for the purposes of reproduction or partial symbiosis.

The study of translation, however, requires a somewhat different view of networks. Instead of communities, organisms and ecosystems, it is perhaps more stimulating to think of winds, of forces that sweep across particular cultures, now one way, now the other, with prevailing tendencies, presenting the possibility of movement if and when the direction is favorable but without any necessary restriction to the inner cohesion or circularity of the territory crossed. Such a network would comprise the general lines of individual voyages made from culture to culture, without mimicking the curves of geopolitical frontiers. The lines or bundles of lines would not go around a centre or along a border; they must instead cut through the bonds of belonging, opening up the possibility of translation, creating and re-creating border posts as they go. This kind of network would by definition be transcultural rather than properly systemic. Although no doubt of limited use for the systematization of any particular culture, this model is highly useful for the study of translation as a strictly intercultural phenomenon. Its conceptualization might moreover find inspiration in the most unexpected places:

A model network of lines, according to Chatwin (1987, 66):

⁶³ The ethical and commercial value of winds: a) Association des Traducteurs Littéraires de France: “Considérant que [...] la transmission des œuvres de l'esprit au-delà des frontières linguistiques est une condition indispensable de l'harmonie entre les peuples et du respect des cultures [...]” (Code de déontologie du traducteur littéraire, 1988). b) Larousse: “Je sème à tout vent”. As if one could control the ethical and commercial value of all winds.

“Suppose you had a tribal area like that of the Central Aranda [of Australia]. Suppose there were weaving in and out of it some six hundred Dreamings [or land-lines which sacred songs describe as the routes travelled by mythological beings]. That would mean twelve hundred ‘hand-over’ points dotted around the perimeter. Each ‘stop’ had to be sung into position by a Dreamtime ancestor: its place on the song-map was thus unchangeable. But since each was the work of a different ancestor, there was no way of linking them sideways to form a modern political frontier. Each ‘stop’ was the point where the song passed out of your ownership; where it was no longer yours to look after and no longer yours to lend. You’d sing to the end of your verses, and there lay your boundary.”

Chatwin describes these geographical lines mapped in song-cycles as crossing Australia for thousands of kilometers, going through some twenty languages or more. They were used for trade, for the regulation of inter-tribal relations, and for the transfer of texts.

The historiography of intercultural transfer must be based on the development of such networks at all levels: those of navigators, railways, roads, political and military alliances, colonial and imperialist extensions.

But a careful distinction should be maintained between the archeology of things that actually move and the history of how such movements are represented. What moves on the material level of the network is constantly affected by what is believed to be moving, by what is allowed to move, and by what is constrained from moving. Archeology can trace actual acts of transfer; it can say more or less what happened. But the properly historical understanding and explanation of such acts requires something more; it calls for analysis in terms of translation and belonging, facilitation and resistance. In other words, historical analysis must address not only actual acts of transfer and their material connections, but also the *regimes* directing transfer and the development of networks. But what then are regimes?

Regimes are ways of representing and acting within networks

One of the essential problems with the idea that translation is socially conditioned through material networks is that each individual act of translation can respond not only to a corresponding act of transfer, but also to the way associated acts of transfer are already perceived.

Confronted by a term like “La Movida”, an adequate translator will of course take into account the specific interests involved in the movement of the text concerned. But the final translation decision will also necessarily be influenced by general ideas about the reasons for the movement, about the relative value of Spanish culture and about legitimate ways of representing that value. In cases where such general ideas are specifically those of the ST or TT culture, their im-

port will no doubt be in some way inscribed in the act of transfer; the inevitable analytical conclusion will be that each party finds what it wants to see in the other. But if translation is seriously framed as a situation of exchange between cultures, there must be a certain level on which these ideas are *shared* by the cultures concerned, just as the networks they are based upon are necessarily shared. That is, there must be a level of social conditioning which is itself intercultural, comprising a set of ideas about the ways and means of legitimate interrelation. When I recently had to translate “La Movida”—in the quite different network associated with Madrid’s status as European cultural capital in 1992—, my version inevitably took into account all the previous Spanish and foreign versions I was aware of, including those analyzed above, since this was the only way I could possibly know what the term meant. My translation thus responded not to one particular act of transfer, nor solely to my Spanish client’s commercial interests, but to a set of very different previous transfers and the knowledge they had set in place.⁶⁴ It is on this level of general interrelated networks that the representational work of translations becomes most vital. It is here that bundles of transfer acts can be reproduced, legitimated, questioned or contradicted in terms of what other disciplines call regimes.

The study of political and commercial negotiations in the late 1970s saw the vocabulary of “international systems” replaced by theories of “regimes”. Keohane and Nye give a simple definition of a regime as a “set of governing arrangements organizing relations of interdependence” (1977, 19). A later collective definition is a little more detailed:

“A regime is made up of explicit or implicit sets of principles, norms, rules and negotiation procedures in terms of which actor expectations converge on a field of international relations and through which the individual behavior of these actors can be coordinated.” (Conference on International Regimes, Los Angeles 1980; in Finlayson et al. 1981, 563)

Two aspects allow a distinction to be made between “regime” and “system”. First, the idea of “independent actors” refers to a theatre for which the play has not yet been written, such that there is no presupposition of the kind of purpose or coherence which could ensue from a sole author or world power. Second, the elements comprising a regime are not so much what actually happens on the level of mate-

⁶⁴ “...the sense of excitement known as “La Movida”, the artistic and cultural movement corresponding to one of the most cosmopolitan centres of our twentieth-century *fin de siècle*. ” (dust-jacket blurb to *Seeing Madrid*, Barcelona: Destino 1992)

rial networks as what actors *expect* will happen on the basis of their *perception* of current, future or desirable intercultural relations. Attention must be paid not just to the contacts that actually take place, but also to those that are actively or passively avoided by one party or another.⁶⁵ Regimes are thus firmly situated on the semiotic or ideological level where transfer is represented in both its positive and negative aspects. And yet they are not merely subjective or culture-specific. They are by definition *intersubjective* and *intercultural*.

Clear examples of regimes can be found in the fields for which the notion was developed: GATT talks, arms reduction negotiations, EEC agreements in specific areas like agriculture, and international treaties concerning fields from extradition rights to ocean zone sovereignty and the pollution of outer space. Regimes ideally enable different parties to come together and organize general rules for their present and future exchanges.

Or again, in trying to understand and improve stilted negotiations like the 1991 Arab-Israeli peace talks which began in Madrid, system analysis would no doubt look at factors like demographic distribution, water sources and security forces in Israel and its neighbors. But regime analysis would be more interested in the procedures and frames of reference of the conference itself, the presence of the American and Russian conveners, the strategies for saving face and withstanding pressure, and the reasons why the Syrian delegate spoke Arabic whereas the Palestinian and Israeli representatives spoke English (to whom were they really speaking?). Where system analysis looks at interactions between systems, regime analysis focuses on systems of interaction. No one can doubt the importance of the systemic factors affecting the peoples and the lands of the Middle East. But regime analysis posits that negotiations like those begun in Madrid do more than just represent the existing systems; it posits that the microcosm of the conference itself could, in the best of possible worlds, change the pre-existing systems in the interests of a greater common good. Regime theory is fundamentally (and often naively) optimistic. That is why it is more interested in what negotiators do than in the systemic essence of what they are supposed to be representing.

⁶⁵ Semiotic regimes and material networks according to Coste (1988, 36): "A sociology of literary internationality must do more than just analyse 'influences' and effective symbolic transfers or exchanges. It must also look at the more or less organised situations of incommunication, at the cultures selected to be forgotten, and at images of refusal, including confusions of images and absences of image which, in the modern era, have never been the result of real physical or cultural distance (so often do we tell ourselves that we know nothing about Japan that we finish up knowing much more about it than we do about Australia, ignorance of which does not worry us, to the extent that we are even prohibited from imagining that we could know nothing)."

In the light of these examples, is it possible to talk about independent translational regimes? No one can doubt that the cultures linked by translation have something of the systemicity of phenomena like demography, water and security in Israel and its neighbors, but is there then a separate level where regime analysis could find translational events corresponding to the function of a peace conference? This is an important methodological question to which I have no unequivocal answer. On the one hand, it is clear that neither authors nor translators come together to negotiate intercultural exchanges of texts or modes of translation. Texts certainly move; they certainly form international networks crossing cultural systems; but, beyond the purely mercenary world divisions fought over by major publishers and dominated by major languages, there are few substantial conscious efforts to direct or control these networks. On this level, there would appear to be no uniquely translational regime. However, it is equally clear that general modes of translation change with history and that these changes are now mildly influenced by intercultural institutions like UNESCO, the Fédération Internationale des Traducteurs, international conferences on translation, and indeed the publication and distribution of translation theory, although there remains a big gap between these very nebulous organizations and something as concrete as a peace conference. The question is really to determine whether these institutions offer the *possibility* of formulating an independent professional regime, or if they are merely parasitic on other intercultural regimes situated closer to economic and political power. Optimistically, I would hope that translators will one day use these institutions in order to develop their own regime. Realistically, however, I must recognize that there is still a long way to go and that translation is so far more adequately seen as responding to ideologies which have little to do with the real or ideal functions of translation itself.

My own attempts to assess the relative dependence or independence of translation have been limited to studies of intercultural relations at the end of the nineteenth century, an epoch when translational ethics was becoming important as a correlative of copyright laws and publishing agreements, although translators themselves were still very much thought of as individuals passing the time of day rather than professionals earning a living. It would be extremely difficult to argue that nineteenth-century translators worked in terms of an independent translational regime. But there *were* several identifiable intercultural norms and conventions concerning acceptable translation practices, as well as numerous debates over possible transgressions of these norms and conventions. Moreover, these norms and conventions were not passive reflections of the way economic, political and mili-

tary regimes determined international relations at the time. There *was* a limited degree of independence.

Where did this relative independence come from? Most immediately, it was made possible by the mediation of nineteenth-century literary institutions, since ideas about translation were almost always based on literary models and debates about these ideas almost always took place in terms of literary intercultural regimes. Literature was thus a place where translators could talk about their work, just as theology had previously provided a context for translational disputes, and just as translation schools and institutes tend to do today. This means that although nineteenth-century translation might appear to have depended on literature, this relation was in fact one of the ways in which it gained sufficient professional solidity to develop elements of its own regime. Which is one good reason for paying careful attention to the historical role of literary translation.

More generally, however, the relative independence of translation was made possible by the interculturality of the translators themselves, since translators by definition have a greater awareness of foreign cultures than do those who need to read translations. As a collectivity, translators presuppose their own intercultural context, and thus their own space for the development of an intercultural regime.

As an example of how the relative independence of a regime might be analyzed, let us consider the European colonial regime from 1870 to 1914, which we can then use to locate elements of corresponding literary and translational responses. Puchala and Hopkins (1982) usefully describe the colonial regime in terms of the following principles:

1. Bifurcation of civilization (civilized Europeans against “savages”).
2. Legitimacy of government at a distance (colonies were governed from Europe).
3. Legitimacy of the accumulation of foreign land (the prestige of a power was measured in terms of the land under its control).
4. Importance of the balance of power (each power expected compensation for intrusion into territory under its control).
5. Neo-mercantilism (each power had the right to organize the economy of its colonies for its own profit).
6. Non-intervention in the domain of another power.

Such would be the regime by which the European colonial powers regulated their interactions. But was the European literary network of the time subject to any such regime? There can be no doubt that the spread of Symbolist and Naturalist aesthetics created complex intercultural relations, calling for numerous translations and

requiring the development of new ways of evaluating foreign texts. Although there were no actual negotiations between writers or translators, and despite numerous material non-correspondences between the networks involved, the literary relations of the time were conceived of in terms like those of the colonialist regime. If we therefore take the colonialist precepts and look for their literary correlatives, the result might be something like the following (cf. Pym 1988):

1. Bifurcation of civilization (the Paris-London centre was opposed to a wide “eroticized” periphery).
2. Superiority of passive influence (the most influential actors were those at the centre who apparently sought not to exert any influence).
3. Legitimacy of the accumulation of aesthetics (it was more important to be aware of several aesthetics than to follow any one master).
4. Principle of professional fraternity (replacing the father/son or master/slave relationships implicit in the principle of “government at a distance” or the Romantic idea of the “School”).
5. Superiority of the unknown (through exoticism, distance itself produced positive values).
6. Supra-nationality of intellectuals (intellectuals took up international causes despite local or national allegiances).

Clearly, these literary principles contradict the colonialist norms at least with respect to points 2, 4 and 6, and probably on point 5 as well. It is thus incorrect or at least maladroit to say that the literary institutions of the period were irredeemably colonialist, although it is correct and interesting to look for ways in which they managed to talk about and respond to the colonial regime.

If we now go one step further and look for these same principles in the specific field of (literary) translation, similar results might be expected. The following is a rough attempt to see what echoes these six principles might find in the field of European translations of lyrical texts from 1870 to 1914 (cf. Pym 1985):

1. Bifurcation of prose/verse in terms of new/old (prose translations at the centre; verse translations on the periphery; transfer movements overwhelmingly from the “newer” centre to the “older” periphery).
2. Superiority of the translator as an active influence promoting the new (in the wake of Baudelaire’s marketing of Poe, it was better to champion a foreign writer than to sing one’s own praises).
3. Legitimacy of the accumulation of influences (reviews published translations from widely different sources, presented one after the other despite their contradicting aesthetics).

4. Principle of professional fraternity between poet and translator (claims of mystical inspiration).
5. Superiority of the untranslatable (archaisms and exotic terms, inherited from Romanticism).
6. Supra-nationality of aesthetic discourse (adoption of foreign terms from the centre; exclusion of local terms and objects on the periphery).

