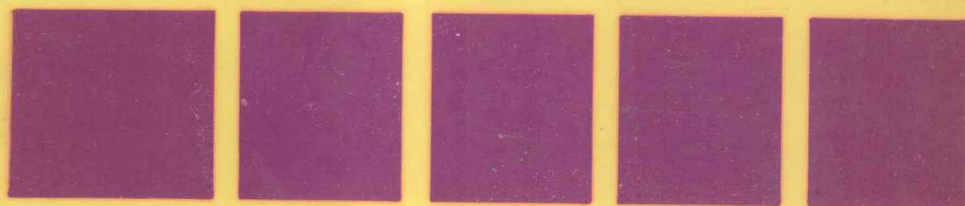
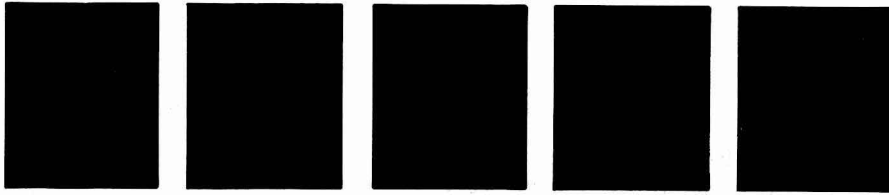


The
Translator's
Handbook

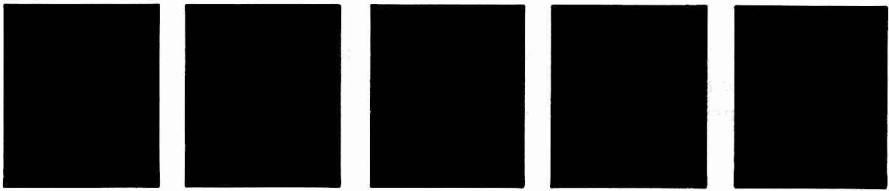


Edited by Catriona Picken





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Translator's
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Editor's introduction

Catriona Picken

In a letter to Carlyle, in 1827, Goethe wrote: 'Say what one will of the inadequacy of translation, it remains one of the most important and worthiest concerns in the totality of world affairs'.

This statement is just as valid today, if not more so, for Goethe was concerned primarily with literary translation and could have had no conception of the vast amount of translation which is now done and has an even more direct bearing on world affairs—technical, commercial, legal, and diplomatic, to name but a few.

If the activity of translation is as important and worthy as Goethe claims, then it is just as important and worthy a concern to offer some assistance to practising translators and guidance to aspirants in the field. That is the aim of the present volume, which is a successor to the earlier Aslib publication, the *Technical Translator's Manual*, edited by Dr. J. B. Sykes in 1971.

It is hoped that this book will be read not only by translators but also by others who are interested in the subject of language and translation. The following outline gives some idea of the fields covered.

Part I, the Introductory Survey by Professor Peter Newmark discusses the translation scene today from the standpoint of the translation theorist. The title of Part II, 'People who do the job', reveals the underlying assumption of the whole book, i.e. that it is aimed first and foremost at the practising translator. Anne Napthine reviews the training of translators both in the UK and in other parts of the world, while Jeremy Verrinder surveys the different ways in which translators can earn their living.

Part III turns from the people to the methods they use—'How is the job done?', starting with John Sykes discussing the intellectual tools employed. It could be said that the major difference between the work of the translator in the early seventies and the present day is that the entire subject of 'hardware' was adequately covered in a few pages in 1971, whereas in 1983, there is a clear need for a whole chapter on this

topic alone—and, what is more, one of the longest in the book.

In Chapter 5(i) Lanna Castellano deals with the equipment which is or soon will be available to every translator who wants it. In Chapter 5(ii) Veronica Lawson gives as up-to-date a survey as possible of the current developments in machine or machine-aided translation, so that readers can feel they are in the picture; translators are often asked about this subject and this chapter should enable them to respond to queries. Once equipped with the appropriate intellectual and practical tools, the translator then has to tackle the translation, and the next two chapters are designed to throw light on working methods, with Christopher Percival reviewing techniques and presentation and John Graham discussing the essential processes of checking, revision and editing.

Part IV is a survey of what is actually translated. In a joint chapter, Barbara Snell and Patricia Crampton have endeavoured to cover all possible categories, including literary and book translation. Current thinking on standards and specifications is provided by Professor Juan Sager and Brigadier R. E. Simpkin—it is now accepted that painful as it may be to a translator who always strives for utter perfection, the specification may call for something rather different, and it is the task of the conscientious translator to apply the appropriate standard.

In Part V, the book widens its horizons again. Ian Finlay starts off the 'World View' with a chapter on the relations between languages, concentrating particularly on those which the reader is most likely to encounter in the course of his work. Wendy Glover presents a composite chapter. She lists the sources throughout the world from which translations can be obtained, and introduces a group of shorter contributions by translators working in five very different environments.

In Part VI, on the subject of international and national professional organizations, Ewald Osers

provides practical information on the international organizations, and quotes the Translator's Charter of the International Federation of Translators (FIT), as well as the Unesco Nairobi Recommendation on the legal protection and status of translators. Dimity Beaumont provides a list, as full and up to date as possible, of the various national organizations. Those translators who are stimulated by the thought of winning a prize for their work will find in Julian Chancellor's chapter a list of the awards and prizes currently available (and not all are for literary translation). Part VII is the essential bibliography, provided by Edward Carson, and Part VIII the Glossary, the need for which became apparent as plans for the book took shape, and which has been compiled by Chris Wolfe.

The Appendices are mainly of a practical nature. Albin Tybulewicz, well known in the very special field of cover-to-cover translation, has provided an outline of the subject. The remaining appendices deal with the transliteration of Russian and the correction of proofs, both for British and US printers. The Index has been compiled by Pamela Mayorcas-Cohen.

The contributors are mainly connected with the Aslib Technical Translation Group or the Translators' Guild of the Institute of Linguists, while other contributors have had their own special expertise to offer.

The new technology looms large nowadays in

most people's lives, and it plays a major role both in the content of the *Handbook* and in the manner of its production: the text is to be stored on disk so that all parts of it are readily accessible for purposes of revision.

