

Literature and Translation

Translation Studies before 'Translation Studies'

Nothing happened?

Edited by

Kathryn Batchelor and

Iryna Odrekhivska

Translation Studies before 'Translation Studies'

LITERATURE AND TRANSLATION

Series Editors: Timothy Mathews, Kathryn Batchelor and
Ana Cláudia Suriani da Silva

Literature and Translation is a series for books of literary translation as well as about literary translation. Its emphasis is on diversity of genre, culture, period and approach. The series uses the UCL Press open-access publishing model widely to disseminate developments in both the theory and practice of translation. Translations into English are welcomed of literature from around the world.

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 **UCL**PRESS

First published in 2026 by UCL Press
University College London
Gower Street
London WC1E 6BT

Available to download free: www.uclpress.co.uk

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A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.



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Batchelor, K. and Odrekivska, I. (eds). 2026. *Translation Studies before 'Translation Studies': Nothing happened?* London: UCL Press.
<https://doi.org/10.14324/111.9781800089877>

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ISBN: 978-1-80008-985-3 (Hbk)
ISBN: 978-1-80008-986-0 (Pbk)
ISBN: 978-1-80008-987-7 (PDF)
ISBN: 978-1-80008-988-4 (epub)
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14324/111.9781800089877>

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Acknowledgements

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When is translation studies not translation studies?

Kathryn Batchelor and Iryna Odrekhivska

Frequently rehearsed narratives of ‘translation studies’ typically trace the origins of the discipline to the second half of the twentieth century and suggest that little of interest happened prior to that date. Reflections on translation from earlier periods are characterised as sterile, imprecise or circular, or as taking place outside the bounds of academic or scientific endeavour. This narrative – which Brian Baer (2020) aptly calls a ‘mythis-tory’ – finds expression in volumes such as George Steiner’s ([1975] 1998) *After Babel*, Edwin Gentzler’s (1993) *Contemporary Translation Theories* and Jeremy Munday’s ([2001] 2012) *Introducing Translation Studies*. Steiner ([1975] 1998), for example, emphasises the apparent paradox between the ‘rich history’ of reflection on translation over several centuries and the ‘very meagre’ number of ‘original, significant ideas in the subject’ (251), grouping together approximately 1,700 years of scholarship, from Cicero through to Hölderlin, as a ‘first phase’ of literature on translation that was characterised by ‘immediate empirical focus’ (248), even while acknowledging that it included ‘major theoretic texts’ (248) by Bruni (1420) and Huet (1680). This echoes James Holmes’s ([1972] 2000, 173) description of translation as having been accorded ‘centuries of incidental and desultory attention’. Munday’s (2012, 4) textbook adopts a similar periodisation and tone, describing pre-twentieth-century writing on translation as a ‘huge range of over 2,000 years’ that focuses on the “‘literal vs free” translation debate, an imprecise and circular debate from which theorists have emerged only in the last fifty years’.

Within this narrative, the Dutch-American theorist James Holmes is typically accorded a key role, and ‘translation studies’ is generally seen as having been founded in the early 1970s. This is the story told by Gentzler, who sketches out developments in American debates on translation in the 1950s–60s (literary translation workshops on the one hand, scientific

linguistics-based theories of Eugene Nida on the other) but accords the label of ‘early translation studies’ only to the strand of scholarship developed by Holmes and other Low Countries scholars in the 1970s. In a paper written some 20 years later, Gentzler (2014, 14) repeats this periodisation, casting the 1950s–60s as a ‘pre-discipline’ and asserting unequivocally that translation studies was ‘founded in the early 1970s in the Low Countries’. Mary Snell-Hornby (2006, 6) gives Holmes a similarly pivotal role, describing him as having ‘laid the foundation stone of the discipline with what now seem visionary powers’. Susan Bassnett’s widely read *Translation Studies*, first published in 1980, adopts a similar set of dates, declaring in the blurb that ‘in the late 1970s a new academic discipline was born’, and associating that discipline in the opening paragraph with André Lefevere’s 1978 proposal that the name ‘translation studies’ be adopted for the new discipline (Bassnett 1980, 1), noting that in this he is ‘follow[ing] the lead set by James Holmes’ (Bassnett 1980, 136).

This trend continues in recent publications, further solidifying this particular narrative within the field’s historiography. Unsurprisingly, given its highly telling title, the editors of the 2022 volume *50 Years Later: What have we learnt after Holmes (1972) and where are we now?* also proclaim Holmes’s 1972 paper to be ‘the first attempt to vertebrate the incipient academic discipline of translation studies (TS) as an autonomous pursuit’ (Aixelá and Olalla-Soler 2022, 7). Interestingly, José Lambert (2022, 40), in his contribution to the same volume, inserts the caveat ‘as far as we know’ around the same claim. However, his simultaneous assertion about ‘Holmes’ pioneering text on a new phenomenon simply called Translation Studies’ (Lambert 2022, 39) is quite resolute: ‘Until that moment, academia had not accepted anything of that kind’ (Lambert 2022, 39). The narrative finds itself repeated in the 2023 edition of the *Routledge Handbook of Translation Theory and Concepts*, which simultaneously affirms the ‘shaping power’ of pre-Holmes works on translation while categorising them as ‘reflections’ that ‘did not engage with the methods and ideas of scientific inquiry’:

TS [translation studies] epistemology is traditionally considered to have had its origin in Holmes’s ‘The name and nature of translation studies’ (1972), where the new discipline and its contents were literally mapped. However, translation had received the attention of writers, scholars and translators themselves for centuries, generating a body of reflections that did not engage with the methods and ideas of scientific inquiry but definitely shaped Western notions of translation (Marín García 2023, 13–14).

The boundaries of Western thinking about translation hence remain strongly entrenched.

The translation studies narrative is both explicitly and implicitly premised on a linear, teleological view of history. While this is to some extent typical of Western understanding of history in general (Wakabayashi 2019, 24), it seems to govern thinking about translation history in a very strong way, as Lieven D'hulst (2022, 5) also notes. There is much talk of progress and development, sometimes even in the same breath, as when Bassnett (1980, 74) writes about the 'progress of the development of Translation Studies'. Maria Tymoczko (2010) adopts a similarly linear view, presenting the discipline as being on a journey from positivism to postpositivism. She thus questions whether translation writings from before the twentieth century constitute theory per se,¹ confessing that she finds them 'both stultifying and disturbing' (Tymoczko 2010, 17) because of their lack of self-reflexivity. In contrast, she argues that post-Second World War translation studies is broadly postpositivist in its underpinnings, revealing her progress-based perspective through her word choices: 'this is a direction that ... the field has been lurching towards for decades ... intertwined with clear retrogression' (Tymoczko 2010, 24). At the same time, she acknowledges the one-dimensionality of the Western-centric view of translation historiography, arguing that 'the thinking of non-Western peoples about this central human activity is essential in achieving broader and more durable theories about translation' (Tymoczko 2014, 14).