In this way, the mediation of a literary regime enables historically marked translational principles to be related to the colonialist regime without ever being confused or identified with it. If the movements of transferred and translated texts should happen to have benefited from a few imperialist winds, this does not mean that the translators of the late nineteenth century had sold their souls to the superior powers of an all-embracing colonialism. They enjoyed at least relative independence.

Translation histories are deceptively diachronic

Given that the public theorizing of translation can be seen as one of the ways in which translation has gained a certain degree of independence, it is not surprising that most general historical overviews of translation theory tend to take this independence for granted. But an epistemological caveat is perhaps necessary here, since this particular image of independence could also be due to a certain lack of history in the histories concerned. The available anthologies and histories of translation theory provide fascinating material on how translators have thought about and defended their practice, but very little information is offered on why such defenses should have been culturally necessary, nor on the relation between theories and actual textual practice, nor indeed on the intercultural relations within which these debates took place. There are several reasons for these absences.

The vast majority of the current historical approaches define their fields in terms of the great Romantic boundaries (English, German, French, Spanish).⁶⁶ Diachronic continuity—such as the curious wandering line from Cicero to Darbelnet in Horguelin 1981—tends to be chopped off at period limits which are as good as arbitrary (mostly based on centuries and mid-centuries). The premises of such research thus refer to nationalist and numerical categories in order to describe intercultural phenomena, perhaps responding more to contemporary institutional con-

⁶⁶ Horguelin (1981) and d'Hulst (1990) deal with the French domain; T. R. Steiner (1975) with English theory; Lefevre (1977) and Berman (1984) with the German tradition; Santoyo (1987) presents an archaeology of Spanish theorisation; Kloepfer (1967) is mainly on the German-French axis with Latin antecedents.

straints on data collection⁶⁷ than to the nature of any specific problem that might have to be solved. The initial drawing up of nationalist research fields moreover excludes the prime concerns of regimes, since these approaches seek to locate neither concrete international contexts, nor synchronic relations based on movement in space, nor moments of regime change based on rupture on several levels at once (brought about by factors like war, revolution, colonization or major technological advances).⁶⁸ Admittedly, the results are even more frustrating when no arbitrary field is delimited: Kelly (1979) sets out to work on “the West”, giving way to a relativism that staggers from century to century, mostly looking to explain translation not in terms of intercultural relations but through reference to linguistics as a branch of theology. When fields are defined in an arbitrary way, or when they are not defined at all, it is difficult to relate serious thought on translation to the more definite times and places of concrete intercultural regimes.

Much of this arbitrariness is due to the nature of historical theorization itself. The major translation theories prior to the twentieth century concerned sacred or classical texts and thus the relation between the present and the past, between innovation and tradition, Antiquity and the Renaissance, Anciens and Modernes. The ostensible problematic was diachronic, whereas political, economic and intercultural regimes are primarily synchronic. If one is to analyze translation in terms of regimes, many historical theories have to be read against the grain.

Such readings are nevertheless possible. From the Crusades to Napoleon, at least, the regimes of synchronic political alliances were also conceptualized in diachronic terms. For as long as the Church and the monarchies based their authority on the past, the negotiations of the present had to be justified or contested in terms of tradition; political or economic struggles were argued in terms of history. Diachronic translation theories are perhaps no different in this respect. When Luther talked about how to translate the Bible, was he not also talking about how to oppose Rome? When Meschonnic criticizes Nida’s dynamic equivalence, is he really talking about rhythm in the Bible or about contemporary relations between Jewish and Christian cultures? Were Perrot d’Ablancourt’s “Belles Infidèles” simply ad-

⁶⁷The statistical privilege of French-German relations: The domain for which most raw data exist is that of translations between French and German. The bibliographies of Fromm (1950-1953) and Bihl/Epting (1987) give an impressive objective basis for analysing the cultural relations between France and Germany. But as Richard Landwehrmeyer remarks in his introduction to Bihl/Epting, the bibliographies themselves are “inextricably tied to one of the most difficult phases of these relations”, none the least because Epting’s work was in fact begun when he was director of the German Institute in Paris during the Occupation. The regimes of the present condition what we know about the regimes of the past.

⁶⁸ The notable exception to random periodization is Bihl/Epting (1987), where divisions are explicitly based on significant regime changes affecting the two cultures under study (1789, 1815, 1830, 1848, 1870, 1918, 1944).

aptations of Greek and Latin authors or, more interestingly, declarations of the supposedly superior sensibility of French culture in the context of seventeenth-century Europe? And when similarly libertine ideas about translation entered England in the 1640s and 1650s (T. R. Steiner 1975, 19), were they adopted by Abraham Cowley because he wanted to be true to Pindar's "way and manner of speaking" or because he himself had been a Royalist exiled in France? In short, the kind of reading we have applied to isolated examples like de Gaulle's speech or "La Movida" might also be projected over broad historical periods, questioning diachronic problematics in terms of essentially synchronic regimes.

Such questions can only be investigated in a controlled way if the fields of historical research are defined in terms of problematics concerning more than one culture, more than one line disappearing into the past and the future. That is, one should first look closely at the level of transfer, at the actual movements of texts, before deciding the limits of a historical study. Data that the semiotic level presents as transfer from a distanced or transcendent source culture often actually concern transfer from previously transferred or translated texts that are momentarily lodged in neighboring cultures. Although Nida, for example, appears to be talking about a Bible in Hebrew and Aramaic, the kind of transfer he is really theorizing is from English-language evangelistic commentaries into third-world tongues. Whatever the diachronic nature of their internal problematics, translation theories should be made to speak in terms of the translation practices they are derived from, and translation practices should in turn be seen as pertinent to transfer acts carried out in terms of synchronic intercultural regimes.

As paradoxical as it might seem, I am arguing for a mode of historical diachrony based on the primacy of intercultural synchrony. I believe that no other historical approach can properly grasp the importance of translation.

Translation plays an active historical role

Jean Delisle has proposed that a history of translation be written in terms of the roles translators themselves have carried out in the development of various fields like languages, literatures, nations and religions. In keeping with the objectives of the Fédération Internationale des Traducteurs, the purpose of the undertaking is to "advocate and advance the recognition of translation as a profession" (1991, 11). This is admirable. But does it mean that the profession is at last to be recognized for services passively rendered in these particular fields, or will translation be seen

as a mode of intervention in the course of history? To what extent can historical approaches reveal truly active translators?

Relatively few claims can be made for the historical role of the individual translator at work on the individual text. Apart from exceptional cases where the translator has an extra-textual identity as an author, the anonymity required by equivalence makes it very difficult to attribute significant historical influence to an unseen worker. What kind of power can be attributed to “nobody in particular”?

On the other hand, if one considers the *general* case, if one considers the general functions of transfer and translation as intercultural phenomena, the notion of an active historical role becomes rather more interesting. Since transfer and translation in principle provide each culture with everything it believes it knows or does not know about other cultures, the historical role of translation is potentially of extreme importance. From the perspective of this second approach, translation can indeed intervene in the course of events, especially at those points—and there are many—where economic, political and technological rationalities fail or contradict each other, causing history to be made on the frontiers of established systems. Because cultures stimulate, copy, praise, fight, absorb and sometimes exterminate other cultures, translation might ultimately have its say in the way of the world.

This is why historical analysis should initially proceed from general intercultural transfer to the individual translation, from the extra-textual to the textual. There is of course nothing to stop it then developing secondary individualized models working in the other direction, but the object of study itself requires that the general case still be privileged. If this methodological priority is not accorded, if intercultural transfer and individual translations are seen as homologous or in a merely tautological relationship, the resulting historiography will inevitably condemn translators to express what we already know about intercultural relations, and will inevitably find that regimes passively conform to what we already know about translation.

An example of the trap to be avoided can be found in Susan Bassnett, who makes the following block comment on both Rossetti’s 1861 praise of translational servility and Fitzgerald’s roughly contemporaneous dictum concerning the translator’s superiority over “inferior” foreign poets:

“These two positions, the one establishing a hierarchical relationship in which the SL author acts as a feudal overlord exacting fealty from the translator, the other establishing a hierarchical relationship in which the translator is absolved from all responsibility to the inferior culture of the SL text are both quite consistent with the growth of colonial imperialism in the nineteenth century.” (1980, 4)

I find this argument powerful but rather too pessimistic. Bassnett's belief in epistemological consistency leads her to overlook the possibility that these translators might have played distinctive roles within and against the dominant colonialist regime. Should translators pretend to be above their authors? According to Bassnett, colonialist if you do, and colonialist if you don't, since the terms of the debate are colonialist even before the translator enters the scene. It is thus methodologically assumed that translation can have no active historical role. Bassnett moreover ignores the fundamental difference between Fitzgerald's exotic fantasy (his *Rubaiyat* was never really taken seriously as a relative equivalent) and Rossetti's translating of early Italian poets according to criteria of work and workmanship, an aesthetic which was to connect with a very internationalist line of English letters. The two modes of translation were motivated in terms of quite different regimes. Even more obviously, the English network of literary translation as a whole presented strong incompatibilities with the networks formed by imperialist military and economic regimes (in Italy?, in eleventh-century Persia?).⁶⁹ Such contradictions allow translations to play an active role within the wider regimes upon which they materially depend.

Translation history could be based on regimes

Because texts move, the historiography of translation must concern more than just translation. It must take into account the reasons why texts move, for whom they move, and in relation to what economic and political movements they move. Only then can the historian properly say what translation does and can do within intercultural regimes.

The regime is the level at which the most important questions should be asked of translation studies; it is where translation should provide data and models criti-

⁶⁹ Fitzgerald's comment is perhaps even more interesting than Bassnett-McGuire realises. Here is the text: "It is an amusement to me to take what liberties I like with these Persians, who, (as I think) are not Poets enough to frighten one from such excursions, and who really do want a little Art to shape them." [Letter to Cowell, 20 March 1857. I think this date is correct, since it at least ties in with the publication of the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* in 1859. Bassnett-McGuire gives "1851" as the date in her text (p. 3) and then "1957", which is no doubt a typographical error in the corresponding note (p. 137).]

The register is indeed imperialist ("frighten", "excursions", "to shape them"). But perhaps this was necessarily so, since Britain was at war with Persia in 1856-1857 and Fitzgerald was thus in the difficult position of presenting the positive values of an enemy culture. The imperialist vocabulary may thus be seen as answering a possible charge of treason, at the same time as an "I" enters the scene to deny any perturbing fiction of equivalence. Fitzgerald's statement may seem compatible with imperialism, but his position as a translator, finding beauty in an enemy culture, was not.

cally elucidating intercultural relations in regions and periods of substantial extension.

This plea for analysis on the level of regimes is more than just an expression of personal discontent with systematically one-sided approaches to translation history. My concern with regimes is also an attempt to formulate the reason why the writing of this kind of history might be important as a contribution to our general understanding of intercultural relations. Beyond the mere collection and arrangement of data, beyond the beguilingly objective identification of systems and natural processes, research on this level should be able to present a critical view of the non-translational levels on which cultures interact, posing and attempting to answer questions not only about past regimes but also about what kind of regimes should be developed in the future.

That is, attention to regimes should enable translation studies to formulate and contribute to questions of professional ethics.

TRANSLATION RULES ARE ETHICAL DECISIONS

Ethics is a professional concern

ETHICAL questions concern translation on two levels. On the one hand, tired repetitions of *traduttore traditore* presuppose some kind of ideal loyalty to a source text, author or sender, often pitted against similar loyalty to a receiving language, culture or receiver. On the other, codes of ethics are written for the control of translation as a profession, regulating the translator's relations with other translators, with clients and with questions like official secrets. These are two very different levels. In the first case, the ideal translator remains an invisible linguistic figure, corresponding to no I-here-now. In terms of the profession, however, the ideal translator is a juridical and fiscal entity who, according to most contemporary ethical codes, should have paratextual and extra-textual presence as the partly responsible source of translated texts. The implicit anonymity of the first level would seem to be overridden by a call to explicit professional presence on the second.

Historically, this difference in levels can be projected as a long process going from politically enslaved anonymity to independently professional practice, a process that has been accompanied by the progressive development and justification of translational ethics. That is, to the extent that translators have slowly transformed their anonymity into a professional identity, they have been able partly to develop a professional ethics.

But can it simply be assumed that all individual translators have become equally professional? Have they really gained sufficient authority to develop their own ethics? And if so, where did this authority come from, and in whose interests should it be used?

Approaches to translational ethics mostly fail to address such questions because they are almost exclusively focused on the practice of the abstract individual translator. Experts thus set about writing rules on the model of “when in situation A,

take action B”, hoping that inexperienced individuals will conform to an ethically unquestioned and ostensibly unquestionable norm. But if no isolated individual has ever gained enough authority to formulate and apply this kind of rule—truly isolated individuals tend to be called traitors—, how can a realistic code of behavior possibly be formulated in such terms? The starting point for translational ethics must be the professional group, not the lone hand.

This means that, since the historical development of the profession concerns a collectivity—translators as a social group—, it is misleading to formulate translation rules as simple precepts for individuals who might be morally right or corrigibly wrong. The essential problem of translational ethics is not *how* to translate in any given situation, but *who* may decide how to translate.

Partial answers to this question can be gleaned from the long march from slavery to professionalism. Translators became professional, but they did not do so spontaneously or individually. They passed through several intermediary stages, recountable in terms of political models and arabesque arguments concerning inspiration, individualism, divided loyalty and the apparently neutral use of natural languages.

Let us review just a few of these models and arguments.

Translators are rarely above suspicion

The first written references to translation did not mention translators at all: Kurz (1985) notes that in sixth-dynasty Egypt (2423—2263 BC) one of the official titles of the Princes of Elephantine was “overseers of dragomans”, with nothing said of the dragomans or interpreters-guides themselves, who were presumably controlled nobodies. Similarly, the Biblical references listed by Nida mention not the history of translators, but the history of the kings, princes and priests for whom translations were carried out. Or again, although the Rosetta stone has the priests of Memphis conferring divine honors on Ptolemy V, it mentions no honors for its hidden translators. Performatives belong to kings, princes and priests; translations remain as anonymous as the overwhelming majority of those who, for at least four thousand years, have sacrificed their extra-textual identities in the interests of one kind of equivalence or another.