Does anyone these days venture to make a definitive statement on any subject? This *Translator's Handbook* certainly does not, and indeed Aslib, the contributors and I all hope that readers will respond by repairing omissions, correcting mis-statements, and voicing their own opinions. It is planned that subsequent editions of the book will be able to incorporate all kinds of amendments and new material, thanks to the disk storage mentioned above.

The ultimate aim of the entire team involved in the production of this book is that it should find a permanent home on the desk of every practising translator, and that it should become well-thumbed with constant use.

So many people have co-operated so readily on this book that I cannot express my thanks to them all individually. I am however especially grateful to my fellow members of the Editorial Board, Barbara Snell, Albin Tybulewicz and Chris Wolfe, to Peter Taylor and Richard Coleman of Aslib for guidance on the practicalities of book production, and, for their invaluable assistance in a multiplicity of typing tasks (aided by the new technology), to Danièle Mohamed, Carola Morales and Maria Nelson.

Chapter 1

Introductory survey

Peter Newmark

1. Background

The *Technical Translator's Manual*, edited by J. B. Sykes, was published by Aslib in 1971. *The Translator's Handbook*, launched by a committee under the chairmanship of Catriona Picken, is being published by Aslib in 1983. The change of title is as significant as the change in contents.

The technical translator as such has rarely existed. As a translator, a specialist in one or more technologies is normally additionally concerned with the progress of their products into commerce—packaging, financing, marketing, tendering, wholesaling, retailing, after service, for instance; further he is concerned with the various domestic and foreign public and private organizations which directly or indirectly will have some impact on these products. The term 'technical translator' is therefore somewhat narrow, since translators of non-literary material (*Sachbücher*) have to deal with commercial, financial, institutional as well as technological and scientific texts, in fact the area of the social as well as the natural sciences.

The present volume also widens the scope of its predecessor by addressing itself to the literary translator, a specialist translator like any other who draws on a common stock of dictionaries, encyclopaedias, gazetteers etc., as well as his own reference books. It would be parochial to exclude the literary translator from this *Translator's Handbook* particularly as there is so much common ground in the field of religious and philosophical literature.

Comparing the contents of the present volume with its predecessor, I note the same accurate attention to every detail of the translator's profession—training, working procedure, relation between translator and client, description and enumeration of hardware and reference material. What is new is 'the world view'—the chapters on

Translation throughout the World, and National and International Professional Organizations. Further, greatly more attention is given to Machine Translation (MT) and to Machine Assisted Translation (MAT). There are also new chapters on Specifications, Standards and Awards, Fellowships and Prizes, and a separate Bibliography and a Glossary.

Translation is a modest but rapidly developing growth industry. The number of translators is not known—there were about 15,000 in West Germany in 1961. (That's the only figure I can find). A manual such as this one is will be in some respects out of date on the day of its publication. Further, like a translation itself, it is never finished, it can always be slightly or radically improved. Ideally it should be revised at least once in two years, and in this respect it will be partly dependent on the assistance and suggestions of its readers.

The translator is continually obsessed with the hunt for reference books, and the hope is that this *Translator's Handbook* (not *Manual*—here too there is a progression from instruction—cf. 'car manual'—to information which includes instruction) will become the essential starting point of many such a hunt, a vade mecum which is never far from the translator's desk.

There is also a wider background to the appearance of this new edition. In the UK, the number of translators has greatly increased, translation departments of government agencies and large companies have expanded, and translation companies have multiplied. Polytechnic and university post-graduate translation courses have become established as the normal and recognized route to the profession. Even the study of principles of translation has made a modest beginning in this country and is pursued at a few polytechnics and universities.

In this sense translation has an important part in the general information explosion of the last years, which to some extent has led to a reassertion of the written word (Prestel, VDUs) against the picture but not against the screen. Translation, once considered impossible, an imposture, a poor substitute for bilingualism and knowing the foreign language is acknowledged as an essential world-wide means of communication. It even has an important place as an objective and a technique in foreign language teaching.

In the world 'outside', translation has made greater progress—S. Congrat-Butlar's *Translation and Translators: an international directory and guide*, J. J. Deenery and Simon Chau's *ECCE Translator's Manual* and S. A. R. Al-Chalabi's *Bibliography of Translation and Dictionaries* give evidence of enormous increase in activities, organizations and publications in recent years. The European Translators' College has been established by K. Birkenhauer and E. Tophoven at Straelen in W. Germany. There have been a plethora of international conferences, notably in Moscow, Leipzig, Stockholm, Århus, as well as the triennial FIT and the quadrennial AILA (International Association of Applied Linguistics) conferences. In 1983 there will be conferences at Saarbrücken and Mons. Certain cities have become recognized as centres of translation activity: Moscow (Maurice Thorez Institute), Paris (ESIT), Geneva (ETI), Ottawa (STI), Leipzig (TAS, KMU), Saarbrücken, Mons, Århus, Hongkong, Tunis, Barcelona, Georgetown, Monterey, Nitra (Bratislava), Amsterdam, Tel-Aviv. The fact that English is the most popular world-language (just as it has the most popular world-music—all the world, especially the East, wants to sing and jive American), that all educated people want to learn English, makes it apparently inevitable although misguided, that there is less serious interest in translation in the UK than in many other countries, and in the USA few, apart from the Bible translators, Marilyn Gaddis Rose at SUNY and G. Vázquez-Ayora at Georgetown University, have even begun to take the subject seriously—certainly not the linguists.

2. What is translated

A hundred years ago, the majority of translated texts were religious, literary, scientific and philosophical. Apart from the religious texts in

Protestant-only areas, translations were mainly read by an educated elite in each country.

In this century, translation has become a force and an instrument of democracy—significantly, only about a quarter of *Mein Kampf* was translated in the '30s, and in 1980, a British Council official only wanted to learn Bulgarian to berate the natives. The subject-matter translated has extended to the whole range of human knowledge, with particular emphasis on the most important technological innovations and on political and commercial relations between nations as well as on creative literature. Further, the range of languages translated has increased continuously as more countries become independent (in 1945, UNO comprised 50 member countries, now it has 145) and more languages achieve national status within each country. (Thus at present there is a big demand for Castilian-Catalan and Catalan-Castilian translators in Spain). The translation budget at Brussels has become notorious.