As D'hulst (2022, 5) observes, the overarching narrative of progress aligns with the scientific models of evolution inventoried by Thomas Kuhn, whereby the 'growth' model sees scientific disciplines as advancing via accumulation over time, and the more confrontational 'paradigm shift' model sees scientists first resist then adopt new viewpoints. One of the most discussed paradigm shifts, and the one most explicitly underpinned by teleological assumptions of progress, is that of the cultural turn. Snell-Hornby (2006, 3) accords the cultural turn discipline-forming power, describing it as that which 'enabled Translation Studies to emancipate itself from literary theory and linguistics, and led to the establishment of the independent discipline'. Her use of the word 'emancipate' is instructive: in the mythistory of translation studies, an important element of the narrative is the idea that translation studies had to free itself from its past, as D'hulst (2022, 4) and Baer (2020, 228) have neatly summarised.

At the time of its announcement via volumes such as Bassnett and Lefevere's (1990) *Translation, History & Culture*, the cultural turn was presented as a 'momentous step' (Bassnett and Lefevere 1990, 4) towards a

more sophisticated envisioning of translation, one that abandons a “scientific” attitude and ... move[s] from “text” ... to culture’ (Bassnett and Lefevere 1990, 4). Bassnett and Lefevere’s declaration was performative, an attempt to wrench the emerging ‘translation studies’ in a particular direction. As Batchelor (2020, 311) argues in her review of another book from this period, ‘translation studies’ was at the time associated primarily with the scientific, large-scale systematic studies led by German scholars under the rubric of *Übersetzungswissenschaft*, rather than with work emerging out of literature departments. Bassnett and Lefevere aimed to intervene in this situation, creating a ‘translation studies’ that would have space for literary translation, elevating the latter from that ‘small corner’ (Bassnett and Lefevere 1990, 12) of comparative literature to which it had traditionally been ‘relegated’ (Bassnett and Lefevere 1990, 12). The strength of their rhetoric reflected this ambition.

In the tradition that has grown up around the stories of translation studies’ ‘progress’, however, the arguments made by the advocates of the cultural turn have rarely been subject to analysis, and have instead been absorbed uncritically as a historically neutral account. That account is regularly reproduced by many a student and scholar, and forms part of the Wikipedia entry on ‘translation studies’. Exceptions to the narrative of progress do of course exist: Theo Hermans, for example, expresses a certain scepticism when he wryly opens the volume *Crosscultural Transgressions* with the exclamation ‘Poor Holmes!’, noting: ‘while the study of translation received a momentous boost from Holmes’ pioneering blueprint, it did not develop along the measured lines of accumulation and progression he foresaw ... Translation studies today look more varied and volatile than Holmes can ever have imagined’ (Hermans 2002, 1).

Given the eclectic mix of topics and approaches that are encompassed under the broad label of ‘translation studies’, the overall persistence of the progress-based narrative seems surprising. In fact, many of the scholars whose work has been key to the consolidation of the mythistory did endeavour to build in certain nuances and caveats, but these have tended to go missing in the many retellings of the story. Both Jeremy Munday (2012, 297) and Anthony Pym (2014, 3), for example, stress that the chronological structures of their introductory books (*Introducing Translation Studies* and *Exploring Translation Theories*, respectively) are not intended to suggest an ‘evolution from linguistic to cultural theories’ (Munday 2012, 297) or to indicate that ‘the newer theories have replaced the older ones’ (Pym 2014, 3). Bassnett (1980, 72) herself, in the first edition of *Translation Studies*, emphasises that ‘it would be wrong to see the first half of the twentieth century as the

Waste Land of English translation theory' and gives a fuller picture of pre-twentieth-century translation theory than that offered by Steiner, an effort that was further strengthened through the anthology *Translation/History/Culture: A sourcebook* edited by her close collaborator André Lefevere (1992). Furthermore, Bassnett (1980, 73–4) contrasts the relative paucity of English-language scholarship in the early twentieth century with the sophisticated theories that were being developed in Eastern Europe, figuring these as 'the bases from which recent work in translation theory has been able to proceed'. She also clarifies in the introduction to *Translation Studies* that it is concerned with 'the discipline ... in the English-speaking world' (Bassnett 1980, 6), contrasting the relative slowness of the crystallisation of this discipline with the 'rapid development of Translation Studies in Eastern Europe' (Bassnett 1980, 6). More belatedly, in the third edition of *Exploring Translation Theories*, Pym (2023) incorporates Russian and Ukrainian theories into his textbook, while still envisaging it as an introduction to core contemporary paradigms of Western translation theory.

Indeed, many scholars stress that their perspective is not universal, countering Eurocentrism by provincialising their own standpoint. Marilyn Gaddis Rose, for example, offers Nida's work as a starting point for 'modern translation studies', but stresses that this is her own personal view, developed from an American perspective:

Although experienced translators must have been trying to explain or justify what they do long before Cicero and Saint Jerome, I give notice that in my idiosyncratic American amalgamation, I date the beginning of modern translation studies with Eugene A. Nida's 1947 essay on translation principles (Gaddis Rose 1997, 9–10).

To expose the implications of the teleological mode of thinking that is associated with the mythistory of 'translation studies', it is useful to consider alternative attitudes to time. In her exploration of what she terms 'translation timescapes', Judy Wakabayashi (2019, 23) contrasts the dominant Western teleological understanding of history with cyclical understandings – common in Hindu and Buddhist cultures – as well as with understandings based around the notion of 'decline from a superior past', dominant in ancient Greece and Rome. In a cyclical perception, the fact that discussions of translation appear to go over the same ground again and again would not be a cause for regret, as it is for Steiner (1998, 283) or Munday (2012, 4), as we saw. Instead, taking such recurrences for granted, we might become more interested in the variations that

surround the core continuities, potentially also connecting in productive ways with recent (and older!) sociological and historical scholarship that studies economic and political cycles and their effects on culture. An understanding of historical time as decline would have even more ramifications for the way in which we approach earlier translation scholarship, with the period that becomes defined as the pinnacle of translation thinking receiving sustained scholarly attention (to the detriment, of course, of others). There is, in fact, precedent for this type of timescape in translation studies scholarship, though it is rarely discussed now, at least in anglophone circles: in his history of the German tradition of theories of literary translation, André Lefevere (1977, 1) identifies the late-seventeenth- to early-eighteenth-century scholars Schleiermacher and Humboldt as the ‘masters’, who were preceded by ‘pioneers’ (Gottsched, Lessing, Herder) and, before them, ‘precursors’ (Martin Luther, Justus Georg Schottel). After the ‘masters’ came disciples: Wilamowitz, Benjamin, Borchardt, Rosenzweig ‘and many German theorists of literary translation writing today’ (Lefevere 1977, 1). Lefevere argues that the masters are ‘to a great extent still central to the theory of literary translation as such, whether that theory is formulated in German, or not’ (1977, 1).