It is not particularly scandalous that few translators have been kings, princes or priests. There is even a certain pride to be taken in the fact that political and moral authorities have had to trust the knowledge conveyed by their translating servants. But how might the prince know that a particular translator is worthy of trust? It

would be foolish to suggest that all translators are equally competent, that their fidelity corresponds automatically to what they are paid, or that their loyalty is beyond doubt. Some kind of extra-textual support is ultimately necessary. Perhaps the prince's confidence is based on a diploma from a specialized translation institute, references from previous employers, comparisons with other translators, or even on what the individual translator is able to say about the practice of translating, since theorization is itself a mode of professional self-defense.

Although these extra-textual phenomena indicate the nominal existence of a translating individual, they should not contradict translational equivalence, since their very function is to provide support for the acceptance of equivalence. In theory, translators can only be accorded the absolute anonymity of equivalence when they can be trusted absolutely. Unfortunately, in practice, the principle of anonymity is mostly relative, since the extra-textual indicators are themselves not equally trustworthy—foreign diplomas and references are easy to forge—and intellectuals tend to have too many personal opinions anyway. The problem remains.

Now, which extra-textual factors are most likely to be trustworthy? Traditional authority mechanisms tend to subordinate meritocratic indicators to factors like birthright and group identification. Moreover, since politics is largely the discursive elaboration of an inclusive and exclusive “we”, the person who is to be trusted should ideally be included in the same first-person plural as the king, prince or priest distributing authority. In Spain, sworn translators are authorized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and have their certificates issued in the name of the king. The translator should identify with the central authoritative figure. The truly trustworthy translator should ideally be “one of us”.

The only problem with this traditional guideline is that, since translation concerns exchange between different cultures, there is always at least one double “we” involved. In theory, the translator's loyalty could always be to the foreign prince or trader, the potential enemy or thief. In practice, ostensible allegiance almost always goes one way or the other, perhaps according to which prince is paying the most for translational services. Yet objectively mercenary behavior is never a guarantee of absolute loyalty; clever princes require some form of subjective allegiance as well. Nor are translators able to pretend to the strict disinterest of other kinds of mercenaries: a hired gun can fight in any battle whatsoever, independently of subjective identification, but translators, like spies, can only be employed in situations between cultures of which they have substantial personal experience; they can only be employed in places where their loyalty is open to question. The Princes of Elephantine were not just overseeing linguistic vraisemblance; they also

had to trust dragomans as guides, as former nomads and border-dwellers who knew the foreign lands to be crossed and thus partly belonged to a foreign “we”. Translators are habitually from diglossic border regions, from families of mixed background, from situations where language loyalty contradicts national frontiers (Weinreich 1953, 100ff). Since they have by definition incorporated elements of multiple subjective identification, since they speak the language and know the lands of the foreigner, since they share the cultural references of real or potential enemies, translators will never be able to convince skeptical princes that their inner subjective identification is entirely one-sided. This was indeed the case in Elephantine. Which is probably why sixth-dynasty pharaohs decided to make “overseers of dragomans” a princely title in itself, placing authority in a home-grown hierarchy above anonymous translational work, to ensure the success of their commercial expeditions to the south.

Sovereign hierarchization was a partial solution to the problem. But not the only one.

Inspiration may have come to isolated cells on Pharos

A simple solution to the problem of divided loyalty is for the translator to seek or invent a higher or even transcendent source of authority. In the case of religious texts, this could mean divine inspiration. And for profane texts, there could be direct inspiration from the author, either through literary metempsychosis, as claimed by Chapman (T. R. Steiner 1975, 23), or perhaps through “Sortes Vergilianæ”, as W. F. Jackson Knight intimated with respect to his translation of the *Aeneid* (1956, 23-24). In both the religious and profane domains, the source of authority is an author who is physically absent from competing worldly princes. Authority thus avoids the political “we” by becoming a fact of individual authorship. Inspired authority may then ensue from the assumption of inspired individual authorship.

If inspiration is best left to the inspired, its sociological import can nevertheless be described on the basis of how its authority is attested. The model example here is the miraculous translation of the Greek Bible, usefully recounted by Nida (1964, 26-27). The Septuagint is said to have been translated by seventy-two rabbis—six from each of the twelve tribes of Israel—who, working in groups of two and in isolated cells, translated the Old Testament with such divine inspiration that the resulting TTs were all absolutely identical.

The legend is at least eloquent on the subject of authority. Rather than compare a Greek TT with a Hebrew ST, this exemplary professional association of translators insisted that the only valid test was to compare one Greek TT with another, since only the translators themselves were competent to judge the meaning of the original text. Regardless of whatever tricks or illusions were used to ensure absolute equivalence between TTs, the very fact of such equivalence could then in turn explain away any deviance between the TT and the ST, including outright deletions and additions, as indeed it did for Saint Augustine:

“[The Spirit] with divine authority could say through the translators something different from what he had said through the original prophets [...]. We will conclude, in the case of something in the Hebrew which is missing in the Septuagint, that the Spirit elected to say this by the lips of the original prophets and not by the lips of their translators. Conversely, in the case of something present in the Septuagint and missing in the Hebrew, we will conclude that the Spirit chose to say this particular thing by the seventy rather than by the original prophets, thus [...] all of them were inspired.” (*City of God* 18.43; cited by Nida 1964, 26)

It would seem that, for as long as translators agree amongst themselves, for as long as they have a solid professional association, their divine inspiration can even claim infallibility.

The rabbis merit two further observations. First, the political problem of their “we” was overcome not only by their being drawn from all of the twelve tribes of Israel, but also by their status as something more than mere dragomans: they were all religious teachers, with a claim to extra-translational authority even before their miraculous texts were compared. Their professional association thus drew its initial authority from contiguous social structures. Second, proof of their inspiration does not necessarily depend on belief in their prior isolation. After all, if they had not been isolated, would it have been any less remarkable that they could all agree on one definitive TT? It should be remembered that Quine’s indeterminism is based on firm belief that “one translator would reject another’s translation” (1969, 296-97), and yet seventy-two rabbis would appear to have reached a common accord. This is indeed miraculous determinism! And if they could all agree on a TT, surely it would have been far easier for them all to agree to say they had been isolated and inspired.

Historically, the structure of divine inspiration functions as a double step towards professionalization. First, it enables translators to draw authority by contiguity with authors and their representatives, be they divine or otherwise. Second, it demonstrates the usefulness of burying differences and seeking safety in numbers.

But more importantly, it offers a mode of professionalization that does not depend on established sovereign hierarchies.

Nec translatores debent esse soli

A slightly different solution to the problem of the political “we” can be observed in the background of major international summits. When two presidents meet in different languages, there are usually two interpreters on hand for the necessary shadowing. Why two? Since summit-level interpreters are competent in two-way communication, only one should be strictly necessary from the point of view of linguistic skills. Yet neither president wants their words filtered through a foreign mouthpiece. In practice, two interpreters are necessary so that each can function as a check on the equivalence produced by the other: one is presumed to be “ours”, the other is “theirs”. In this way, the problem of trust is partly solved by making specially selected translators their own mutual overseers.

Heck (1931, 5ff) describes how in the early Middle Ages two translators often worked on the one text, the first producing a literal version, the second then adjusting the literalism to the stylistic requirements of the target language. In principle, this double translation allows for a checking of loyalty in both directions. The “ours” and “theirs” of summit translators becomes an internal fact of the translating process itself, without any recourse to hierarchies or claims of divine inspiration.

Extended forms of intra-professional checking have long been used in Bible translating. When Luther states that “a false Christian or a person with a sectarian spirit cannot faithfully translate the Scriptures” (in Nida 1964, 16, 152), his insistence on divine grace functions not only as a safeguard against potential treason but also as a way of making translators work together. Translators should belong both to a “we” defined by potential inspiration—which should never be rejected out of hand—and to another “we” based on mutual presence. Instead of legendary isolation in cells, Luther insists on obligatory conversation: “Nec translatores debent esse soli, denn eim einigen fallen nicht allzeit gut et propria verba zu... (*Tischreden*, in Kloepfer 1967, 36); the right words in the right order do not always occur to the solitary translator. Luther thereby condemned his translators to painstaking committees—“We often spent a fortnight or three or four weeks questioning a single word” (*Sendbrief*, in Störig 1963, 32)—, but he made sure that the word finally found was suited to the intersubjective principles of equivalence for the people.

Authority, in this context, is presumably recognized within the group of translators as they work. It is something that exists in the relation between translators; it depends on neither divine authors nor worldly princes, since it has effectively been transferred to the level of dialogue and mutual recognition. The prohibition of solitude thus marks a further major step in the professionalization of translators.

But does Luther's "we" entirely avoid the problem of political overseers? After all, he himself assumed enough authority to lay down the principle of group collaboration, which in turn worked to the benefit of his desire to break with literalist tradition. Yet the authoritarian position is in this case not quite pharaonic. Since Luther was himself one of the translators, his "we" was also an extension of the intra-professional model. Group work and authority were contained within the social unit formed by translators as a professional organization, independently of princes, popes and cardinals.

A similar "we" can be found in introductions to modern Bible translations. The *New International Version*, for example, is presented as the work of "over a hundred scholars" selected and controlled by a complex system of committees which "helped to safeguard the translation from sectarian bias" (NIV, v). However, as in Luther, the work of the overseeing committees was based on subjective identification of the translators themselves as a group of believers:

"...the translators were united in their commitment to the authority and infallibility of the Bible as God's Word in written form." (NIV, vi)

The structure of divine inspiration still exists in this insistence on faith as a collective professional qualification.

Isolated inspiration is also regulated

If Luther's communal precept can be seen as an extension of Septuagint inspiration and traced through to contemporary Bible translation procedures, there is perhaps no less historical continuity to be found in the Hieronymian aesthetic of individual inspiration, against which Luther's committee procedures were partly formulated (Kloepfer 1967, 36-38). Should the ideal translator work alone or in a group? It is no doubt possible to find at least one great individual translator for every great professional group of translators, and no amount of historical or statistical argument will win the day. In the field of Bible translation, solitary scholars like Emile Osty believe that their individuality protects them from "fantasy and lack of con-

sistence, a reproach warranted by so many versions produced by a plurality of authors” (1973, 9). Newmark has typically raised this individualism to the level of an eternal principle: “...a first-rate translation must be written by one person...” (1981, 158). But how serious are such claims to inspired individuality?

Especially in the field of literary texts, preferences for the collectiveness or singularity of translators tend to follow general ideas about ideal authorship and the strength of the corresponding property bond between author and text. If an age believes that all great authors are individuals, its preferred translators will also tend to be individuals. Hegel believed that the greatness of the *Iliad* proved the individuality of Homer (1835, II, 1048-1098), despite Wolf’s early exposition of the Homeric epics as a translational series. Newmark would no doubt have agreed. If authoritarian individualism has its preferred workplaces, so much the worse for the facts.

Examples of relative correspondence between authors’ and translators’ anonymity:

It seems pragmatically correct that “authorless” genres like information brochures should not name their translators, and that strongly authored texts like poems should always give the translator’s name. But there are many genres where authorship bonds are weak and, although ostensible sources are cited, it is very difficult to have a translator’s name printed. In Spain, where I nevertheless try to ensure such naming, this difficulty concerns political and economic texts, children’s literature, encyclopedia articles, how-to-paint books and almost anything else that, in commercial passages from publisher to publisher, can undergo any number of uncontrolled rewrites. In these cases, authors are often named quite independently of their knowledge or desire, and translators tend to become as anonymous as the unscrupulous intermediary agents they work for. For this reason alone, it would be difficult to base translational ethics on criteria of authorship. But there are other reasons as well.

The historical projection of the relation between translational practice and authorship ideologies demands more investigation than can be undertaken here. But it should nevertheless be clear that this relation does not imply that *individual* translators can or should assume the status of individual authors. The relation pertinent to professional ethics exists on the level of two *collectivities*. If translators are able to use authorship ideology in order to absorb authority from more prestigious social institutions like national literatures, they do so in a way that affects the professional as a whole, in a collective space logically anterior to individual authority. There can be no question of analyzing the authority of the translator’s profession as the consequence or sum of individually authorized translators, as if there had never been any Princes of Elephantine, as if all translators were always already priests. The historical order of models was in fact quite the reverse: just as primitive communism and exploitive hierarchies preceded capitalist individualism, just

as the obligations of fixed verse forms preceded the liberty of literary prose, so collective professionalization historically preceded the authority of the individual translator. Exceptions to this anteriority are merely exceptional. In general, only once translators had a positive collective status could they set about imitating authorship structures, assuming individual authority.

Radical individualism should thus be taken with a large grain of salt. If works like Luther's Bible and the King James Version can legitimately be criticized for fantasy and inconsistency, it nevertheless seems difficult to classify them as automatically second-rate because of group authorship. Such prejudice should quietly be absorbed by the more global principle that the collective profession provided the conditions necessary for the rise of the authoritative individual.

There can be no ethics of linguistic neutrality

If the individual translator's ethical decisions concern cases of loyalty divided between ST and TT cultures, an easy way to solve such dilemmas is presumably to get rid of the figure of the individual translator, thereby getting rid of the subjectivity originally called upon to make such decisions. Indeed, the very existence of authoritative professional groups suggests that there is a certain strategic virtue to be found in the semantic absence of individualism, in tacit retreat from situations of individual choice. By complying with group decisions, the individual's equivalence might be supposed to escape partisan bias and attract substantial social guarantees.