It is not possible to obtain any figures about the quantity and the areas of the total mass of translations. UNESCO publishes figures for the production of original and translated books, from which it transpires that in 1973, out of a world production of 47,000 translated books, Literature occupied 49%, followed by Social Sciences 12%, Applied Sciences 8.5%, Geography 8%, History 7.5%, Pure Sciences 6%, Religion 5.5% and Arts and Philosophy with a slightly lower percentage. The Federal Republic produced the highest percentage of these translations (14%) followed by Spain (9.5%), USSR (9.4%) and then a series of countries, Japan, Italy, USA, France, Netherlands, GDR and Brazil, each at under 5%. The great majority of the translations were from English (38%) followed by 13% from French, 11% from Russian and 9% from German; Spanish, Italian and Swedish each stood at under 3%. It was noticeable that Chinese, Arabic and Hindi appeared incongruously isolated from translation activities.

Compare these figures with 1975, when the number of translations from English had increased by 2% to 40% followed by Russian 13.5% and French had dropped to 10%. There was a sharp rise in translations emanating from the USSR from 9.4% to 13.5% and a fall in West Germany from 14% to 10%. Translations in USA and GDR halved during the period. British translations stood at 3%. In the subject area, Literature

dipped to 46% whilst Social and Applied Sciences each increased by 1%.

These figures have to be looked at with some caution, as they are all based only on numbers of books translated. If reports, papers, articles, journals etc., were included, one could perhaps assume an at least fivefold increase in the proportion of applied sciences translations and a corresponding decrease in creative literature as well as an enormous additional quantity of non-literary material: publicity, patents, notices, instructions etc.

There is no sign or likelihood that this translating activity throughout the world will decrease—on the contrary it will increase exponentially with the spread of literacy and education, wider means and channels of communication, the removal of further ethnic groups from a regime of tutelage, and even the spread of foreign language learning, which may eliminate the need for translation for successful learners but will make them into amateur translators themselves and is likely to increase their own appetite for translations from third languages.

As for the languages of translation, international bodies rationalize these by selecting official languages and working languages (UNO has English and French as official languages—‘world languages with the largest range’; Spanish, Russian and Chinese as working languages).

It is unlikely that in the foreseeable future the world language situation will be rationalized by simplifying communication between states. Since the 18th century, English has increasingly dominated all international means of communication; it is spoken all over the world, is the language of N. America, Australasia, and UK, and is the main language of communication in many Asian and African states. The other world languages: French, Russian, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese and German are on the whole regional languages—though Spanish dominates all Latin American countries but Brazil, and French is the language of communication in about twenty African and Asian countries. (Needless to say, the quantity of translations between Quebec and the rest of Canada continues to increase.) In Europe, the use of German with three and two-third states in and between the ‘West’ and the ‘East’ is likely to grow at the expense of French, which is however well established in the EEC.

It should be stated here that in UK at least,

but I suspect in America and much of continental Europe too German is the most undertaught language, both for translation and for the command of the language. In the UK, German appears to be most in demand for technical and scientific translation (note also that Böll and Grass are the most popular non-English living world-writers possibly succeeding T. Mann, Kafka, Brecht and Hesse). Any professional translators’ course that does not offer an *ab initio* German reading class is severely handicapping its students.

It seems unlikely that the modest advance of Esperanto will reduce the demand for translation from or into other languages; more interesting will be the impact of Machine Translation and Terminology, which should effect economies of scale in labour and financial costs for the translation of important standardized texts with an emphasis on technical and other standardized terms, common syntactic structures and a minimum of figurative language in areas such as finance, trade and meteorology.

To some extent public language, strongly influenced by the EEC in the West, Marxism in the East, and the proliferation of bureaucracies everywhere is converging, at any rate in many key-terms, towards an international translationese; one has only to look at a brief list of Russian key terms: *deputat, komitet, partija, Ministr, plakat, plenum, natsija, federatsija, konstitutsija*, or of EEC terms: *harmonisation, intervention, collégialité, équipement, concertation, conjoncture, sanction*, to surmise that it is precisely the ‘converging’ terms, nearly all of which have existed in many European languages since the 18th Century which are most in use, in view and in exchange.

In fact, statesmen and diplomats often make speeches with their translated impact in mind as being of more importance to them than their actual words in their own language. Further much broadcast material as well as the blockbusters of popular literature and TV and the written commentaries of art books and coffee-table books are now written specifically for multilingual translation. Other material, such as secret coded military and government messages, personal letters produced as evidence in a foreign court case and advertisements for new products, sometimes with brand names or trade marks, which if incautiously transferred have an offensive or ridiculous mean-

ing in the foreign language (e.g. 'Pschitt'—a French brand of fizzy drink), is later translated and may present cultural difficulties to the translator, given that translation was never in their writers' minds.

I may have given an impression of a world-wide task and necessity for translation that is insuperable. This is far from being the case. Translators, who before the War hardly existed as a profession (except as a small one in Germany and the Netherlands as *vereidigte Übersetzer* from the 19th Century), started to organize soon after the War and formed an international organization, the International Federation of Translators (FIT) with UNESCO support in 1953. International organizations, large companies and translation companies hired translators; the élite of these, who were normally technical experts first and linguists second, remaining free-lance. The mass of translators often began as language graduates and then specialized in a technology on the job. The EEC, which was soon to house the largest number of translators ever working under one 'roof' offered high salaries, but translators in many countries remained, as traditionally, undervalued, underpaid and unrecognized. Again, soon after the War some universities (and in UK, polytechnics) began running post-graduate vocational and sometimes first degree courses for translators; translators' and interpreters' institutes in some countries (notably Federal Republic, GDR, Finland, CSSR) attained academic respectability when they were incorporated into universities.

There is no question that the translation task can be coped with. What has rather to be questioned, in the most general terms, is whether enough material is being translated and whether the standard of translation is high enough. First, are there enough community translators for the immigrants, the foreign workers and the refugees in each country? Is enough national and local government material that concerns them being translated? Secondly are governments and industry translating enough, in particular publicity, correspondence, instructions, and after-service material, particularly in relation to exports?

The British Overseas Trade Board Report, *Foreign Languages for Overseas Trade*, issued in 1979 under the chairmanship of the Duke of Kent, implicitly suggests that this is not so, though regrettably the terms 'translation' and 'translator' do not appear in the Report. It is

surely time for a CBI report to appear on the translation requirements (a) actual (b) desirable of British public boards and corporations as well as private companies. Such a report, if imaginatively framed, would draw more attention to perceived gaps and needs than to present practice. The last such report, chaired by Anthony Crane, was produced in the old FBI (Federation of British Industry) days in 1964.