The consequences of the linear mode of thinking that has dominated contemporary translation studies have been profound. Much of the pre-Holmes scholarship has fallen into oblivion; not only is it no longer read, but it is even often not known to exist. How many of today’s translation studies scholars would be aware of the 266 entries in Bayard Quincy Morgan’s critical bibliography of works on translation, published as part of *On Translation* (Brower 1959), or the many pre-1970s entries in the bibliography compiled by George Steiner ([1975] 1998) and appended to his influential book *After Babel?* Or, for that matter, the analytical bibliography of *The Science of Translation* by Bausch, Klegraf and Wilss (1970, 1972), published in two volumes with approximately 1,700 entries covering the period 1962–71, to which Holmes ([1972] 2000, 175) himself makes reference in ‘The name and nature of translation studies’? Has present-day scholarship given more than a glance to the 2010 English translation of Jiří Levý’s landmark 1963 book *Art of Translation*, especially to its list of references, which reveals a remarkably rich and diverse – and now largely obscured – landscape of translation thought? Levý also compiled an anthology, *České teorie překlada* (1957), a collection of seminal essays by Czech translation theorists, which, paradoxically, has gone unnoticed in the scholarly field of translation due to its unavailability in English translation.

It is not only the specific ideas explored in much of this early scholarship that have been lost, but also the broader intellectual context of the handful of isolated works that have been canonised from these earlier periods. [Schleiermacher's 1813](#) lecture, 'On the different methods of translating' and [Benjamin's 1923](#) preface, 'The task of the translator' offer excellent cases in point, as [Lefevere's \(1977\)](#) study demonstrates, and as recent work by [Hermans \(2015, 2018\)](#) and Douglas [Robinson \(2022\)](#) has explored.

The uncritical absorption of the narrative around the cultural turn, in particular, has compounded another tendency – already strong within any linear conceptualisation of disciplinary 'progress' – to pay minimal attention to linguistics-informed works developed prior to the 1980s. Texts that were seminal in their day, such as [Catford's \(1965\) *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*](#), are rarely read now, yet at the same time are still held up as evidence of the supposedly more immature viewpoint from which 'translation studies' has evolved. In fact, Catford's effort to account for cultural items in linguistic terms was not because of a naïve failure to take cultural issues into account, as is often claimed in simplified retellings of the cultural turn, but because turning cultural problems into linguistic ones appeared at the time to hold the key to successful machine translation, as the following quotation makes clear:

If ... it should turn out that 'cultural untranslatability' is ultimately describable in all cases as a variety of linguistic untranslatability, then the power of translation theory will have been considerably increased and, among other things, the horizon of machine translation will have been enlarged ([Catford 1965](#), 103).

More collectively, translation studies' 'self-chosen caesura' ([Schippel and Zwischenberger 2017](#), 10) has resulted in it being perceived – both from without and from within – as a discipline with shallow roots. Stephen [Noble \(2023\)](#), in an article exploring the relation between philosophy and translation, assumes the validity of the narrative that 'translation studies' began in 1972 with James Holmes, and contrasts the 'shallow, slender roots' ([Noble 2023](#), 132) of translation studies with philosophy's much deeper ones. What Noble does not explore, however, is the fact that every discipline – and even each national variety of that discipline – actively decides what belongs to it: what needs to be read, what deserves to be discussed, what is included or omitted from the canon. As [Lefevere \(1977, 1\)](#) notes in his opening to *Translating Literature: The German tradition from Luther to Rosenzweig*, 'traditions do not "arise"'. They are

consciously shaped and established.’ This is a point that also emerges from Martha Cheung’s (2003) reflections on her efforts to anthologise Chinese discourse on translation, which begin by asking a series of questions about what she terms the ‘disciplining of knowledge’ (Cheung 2003, 390) in cross-cultural situations. Her use of ‘discipline’ as a verb rather than a noun is instructive: it points to the fact that academic disciplines are actively shaped by a series of decisions around what constitutes ‘knowledge’, rather than denoting something that is intrinsically natural or commonsensical. As Cheung (2003, 390) argues, ‘disciplining’ involves ‘organizing, hierarchizing, including/excluding, centring/decentring, aligning and re-aligning of material deemed to constitute knowledge’. In the case of ‘translation studies’, much has been excluded: the ‘shallow, slender roots’ of the discipline, or what D’hulst (2022, 17) terms its ‘short, modern shape’, are crafted rather than intrinsic.

The elision of much early scholarship has also been a key contributor to the monolingual, anglophone nature of ‘translation studies’ and its perceived historical roots. It is quite striking to compare the dominance of English-language material in volumes such as Venuti’s *Translation Studies Reader* (on this point, see Baer 2000) with the multilingual nature of the bibliography included in Brower 1959, or even in Steiner’s ([1975] 1998) *After Babel*. For example, in Steiner ([1975] 1998, 500, 503), we find listed the first edition of the Russian-language volume from which the 1920 essay by Fedor Dmitrievich Batiushkov, presented by Baer in Chapter 12 of our volume, is taken; Steiner also lists Fedorov’s (1953) book, again in Russian, excerpts from the second edition of which Eade Roberts presents in Chapter 18.

Paradoxically, translation theory itself remains among the least translated fields. As Şebnem Susam-Sarajeva (2002, 202) pointed out almost a quarter of a century ago, ‘those who wrote in their own languages and in their home countries are bound to be heard only by their local audience, however important and useful their work might have been for the rest of the world’. In view of this, Anne Lange, Daniele Monticelli and Christopher Rundle (2024, 4) underscore the need to widely acknowledge that ‘many so-called “advances” in translation studies were perceived as such in the West because of a lack of knowledge about reflection on translation in other parts of the world’. It is for this reason that Baer (2020, 223) describes the mythistory of translation studies as ‘imperial’, conceiving of itself as something that is born in the West and then expands outwards. Delinking from this ‘mythistory’ requires a critical deconstruction of its underlying assumptions, a collaborative effort toward reflexivity and an openness to an epistemological

shift. As Tymoczko (2014, 30) argues, ‘the dissemination of Western translation theory will inevitably continue to have a hegemonic character unless it is interrogated on the basis of differences that exist between dominant Western assumptions and other local knowledges and experiences’. From this vantage point, the editors of the 2024 volume of the *Routledge Handbook of the History of Translation Studies* pose a crucial rhetorical question: instead of adopting the standard narrative, ‘should we not rather acknowledge the “fragmented nature” ... of TIS’s origins and filiations, replacing the rooted and linear image of the origins and development of the discipline with a more rhizomatic and multidimensional one?’ (Lange, Monticelli and Rundle 2024, 3).