In accordance with this view, an ethics of anonymity would have the translator remain an essentially passive entity with no identity beyond professional unanimity. Translators might perhaps work, but they should not be seen to work. In fact, if one is to believe a standard contemporary ethical code, the translator's only active right should be the capacity to refuse a given text:

A somewhat brutal summary of the code of ethics of the Association des traducteurs littéraires de France (ATLF), 1988:

Let it suffice to say that translators:

1. Must have adequate linguistic competence.
2. Must have knowledge of the pertinent subject matter.
3. Must refuse to translate from a TT unless with the consent of the author.
4. May only alter a text with the author's consent.
5. Have the right to accept or refuse a translation.
6. May demand the documents necessary for the translation.
7. Must respect professional secrets.
8. Must translate personally and ensure that their name appears on TT.

9. In the case of co-translation, the names of all the translators must appear on TT.
10. Must demand the same conditions if co-translating.
11. Must refuse work detrimental to a fellow translator.
12. Must not accept work conditions inferior to those established by the profession.

The priority of the author over the translator is clear in points 3 and 4. The translator's only elective right is mentioned in point 5, the capacity to refuse to translate a text. Points 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7 might perhaps better be described as clients' rights. The blunt individualism of point 8 ("Le traducteur s'engage à traduire personnellement") is curiously and immediately modified by the co-translation rules of points 9 and 10. All in all, this negative ethics delimits certain areas where translators should not enter, but accords them little positive identity within their own territory.

What is the explicit guarantee of equivalence in this code of ethics? Since authority here only partly ensues from the author, there is relatively little inspiration or grace at stake. The code instead refers to some basic traits of professional competence, expressed as adequate knowledge of the ST and TT languages and the pertinent subject matter. Translators are authorized as translators not because of any individual identity, but because of the linguistic and communicative skills they have acquired. The level of meritocratic performance is brought down to that of a passive collective capacity. The prime guarantee of equivalence—the first point named in the above code, and the first that comes to mind in popular definitions of translation—becomes the translator's *linguistic competence*, a space supposedly untouched by active passages of transfer or dilemmas of allegiance. If translation is thus seen as little more than a linguistic phenomenon, it becomes impossible to see why there should be any ethical problems to solve.

Some translation theories turn this technocratic evasion into an incipient morality, finding in "natural" language a kind of universal common ground to be attained and retained. Such is the paradise targeted by Nida's "closest natural equivalent" (1959, 33) and, more belligerently, by Newmark's campaign against jargon, pretension and superficially asymmetric discrimination.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Newmark's morality (1988):

a) "You have to ensure... that your translation reads naturally, that it is written in ordinary language, the common grammar..." (24)

b) "What is natural in one situation may be unnatural in another, but everyone has a natural 'neutral' language where spoken and informal written language more or less coincide." (29)

c) The translator's responsibilities are to truth, "not only physical truth, but also moral 'truth', the acknowledgement that people are equally valuable and have equal potential, has to be reaffirmed in the notes if it is violated in the text." (211)

d) "It is always your duty to 'desex' language ('they' for 'he', 'humanity' for 'Man', etc.) tactfully, without being counter-productive." (211-212)

I hasten to add that Newmark himself fails to desex language, as in "The teacher more or less imposes a fair copy which is a 'model' of *his* own English" (1988, 20, italics mine); to say nothing of masculine pronouns in 1988, 76, 78, 80, 81, 84, 86, 88, 91, 209 & passim.; 1981, passim.

What is this neutral space full of “natural” language? To whom does it belong? Apparently to everyone, since universal equality is one of the principles of its very construction. But if the tongue includes a privileged set of mechanisms for creating specific and relatively untransferable belonging, how can it possibly map out a neutral ground able to abolish all distinctions between “we” and “they”? How can knowledge of “natural” tongues suddenly make the translator equally “natural” and thus neutral?

There have been numerous outcries against the naturalness of language. One of the loudest came from Roland Barthes, who bluntly declared the apparently democratic tongue to be not only undemocratic but quite simply fascist, since “fascism does not prohibit the saying of things; it obliges things to be said”:

“In French (which provides the most extreme examples), I am obliged to present myself first as a subject before I can manifest an action, which will then forever be no more than my appendage: what I do is merely the consequence of what I am. In the same way, I am always obliged to choose between the masculine and feminine genders; the neutral and complex genders are prohibited. And again, I have to indicate my relation to the second person by using either *tu* or *vous*; I am allowed no recourse to social or affective suspense or mystery.” (1977, 14)

The complaint, which concerns no more than the primary linguistic articulations of the I-here-now, is most readily understandable in terms of Barthes’ homosexuality; the assumed naturalness and equality of the tongue turns real desire for equality into something quite unnatural and unequal. Missionary-translators may similarly suffer from a lack of neutrality, since in many languages God must be either male or female, and natural common ground is hard to find. And yet Barthes managed to express amorous sentiments in fragments of beautiful French; and Bible translators manage to translate.

An evasive reply to Barthes is that he should have either spoken another language—English perhaps offers a higher degree of superficial neutrality—, or set about reforming the French language itself, from a position of authority (the above complaint is from his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France). In the case of masculine dominance in English gender, the latter course has been undertaken reasonably successfully and change has proved relatively painless. In the case of Barthes’ French, change was in fact sought through the literary and critical reworking of the tongue, creating a multiplicity of contradictory rules in such a way that complexity itself ultimately left space for a certain undefined liberty, although strategies of selective blindness would also have been possible (Anne Garreta’s 1986 novel *Sphinx* responds to Barthes by avoiding gender-marked adjectives

from beginning to end). There are many ways of attaining neutral linguistic ground, but this neutrality cannot be attributed to nature.

The tongue is neither naturally neutral nor a fascist conspiracy. The neutral ground sought by democratic ethics *can* be expressed in language, but its expression requires work, transformation and creation, be it by the translator or by the discontent author. Since there is no neutrality prior to this linguistic work, the ethics of professional practice are to be sought in the active role of the professional. Neutrality is not natural; it has to be created.

To translate is to attempt improvement

The rejection of natural neutrality makes it possible to address several thorny questions commonly avoided by the ethics of anonymity. The most important of these problems is the translator's right or duty to improve originals (the question is significantly absent from the code of ethics summarized above, which bluntly adjudicates this right to the author). Since translators cannot help but take position—since even neutral positions have to be created—, their ethics should break with passive non-identity, forcing them actively to evaluate the texts they work on, making them take on a major degree of responsibility for the texts they produce.

The question of improving a text concerns various domains. With respect to “facts”, few would disagree with Newmark's sound if pedestrian advice:

“When extralinguistic reality is wrong in the source text, the translator must say so. Misstatements must be either corrected or glossed. This responsibility is more important than monitoring the quality of the writing in the source-language text.” (1981, 128-129)

The real problem begins on the level of what Newmark describes as “monitoring the quality of the writing”, which should be extended to include the monitoring of pertinence, relations between implicit and explicit material, and strategies of addition and deletion. Were Peter the Great and Perrot d'Ablancourt actually improving their texts? Was Major Spears effectively improving de Gaulle? Such questions are less easily answered than appeals to “extralinguistic reality”. But there can be little doubt that Peter the Great, d'Ablancourt and Spears all *thought* they were carrying out improvements, in accordance with either personal criteria or group interests.

After all, if the transferred texts had been perfect and required no change, why should they have been translated? Is not translation itself a major change? The questions demands some thought.

What might be wrong with a merely transferred text? Obviously, if a transferred text's language or codes unacceptably restrict its performative capacity in a new cultural context, the first improvement must be the elaboration or transformation of its language or codes, the opening of a new potential "we" for new potential receivers. By definition, from the perspective of the translator receiving the text, *the first improvement must be fact of translation itself*.

Translational improvement thus initially means enabling a text to reach certain receivers who would otherwise find that text unavailable or incomprehensible. In certain cases this requires that improvement pass through the reproduction of defects, so that the original text or author may be recognized as defective and thereafter be avoided or corrected in future texts. To translate is not always to correct; but it is always to attempt improvement, sometimes according to a long-term vision.

On this level, improvement is obviously a very relative notion; it is always in terms of the specific purposes of the person or group interested in creating a new "we", in extending reception in a certain direction (and not in others).

The pertinent question is then not *whether* the translator should improve a transferred text, but according to *whose criteria* improvements should be made. For whom is the text to be improved? And with authority from which side of the summit?

Translators' first loyalty should not fall one side or the other

Since the question of improvement can be formulated as a classical problem of multiply divided loyalties, it may be conceptualized in terms of the figures to which the translator might turn when in search of authorization. There are at least five such figures:

- The author or sender, whose consent might be necessary for alterations (as stated in the ATLF code of ethics).
- The receiver, who might have a right to know about the defects of the original (the ATLF code is prefaced by something called the "right to exact information of all kinds", described as "one of the fundamental rights of Man [l'Homme]"⁷¹).

71 "Considérant que le droit à l'exactitude de l'information, quelle qu'elle soit, est un des droits fondamentaux de l'Homme..."

- The client or initiator (“Besteller”, “donneur d’ouvrage”), who might demand that the translation be written in accordance with a specific aim or purpose (as broadly defended in the wake of Holz-Mänttari 1984).
- The ST culture, since even the most disastrous poverty or iniquitous domination might have the right to treatment in terms of a regime of cultural equality (a 1982 UNESCO text advises member countries that “international cultural cooperation depends on respect for cultural identity, for the dignity and value of each culture, for independence, for national sovereignty and for non-intervention”).
- The TT culture, since translation has the potential to alter the defensive capabilities of the receiving community and the long-term expressive capacities of the receiving language (certain Canadian translators engage in “elegant re-writing” in order to protect and enrich Québécois, cf. Delisle 1984, 118).

Of these five possible sources of authority for improvement, which is to have priority? And if there is no absolute priority, how, in any given situation, might translators know in which of these directions they should look first?

Several short-sighted solutions should be dispensed with before a general answer can be given.

First, although the ideal translation might be thought to be one in which all these parties would find visible improvement, the ideal of equivalence suggests exactly the opposite, namely that what these parties are primarily interested in is *invisible* improvement of the kind that can be mistaken for zero-degree value change. From the translator’s point of view, to translate is to improve. But from the perspective of authors, clients, receivers and cultures, what we are calling translation is the production of equivalence. No one really wants to know about the translator’s value added; few are automatically prepared to let unknown and potentially untrustworthy individuals decide what is or is not an improvement, especially when those individuals start to reveal their ignorance by asking clients too many questions. The more translators manifest their individuality, the less chance equivalence has of finding believers. The improvements most likely to suit all parties are thus those made by silent hands, leaving fragile translational fictions untouched.

Second, it might be assumed that the fairest kind of improvement is that which is most explicit. The best translation would then be one in which nothing is hidden from the receiver, all problems are elaborated, all original defects are noted and expansion is worked up to the outer threshold of relative equivalence. But in whose favor would such an ethics of explicitness function? Certainly not the client,

who will only have to pay more. And not especially the author, who will usually doubt and resent distortions of the original form. Receivers are surely those who stand to gain the most from maximum expansion. But how many receivers have the time to go through vast tomes of elucidation before finding the part of a text they consider of most value? How many would rather have a shorter text, elaborated according to purpose-specific criteria of pertinence? How many would exchange their apparently universal “right to information” for a socially determined right to “freedom from redundant or impertinent information”? Since excessive textual quantity is one of the best ways of concealing important information—books are best hidden in libraries—, an ethics of explicitness cannot be expected to provide any general panacea for problems of immoral manipulation.

Third, an ethics of commercial service, most effectively based on the translator’s responsibility to the client’s purpose, would simply place mercenary behavior beyond the reach of ethical critique, suggesting that the most improved translation is the one which gets paid the most and that none of the other possible sources of authority count for anything at all. In the absence of any translational guiding hand (such as Luther’s insistence on faith), an ethics of commercial service would appear to be more like a non-ethics, although the rather more interesting but associated criterion of “professional detachment” will be commented upon below.

Fourth, an ethics based on symmetrical respect for hypothetical cultural equality would seem inadequate to the fundamentally asymmetric principles of translation itself: authors and translators are by definition not equal; text flows between senders and receivers are rarely balanced or reciprocal; the right to information is not automatically a universal blessing. An ethics of improvement must recognize that translation is a profoundly asymmetrical phenomenon.

Fifth, an ethics based on asymmetrical cultural specificity would in fact fare no better than its symmetrical counterpart. If one says that each culture has and should have its own way of translating—and thus its own way of improving texts according to its own criteria—, there is no way of recognizing and assessing translation as an actively communication act necessarily relating at least two cultures. An ethics of cultural specificity would be like suggesting that improvement in a marriage can only result from having husband and wife pursue their separate criteria, which in fact amounts to saying that the best marriage is divorce. Is the best intercultural relation then culture-specific? Is the best translation really non-translation in disguise?

There can be no doubt that certain phenomena are culture-specific. But translation, precisely because it is an intercultural phenomenon, should not be one of

them.⁷² To pretend otherwise would be to push relativism to the paranoid extremes translation should ideally overcome; it would be to draw up rules based on unchanging cultural distances and then apply them to a phenomenon which has as its function precisely the transformation of those distances; it would be to forget that the kings, princes and priests taking their sovereignty from cultural specificity can never totally trust translators anyway. Because, despite whatever cultural specificity they might be attributed, translators have always been intercultural.

Questions of divided loyalty cannot be decided in terms of looking in one direction rather than another. Criteria of equivalence, explicitness, purpose-adequacy, hypothetical cultural equality and cultural specificity fail to provide any convincing orientation as to the general nature of translational improvement. This is because they are not in themselves translational criteria; they are not derived from any careful contemplation of what translation is and does. In order properly to decide how and when to improve through translation, one must first position oneself in an appropriately intercultural space, and only then consider the fortunes of individual senders, receivers, clients or cultures.