Thirdly, is enough translation available for tourists and tourism in the form of notices at public places, brochures and other publicity? In UK, tourist translation appears to be only at its beginning.¹ More multilingual guides, brochures, and summaries should be available in museums, galleries, country houses, places of entertainment, tourist shops etc. (Why are foreign record sleeves usually multilingual, English ones apparently monolingual?) Even now there appear to be no standard translations for terms such as 'Citizens Advice Bureau', 'National Trust', 'National Tourist Authority'. It is surely the duty of any government to issue official translations of its important institutional terms in the main languages concerned. Pioneer work in this field is being done by the Europa-Glossaries produced by the Institute for Legal and Administrative Language, Berlin. Fourthly, there is no question that not enough creative literature is being either translated or retranslated. After the War, a tremendous job was done by Penguin Books in having all the 19th Century Russian classics translated again, since the translations at the turn of the century had given such a false impression of stiffness and gloom, which still to some extent influences the English stereotype of the Russian character.

The Penguin Classics continue to dominate the translation of creative literature and with about 350 volumes, headed by the ancient Greek and Latin classics, followed by French and Russian, they make an impressive list. German literature (Goethe, Heine and the dramatists) has been somewhat neglected.

Further many Russians complain, rightly, that modern Soviet literature is virtually unknown in this country, unlike contemporary British and American literature in theirs; they claim that the British stereotype—that Russians know no English author since Dickens (all fog and slums)—is false—many prefer Murdoch, Drabble, Fowles

¹Similarly, multilingual interpretation, live and recorded, is inadequate on British aircraft.

and A. Wilson in any event. It is time to translate more non-censored as well as dissident Soviet and GDR literature. In general, whilst Unesco has done an exceptional job in promoting translation and providing interesting statistics (Lenin was again in 1975 the most translated author, followed at a long distance by Agatha Christie and Walt Disney), not enough is done to promote translation from small countries. It has always been the oddest of suspect coincidences that great writers mainly write in world languages. Would Conrad be known, if he had written in Polish? In fact, Third World countries should promote the translation of their best writers into English; some of their works could become powerful propaganda for aid. (I wave aside the preposterous notion, abetted by many writers, that works of art have no influence on events or behaviour.)

Finally, the number of abstracts written in appropriate foreign languages in technical journals, periodicals and even newspapers, should be increased in particular in Western Europe. All educated Germans, Dutchmen and Scandinavians read and speak English (an increasing number of books and articles are published in English in W. Germany and the Netherlands), and abstracts in their languages would encourage them to read the complete work in English.

If I now discuss a generally 'low' standard of translation, a meaningless evaluation since it relates to no norm, but which is nevertheless usually agreed for UK (though translation appears to be worse in France), I would attribute it to translationese (in the course of translating out of one's own language) in commercial texts, particularly publicity; literal translations of technical texts; and inaccurate translation, due to attempts to 'normalize', naturalize and liven up the language with colloquialisms and idioms, in literary texts.

The worst translationese is perpetrated by writers translating out of their language of habitual use. The phrase 'language of habitual use', which was coined by Anthony Crane is accurate; terms such as 'mother tongue', 'native speaker', 'native language' etc., lead to a suspicion of racialism. Students refused admission to translation courses because they are 'foreign' are apt to protest, since the translator represents the essence of internationalism and the negation of racialism and chauvinism relating to language and

culture in particular and of prejudice relating to people in general. Translationese is bad not because it misrepresents the facts—it usually gets them right; not because it exhibits 'incorrect' grammar—on the contrary, its grammar is often copybook, and compared with the horrors of clichés, platitudes, vogue words, weasel words,¹ buzz words,² jargon, insincere phaticisms³ and mindless intensifiers,⁴ 'incorrect' grammar (and spelling) is a triviality in any event; but because in its reproduction of source language idioms and syntax translationese is either absurd or heavy and therefore fails to transmit the tone and mood and feeling of the original—its style diverts the reader from its message. Examples abound in the tourist literature of most countries and the translationese is usually made worse when compounded with copious jargon. Since Alan Duff has written a book about the misuse of this 'third language' (sometimes referred to as 'interlanguage' by applied linguists—it has its uses in language learning), I quote one of his examples:

'The outmoded phrase about the country where the nuts come from has been substituted by objective approaches to realities that were provincial and distant and are now world-wide and importantly close to the life of everybody'. (Advertisement for Brazil in *The Guardian*, October 1977).

Alan Duff's 'translation' from this presumably ex-Portuguese English is:

'The old saying that Brazil is the country where the nuts come from is no longer true. The country is rapidly opening up; its problems are no longer local problems, they are shared by people throughout the world. And new approaches to these problems are constantly being found' (*The Third Language*, Alan Duff).

Possibly Alan Duff has put too many additional ideas into his version, and if concision is one of

1. Weasel word. (Pei) words with meanings changed to manipulate opinion.
2. Buzz words. Words used for the sake of their sound alone.
3. A phrase such as 'I hope you're in good health' or 'of course' used to keep the interlocutor happy. (Invented for this piece).
4. Intensifiers. Superlatives and emphasizees, they are often also buzz words.

the criteria of translation, a more appropriate (and appealing) version might be:

'Brazil is no longer just the country that the nuts come from. It is now a modern country and has important social problems that have parallels throughout the world and must be approached objectively'.

Bad writing is bad writing in any language, but it is more exposed and therefore apparently even worse written when it is translated. (Here, as often, translation represents truth or clarification, a weapon against sham, mystification, obscurantism, and secretiveness, an argument against mandarin mumbo-jumbo, since at least Luther).

Often the translationese of a hotel brochure is mildly irritating or amusing: 'We have created a comfortable atmosphere so that you and the further 512 guests may have as pleasant a sojourn as possible'. (*Wir haben für Sie und weitere 512 Gäste dem Komfort geschaffen, der Ihnen den Aufenthalt so angenehm wie möglich gestalten soll*). And: 'Our social rooms are at your disposal for the most different occasions'. (*Für die verschiedensten Anlässe stellen wir Ihnen auch gern unsere Gesellschaftsräume zur Verfügung*)¹. (Note that the translator has handled word-order well and rightly treats *auch gern* as a 'modal enclitic', which (cf. *eben, ja, gewiß*) are often left untranslated, but he is let down by a few literalisms—i.e. inappropriate translations of words by their primary or most common meanings). However such slightly inaccurate translations will sooner or later disturb business customers who pride themselves on their close attention to detail. A more acceptable translation might be: 'We hope that you will find our hotel comfortable, and that your stay will be agreeable. We can accommodate 513 guests and our public rooms are at your disposal for a wide variety of functions.'