In the attempt to reflect a more multidimensional understanding of the discipline and present non-Western traditions, several important volumes have been published over the past two decades, among them the two-volume *Anthology of Chinese Discourse on Translation* by Cheung (2006) and Cheung and Neather (2017), *Translation Theories in the Slavic Countries* by Andrea Ceccherelli, Lorenzo Costantino and Christino Diddi (2015), *Asian Translation Traditions* by Eva Tsoi Hung and Judy Wakabayashi (2016), *Palavra de tradutor: Reflexões sobre tradução por tradutores brasileiros/The Translator’s Word: Reflections on translation by Brazilian translators*, a bilingual anthology edited by Marcia A. P. Martins and Andréia Guerini (2018), and *Anthology of Arabic Discourse on Translation* edited by Tarek Shamma and Myriam Salama-Carr (2022). In direct response to Chakrabarty’s call to provincialise Europe and following his appeal to models of ‘cross-cultural and cross-categorical translations that do not take a universal middle term for granted’ (Chakrabarty 2000, 83), these books open up space for new dimensions of theorisation that move beyond the confines of the traditional Western canon and stimulate a growing awareness of other contexts.

Indeed, it is now true that many recent authoritative editions in translation studies acknowledge the bias towards scholarship originating in Western theoretical programmes and the limited scope of language constellations represented (see, for instance, Tipton 2019, 7). However, these acknowledgements tend to be made briefly and largely superficially in the volume introductions, and on their own are insufficient. They do not effectively challenge the prevailing narrative, but rather – again and inadvertently – marginalise the new attempts to resituate once-bypassed Asian, Arabic, Chinese, Slavic and other discourses within ‘translation studies’, effectively relegating them to the status of addenda to the Western imperial archive of knowledge on translation. Here, we concur with Tymoczko’s (2014, 14) argument that ‘in order to

expand contemporary theories of translation, it is not sufficient merely to incorporate additional non-Western data pertaining to translation histories, episodes, and artefacts. The implications of those data must be analysed and understood, and the results theorized.’ Otherwise, the broadening of translation theory carries the risk of contributing to what Tymoczko (2014, 30) aptly terms ‘an occasion for a new Orientalism’. This concern becomes particularly pertinent when translating historical and non-Western theoretical texts, as these translations often involve mediating between distinct epistemic systems. Rooted in their own coherent knowledge regimes, these systems represent alternative frameworks of understanding translation and its meaning making, directly aligning with Karin Knorr Cetina’s (1999) concept of ‘epistemic cultures’. This concept emphasises the existence of diverse, context-dependent knowledge systems shaped by distinct arrangements constituting ‘how we know what we know’. However, as Karen Bennett (2024, 1–2) states, such frameworks have often been stripped of their ‘cognitive authority’, diminishing their value and reducing them to being perceived merely as ‘myth’, ‘tradition’ or ‘belief’, thereby dismissing their intellectual contribution and reinforcing a hierarchical view of knowledge. In light of this, it is essential to engage in what Douglas Robinson (2017, 200), in his extension of Roman Jakobson’s tripartite model, terms ‘interepistemic translation’. Rather than simply translating concepts into terms familiar for present-day Western paradigms, interepistemic translation requires a careful contextualisation of the historical emergence, anchoring and impact of these perspectives on translation, avoiding reductive comparisons or hierarchies.

Our vision for this volume is to challenge the prevailing narrative of a monolithic history of ‘translation studies’ in precisely these ways, demonstrating how this narrative often overlooks, marginalises and even silences pre-1972 contributions. To this end, the volume gives access to a small but significant selection of overlooked material, focusing on works written in languages other than English. In a recent review of the volume *50 Years Later: What have we learnt after Holmes (1972)?*, mentioned above, Andrea Bergantino (2024) interprets our foregrounding of translation theories from other times and places as something that stands in opposition to displacing Holmes’s ‘Name and nature of translation studies’ as the foundation of translation studies, but we do not agree.² Surely one of the best ways of countering the view that ‘nothing happened’ in the centuries prior to Holmes is to show that plenty was happening? This is precisely what we are seeking to do, both by translating primary material from those centuries and by commissioning accompanying essays

that provide historical context for the selected pieces and explain how they engage with the dominant translation questions of their day. Each excerpt thus functions in a sense as the tip of an iceberg, the accompanying essay giving a fuller picture of the vibrant traditions of translation practice and theory in which each piece was produced.

The coverage in this volume is not and could never be exhaustive. A more acceptable criticism, and one that we fully accept, is that it is imbalanced, in every respect: time, place, gender. Eleven of the 20 chapters present material from the twentieth century. Only one chapter focuses on ancient Rome, two on the medieval period (in China and India, respectively) and one on Early Modern Europe. In terms of geography, Eastern Europe features strongly, particularly Ukraine (three chapters). This weighting is a result of the personal, practical circumstances – driven by global political events – through which the volume arose. The seeds for the volume were sown in London, a place of home and exile, and first came to life as a conference jointly organised by the Centre for Translation Studies and the School of Slavonic and East European Studies at UCL. The conference brought together 30-odd scholars who had responded to our call for papers, which we titled ‘Nothing Happened: Translation studies before James Holmes’. A further 50 or so joined us online. Theo Hermans, Hephzibah Israel and Daniele Monticelli were our keynote speakers, generous in their participation and contributions. At the end of the two days, there was a consensus that we could not end things there; we needed to put our discussions in print and, crucially, give access to the original material. A further call for papers, for this edited collection, followed.

The imbalances in the volume are thus a reflection of the research interests of those who saw and responded to our calls for papers. As editors, we have sought to redress the imbalances by inviting contributions from colleagues whom we know to be working on other overlooked material. This resulted in the chapters that feature material from Brazil (Amarante, Silva-Reis and Milton), the Arab world (Abou Rached) and the Swahili Coast (Talent), as well as the chapter on female French theorist Madame G. M. de Rochmondet (Overton-Gill). Other efforts to solicit more diverse material did not succeed; the imbalance between male and female translation theorists is one that in particular calls out for further efforts in unearthing and giving access.