Professional detachment is attachment to a profession

A properly translational ethics must precede questions of individually divided loyalty. It must be developed beforehand, in the space of the collective professionalization which produced the ideal of the individual translator in the first place. *Translators' prime loyalty must be to their profession as an intercultural space*, an intersubjective place in which criteria of translational quality can and should be determined.

On what basis should these decisions be made? It is important to realize that certain factors lie beyond professional control.

First, there is rarely any question of improving the *source text*, which by definition lies beyond the space of translation. The ST is generally to be regarded as a *fait accompli*, outside the control of the translator and only entering translation through irreversible transfer. No one can change de Gaulle's speech of 1940. What

⁷² This is not to say that no forms of translation have ever been culture-specific. The Spanish translation of legal documents, for example, is traditionally literalist to the point of illegibility. A group of teachers from the Granada Translation School have nevertheless begun arguing for explanatory expansion and addition as legitimate strategies in such cases. Their innovations might be criticised as an imposition of English criteria on Spanish tradition. But from the perspective of translation as intercultural communication, their attempt to change conventions is surely laudable. It should moreover be noted that this change has necessarily come from within the profession itself, since the government exam for sworn translators still recommends basic literalism.

can be improved is the transferred text, the original as it arrives in a new context: a translator could and did attempt to improve de Gaulle's speech as it existed in Britain in 1966.

Second, the question of improvement does not directly concern the *content* of the translated text. When Geoffrey Kingscott (1990) discusses the moral responsibility of the translator in terms of issues like "the manufacture or sale of armaments, the use of animals in laboratory experiments, and pornography", the questions involved might concern the translator's opinions and beliefs as an individual, but do not concern the translator's profession as such. The individual translator can refuse to work in these areas, but does so as an individual, like any other worker reluctant to be involved. There are no strictly professional grounds for saying that such texts should not be translated.

Source texts and non-translational ideologies must thus lie beyond the space in which a professional ethics can be developed.

But this does not mean that the profession should then refuse any ideologically based alterations whatsoever. Content is one thing; axiological presentation is quite another. In this respect, Kingscott is more provocative than exact when he argues that:

"...the translator or interpreter, when he or she is translating and interpreting, is in the same position as an advocate. An advocate, during the course of his career, may occasionally appear on behalf of an unfortunate victim, but it is more than likely that his client will be a double-dyed villain who would make him shudder with disgust if he had not learnt to take an attitude of professional detachment.

"Our clients rely on us to put their case, in the foreign language, as they would like to see it put, not as we would like to see it put." (1990, 48)

The analogy might be more instructive than it appears. If a client knows how a case should be put, why should he or she need an advocate? Obviously, so that a spontaneous presentation of the case can be improved; so that certain embarrassing details can be left out or hidden, other advantageous elements extended or added, a more formal or logical order instituted. The advocate, like the translator, is employed to improve a given text. But should the translator therefore mimic the advocate's professional detachment with respect to the client's purpose as such?

When a barrister argues a client's case, it is in a symmetrical situation where a further professional will argue the opposing case, producing a partitioned dialogue leading to a formal conclusion or judgment. That is, professional advocates are employed to facilitate exchange within a highly formalized regime. If they are detached with respect to the moral value of their client's actions and opinions, it is

because they are firmly attached to the ethical values of the discursive regime within which they work: they will not abuse the judge; they will respect court rules; they will speak the formalized language of the profession; they will tailor the client's case to suit the rules and conventions of the applicable legal code.

Now, if the translator is really a kind of advocate, there is no reason why the analogy should be limited to professional detachment. One should also ask what professional criteria—what regime of formalized exchange—might justify this detachment as ethical commitment. If there is detachment, it is only because there is *attachment* to something else. Barristers are attached to the rules and procedures of the court, which has as its purpose the dispensing of justice. Translators should presumably be attached to the rules and procedures of their profession, justifying their actions and decisions in terms of translation's own ultimate aim. But where advocates have the symmetry of accusation and defense, translators have only the asymmetry of imposed directionality; where advocates leave the final decision to a judge, translators themselves are surely the only people fully qualified to assess the shortcomings of their intercultural work. For these reasons, the fact that the advocate's aim is to serve a client does not necessarily mean that the same purpose is valid for translators.

The apparent conflict between translational improvement and professional detachment thus in fact concerns the translator's attachment to a profession whose ultimate aims have yet to be formulated.

Translation has purposes of its own

Some descriptions of the purpose or aim of translation appear to focus on what translators actually do or produce, without reference to the authority of external actors. In view of the negative arguments presented above, these descriptions would seem to be the only ones worthy of our continued interest. Unfortunately, even the most basic of such attempts tend to relapse into the ethics of service.

Ladmiral defines the purpose [*finalité*] of translation (1979, 15; 1981, 25):

“The purpose of a translation is to enable us to go without reading the original text.”

This would seem so basic as to be axiomatic, and yet it gives rise to several problematic questions: Who is this “us”? (contradictory equivalence suggests that translations are not just for their receivers); Are transliterated terms not properly part of a translation? (I have argued that they are); Why should a translation not lead to a reading of the transferred text? (such has long been the pedagogical use of literalist cribs); Can the particularity of “a translation” be confused with the general function of translation as a social phenomenon? (I have argued that, in ethical questions, the general case is very different from particular translators and individual transla-

tions). And then the most obvious question: If the purpose of a translation is to save “us” from the original, what is the purpose of “going without reading the original”? Are foreign languages and codes no longer to be learned? And so on. One senses that some further, more noble aim is required.

Laugier (1973) defines the social purpose [*finalité sociale*] of translation:

In a fine polemical paper, Laugier distinguishes radically between the social purpose of translating technical texts—which should enable technology to operate—and that of translating literary texts—which, according to formalist aesthetics, should create literariness in the space of reception—, such that the technical purpose would be well served by translating signified for signified, whereas the literary purpose would then require the almost mechanistic literalism of signifier for signifier.

The obvious ethical problem with this general approach is that it limits the social purpose of translation to that of serving the pre-established (and always available?) purpose of ST texts, thus once again displacing the question of purpose away from translation itself. If the purpose of translation is to reproduce ST technical or literary functions, what then is the purpose of technical and literary functions? And so on, again. Like Ladmiral, Laugier falls back into an ethics of service, with all its potentially mercenary consequences.

We are thus returned to the fundamental questions: Can translation be seen as having a purpose of its own? How might such a purpose be formulated? For whom should it be formulated?

I believe that a basic answer to these questions has already been intimated in the above discussion of professionalism. Let me now bring together the main steps in the argument.

If one can accept that, from the perspective of translators, to translate is to attempt improvement, if one can accept that translators’ first loyalty should be to their profession, and if it can also be accepted that translators are by definition intercultural subjects with intercultural professional relations, it becomes possible and interesting to propose that, *from the perspective of translators, the ultimate aim of translation is to improve the intercultural relations with which they are concerned.*

Such would be the formal principle of ideal translational improvement⁷³ most adequate to translators as an intercultural collectivity.

As much as this principle might appear to be saying nothing, as much as it is intentionally devoid of historical content, I suspect it *is* saying something simply to the extent that it has very rarely been formulated in such terms. But I freely concede that one should work towards giving it a more positive historical content.

⁷³ The principle of general translational improvement is not the same as the hypothesis of translational progress. Translational progress says that each new version should be better than the last. General improvement simply means that it is beneficial to have a lot of translated texts instead of just a lot of transferred texts.

Goethe was close to this principle, and no doubt more elegant, when he described the aim of translation as being to “increase tolerance between nations” (in Lefevere 1977, 34). But elegance is a relative virtue, and tolerance presupposes a degree of sovereignty and symmetry that nations are fast losing. A modern translational regime cannot assume that one act of tolerance will be rewarded with another, that there will be a judge to listen impartially to accusation and defense, that all parties will remain equally purposeful and command respect as such. Positive virtues like tolerance, understanding and enlightenment should not be dissociated from translation, but a world of asymmetry and limited sovereignty requires a slightly more cunning mode of thought.

Instead of arrogantly assuming that the immediate enemies of translation are intolerance, misunderstanding and ignorance, we must look closely at the historical ways in which translation opposes and interacts with *belonging*, which in itself surely has positive values. Far from proclaiming the goodness of all translation, an ethical notion of improvement should seek to identify the form of historically progressive dialectics between translation and belonging. That is, it should look for elements of globally beneficial translational regimes; it should be addressing wholly contemporary issues like the intercultural status of English, the stimulation of European multilingualism, and the representation of revived Romantic nationalisms. Obviously, these questions involve far more factors than can be grasped through translation theory alone.

At this point I can only put forward several examples that might be of interest for future discussion, especially now, in the early 1990s, at a moment of major regime change and thus extreme uncertainty.

An exception to prove the rule:

The excellent film *Patton* at one point portrays an American-Soviet celebration immediately after the fall of Nazi Berlin. There is no communication between the American and Soviet generals until, when the Soviet proposes a toast, the American general orders his interpreter: ‘Tell him he’s a son of a bitch.’ The interpreter understandably doubts that this is likely to improve intercultural relations: ‘I can’t tell him that, sir!’ The general insists, the interpreter interprets, and the Soviet’s relayed reply comes back as: ‘You’re a son of a bitch too.’” And then there is a toast.

The anecdote calls for two observations. First, the interpreter is undoubtedly correct to take an active role and offer advice to the Prince of half-Berlin. Second, his decision ultimately to convey the text is justified only by the extreme symmetry of the situation at all levels, both in the immediacy of the transfer situation and the authority of the communication participants.

This global symmetry was to become an international political and military regime ensuring some forty years of relative peace. But beyond the cold-war regime, such texts should probably not be translated.

An unexpectedly asymmetric regime:

On 9 January 1991, the American Secretary of State James Baker met the Iraqi Minister of Foreign Affairs Tariq Aziz in Geneva. A letter from President George Bush, addressed to Saddam Hussein, was transferred from Baker to Aziz, but the Iraqi refused to convey the letter to Saddam. One might say that the fluently bilingual Aziz refused to transfer and translate for his president. The reason given for this non-translation was that “the language of the letter is inappropriate to communication between heads of state”. In other words, in an asymmetric situation with respect to both the transfer situation and the relative power of the communication participants, the letter was not going to do anything to improve intercultural relations.

A suspicious mind might suppose that George Bush’s letter was written in the spirit of cold-war confrontations, in terms of the relative symmetry of the Cuban missile crisis, if not entirely in the language of General Patton. If so, the translator’s refusal, ostensibly based as it was on cultural values like respect and pride, is indicative of a very different international regime. But few failed to appreciate it at the time.

Should translators really take their decisions on the level of world-saving questions like intercultural regimes? In practice, it would be a lot to ask and could risk some quite absurd results. But I do not believe translators should passively accept the role of mere technicians, working on means and never considering anything but the most immediate or commercial ends, burying themselves in a practice falsely cut off from history and theory. Translators should also be intellectuals; they should have ideas about who they are and what they hope to achieve as a collectivity. If Sartre (1965) could describe the main contradiction of the intellectual of his day as “universalism of profession” opposed to “particularism of class”, the problems of the translating intellect might well be described in terms of “interculturality of profession” opposed to something like an immediately commercial “particularism of task”.

In ethical questions, priority must be given to the interculturality of the translator’s profession.

Should one refuse the “superiority of the white man”?

A Spanish encyclopedia for children contains the following sentence: “El hombre blanco ha marcado el avance del progreso humano durante más de dos mil años.” This was translated as: “The white race has led human progress for more than two thousand years.” In this particular case, where the text is “authorless” and the intended receiver is aged between ten and fourteen, even the most professionally detached translator would have doubts about serving a client’s interests by translating in this way.

Thankfully, the sentence did not reach its intended public. The translation was sold to an American publisher working from Taiwan, where it was radically edited, with appropriate complaints being sent to the Spanish publisher, who then conveyed them to the man who had written the sentence. The editor in Taiwan pointed out that the Tang dynasty in China was far more advanced than the European culture of the time, and that the sentence was thus factually incorrect (cf. Newmark). The Spanish “author” then replied that he didn’t care about China and, anyway, there was “nothing to compare with Romanic art and Gothic cathedrals”. I refused to translate this latter argument, not because I think Tang art is better than Gothic cathedrals—who am I to

say?—, but because the argument itself had deviated from the original sentence (which concerned “leading progress” and thus cultural contact) and was moreover highly unlikely to improve intercultural relations.

In some cases, dark-age silence or separate development is to be preferred to a regime of mud-sliding.

Should one refuse “the Catalan nation”?

One of the recurrent problems of translating from Spanish or Catalan into English is the political organization of Spain into seventeen “autonomous regions”, some of which call themselves “nations”. Particularly in Catalan, the terms for “nation” and “national” tend to refer to Catalonia and not to Spain, which is then usually referred to as “l’Estat” (the State). This means that “el nivel estatal” (State-level) concerns the whole of Spain, and “el nivel nacional” (national-level) sometimes concerns just Catalonia, upsetting the English-language concept of a nation divided into “states” (as in United States or the states of Australia, Nigeria or India). Part of the problem is that the Romance-language term “nation” refers to cultural tradition more than to the nation-state as such, as it tends to do in English⁷⁴ (much the same terminological problem is raised by French-Canadian nationalism). But the difficulties here are not just linguistic. Since the internal political regime of “autonomous regions” is specifically post-Franco, use of the term “nación” to refer to a region is by no means neutral in Spanish. It implicitly demands further independence. The translator is thus asked to convey or refuse this implicit demand.

In such situations, the translator must decide whether or not to call Catalonia a nation. It is not an easy decision.