Translationese both 'native' and 'foreign' often appears in technical texts. The 'foreign' translator has not got the command of the target language; the 'native' translator is inexperienced and is unaware that interference from the source or a third language may go beyond a few conventional *faux amis* (like *troubler, demander*), to clauses, phrases, technical terms, metaphors, word-order and most collocations; he thinks like many laymen and literary snobs that accurate rendering of the vocabulary of technical terms is all he requires—

¹Extracts from the Interhotel, Leipzig, brochure.

(in fact these on an average constitute 12% of the average specialized text)—a good bilingual technical dictionary will do the job—neologisms he has to chance his arm with. Such translationese, when read cold, makes one think that the (native) translator must have taken leave of his senses, and yet it is often perpetrated:

Sa faible viscosité en solution, son bas

Translationese Its feeble viscosity in solution, its low

Corrected Its low viscosity in solution, its low

poids moléculaire suffisants pour l'empêcher

Translationese molecular weight sufficient to prevent it

Corrected molecular weight, though big enough to prevent it

de franchir à l'état normal les parois

Translationese crossing at the normal state the partitions

Corrected from passing through the capillary walls in

des capillaires, rénaux en particulier

Translationese of the capillaries renal in particular

Corrected the normal state, and particularly in the kidneys

expliquent qu'une de ses grandes fonctions

Translationese explain that one of its great biological

Corrected explain why one of its major biological

biologiques soit représentée par son rôle

Translationese functions is represented by its role

Corrected functions is the

dans le maintien du volume sanguin

Translationese the maintenance of the blood volume

Corrected maintenance of the blood volume

The interesting thing about the above passage is its large quantity of *amis loyaux*, where as always the literal translation (both for technical and descriptive terms) is the only correct one. The fact remains, however, that owing to the translator's blind adherence to the central or primary sense of each word and the French grammatical structures (used, but not so commonly in English), the text is defective.

The last important type of text where standards of translation are deficient is the area of creative literature. Here I think one has to propose certain absolute minimum standards of accuracy, not previously formulated, up to now usually ignored, in particular at the word level. I take my example from the first sentence of Kafka's *Verwandlung* (which I would translate as '*The Transformation*' rather than '*The Metamorphosis*') translated (a) by Edwin and Willa Muir (b) Stanley Corngold:

K. Als G.S. eines Morgens aus unruhigen

(a) When G.S. awoke one morning from uneasy

(b) When G.S. woke up one morning from unsettling

K. Träumen erwachte fand er sich in seinem

(a) dreams, he found himself transformed in his

(b) dreams he found himself changed in his

K. Bett zu einem ungeheueren Ungeziefer verwandelt

(a) bed into a gigantic insect

(b) bed into a monstrous vermin

It seems to me 'impossible' to translate *unruhig* as 'unsettling' (*beunruhigend*), *ungeheuer* as 'gigantic' (*riesig*), *verwandelt* as 'changed' (*verändert*), and *Ungeziefer* as 'a vermin' since 'vermin' is not a count noun.

Similarly, in the same story, *machte ihn ganz melancholisch* cannot be 'completely depressed him', *üppig* cannot be 'shapely' or 'with a good figure'; *ein schwerer Pelzmuff* cannot be 'a huge fur muff' nor *das trübe Wetter* 'the overcast sky' etc. etc.

I am suggesting that in any type of text, any SL content word whose meaning is not affected by its linguistic context, has to be translated by its primary most common sense. Thus *unruhig* covers 'unquiet' 'restive' 'uneasy' and even 'restless', though 'restless' is a stronger intensifier than *unruhig* ('-less' and *-los* are stronger than *un-*, *un-*); *ungeheuer* covers 'huge', 'immense' and 'monstrous' but not 'gigantic'; *verwandelt* covers 'transformed' and 'completely changed', '*ein Ungeziefer*' has to revert to the more general 'an insect' or 'a bug'.

Thus in literary translation (as well as in the translation of authoritative statements) content-words (most nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs) normally have a certain autonomy as units of

translation. They cannot and must not be translated by words which when retranslated into the source language, could not remotely reproduce themselves. The above seems to me a minimal unassailable principle of accurate translation. It has to be upheld against the translator's wish to translate 'naturally', fluently, colloquially and so on, since one assumes that the degree of unnaturalness of the relevant word in relation to the target language norm will correspond to its equivalent's degree of unnaturalness in relation to the source language.

I am suggesting that more words in a text are either relatively context-free or conventionalized than is often assumed. The word 'home' is often described as 'untranslatable', but the sentence 'I'm going home' is conventionalized and therefore easily translated into any language; (*nach Hause, à la maison, domoj* etc.) 'this is my home' is almost, but not quite, as straightforward; only when we get to 'home means a lot to me' do we find difficulties, and start looking into increasingly wider contexts, and the 'wave' translation procedure operates. Now my minimal standard of accuracy operates sharply for the first example, approximately for the second, and only generally within limits, for the third. I am not denying the existence of words and stretches of text that are bound up in a complex way with levels of meaning covering the whole text.

Naturally, translation does not remain at this simple level, all languages have many 'untranslatable' words whose meaning, if important, has to be spread and manipulated across two or more words or a phrase of the target language. Translation can be described as filling up the gaps *between* languages. Many words are profoundly affected by their contexts both linguistic, cultural and situational and cannot be translated in isolation. The impact of text linguistics on translation suggests that the whole text should be assumed to be the unit of translation.