Our volume is not the first to expose or question the ‘mythistory’ of translation studies. In addition to the article by [Baer \(2020\)](#) discussed above, D’hulst and Gambier’s *A History of Modern Translation Knowledge: Sources, concepts, effects* (2018) makes a significant contribution to

this critical endeavour. In their abstract, they make a case for challenging ‘the artificial distinction between past and present’ and argue that ‘the latter’s historical roots go back far beyond the 1970s’. As a consequence, they see translation studies as part of a broader set of discourses on translation, and prefer to use the label ‘translation knowledge’, rather than ‘translation studies’. Their reasoning is similar to that used by Martha Cheung (2003) when deciding to title her volume an anthology of translation ‘discourse’ rather than ‘theory’ (see Cheung 2006): the premise in both cases is that a more generic term is needed if we are to include material that does not fall on the right side of today’s disciplinary dividing lines. Our own approach is different: we prefer to expand the scope of ‘translation studies’ and to have a broad consideration of what counts as ‘theory’, thereby hoping to expose the constructed nature of our disciplinary canons and history, and to suggest that it is they that need to be changed.

While the excerpts featured in this volume are drawn from an eclectic range of times and places, they nevertheless reveal some important confluences that challenge the over-simplified narrative of the history of ‘translation studies’ in specific ways. With regard to the ‘literal versus free’ debate, said to have dominated pre-twentieth-century discussions in a circular and stultifying manner, our volume shows that the ‘literal versus free’ binary emerged retrospectively as a convenient shorthand for what was being discussed, rather than being an accurate representation of the debates themselves. This can be illustrated in a variety of ways: in some cases, as in the medieval Chinese translation debates outlined by Sui Sai Yau in Chapter 2, there are many different translation processes that are artificially grouped together under the rubric of ‘free’, such as rewriting, abridging, restructuring, fusing Confucian and Taoist concepts with Buddhist ones, and so on. The decision to group these very different translation approaches together under the single label of ‘free’, thereby creating a binary rather than a plurality of options, is a decision taken by the historian, rather than one that emerges organically from the primary sources themselves. In other cases, as in the sixteenth-century debates discussed by Hermans in Chapter 4, there would appear to be a use of a binary distinction, but this is not between ‘free’ and ‘literal’ renditions: instead, it is between Latin translations that emulated Ciceronian Latin and those that did not. While the former would likely result in translations that were freer than the latter, the literal/free binary does not encapsulate what was at stake, nor how it was being measured: translations were evaluated based not on their similarity to their source text, but on their similarity to other works in the target language, specifically

those by Cicero. In that context, the ‘literal versus free’ distinction becomes nonsensical, even if some of the later critics of the Ciceronian translators also discussed by Hermans appealed to those notions.

Many of the chapters also offer robust challenges to the ‘shallow roots’ (Noble 2023, 132) of translation studies, foregrounding debates and practices that were taking place hundreds or even thousands of years ago, but which are today often envisaged as new phenomena. One example involves the collaborative translation practices that were common in places and times as far afield as ancient Rome and medieval India. The third-century BCE playwright Terence (discussed by Manuwald in Chapter 1), for example, incorporated discussions about translation into his plays, inviting audiences into the debates, while Dnyāneshwar, one of the medieval Indian authors discussed by Padhye in Chapter 3, produced his translation in highly collaborative fashion, garnering opinions from his guru, fellow saints and wider audiences.

Another example involves the notion of translation as creative rewriting, often associated with the cultural turn of the 1980s–90s. Talento’s exploration in Chapter 5 of classical Swahili translations, including the vocabulary adopted by its theorists, shows that this was a period in which there were no clear divisions between poetic composition and translation, with assimilation, borrowing and rewriting being seen as components of both kinds of activity. Talento’s discussion also shows the importance of not taking the terminology used by early theorists at face value, or perhaps of not assuming equivalence between a close English translation of that terminology and our present-day terms. For example, while classical Swahili translators spoke of translation as ‘repetition’ (*kudhukuri*, *qarari*), a careful reading of their further reflections shows that they understood this to involve transformation and wholesale shift to a different genre.

Several of our chapters foreground connections between translation activity and social change, and show that reflections on the sociological significance of translation go back much further than the so-called ‘sociological turn’ of translation studies in the 2010s. Examples include the religious translations that challenged social hierarchies in medieval India (explored by Padhye in Chapter 3), the systematic and sustained attempts to generate knowledge via translation activity in the Umayyad/Abbasid Empire eras (explored by Abou Rached in Chapter 9) and the foregrounding of translation as a driver of literary and cultural advancement in the complex geopolitical context of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Ukraine by both Ivan Franko (discussed by Dzera and Naniak in Chapter 11) and Mykola Zerov (discussed by Kolomiyets in Chapter 13).

The phenomenon of indirect translation, whereby translations are made from another translated version of a text rather than from the original, offers a neat illustration of the way in which the socio-political context can fundamentally change what is at stake. In Paulo Rónai's essay on the topic, presented by Amarante in [Chapter 16](#), the concerns around indirect translation have to do primarily with translation quality; the calls for direct translation into Slovak discussed by Šavelová in [Chapter 15](#), in contrast, have a motivation that is primarily political, direct translation being envisaged as a way of strengthening the position of Slovak vis-à-vis Czech in post-1918 Czechoslovakia.

Other 'turns' of post-1972 translation studies can be shown in a similar way to have been anticipated in the much earlier traditions of translation studies featured in our chapters, indicating that turns are accentuations of existing strands of theoretical interest, rather than radical changes in approach. This is not to suggest that there is always a direct line of influence; on the contrary, the commonalities that we see between the traditions featured in our chapters are often coincidental rather than causally related. Attfield's exposition of the seventeenth- to eighteenth-century Ethiopian *andem* tradition, for example, shows that many of the features associated with the post-structuralist turn driven by late-twentieth-century scholars in Brazil such as Rosemary Arrojo, and inspired by French theorists such as Jacques Derrida, are shared with the historically unrelated traditions of Ethiopian *qine* hermeneutics. These include an emphasis on openness and plurality of translations: in the Ethiopian tradition, *andem* means 'and one', and is used to layer interpretation upon interpretation in non-hierarchical fashion rather than to settle on a single or dominant meaning for a given text.

The highly formalised, rich tradition of *qine* hermeneutics and the *andem* tradition within it gives the lie to the idea that pre-twentieth-century translation theory was unsystematic. Other chapters speak to this particular aspect of the denigration of early translation discussions, too: the book-length work by the early nineteenth-century French theorist Madame de Rochmondet, discussed by Overton-Gill in [Chapter 7](#), for instance, offers a compelling example of a substantial, systematic work that blends theory with practical examples – similar in approach to the volumes that would be produced by Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet or Eugene Nida in the 1950s–60s, or indeed by Andrei Fedorov, whose 1953/1958 book is the focus of [Chapter 18](#) by Eade Roberts.