Since I believe that, in the context of European integration, improved relations require stimulation of minor cultures, I also believe that translation should be used to convey awareness of such cultures. Ideologically, I am in favor of bending the dominant English concept of “nation” so as to be able to talk about “the Catalan nation”; I have no qualms at all about unambiguously referring to Catalonia as a “stateless nation” and have done so in one way or another whenever indicated by the Spanish or Catalan text. However, when considering this problem, I searched my translations for the term “nation” and was surprised to find that, as a technician translator concerned with means and not ends, I have repeatedly referred to the Spanish State as a “nation”, even when not indicated by the Spanish or Catalan text. In a text on EEC agricultural policies, a phrase like “No hay estructura administrativa *al nivel estatal o autonómico* para el desarrollo...” is efficiently rendered as “There is no specific administrative framework *on the national or regional level* for the development and application of the EEC regulation.” (“Farm Structures and Pluriactivity in Spain”, 1989). That is, I find that I have been prepared to convey regionalist ide-

⁷⁴ The distinctions here tend to be quite cunning and do not necessarily depend on differences in the interpretation of the term “nation”. Consider, for example, the description of the Organising Committee of the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games as working “para estar a la altura de la ciudadanía de Barcelona, del pueblo de Cataluña y de los cuarenta millones de españoles que han hecho cuestión de Estado que los Juegos del 92 sean un nuevo reencuentro...” There is no reference to any “nación”, but the three political terms all invite misunderstandings based on this absence: “ciudadanía” combines collective citizenship (usually of a nation?) with the existence of a city (“ciudad”); “pueblo” can be read as “people” in the sense of a national as well as cultural unit (an integrist would talk of “el pueblo español”); and “cuestión de Estado”, which would normally be a “question of national importance” or “of capital importance”, carefully avoids using the term “nación” for Spain as a whole at the same time as it suggests that the central government (the “State”) should be contributing more to the organization of the Olympic Games.

I confess to having translated the passage as: “The COOB’92 is working to live up to the expectations of the constituents of Barcelona, of the people of Catalonia, and of the forty million Spaniards who trust that the...” (*Barcelona Olympic News*, April 1989). That is, I chose to hide most of the implicit conflict, arguing that intercultural relations would be better served by an English-language text able to conceal internal political disputes about responsibility for the Olympic Games; I chose to present a falsely common front for external consumption.

ology when it appears, but not to impose it when it does not appear or is not at issue. An ethics of translation should be able to address moral dilemmas when they arise, but it should not ex-hume them unnecessarily.

Translators could be taught in terms of translational regimes

The translator's profession can be approached from the outside, through the critique and distancing of alternative sources of authority. Yet it can also be considered from within, through reflection on the way principles, norms, rules and procedures (the components of regimes) are or should be transmitted from translator to translator, master to apprentice, teacher to student.

Do teachers of translation give their students principles, norms, rules and procedures? Undoubtedly, yes. But are these regime elements properly translational? The vast majority are inevitably linguistic or have to do with area studies, bearing on adequate comprehension of content and on target-language production rather than on translation as such. Guidelines are widely formulated and taught as lexical, syntactic, discursive, pragmatic, probabilistic, psychological or sociological laws. Prestige is easily won by anything resembling standardized research into the nature of these supposed laws, as if they had inner secrets to reveal to passive microscopes.⁷⁵ As argued above, the guise of the natural thus supports a falsely benign neutrality requiring no strong ethical elaboration. Such approaches effectively let sleeping students lie. And they have little to do with translation.

How much of what is taught really concerns translation as a positive activity? Beyond apparent rigor and a lot of exercise, honest reflection on actual teaching practices might come up with a few homely imperatives like "explain abbreviations", "avoid footnotes", "do not translate names of real people" or "be more literal when translating citations". None of these really rise above the level of personal preferences or endemic norms; none of them can claim absolute applicability in all situations; none of them strictly concern ways of infallibly improving through translation. And then, who has the authority to impose such preferences anyway? Whose theorization can be accorded such absolute validity? Can the teaching of translation really convey strict guidelines at all?

I believe that the effective teaching of translation has much more to do with using theorization to open up a series of possibilities, a series of alternative ways of translating, and then inductively questioning those alternatives in terms of the spe-

⁷⁵ Among English-language approaches, Peter Newmark provides a significant exception to scientism. Although I find Newmark's theorisation constantly and consistently unintelligent and of peculiar moral bias, he has at least had the courage to speak his mind and say how he believes one should translate.

cific and general aims of translation. In most cases, this process requires little more than occasional cries like “Think of your reader!” or “What will your client say?”, initially overshadowed by the basic imperative “Decide!”, since students tend to take some time to accept that translators have the right and duty to make decisions. Any reasonable course should include enough morally dubious or badly written texts for serious questions to be raised about expansion and abbreviation, addition and deletion. The ensuing discussions can usefully be directed in terms of questions like “Why translate this text?”, “For whom might this text be translated?” and ultimately, “Why translate?”, in the not ignoble hope of transforming the copiers of rules into a profession of decision-makers, forcing theorization to show itself as a part of translational practice.

For each future generation or world situation, the answering of such questions, the practical process of collective theorization, should ideally constitute the consensual basis of a peculiarly translational regime.

All teaching influences students, for or against the opinions of the teacher. Although each generation of translators is undoubtedly free to work as it sees fit, the answers it comes up with will initially be to the questions posed by the previous generation. It is no crime to exert influence, to direct attention one way or another. However, it does seem less than ethical to dress up current preferences in the costume of immutable rules, and thus attempt to deny future generations the right to decide about their own professional ethics.

Only when translation rules are recognized as ethical decisions, when notions of split loyalty and potential treason are accepted as something more than idle metaphor, and when the technologies of means are accompanied by hard thought about why intercultural relations are important and how they can be improved, only then might we develop properly translational regimes.

TRANSLATORS THEORIZE

Theorization is part of translational competence

WHEN seen from the outside, as an activity carried out by a person other than the observer, translating can be described as exercise of the following two-fold competence (Pym 1990b):

- The ability to generate a TT series of more than one viable term (X, TT₁, TT₂...TT_n) for a transferred text (Y).
- The ability to select one TT from this series, quickly and with justified (ethical) confidence, and to propose this TT to a particular reader as an equivalent for Y.

Together, these two skills form a specifically translational competence to the extent that their union concerns translation and nothing but translation. That is, although there can be no doubt that translators need to know a good deal about grammar, rhetoric, terminology, world knowledge, common sense and strategies for getting paid correctly, the specifically translational part of their practice is strictly neither linguistic, common nor commercial. It is a process of generating and selecting between alternatives; it is expertise in a kind of problem solving.

This definition of translational competence is restrictive but not necessarily reductive. Its relative virtues include applicability to intralingual translation, recognition that there is more than one way to translate, and refusal of any notion of exclusive correctness, since the criteria of speed and confidence—written into the above description—by no means rule out disagreement between translators or future improvements by the one translator.

More important, the definition recognizes that there is a mode of implicit theorization within translational practice, since the generation of alternative TTs depends on a series of at least intuitively applied hypotheses. Even though this theorization usually never becomes explicit, the ability to develop and manipulate hypothetical

TTs is an essential part of translational competence. Unsung theory—a set of premises resulting from theorization—may thus be seen as the constant shadow of what translators do every day; it is what improves as student translators advance in their specific craft; it is the mostly unappreciated form of the confidence slowly accrued through the making of countless practical decisions; it is what most competent translators know without knowing that they know it.

The fact that translating translators have no I-here-now thus does not mean that they are somehow unable to engage in theoretical or imaginative thought. They might be condemned to subjective silence, but that does not stop them from using often quite sophisticated hypotheses to generate and select between alternatives.

This view of the relation between theorization and practice has significant consequences for the assessment of explicit translation theories. If translators already know what they are doing, why should there be explicit theories to make sure that they know? Who has the right to theorize out loud? For whom do explicit theories exist? How should one judge the value of one theory or another?

Theorization is the basis of translation criticism

According to the above model of translation competence, the practical role of theorization is first generative and then negative. Silent hypotheses should thus come in two varieties: those able to project possible TTs, and those able to eliminate non-optimal TTs. The order of these two processes means that constraints of speed and confidence operate more on the generative side than the negative side, since negation can only follow and must match the alternatives proposed. The fewer alternatives, the less negation, the less time lost and the less doubt accrued in pondering undistinguished or indistinguishable subtleties. Practical theorization cannot afford the luxury of elaborate or complicated generative hypotheses bearing on all textual details; it must massively tend toward automatic or subconscious self-negation, leaving only a few islets for major conscious decision-making.

The situation is not very different when theorization becomes explicit on the level of translation criticism. When a TT has already been proposed and selected, the translation critic—more often than not a teacher or editor—must also generate and negate alternative TTs according to criteria of speed and justified confidence. Although there are alternative TTs for numerous textual items, the critic usually only has to generate these possibilities in cases where the proposed TT is manifestly unacceptable. In the economy of conceptual labor, the work of the critic thus differs only slightly from that of the translating translator. The main difference lies

not in the production of a new TT as such but in the need *explicitly* to justify the preference for one TT over another. Although theorization on the level of translating is condemned to silence, critical theorization should find a voice and an argument with which to express applied principles.

Criticism follows translational competence in that it basically involves pitting one TT against another. Both practices are based on textual comparison. Yet the kind of intuitive preference operative on the level of translating becomes mostly inadequate on the level of criticism. If a TT is to be rejected, the critic must be able to indicate why.

This can be demonstrated on the basis of cases like the de Gaulle example. Here again are the texts:

Y: Car la France n'est pas seule! Elle n'est pas seule! Elle n'est pas seule!

TT₁: For remember this, France does not stand alone, she is not isolated.

TT₂: For France is not alone! She is not alone! She is not alone!

Why should this TT₁ not be acceptable? The critic's instinctive response is often to refer not to the relation with a TT₂ but to presumed non-correspondence with the "original", thus assuming that some kind of absolute authoritative determinant is available for those sufficiently enlightened to see it. Such claims are not easy to avoid. As inviting as it might seem humbly to renounce privileged access to the meaning of ST—to renounce what Derrida described as the transcendental signified, to know how de Gaulle really wanted his words to be felt—the question immediately repeats itself with respect to Y and TT₁, which should also require authoritative enlightenment, especially if the critic wants to ascertain the value of de Gaulle's speech in the Y situation (Britain in the mid-1960s). Arguments on this level inevitably turn on the "real meaning" of a text, be it ST, Y or TT₁. The problem, however, is that the *value* of ST, Y or TT₁ is only knowable through comparison with further TTs, further ways of translating whatever it is that has supposedly been mistranslated. Assumed access to original or authentic meanings of the past is inevitably fought out and justified through comparison in the present. Thus, although they believe they are arguing about something fixed as a historical referent, critics—in this case Newmark—cannot avoid pitting one translated text against another. The conflict is never between a bad TT and an unalterably good ST, but between an alterably bad TT₁ and an arguably better TT₂. This means that,

as we have noted with respect to the historiography of translation theory, many apparently diachronic arguments in fact have synchronic motivations.

Recognition of this comparative orientation is an important initial step toward good critical theory. It enables one to ask not only why a Y text was rendered as TT₁, but also why it was *not* translated as TT₂, TT₃,... TT_n. For example, in order to assess Spears' TT, even the crudest of analyses, including Newmark's, would be able to generate the literalist TT₂ "For France is not alone! She is not alone! She is not alone!" and then find at least one reason why this version might be preferred to Spears' non-literalist rendering. Newmark does exactly this, stating bluntly that "the translation of citations is normally semantic" (1977, 169). Such would be the limits of endemic normative theory.

Critical theorization worthy of the name should also be able to explain why Spears went against every law of least effort and did not translate in the shortest or most evident way. It is one thing to say that a rule has been broken, but quite another to say *why* it might have been broken, and thus why it should *not* have been broken.

Translation errors are not necessarily mistakes

Criticism has to be very careful when invoking apparently immutable rules. There are many ways of translating, many things that can be said through translation, and bad explicit theorization is apt to do more harm than is mere poverty on the level of practice. If translators are allowed to have ideas, critics should be prepared not to reject out of hand the signs of consciously applied strategies like the one probably used by Spears. This is one of the reasons why a careful distinction should be made between errors and mistakes (cf. Pym 1991a).

The notion of translational error is triadic—the actual translation TT₁, the arguably ideal equivalent TT₂, and their difference—, as opposed to the binary structure of the simple mistake—TT₂ as right, TT₁ as wrong.

For example, when Robert Lowell translates Baudelaire's

Le temps! Il est, hélas! des coureurs sans répit

("Le Voyage")

as

Time is a runner who can never stop

(*Imitations*)

the misreading of French syntax (“il est” means “il y a”) produces nothing but a grammatically describable blockage of good sense: a few lines further down in the translation, Lowell’s ever-running Time unfortunately seems able to pause at least long enough to trample on what should be the real runners:

And even when Time’s heel is on our throat
we can still hope, still cry, “on, on, let’s go!”

The fault has its own linguistic logic as a mistake and has nothing of consequence to say as a translational error.