However, my argument is in the opposite direction. I am suggesting that on the whole, more words are *relatively* context-free than relatively context-bound. And that in the fight against dead perfection, lifeless and pedantic correctness, dry academicism etc., and in favour of lively modern language, the release of the 'undertext' (in brief, what the author meant, rather than what he wrote) referred to by Michael Meyer as the 'sub-text', the spirit rather than the

letter, the activity rather than the product etc., it must, shall we say in the '80s, in a climate of science and *verification* (that is the main principle) be on the whole illegitimate to stretch the meaning of a word beyond its hitherto usage, unless one is neologizing; it is wrong, and this principle applies to the translation of *all* texts (unless they are poorly written) say to translate *caractères généraux* as 'general features' rather than 'general characteristics'; usually the translator is reluctant to use a word so like an SL word, when in fact he should seize the opportunity since it is the one that is nearest to the 'truth' or to accuracy. This is the *rappel à l'ordre*, the call to order in translation. In any type of translation, the back translation test is conclusive, one cannot appeal against it, provided no collocations are implicated: 'a rose' is *une rose* is *eine Rose*, unless it is an 'English rose', in which case it might be '*fraîche comme une rose*' or *eine englische Schöne*, or the 'rose' (*pomme, Brause*) of a watering can, or is otherwise figurative or technical.

I suggest that this is the minimal 'scientific' principle of translation since the evidence is there, in the words, and the translator's loyalty is to them, not to a nebulous readership; his relation to this language substance is much closer than when the nebulous readership is between him and those words. There is continuous verification: here, in artistic literary translation, translation is at its most scientific, its most 'rigorous'. So much for the paradox of translation, where art can be transformed by science.

Scientific up to a point, but not dogmatic. There is occasionally a case where instinctively intuitively the translator will use a 'different' word, a word plainly not in the text, but which 'feels' right.

*Leur haine dès longtemps contre moi déclarée
M'avait à mon malheur depuis longtemps préparée
(Bérénice 1079–80)*

'Their hate, long since against me unconcealed
Had long prepared me for catastrophe.'

John Cairncross

The translator's defence may be that he felt Racine would have used 'catastrophe', if he had been writing in English. But this 'lapse' may be the exception that proves the rule, once in one or two hundred lines.

The arguments that a translator should strive for 'equivalent' effect (i.e. his readership should react to the translation just like the source language readership to the original) and that he should write as the source language author would have written if he had been a native, had complete command of the target language—both these arguments are eventually nebulous and hypothetical though not equally so. McFarlane (1953) in a too little known article pointed out that Rilke, Julien Green, Albert Schweitzer and Schleiermacher ('portrait of a man as he would have looked if his mother had begotten him by a different father') all produced arguments in favour of 'different' self-translation—Samuel Beckett, on the other hand, kept exceptionally close to his own originals.

However, I return to my subject, which is the inaccuracy of three types of translations, and in particular that the inaccuracies of the first two (publicity and technical reports) are often a mirror-image of the inaccuracies of the third (literature); the first two are too literal, the last is not literal enough.

Finally, I should say that the important factors of a translation (and its text) are its intention, its meaning, its tone, its impact, its 'texture', its function, the text as a unit—but that the evidence for all these factors can only be found in the words in the text—these are the touchstones of a translation. 'Words'—not sentences! 'are to be interpreted according to their ordinary and natural meaning', says Halsbury. In any challenging text, there is continuous tension between the maximal unit—the text—and the minimal, the word.

3. What is translation?

Most people can recognize a translation *grosso modo*—particularly if they find enough corresponding features between the target and source language texts. But asked to define translation, they hesitate, and many dictionaries, which offer synonyms for the verb (render, rephrase, reword, interpret, convert, transform, transpose, express, transfer, turn) and add 'from one language into another' do not state what is being translated; other authorities make use of expressions such as 'equivalent', 'equivalent message', 'equivalent textual material', 'similar', 'like', 'parallel', 'equal', 'identical', 'comparable', 'synonymous', 'analogous'.

If I define the act of translating as transferring the meaning of a stretch or a unit of language, the whole or a part of a text, from one language to another, I am possibly putting the problem where it belongs, viz, the meaning of meaning rather than the meaning of equivalence, identity, similarity, likeness, sameness and so on.

By meaning, I am not referring to the whole meaning. *Je suis arrivée* tells us that a woman is speaking and that she arrived either just now or some time ago; *die Sonne geht auf* tells us that the sun is rising now or that it rises regularly, and that it is feminine gender in German. But in the context, it is unlikely that all this information would have to be transferred. We are therefore only talking about functionally relevant meaning being transferred, leaving out all the superfluous features of meaning that can also be found in the text.

Much of the meaning in any stretch of language may have already been conveyed in previous sentences; other meaning is 'potential', e.g. phonaesthetic meaning, the meaning if any suggested by the sound of the passage, or philological, for example the etymological meaning of the content words.

Now the main difficulties begin. Is the meaning to be transferred the meaning intended by the writer, or reformulated by the translator? Is it to be modified for the reader, or again is it to be squared with the facts of the matter? There is no straight answer—it depends on the purpose of the translation. Thus in translating the sentence *Créé en 1798, le Conseil d'Etat est une des institutions françaises les plus originales*, *Conseil d'Etat* may be translated as *Conseil d'Etat*, or *Council of State*, or assigned a cultural equivalent and succinctly defined, and, presumably, the date must be corrected.

Now meaning as such can be summarized as cognitive, communicative and associative and these three varieties of meaning are normally involved in any translation. Thus the meaning of *tu sais* ('you know') may include the cognitive meaning that what has been said is true; the communicative meaning that the writer or speaker is asking for the reader's or listener's assent or mere attention, and the associative meaning that the writer or speaker is on familiar or fairly 'symmetrical' terms with the reader or listener.

Here I should state that every variety of meaning can be transferred, and therefore, unequivocally

that *everything can be translated*. This does not mean that every relevant aspect of meaning in a text is translated, because this would sometimes be longwinded and cumbersome (a translation should usually be as concise as possible, like good writing) and would require a long explanation. The explanation is then the translation, which is not usually good translation, but the best that can be achieved in the circumstances. The only complete translation of 'the murmur of innumerable bees' into French would entail a literal translation plus an explanation of the English onomatopoeia, which could therefore not be incorporated into a French poem, but would have to be painfully demonstrated in prose. Therefore the translator has to establish his priorities in choosing what varieties of meaning to transfer, depending on the intention of the translated text and his own intention.