In a similar vein, our volume offers a robust provincialisation of the claim that translation studies did not see institutionalisation until the 1970s. In [Chapter 10](#), Zhang and Wang call our attention to what may

have been one of the earliest institutionalisations of translation studies as a discipline within a modern university structure, namely the School of Translation Studies founded in 1903 at the Imperial University (later Peking University). While the traces of this particular institutionalisation are limited to its skeleton structure, in the form of foundational charters, a fuller picture of another early institutionalisation – this time in Ukraine between the 1910s and 1930s – emerges in the chapters by Dzera and Naniak (Chapter 11) and Kolomiyets and Kalynchenko (Chapter 13). Through these chapters we gain insight into the nature of ‘translation studies’ (*perekladoznavstvo*) as it developed in that space, with particular attention being given to translation quality and criticism, translation approaches and translation history. Slightly later, but still more than a decade before Holmes, the Russian theorist Andrei Fedorov sketched out a basic map of ‘translation study’ (*izuchenie perevoda*) as a discipline, envisaging subdisciplines such as literary studies, linguistics, psychological and cultural-historical research (see Chapter 18 by Eade Roberts). While Fedorov explicitly excluded machine translation from the discipline, two of his contemporaries, Isaak Revzin and Viktor Rozentsveig, argued for its inclusion, synthesising existing Soviet and Western research on machine translation in what is believed to be the first textbook on the topic.

A less uplifting tale of institutionalisation is told in Chapter 14, in which Regniers presents the Vereeniging Nederlandsche Vertalingen (Association of Dutch Translations), founded in January 1932 with the goal of increasing the quality of literary translations. Harshly critical of translators and publishers, with a strong undercurrent of misogyny, the association and its magazine ended up alienating many of its natural allies and had minimal direct impact on either the profession or the academic community. Intriguingly, however, as Regniers explains, it formed the backdrop to the environment in which a certain James Holmes would begin his academic career. Restoring Holmes’s 1972 mapping of translation studies to its immediate historical context offers another means of challenging the simplified Western-centric mythistory of the discipline. Rajewska’s chapter (Chapter 19) is important in this regard: focusing on Edward Balceran, a Polish contemporary of Holmes and a contributor to the 1968 pan-European conference on translation in Bratislava that resulted in the publication of *The Nature of Translation: Essays on the theory and practice of literary translation*, edited by Holmes (1971), Rajewska reminds us that the discussions that shaped Holmes’s mapping of the discipline drew extensively from earlier Eastern European and Russian scholarship. As Odrekhivska shows, this is a point that Holmes himself acknowledged in a keynote speech given in 1978, even going so far as

to name specific theorists whose work remained untranslated and overlooked. One of these named individuals was the Ukrainian Viktor Koptilov, whose seminal works are excerpted and translated in [Chapter 20](#), with an emphasis – particularly appropriate for our volume – on how translation analysis might be expanded through a historical lens. Significantly, it was Koptilov’s 1971 Ukrainian-language article ‘Translation Studies as a separate branch of philology’, a fragment of which is presented here in English translation for the first time, that represented a decisive step in the further institutionalisation of the discipline in Ukrainian academia and is still considered core reading in university programmes.

Another way in which our volume exposes the artificiality of the shallow roots that ‘translation studies’ has chosen for itself is by offering glimpses of the extensive engagement with Ancient Roman translation theory, particularly Cicero’s, that have taken place over many centuries. While present-day translation studies rarely crosses the disciplinary boundary to Classics, several of the chapters in our volume show that earlier scholars, from a variety of locales, were – perhaps unsurprisingly – well versed in early Latin writings and engaged in lively debate over how these were to be interpreted. This emerges most clearly in Hermans’s chapter, but is also an anchor point for the 1813 essay by the Brazilian Manuel Ferreira de Araújo Guimarães discussed in [Chapter 6](#) by Silva-Reis and Milton. Were present-day translation studies to adopt a narrative that highlights continuity with pre-twentieth-century debates, rather than seeking to establish itself in contra-distinction to them, then tracing the traditions of debate around the writings of Cicero and other Ancient Roman authors as they unfolded over centuries and across continents would be a rewarding place to begin.

The usefulness of deepening the historical roots of ‘translation studies’ becomes clear from Wiczorkiewicz’s chapter ([Chapter 17](#)), which presents an essay by popular children’s book translator Irena Tuwim. The creator of what became a canonical adaptation of *Winnie-the-Pooh* in Poland, Tuwim used an adaptive approach that Wiczorkiewicz shows can be understood as part of an established tradition dating back in Polish translation culture to the Renaissance. This understanding offers an important further dimension to the excerpt itself, which was written during the height of Stalinism in Poland and anchored its justification of the adaptive approach in Soviet education policies.

If we are to create a discipline with deeper roots, it is also a question of where we look for relevant material. In many of the earlier periods and places, separate treatises on translation were not produced (or have not been preserved). To access reflections on translation from these

eras, our volume shows that it is vital to explore paratexts of all kinds, as well as reflections embedded in plays, prose and poetry, or even fictionalised within works themselves. The classical Swahili poetry discussed by Talento in [Chapter 5](#) offers a compelling example, meshing together narrative and metanarrative, with reflections on literary translation appearing within the work and even finding fictionalised performance. In a similar vein, Padhye's contribution ([Chapter 3](#)) presents a paratext that appears to be unique to Indian translation traditions: the *praśasti* is a form of translator's note, or commentary, that is integral to the translated text itself, meticulously detailing the translator's motivations, the challenges encountered, the chosen methodology and even at times the timeline of the translation project. This intimate integration of the translator's voice and the translated text elevates *praśasti* beyond a mere technical annotation; it becomes a valuable historical document.

The concept of *praśasti* thus exemplifies how looking beyond traditional sources can significantly enrich our understanding of translation theory and practice. Furthermore, it highlights another challenge that arises in translating texts from earlier decades or centuries: the reintroduction, or, perhaps more accurately, the reanimation, of past or bypassed translation terms and conceptual units. This process, by its very nature, demands synchronisation of different temporalities and inevitably entails reinterpretation, which carries both new insights and significant implications, including the potential for refractions through the lens of contemporary biases. For instance, Rajewska ([Chapter 19](#)) brings to the fore Balcerzan's concept of *latent translation*, formulated in his 1968 doctoral dissertation as a form of 'noble plagiarism', and immediately draws a crucial distinction between this practice and the phenomena of cryptotranslation and pseudotranslation, thereby underscoring the need for careful contextualisation.