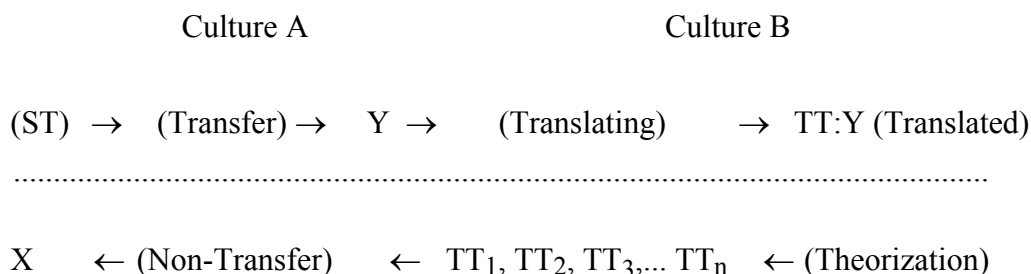
Mistake only becomes error when the difference between equivalence and mistranslation assumes a non-trivial meaning of its own. When, similarly in *Imitations*—which I read as a narratively ordered collection of poetic translations—, Lowell renders “lice” (French for “disputes”) as “lice” (English plural of “louse”) in the first Baudelaire version, the false friends would appear to signal a mere mistake until, further on, we come to the final Rimbaud translation “The Lice Hunters”. The mistranslation functions as coherent narrative parallelism, bracketing off this Baudelaire-Rimbaud section of the book. It can certainly be criticized as going against general semantic norms for the French term “lice”, but it cannot be called a mistake. Critical theorization must be able to describe and explain not only *what* has been done, but also *why* it might have been done. Only then can it properly say what should have been done and why it should have been done.

Critical theorization is a negation of transfer and translation

Translation is usually represented as a horizontal process going from left to right, as if it were merely conventional Western writing. However, except in cases of contradictory equivalence, translational writing is not accumulative in the way that other writing can be. This is because the end product of the translation process—the TT—usually *replaces* the previous moments of transfer and translating. If one were to remain on this same horizontal level, looking only at what was actually done and manifested, there would be no way of peering over the translated text to glimpse and question the actual processes. Theorization by anyone but the translator would be almost impossible.

Critical theorization, however, does not remain on this one level. Its hypotheses, be they unspoken or explicit, present *alternatives* to what has happened. They falsely assume access to a world where the text has not yet been transferred, where

it has not yet been translated, as if one could go back in time and change the course of history. Theorization thus retrospectively doubles translation, creating its negative image or shadow:



This model is peculiar in that it works on two levels. Above the dotted line, the left-to-right movement purports to represent the actual practice of translation, with the translator implicitly positioned as the necessary receiver of the uncovered text Y. Below the line, manifest practice is shadowed by a right-to-left movement representing theorization. The model thus relates practice to theory (although inquisitive minds are of course also invited to read it as an epistemology for the distance formula presented on page 34 above).

In its most extensive form, theorization potentially involves three kinds of activity. First, as we have seen, it is necessarily involved in the generation and negation of alternative translated texts. Second, the categories by which these texts are generated enable critical description and analysis of the TTs considered optimal in terms of endemic norms. And third, theoretical work is potentially able to project the hypothesis of non-transfer (X), sometimes in order to idealize the meaning of ST in its native place, but also potentially to ask why transfer originally set up a situation requiring translation.

Since this third level of theorization negates actual transfer—it asks what the world would be like if an act of transfer had not taken place—it can question not only whether transfer purposes have been achieved but also the value of those purposes themselves. As such, this level should be crucial for the relation between translation theory and the study of intercultural relations. Unfortunately, it is also on this level that theorization often assumes doctrinal proportions, becoming a set of abstract propositions presupposing the desirability of all translation and thus a certain infallibility on the level of transfer. Despite its critical potential in this respect, bad explicit theorization leads to the repetition of norms as falsely comforting lullabies.

Who needs such theories, and why should they be developed?

Theory first expresses doubt

The term “theory” is not used here to replace the disciplinary label “translation studies”, which quite adequately covers the wide variety of possible writings on translation that can be undertaken from the perspective of numerous disciplines in the social sciences.⁷⁶ Yet theory should not then pretend to stand automatically above the ruck thanks to facile equations with terms like “translatology”/“traductologie”, as in Ottawa (Goffin 1971; Harris 1977; Delisle 1984) or the Spanish “traductología” (Vázquez-Ayora 1977). As useful as such unpretty scientism could be for justifying research budgets, it has very little plausible relation to the commonsensical nature of the texts they are supposed to describe. It moreover suggests potentially unhealthy implications for the interdisciplinarity needed if a theory of translation is to speak with any degree of intelligence about its object. In English it is preferable to stay with the general term “translation studies”, within which theorization and its explicit textual result as translation theory should be understood as having an intimate relationship with the actual practice of translation.

If one accepts Holmes’ description of a theory as “a series of statements, each of which is derived logically from a previous statement or from an axiom and which together have a strong power of explanation and prediction regarding a certain phenomenon”, it must surely be concluded that, as Holmes himself states of translation studies, “most of the theoretical presentations that we have had until now, although they have called themselves theories, are not really theories in the strict sense” (1978, 56-57). Indeed, the only endeavor approaching this “strict sense” could well turn out to be Quine’s theory of indeterminacy in translation, widely thought to be a theory not of translation but of untranslatability. Quine’s much cited point of departure is in fact highly indicative of the difficulties facing any attempt to formulate a theory of translation with strong explanatory and predictive powers:

⁷⁶ It would be absurd to follow Newmark in describing “translation theory” as a “a blanket term, a possible translation [...] for *Übersetzungswissenschaft*” (1981, 19), amongst other reasons because phrases such as “*die Übersetzungstheorie als Teilgebiet der Übersetzungswissenschaft*” (Koller 1979, 45) would thus be made unnecessarily meaningless in English. To say that “in fact translation theory is neither a theory nor a science” (Newmark, *ibid.*) is to use a misnomer to discredit any attempt at rigour.

“...manuals for translating one language into another can be set up in divergent ways, all compatible with the totality of speech dispositions, yet incompatible with one another. In countless places they will diverge in giving, as their respective translations of a sentence of the one language, sentences of the other language which stand to each other in no plausible sort of equivalence relation however loose.” (1960, 27)

This thesis surely depends not on any *lack* of translation, but on a *plurality* of TTs between which, in theory, natural data and native informants allow no definitive choice to be made. Quine is not saying that translators cannot translate; he is simply saying that they can legitimately *disagree* about their respective translations. And this is precisely what happens. Debates about translation are essentially between translators or, more exactly, between translators as theorists. They concern the way one translator reads another’s work; they are based on differences and distinctions that are mostly of little consequence for other readers, who for the most part remain none the wiser.

There remains a slight logical problem here. As Katz argues in a punctilious critique of Quine, if an ST is so indeterminate that no justified choice can be made between a TT₁ and a TT₂, no one but a translator would want to make such a choice anyway: “It is not easy to see how two hypotheses can make inconsistent predictions when there is nothing for them to differ about” (1978, 234).

I suspect the correct reply to Katz should insist on the necessary distinction between translator-theorists (who argue the toss) and intended receivers (who are shielded from such arguments by the non-contradictory modes of equivalence). If it can be accepted that the positive role of theory is to generate alternative hypotheses, theorization can be seen as responding not to verifiable differences in the external world, but to doubt or uncertainty about distant and imperfectly known objects. When doubt gives rise to theorization and theorization leads to a solution (the selection of TT₁ instead of TT₂), the fact that this process may well hide its bases from the intended reader of TT₁ does not mean that doubt disappears for the translator-theorist. As we have noted with respect to quantities, translators usually remain painfully aware of their points of departure. This is one important reason why they can continue to disagree even when, from outside the profession, there appears to be nothing for them to differ about.

It is not then surprising that very few substantial disagreements have ever been resolved between translator-theorists. Savory appreciated the consequences for scientism: “The truth is that there are no universally accepted principles of translation, because the only people who are qualified to formulate them have never agreed amongst themselves, but have so often and for so long contradicted each

other that they have bequeathed to us a volume of confused thought which must be hard to parallel in other fields of literature” (1968, 50). The history of translation theories is very much a history of expressed preferences, not because none of the theories are right, but because there are few generally recognized criteria by which any particular translation theory might be proved to be wrong. This alone should be enough to dispense with projects for strict scientific analysis.

There is no reason to suppose that the kind of closed logic once applied in the exact sciences should immediately be valid or even desirable in the social sciences. Pseudo-mathematical formulations and little abbreviations all over the place might be useful as energy-saving shorthand; criteria of internal coherence and elegance should retain at least aesthetic validity; but the social sciences allow no position where the theorizing subject can be radically external with respect to the data to be dealt with. This is as true of sociology—the sociologist is a member of society—as it is of linguistics—in which language is made to analyze language. Translation criticism is certainly no different in this regard, since, as we have seen, it involves the use of one kind of translation to analyze another. The consequences of this lack of exteriority are far-reaching: explicit theorization must be seen as a practice in itself; it must be subject to the same criteria it imposes on its object; it must be considered just as historical as the practices forming that object. It is not then particularly worrying to find that centuries of conflicting translation theories have revealed very little resembling a universal law for translation. In the social sciences, such things are very rare, always subject to historical testing, and perhaps thus only attainable as laws of tendency. It is perhaps enough to ask pertinent and meaningful questions, or to fight for sufficiently ethical professional causes tending in the right directions.

When the questions are truly pertinent, when debate is really about the role translation can and should play in concrete intercultural relations, internal squabbles between translators often spill over into the public arena, allowing theorization to enter a wholly explicit phase.

Explicit theorization responds to conflict in practice

The need for explicit theorization only arises when there is a problem to be resolved between conflicting practices. In the specific case of translation theory, certain problems might be anterior to the production of a particular TT—excessive quantities of ST would be the practical problem giving rise to machine translation theory—, but the real problems are more usually the result of social tension in the

reception of a particular kind of TT. Jerome and Luther turned to explicit theory because they had to justify their representations of the Bible as being of a far closer culture than was generally believed; Dryden theorized as a reader of Cowley and against Cowley in the name of proper respect for classical culture; and it is certainly not fortuitous that the translator whom Cary (1955) regarded as the first proper theorist of translation—Etienne Dolet—was tortured, strangled and burnt at the stake, along with his translations, for theorizing against religious theory. When translators are put on trial—juridically, politically or financially, through the marketing of their products—, when disagreement or discord is not merely a silent doubt efficiently dispelled by intuitive concession or adequate sales figures, then practice turns to explicit theorization. It is at this moment that a division of labor enables one to talk about translation theory as such and of theorists as more or less adequate advocates disposed to defend or prosecute the accused.

All translators theorize, but certain translator-theorists become specialist theorists. The quality of their products can then be assessed according to specialist criteria.

Linguistics is of limited use

According to Jacques Perret, “each discourse on translation implies a theory of language, since it is only at this level that practical problems become consistent and intelligible; it is only at this level that doctrines concerning the art of translating can be compared and appreciated” (cited in Delisle 1984, 46). This appears to mean that, although it is all very well for translators to defend themselves, to discuss and attempt to solve their immediate practical problems, such pastimes can only become substantially theoretical by becoming a mode or branch of linguistics. For Perret, as for many academics, the aim of theorization seems to be not to address practice but to produce doctrines that can be “compared and appreciated”, as if the world lacked books. The same idealized sheltering from extra-linguistic problems is no doubt behind the fact that, in Spain, where I do my best to teach, my colleagues have unthinkingly fought to have “translating and interpreting” institutionally classified under “applied linguistics”. As if linguists were the only people really qualified to theorize about translation.

However, the proposition that “each discourse on translation implies a theory of language” is perhaps not necessarily a simple evocation of linguistic theory as a kind of savior sent from on high. It could be interpreted as saying that “discourses on translation” are one of the necessary but ignored bases of linguistics. After all,

“mouton” had to be translated as “sheep” before Saussure could declare the principle of their difference, and what Benveniste (1966, 23) sees as the first descriptive linguistics—the phonetic alphabet—could also be described as a code of translation. This suggests a far more interesting interdisciplinarity in which there is no necessary hierarchy between theories of translation and theories of language. Indeed, there should be great potential for dialogue between the two, and quite massive potential for mutual blindness in the absence of such dialogue.

The inadequacy of a purely linguistic approach to translation was realized by Georges Mounin some time ago, when structuralism was afraid to go beyond sentence level:

“If the current theses on lexical, morphological and syntactic structures are to be accepted, one must conclude that translation is impossible. And yet translators exist, they produce, and their products are found useful.” (1963, 5)

The problem signaled by Mounin’s decidedly economic register is one of confusion between language as the material used by translators, and translating as a productive transformation of that material. As Marianne Lederer puts it, “although knowledge of the tongue is necessary for translation, it cannot be equated with translating” (in Seleskovitch and Lederer 1984, 24). Linguistics, as the study of the tongue, thus has no reason to be equated with the theorization of translation. No one doubts that carpenters work with wood, but how pertinent is the study of forestry to the practice of carpentry?

Linguistics has of course changed considerably since the days of sentence-bound structures. We now have countless versions of discourse analysis, text linguistics, sociolinguistics, computational linguistics, prototype semantics, and other assorted wonders. At the same time, translation theorists have been able to claim a degree of independence from “old” linguistics by surreptitiously incorporating various forms of “new” linguistics, which in fact means that they have done little more than follow the footsteps of the linguists themselves. I find it difficult to believe that any major insight has been gained in this way. For example, no discourse analysis, text linguistics or prototype semantics that I know of—which might be an important limitation—can substantially incorporate the directionality of translation; no scenes-and-frames analysis can tell me why Pavlov’s dogs could not translate; no linguist can really tell me if ST and TT are two different discourses or the same discourse repeated; the formulation or study of an artificial in-

terlanguage cannot substantiate an ethical position with respect to intercultural relations.

However, if I should insist that theorization should respond to the immediate practical problems of translators, it is not in order to discount the validity of linguists' observations and endeavors. It is partly to ensure that the theorization of translation can have something to say to linguists, something that has not already been acquired through linguistic models.

Generality should begin from translation

The past few decades have seen a rapid multiplication of the fields of inquiry that have been brought to bear on translation theory. Very broadly, this process can be dated from when Nida and Mounin, each in their own way, pointed out the inadequacy of traditional linguistics in order to embrace quite far-reaching forms of interdisciplinarity. But has this process threatened the specificity of translation theory?