Further, I have to add that the three varieties of meaning I have mentioned each include other varieties of meaning. Thus cognitive meaning includes (a) *linguistic meaning*, that is the proposition within the text say *Il était obsédé par l'idée de vendre son journal* (He was obsessed by the idea of selling his paper); (b) *referential meaning*: JJSS was obsessed by the idea of selling *France-Soir* (in Paris in 1970); (c) *implicit meaning*. The tone of a passage determines the cognitive meaning of a sentence. Thus: *Vous avez cent fois raison* may mean 'You're quite right' or 'You're quite wrong', or 'You may be making a mistake' or 'No comment'; (d) *thematic meaning* showing normally the old information as the theme at the beginning of a sentence, and the new information—(rheme) at the end of the sentence, with the highest degree of Communicative Dynamism (Firbas 1972) on the last word (rheme proper). Thematic meaning ensures the maximum 'reasonable' formal equivalence between source and target language text.

Communicative meaning, say in the sentence: *Qu'est-ce que c'est, le succès d'un journal?* includes (a) *illocutionary meaning*, here requiring a response to the question; (b) *performative meaning*, e.g. in the sentence *Double faute!* for tennis, signifying the loss of points; (c) *inferential meaning*, e.g. the sentence *Je regrette mon argent* implies 'I regret the expense, I wish I had my money back', whilst 'He shot the policeman' may mean *Il a tué* or *Il a tiré sur l'agent de police*; (d) *prognostic meaning*, *Il se fait tard* may mean 'It's time to go' and *Il y a un*

taureau dans ce champ may mean 'Let's get away'.

Finally, associative meaning may be related to the writer's background, the situation, or the sound-effects conveyed by the source language. It covers in particular pragmatic meaning, which identifies the effect which a text is likely to have on a particular readership.

Meaning relating to the writer's personal background has perhaps been sufficiently analysed and can be conveniently illustrated with single words: class or sociolect ('luncheon'); dialect (*Potschen* (Austrian): 'slippers'; *Schrippe* (Berlin): 'roll'); period (e.g. in the 18th Century 'Er' is 'you'); age (*Elektrische*: tram); occupation (*Anamnese*: 'case history'; *Gut* (naut.): 'rigging')—Note that single words or sentences may conflate class, regional dialect, occupation and degree of formality (e.g. *Adöpf*: potatoes, labouring class, Thuringian, agricultural work, colloquialism); sex (distinctions between male and female language are fluid and tend to fade in speech communities where taboos on language are disappearing for social reasons).

Meaning relating to culture may be material or ideological. Words for objects or institutions (*baguette*, *Institut de France*) may be given a cultural equivalent ('French loaf', 'French equivalent of Royal Society and British Academy') or neutralized by a descriptive term ('long loaf', institute of arts and sciences). Political and philosophical internationalisms ('democracy', 'socialism' etc.) may have different meanings in the source and target languages, whilst pejorative (negative) or ameliorative (positive) terms may be used for the same 'objects', conveniently illustrated in the GDR/German Federal Republic oppositions: *Gewinn/Profit*; *Wettbewerb/Konkurrenz*; *Angestellter/Beamter*. Note that some otherwise negative terms may sometimes be used as familiar or informal alternatives: 'Tory'/Conservative; bourgeois/middle class; propaganda/information ('enlightenment').

Familiar alternative terms extend to 'in' words ('squad' rather than 'team') in spite of the difference in meaning; 'flight' rather than 'crossing' of hovercraft; picturesque or catchy words (*l'hexagonal* for 'French' (language); *lo Stivale* for 'Italy'); former names ('Pressburg' for 'Bratislava'); nicknames or abbreviations ('Spurs' for 'Tottenham Hotspur Football Club'); political concepts (*jacobinisme* for 'political centralism'). When used as familiar alternatives, they are intended to have the

same cognitive, communicative and associative meaning as the 'correct' terms, though this may be dangerous and must sometimes be avoided ('Ten little nigger boys' etc.).

Whilst metaphors in the form of kennings or metonyms are frequently used as familiar alternatives ('Auld Reekie', the Black Prince, the Iron Lady etc.), the use of metaphor for the purpose of imprecision, vagueness, insinuation, non-self-committal, shilly-shallying, staying on the fence, half-truths, dissimulation, deceit etc., and the translator's attitude to this practice, has still to be investigated.

It is difficult for a lover of metaphor to get used to the fact that when people want to be dishonest, to prevaricate, to not commit themselves, they use metaphors—also when they want to be tactful, to mitigate, to soften. 'She may not be ideal, but she has invested a lot in you'. Woman or machine? How to convert this to literal language, to straight talk, to direct honest statement. 'These mentally handicapped people are eroding our beaches' says the mayor of Teignmouth. Translate 'erode' by *minent* or *untergraben*, and the prejudice becomes more explicit.

Meaning relating to culture and ideology may be implicit in a text, and can be expressed either through significant quotation, or through proper names. Thus in a crude propaganda article published by *Die Weltbühne* (2. 1974) referring to the anti-Arabic feeling in Munich after the murder of the Israeli athletes at the Olympic Games, and approvingly quoted by S. Bastian (Kade 1979): *Das gesunde Volksempfinden feierte fröhliche Urständ, nur daß es diesmal die Forderung zu formulieren hatte: ARABER sind hier erwünscht!* Suggested translation: 'The healthy popular feeling, of which the Nazis used to be so proud came to life again, but this time it had to rephrase its demand: Arabs (not Jews) not wanted here'. S. Bastian rather optimistically refers to this type of implicit cultural meaning as the 'pre-information' of a text.

Meaning in relation to situation covers degree of formality (official, formal, informal, colloquial/slang); generality (popular, neutral, technical etc.); objectivity (impassioned, factual).

Finally meaning in relation to language may be literal (denotative) or figurative (connotative, metaphorical); expressive, expressing the writer's personality; informative, stating the facts of the matter; persuasive or imperative, directed to

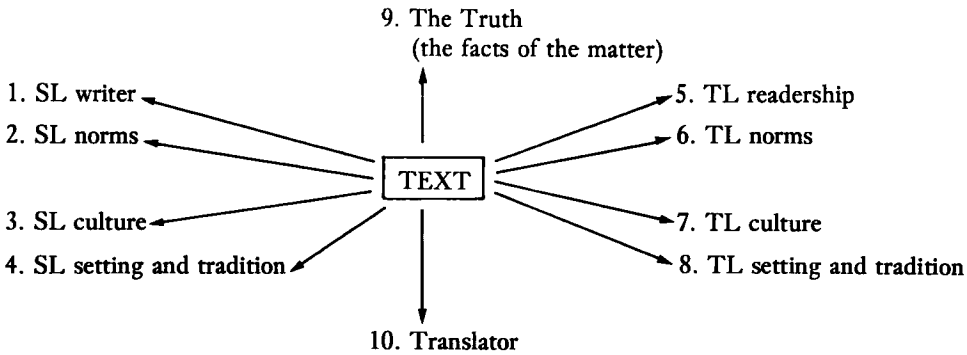
affect the reader. Further, onomatopoeia, assonance, alliteration, word-play and rhyme may be used directly or indirectly to convey meaning, in non-literary texts as well as in poetry.