In some cases, deepening the roots of 'translation studies' has a political dimension, since it involves retrieving politically silenced theorists from their historical invisibility, as well as going against the flow of the global dominance of English. This double unearthing – via historical research and translation – is relevant to many of the Eastern European theorists presented in this volume. Batiushkov, for example, whose important contribution to Soviet translation studies is discussed by Baer in [Chapter 12](#), was marginalised in official Soviet culture because of his class background and lack of affiliation with the Bolshevik party; the book in which he published the essay that is here translated into English for the first time also fell into obscurity owing to the execution in 1921 of its co-author, Nikolai Gumilev, as a monarchist. Other theorists

fell victim to similar erasures: the work of the two Ukrainian theorists discussed by Kolomiyets and Kalnychenko in [Chapter 13](#), Mykola Zerov and Volodymyr Derzhavyn, was suppressed and marginalised by the Soviet authorities, Zerov being one of nearly three hundred members of the Ukrainian cultural renaissance who were executed by the regime in 1937. Information barriers erected during the Cold War, together with the ever-increasing elision of non-anglophone scholarship, cemented their disappearance.

Unearthing the contributions of marginalised theorists serves as an important corrective not only to the non-nation-specific ‘translation studies’ that is the primary target of our critique, but also to accounts of national traditions of translation studies. This point can be illustrated by Šavelová’s study of the contribution of the Slovak scholar Zora Jesenská in [Chapter 15](#): Šavelová shows that while Slovak translation studies is generally seen to have begun with Anton Popovič in the 1960s, many of his key ideas were developed by Jesenská and her colleagues some 30 years earlier. Like other Eastern European scholars mentioned above, Jesenská’s work was erased for political reasons: as an outspoken critic of the violence used to suppress the Prague Spring in 1968, Jesenská was banned from translating and writing, and her work and her name were removed from public view. She would not be politically rehabilitated until the beginning of the 1990s; efforts to recuperate her contributions to Slovak intellectual history are still ongoing.

If the mythistory of ‘translation studies’ once served to help a group of people form a collective identity ([Baer 2020](#), 222), it seems to us that we are now in a different time. Or perhaps not? In the early 1990s, the German translation theorist Hans [Vermeer \(1992, 15\)](#) offered a perspective that closely aligns with our own, suggesting that a discipline that ‘doesn’t interrogate its own past, that doesn’t repeatedly construct and reconstruct its history, is without identity’.³ In this view, identity is derived not from a single tidy story, but from an ongoing commitment to engaging with the messiness and complexity of the historical past and to the questions that such a process raises. In this sense, interrogating our discipline’s origins and historical trajectories is as crucial to understanding our field as charting its future direction. Our aim, above all, is to invite further discussion. In what does the true strength of ‘translation studies’ as a discipline lie today? To what extent might the act of deconstructing the existing narrative of the history of ‘translation studies’ contribute to a more inclusive and equitable understanding of the field? How can uncovering marginalised or silenced histories of ‘translation studies’ reshape our understanding of the power dynamics behind the circulation of ideas?

Notes

1. In this, Tymoczko is drawing on the work of Marilyn Gaddis Rose (1997, 15), who sees the history of translation studies as ‘essentially a record of successive guides to pleasing literary taste’, and suggests that ‘translation theory ... should usually be punctuated with quotations marks, i.e., translation “theory”, since the “theory” in translation studies, even now, is often not theoretical by twentieth-century standards’.
2. Bergantino (2024, 301) presents our conference as an example of celebrating or paying homage to Holmes, which is precisely the opposite of our actual agenda: ‘Now, fifty years after his paper was first delivered, homage is being paid to Holmes, whether to challenge or expand his work, which remains a reference point for the TS community. For example, the conference under the provocative title “Nothing Happened: Translation Studies before James Holmes” took place in November 2023 at UCL. This conference aimed to displace “The Name and Nature of Translation Studies” as the foundational beginning of TS. Instead, it acknowledged the importance of translation theories that originated in different geographical and historical contexts, ranging from 16th-century Italy to premodern Japan, with a particular focus on oft-overlooked Eastern European contexts in the first half of the twentieth century. A further example of the TS community’s celebration of the semicentennial of Holmes’ paper ...’
3. We have translated this citation from German. The original citation reads as follows: ‘Eine wissenschaftliche Disziplin, die sich nicht mit ihrer eigenen Vergangenheit auseinandersetzt, nicht immer wieder aufs neue ihre eigene Geschichte konstruiert und rekonstruiert, eine solche Disziplin kann gar keine Identität besitzen’ (Vermeer 1992, 15). Vermeer is in fact citing Otto A. Baumhader (1986), confessing after the citation: ‘So steht es allerdings nicht in der Quelle’ (That’s not how it’s written in the source, though) (Vermeer 1992, 16). Baumhader’s original words pertain to communication studies; Vermeer explains that he has replaced the word ‘Kommunikation’ (communication) with the word ‘Übersetzung’ (translation) throughout, arguing that Baumhader’s comments are fully applicable to translation studies.

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1 Ancient Rome

Translation studies in ancient Rome?

Gesine Manuwald

Introduction

While the expression ‘translation studies’ and the modern terminology associated with it would have been unfamiliar to people writing in Latin in ancient Rome, these authors engaged in ‘translation’ from the first attestation of items of Roman literature in the third century BCE onwards because of the unique circumstances for the creation of Roman literature. Beyond some domestic influences, the key characteristic of literature in Latin is that it developed in close interaction with existing ancient Greek literature; therefore, individual works of Greek literature were adapted and reworked in Latin by Roman poets, an appropriate literary and technical vocabulary was developed in the Latin language, and many literary genres eventually present in Rome were taken over from Greece.¹ The process of building on Greek models makes Roman literature the earliest European literature based on another European literature, and this starting point enabled Latin literature to reach quite a sophisticated state fairly rapidly. In modern scholarship of the last few centuries, the reworkings of Greek texts by Roman writers were initially regarded as ‘translations’:² such labelling was often done without a clear definition of this complex term, which was usually understood as a mostly faithful rendering of Greek texts, just adapted to the conventions of the Latin language; hence such a description was linked to a low appreciation of Latin literature, regarded as merely ‘secondary’. More recent scholarship considers the Latin versions of Greek literary texts no longer as straightforward ‘translations’ in a narrow sense and rather as free transpositions, consisting of passages of different character, some more closely matching the original, others showing a higher degree of adaptation.³ If ‘translation’ is understood in a broad sense, the writers generally followed methods that could be subsumed under the label ‘translation practice’, and at

least some of them saw their pieces as (more or less free) ‘translations’, which made Greek material available to readers of Latin.