Since Mounin saw the linguistics of his time as formal algebra, he was necessarily led to believe that “the semantic content of a tongue is the ethnography of the community speaking that tongue” (1963, 234). Similarly, for Nida, “...only a sociolinguistic approach to translation is ultimately valid” and the theoretical activity concerned should belong to the broader discipline of “anthropological semiotics” (1976, 77). This could amount to saying that an expert in translation should also be an expert in the totality of social life. Such is indeed the logical conclusion to be reached from a theory of “dynamic equivalence” designed to enable God to speak in all human households: the competence of translator-theorists must be located somewhere near the higher reaches of a modern Tower of Babel. Early semiotic ambitions might have promised sufficient scientific bricks and mortar to keep them there, but few theorists are nowadays so keen on writing catalogues of a changing world. It has become more important to have something to say.

Given that the eclectic interdisciplinarity of the 1970s led to a relative lack of theoretical activity in the 1980s—at least in the English language—, I believe it is nowadays necessary to rebuild our frames of reference. We should initially limit the fields of inquiry that can be considered pertinent to translation and focus them on a specific field, as I have attempted to do in the above definition of translational competence. When this is not done, research quickly loses its way. It is no good analyzing utterances, discourses, texts, situations, sociolects and the rest until one knows what translation actually does with these things and thus what kind of ex-

ternal information is needed for the particular theoretical practice concerned. The categories of translation are to be found by looking at translation. Only then, in terms of these categories, might one determine how and why the totality of social life should be tackled.

This criterion of disciplinary centralization particularly concerns the elimination of various assumptions often invoked as normalizing operations in definitions of the domain of translation theory. I have mentioned most of these assumptions in the course of the previous chapters, but it should not hurt to bring them together here.

There is no overwhelming reason why, for instance, a theory of translation should unthinkingly exclude orality from its domain. Interpreting is materially conditioned in ways similar to any other form of translating; interpreters make use of written texts when possible; and spoken language has degrees of fixedness which by no means radically oppose it to the material fixedness of writing. The fact that the mode of production is spoken rather than written does not fundamentally alter translation as a general process pertinent to both kinds of support.⁷⁷

Similarly, as I have noted with respect to the status of intercultural space, the common distinction between intralingual and interlingual translation introduces a presupposed frontier that need not concern the generality of translation as a process. From a sociolinguistic perspective, it is simply dangerous to assume absolute frontiers between tongues or to ascribe only one tongue to a given community: as mentioned in chapter one above, there are many cases of multilingual communities in which interlingual translation has the same social function as intralingual translation in a monolingual community.⁷⁸ It might of course be objected that criteria of difficulty impose an immediate distinction between intralingual and interlingual translation. But then there is no reason why this frontier should be more pertinent—or more difficult to cross—than the borders defining class speech or, at the other end of the scale, families of tongues. Translating from Catalan into Castilian, for instance, is by no means of the same order of difficulty as translating from a

⁷⁷ It should be added that the choice of either oral or written communication as the model for all communication is also subject to certain political considerations. Bakhtin, for example, constantly refers to basically oral models and terms, arguing for dialogue as the desirable relation between different cultural and social points of view. Lotman, on the other hand, has a fundamentally written-based vocabulary and theoretical perspective, since he is concerned more with distinguishing between cultures than with creating dialogue. When one considers Lotman's position within the relative autonomy of Estonia and the weight of written tradition as the cultural basis of that autonomy, it may be appreciated that the choice of either oral or written models has potentially far-reaching consequences for the internal politics of the Soviet Union, and perhaps for other empires like the European Community.

⁷⁸ For example, Trudgill (1974, 127 ff.) cites Parkin's research on a housing estate in Uganda where some twenty vernaculars were used, language choice being determined to indicate mood, intentions and social interrelations.

Bantu into an Indoeuropean tongue. More importantly, many preconceptions about the nature and indeed possibility of interlingual equivalence result from failure to consider the nature of intralingual equivalence.

In the same vein, there is no reason why the categories of translation as a process should pay undue attention to certain preconceptions about text genre. The pre-supposed sacred or documental status of religious or literary texts, for example, is often without consequence for the actual process of translating, whereas discursively based genres such as those elaborated by Reiss (1971) only affect translation to the extent that they first affect certain transfer situations. It is possible to imagine the training of translators being well served by a global genre system based on transfer analysis. But in the meantime, the tendency to exclude special text genres from the domain of translation theory leads to the assumption that one must first deal only with something called “common everyday language” or, in the Tartu version, “primary modeling systems”, or again, in many university curricula, “general texts”. From the perspective of a generality organized in terms of translation, there are no such beasts. One might as well go to a zoo and look for a cage marked “animal”.

Translation theory must be general, but this does not mean that its general categories have to correspond to those of other disciplines.

Translation theory should be pertinent to translation

The intrusion of external assumptions is largely responsible for the current state of English-language translation theory as a series of partial and partisan cross-purposes, with each theorist setting out to categories and justify a given set of data, discounting alternative data and drawing arguments from external ideological sources concerning things like the nature of God’s Word, the supposed equality of different cultures or the ethical duty to convey information. Certain movements towards comprehensive generality have no doubt been initiated through broad dichotomies such as those between “dynamic” and “formal” equivalence (Nida), “communicative” and “semantic” translation (Newmark) and so forth, but in most cases—and certainly in these two cases—the normative preferences are clearly marked, the boundaries are drawn to suit specific strategic purposes, and theoretical justification is highly predetermined by assumptions drawn from external beliefs.

Critique of excessive partisanship leads to a simple criterion for the initial evaluation of theories, based on pertinence to the data to be justified: *If the catego-*

ries of a theory cannot generate an alternative TT₁ for a TT included in its data, then that theory is not pertinent to the TT concerned.

This enables us to say, for example, that the semantic/communicative division proposed by Newmark is pertinent to the de Gaulle example because it is able to generate the TT₁ “For France is not alone! She is not alone! She is not alone!”. However, these categories are *not* pertinent to examples where one-to-one correspondence is obligatory. For instance, the only TT that Newmark’s theory can generate for the Y text “faire un discours” is TT “make a speech” (1985, 11-12), in which case the theory concerns comparative linguistics, not translation. As a general principle, if there is only one possible TT for a given Y text and the possibility of non-translation (X) is excluded, the limited translational process concerned should be considered uninteresting. The criterion of pertinence thus privileges those theories able to open space for both possible and apparently impossible TT forms, prior to all attempts to define the generation of those TT forms judged to be acceptable.

If, as Newmark claims, “the central concern of translation theory is to determine an appropriate method of translation” (1981, 141), nothing of pertinence can be determined until at least one apparently inappropriate method of translation has been formulated and discarded, for good reasons.

Translation theory should not lecture translators

One readily observable feature of translation theories since 1960 is the way the use of external beliefs and the search for good reasons has allowed authority to be transferred from one discipline to another through citation or invocation of outside competence. Greimas (1976) has offered a semiotic explanation of this circular displacement, which he considers general to the social sciences. In the case of translation theory, there is commonly a reference to previous theories, which themselves invoke an external discipline like linguistics, linguistic philosophy, anthropology and perhaps ethics. This circular process knows no absolute repose. The buck simply does not stop.

The interdisciplinary displacement of authority has significant consequences on two levels of translation theory.

First, there may be a certain indifference as to whether or not an authoritative theory is really applicable to translation. As we have noted, theorization begins when there is a practical problem to be solved, usually in a context of social tension. One of the functions of theory is thus to bestow authority on one mode of

translating or another. That is, the authority that a theory is able to assume from the more prestigious disciplines and beliefs of the day may be transferred to the practice of translators themselves. This process can be observed in the institutional involvement of theory in the teaching and professionalization of translators over the past twenty years. When structuralist linguistics was the dominant social science, part of its authority was adopted to promote new interest in translation theory, despite the fact that it was and remains completely unable to explain translation. Now that the central role of structure has passed to discourse analysis, translation is suddenly seen as a discursive process, even though most theories of discourse in fact fare no better than structuralist linguistics. Happily, general translational practice itself has quite probably changed far less than the theory. What has altered is rather the distribution of authority within the social sciences.

Such changes are of little practical consequence if one is sufficiently aware of why they occur. And when there is awareness, it is not wholly perverse to claim that the existence of authoritative but inappropriate theories is a socially meritorious fact. This is because, regardless of whatever the theories might actually say, the institutionalization of this field within the social sciences is a supportive correlative of the professionalization of translators. Indeed, the very reasons why translators tend to dislike academic theory—Komissarov (1985) lists arcane terminology, diversity of approaches and inapplicable general findings—are perhaps precisely the reasons why the existence of such theory, with all its hermetic markers of intellectual authority, has proved socially beneficial for these same translators. The practical function of public theory is not necessarily to tell translators what they should be doing, but partly to open authoritative academic and social space in which they can work as recognized professionals.

The second problem of theory as a bestowal of authority is that, as basic self-defense on the part of translator-theorists, theorization tends to assume that the practice it is based on is authoritative in its own right. This means that the relation between theory and translational practice risks becoming entirely tautological. Thus, when Catford admits that “the discovery of textual equivalents is based on the authority of a competent bilingual informant or translator” (1965, 27) he initiates a further circular displacement of power, this time on the level of practice. The authority of the translator could be gained from an anterior informant—dictionaries, previous translations, and even, for Newmark at least, the authority of the ST itself—, but there is ultimately little way of grounding such authority in practice except through reference to norms and conventions, to what is “normally

done”, or to what authoritative theory chooses to accept as authoritative competence, which in turn becomes the ostensible basis of authoritative theory.

What is at stake here is not the pernicious nature of the circularity itself, but the highly conservative import of established practice or recognized competence as the projected bases of translation theorists’ authority.

It should not be forgotten that explicit theorization begins from a problem within established practice. Its fundamental point of departure is *movement* and thus *change*, as indeed is the point of departure for translation itself. If everything were already in its rightful place, there would be little reason for transfer and thus no reason at all to talk about translation. The nature of translation requires that, wherever possible, explicit argument be preferred to surreptitious invocation; explanation of change be preferred to repetition of norms; and implicitly unidirectional relationships between theory and practice be regarded as immediately suspect.

When Jiri Levy asked some time ago if translation theory would be of any use to translators, he answered the question in the following way: “In my opinion, writing on the problems of translation has any sense at all only if it contributes to our knowledge of the agents which influence the translator’s work and its quality” (1965, 77). The response was acutely intelligent in that it did not pretend to lay down any law for all translators. Levy’s respect for practice was such that his concern was first with those factors which facilitate an understanding of how and why translators work. That is, useful theory should be based on knowledge derived from a practice generally able to find solutions to its own problems. Which is why theory should not lecture translators.

Translation theory should address the social sciences

If theorists should look closely at the how and why of translational practice, at the practical problems they are called upon to resolve—only to find that most problems have already been solved on the level of practice—, this does not mean that translation theory should adopt a perpetually involuted stance with respect to its peculiar object. These practical problems are by no means limited to translation alone. Surprising commutations and occasional commiserations are to be found in the most unsuspected corners. If, for instance, I have looked at the history of economics for a suggestive if slightly perverse model of equivalence, an economic historian like Alexander Gerschenkron might equally look at translation in order to model an apparently hard-headed problem like comparing American and Soviet

machine output statistics.⁷⁹ Economic historians, indeed comparatists at all levels, are called upon to carry out translational operations. There is no reason why translation theory should exclude them from its vision of possible applications.

It is one thing to organize a centralized generality incorporating a range of determining factors, but the resulting theory should then be able to use its specific insights to address problems in related disciplines, notably sociolinguistics, comparative cultural studies and the history and theory of international relations.

This essay has been an attempt to indicate ways in which theoretical awareness of transfer can be used as a basic link between translation theory and wider social sciences. Recognizing transfer as the major influence on the translator's work, I have argued that the materiality of things that move should be integrated into the study of translation itself. Broader social sciences—all the sciences that can address the social reasons behind the movements of things—can thus be reached through inspection of translational practice rather than by blindly adopting and applying their independent categories. Awareness of transfer should moreover prompt theorists to reconsider basic issues like the materiality of texts, the role of equivalence in exchange, the significance of quantity, the dynamic forces setting up the translation situation, and the ethical implications of the translator's profession. For too long theorists of translation have merely subordinated themselves to the interests and categories of better established or more frightening disciplines, believing, erroneously, that the statistics of economists or the schemata of sociologists offer more objective bases for international understanding. Translation theorists would do better to take position with respect to the categories of transfer and translation, to seek the principles of their own objectivity, and then address the social sciences from there.

Such interdisciplinarity can be seen not only as good imperialist propaganda on behalf of translators. It might also become a way of alerting wider disciplines to

⁷⁹ Alexander Gerschenkron as translator, according to Parker (1990, 5):

“He had been engaged in comparing US and Soviet machinery output, revaluing the quantity series of the various types of machinery in the Soviet index, which had been computed on 1926/27 Soviet prices, on US prices for comparable items in 1937. Not surprisingly, he found that, using Soviet base year prices, the growth was very rapid because the kinds of machines whose output was growing most rapidly were expensive in Russia relative to simpler types whose output was expanding less, whereas in US prices such items were relatively less expensive and were not weighted so heavily. Measuring US growth in Soviet prices would have the reverse effect, exaggerating the growth of items relatively cheap in the US and expensive in Russia.

“Index numbers comparison of the sort developed then required him as a statistician to take quantities produced and valued in one set of prices and to drag them, as it were, across time or space or both, into a world where those original weights no longer applied, and to compare the result with the actuality of that other geographical and/or temporal world. This mental operation is indeed the same one which a translator undertakes when he tries to drag the meaning and even the rhythms and rhymes of one language into another.”

The reference to translation is not entirely Parker's: Gerschenkron wrote on Nabokov as a translator of Pushkin (*Continuity in History*, Harvard, 1968, 501-524).

models and phenomena that traditionally and often perniciously limit our vision of the world.

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