The above has been an attempt to enumerate most of the varieties of meaning which may or may not be functionally relevant to the translation of a text. Incidentally, it is evidence, if evidence is required, of how complex and multifarious the translating activity, if not the translated text, can be.

A further illustration of the various factors that impinge semantically on a text can be put diagrammatically:

- 6, 7 As for 2, 3 and 4 respectively, but related and 8. to the TL.
- 9. What is being described or reported, ascertained or verified (the referential truth), where possible independently of the SL text and the expectations of the readership.
- 10. The views and prejudices of the translator, which may be personal and subjective, or may be social and cultural, involving the translator's 'group loyalty factor', which may reflect the national, political, ethnic, religious, social class, sex etc. assumptions of the translator.

The Dynamics of Translation



The text may therefore be pulled in ten different directions, as follows:

1. The individual style or idiolect of the SL author. When should it be (a) preserved (b) normalized?
2. The conventional grammatical and lexical usage for this type of text, depending on the topic and the situation.
3. Content items referring specifically to the SL or third language (i.e. not SL or TL) cultures.
4. The typical format of the text in a book, periodical, newspaper etc., as influenced by the tradition at the time.
5. The expectations of the putative readership bearing in mind their estimated knowledge of the topic and the style of language they use, expressed in terms of the largest common factor, since one should neither translate down (or up) to the readership.

All these ten factors may actually or potentially affect the translation of a text, which may represent a compromise, a balance, a choice from among them.

Now I have maintained that every variety of meaning in a source language text can be translated directly or indirectly, into a target language text, and therefore that everything can be translated. However, any variety of meaning, relating to the source language itself (e.g. puns, alliteration, linguistic terms) can only be translated indirectly, by transferring the source language item, translating, and explaining it, unless there is already a parallel item in the target language or the translation which can produce a compensatory effect within the same paragraph. Such a transfer of source language items is cumbersome, and whilst the transfer and the definition of the item would be essential in translating a word such as 'supine' or 'optative' to a lay reader in a language that does not possess these phenomena,

it is usually not worthwhile to 'translate' cases of say alliteration with this form of metalingual comment. Thus if the sound-effect as well as the meaning of Flaubert's *la poussière des granges, la potasse des lessives et le suint des laines* ('the dust of the barns, the potash of the washing-water, the grease of the sheep's wool') were considered an essential part of the translation, which would be possible if the passage were being exemplified for its stylistic effect, the words would have to be transferred and the alliterative *s*'s pointed out. The same impact could not be achieved (the target language reader might not know how to pronounce the passage), but the sound effect would be explained: the explanation is the translation.

Normally, however, the translator is continually making choices, weighing up, balancing, comparing the merits of one 'equivalent', or carrier of meaning, against another. Whilst all the varieties of meaning I have listed above may be present in one text, only a proportion of them may be functionally relevant for a translation and some information (e.g. grammatical meaning (gender, number, degree of intimacy, or dialect)) may not need to be repeated as frequently as it is in the target language text, or it may be introduced (e.g. a metaphor) as a compensatory element in a part of the target language text in a place that does not correspond to its place in the source language text.

The subject of the 'invariant' element in translation has been frequently discussed, often with the implication that the cognitive element, the information, is the invariant element which must at all costs be transferred, whilst the communicative and associative elements should only be transferred if possible. No generalization could be more misleading. The invariant and variant elements will depend entirely on the intention of the text. In the sentence 'Fortunately she's ill', the pragmatic element is invariant whilst the cognitive could be expressed in more general or more specific terms without much loss of meaning. In translating the sentence 'The cat sat on the mat', the invariant element may be the information (approximate as it is), the six monosyllables, the assonance or the representative quality of the sentence. Admittedly, the invariant element in a factual text is the maximum proportion of fact, whilst in a literary text the invariant element must be some aspect of the associative meaning. The translator makes his own decision for each text.

The more 'challenging' (i.e. translationally difficult and interesting) the source language text, the more subtle and delicate will be the new 'mix' of units of meaning, sometimes referred to as 'semes', to be introduced into the translation. Translation equivalence will then not be achieved word for word, collocation for collocation, clause for clause, sentence for sentence, but possibly only paragraph for paragraph, or, rarely, text for text. For this reason, translation equivalence, like the term 'unit of translation', is sometimes a useful operational concept, but it can only be roughly and approximately indicated for a stretch of language, e.g. it is likely to be smaller (in the area of word, collocation, clause) for an 'expressive' text (creative literature and authoritative statements) than for an 'informative' text (e.g. technical translation, textbooks etc.) but there will still be plenty of one to one translation in any text.

The translating activity, I hope I have shown, is complex and difficult to define. A good translation, however, at least of the type that most professional translators are faced with, is not difficult to identify. It is likely to look surprisingly like the original text to a reader competent in both languages, unless the original contains errors of fact and deficiencies of style. Provided one leaves 'creative language' texts and official ex-cathedra statements of any kind out of account, Nida's classical definition of translation as 'the reproduction of the closest natural equivalent of the source language message' could not be bettered. In fact, this type of translation is distinguished by its elegance and concision, its attention to a natural word order, to the deployment of clauses and phrases more frequently used than their formal equivalents in the source language, to the occasional unobtrusive distribution of the meaning of important 'untranslatable' words (e.g. 'privacy', *éclat*, *sauber*, *casanier* etc.) over two or three target language words or a clause: a good translation is deft, neat, closely shadowing its original. 'A misted window-pane that continuously has to be wiped cleaner' (Mary FitzGerald) (The only merit of such epithets and metaphors is that they are not yet clichéd.)

Should a translation be 'visible' or 'invisible'? One assumes that a translation devoted to facts and ideas, or persuading people, is mainly invisible, unless it wants to seize its readership by drawing attention to its curious syntax ('this hopefully to you not displeasing postcard')—this