It is not a surprise that Rome’s early poets were able to develop a literature in Latin on the basis of models in other languages: according to ancient sources, many of them were bi- or trilingual, in command of Greek, Latin and other Italic languages (Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 17.17.1), and were not Roman by birth, so that some were described as ‘half-Greeks’ (Suetonius, *De grammaticis et rhetoribus* 1.2). For later Romans of upper classes, a bilingual education including a substantial amount of Greek material was a matter of course.

Since the transposition of Greek material into Latin was such a central element of the creation of Latin literature, from an early point in time onwards Roman writers reflected on this practice, considering different approaches and particular challenges as well as justifying their methods. Such observations are not presented as separate treatises on translation, which do not seem to exist for the ancient world; instead, these considerations are inserted into works of different types, often as paratextual material accompanying pieces ‘translated’. Collected, these statements amount to a sizeable body of ‘Ancient Roman translation studies’, which has become influential for the understanding and description of translation in later periods.⁴

This chapter presents a selection of key classical Roman contributions to the discourse on translation (in chronological order) to explore their understanding of ‘translation’ and ‘translation studies’ and thus to assess their role in the development of these concepts since antiquity (even though these comments do not amount to a full ‘theory of translation’). Such an exercise emerges as a useful contribution to the history of translation studies because these Roman texts are often not given full attention in modern overviews of translation studies.⁵

Note on terminology

Although the English word ‘to translate’ has a Latin root, the corresponding Latin word (*transferre*, with participle *translatum*; lit. ‘to bear across, transfer’) is not the only term applied to describe the process of transposition; one also finds words such as *interpretari* (‘to explain, interpret, translate’), *vertere* (‘to turn, change’), *convertere* (‘to turn round, transpose, change’), *efferre* (‘to set forth’), *exprimere* (‘to press, render, imitate’) and *reddere* (‘to give back, render, translate’). This range of expressions indicates that ‘translation’ was seen as consisting of turning

material from one language and culture into another, potentially with the need for adjustment.⁶

Dramatists in the third and second centuries BCE: Terence

The first literary genres established in ancient Rome from the middle of the third century BCE onwards were epic and drama. Works in these genres initially were Latin versions of Greek texts (starting with Livius Andronicus's transpositions of Greek dramas and of Homer's *Odyssey* into Latin), while later examples also presented Roman topics.

Early Roman playwrights transposed Greek tragedies and comedies into Latin for performances at public festivals in Rome; comic writers sometimes inserted comments on their translations in the prologues. In terms of those, the earliest playwright of whose comedies some survive in full, T. Maccius Plautus (c. 250–184 BCE), simply indicates the underlying Greek play and states that he turned it into a 'barbarian' (that is, 'non-Greek') version, but does not give details about his approach to translation (for example, Plautus, *Asinaria* 10–12; *Trinummus* 18–21). The slightly later comic playwright P. Terentius Afer (c. 195–159 BCE), called Terence in English, used the prologues not to explain the background to the plot (with just a brief reference to the Greek model), as many of his predecessors did, but rather to discuss literary questions; therefore, these passages have been called the first examples of original literary criticism in Latin.⁷ Such discussions offer more extensive comments on translation practices, contrasting Terence's own with that of unnamed opponents.

Thus, in the prologue to the play *Eunuchus* (The Eunuch) Terence says about another playwright that this dramatist translated 'well' but at the same time wrote 'badly' and thus turned 'good' Greek plays into 'bad' Latin ones (Terence, *Eunuchus* 7–8 [Text 1a]). In *Adelphoe* (The Brothers) Terence defends himself against the accusation that for this play he used a scene from a Greek comedy that had already been transposed into Latin by Plautus; for there was apparently a convention in ancient Rome that, in order for a play to be advertised as 'new', it would have to be the first Latin version of a Greek piece. Terence argues that he merely inserted a single scene from that Greek comedy into his play, a scene that had been left out by Plautus and thus was still untouched and available, and that he set it forth, represented word for word (Terence, *Adelphoe* 6–14 [Text 1b]).⁸

These passages reveal some aspects of Terence's understanding of translation methods: in the second excerpt he says that he reproduced the scene at the focus of the controversy 'word for word', which is usually understood as indicating a literal translation. In the first excerpt Terence criticises someone else for translating well and writing badly and thus not producing good Latin plays. This statement is generally read as criticism of overly literal translation, so that the resulting product renders the sense of the original but does not read well in the target language, as it does not take account of its stylistic and literary requirements. It may thus appear to be a contradiction when Terence seems to have used a verbatim method of translation elsewhere, but each passage has to be seen in its context. Terence may not have been averse to literal translation of individual scenes, where it was suitable, and he may have emphasised such a method for the single transposed scene, so as to demonstrate that he took over only this self-contained scene, still recognisable in his version. At the same time, he apparently would not have approved of literal translation for an entire play, as it would not have led to a fluent and literary product in Latin.

The fact that discussions about different translation practices were carried out on stage within the production of a play suggests that awareness of such issues and interest in them extended beyond the playwrights to at least part of the audience and that there was a sophisticated discourse on literary translation in Rome from a relatively early point in time onwards.

Scholars of the first century BCE: Lucretius

Further issues concerning the reproduction of Greek texts and ideas in Latin came to the fore when philosophical texts started to be developed as a separate literary genre in the first century BCE. At this stage the lack of adequate terminology was highlighted because at the time Latin did not yet have a philosophical language or dedicated philosophical literature.

Thus, when the Epicurean philosopher T. Lucretius Carus (c. 94–55 BCE) produced a philosophical poem titled *De rerum natura* (On the Nature of Things) in the middle of the first century BCE, he had to confront the task of expressing Greek philosophical concepts in verse when the Latin language had not yet developed a philosophical vocabulary. On several occasions he notes 'the poverty of the language/native tongue' (Lucretius, *De rerum natura* 1.136–45; 1.830–3; 3.258–61 [Texts 2a–c]). Accordingly, he points out that it is impossible to translate Greek

philosophy into Latin with the existing vocabulary and that therefore new words have to be coined or new meanings of existing words established or paraphrases used. This situation is probably the reason why Lucretius comments on the translation process in such metaliterary asides in the middle of the philosophical exposition. Here, the issue raised is not the question of how free a translation should be, but rather the problem that translation is almost impossible if the target language does not have any terms that match the ones in the source language at least approximately and the subject matter is too complex for expressing everything via paraphrases in ordinary words. While Lucretius asks for understanding on the part of his readers for the difficulties he has to contend with and the solutions he has arrived at, the fact that there are no established equivalences between the two languages also gives him a certain amount of liberty in shaping his translation and in influencing philosophical discourse in Latin. Thus, although he alerts readers to the difficulties faced, he claims in a later book that he was found to be the first to be able to present natural philosophy in the native language (Lucretius, *De rerum natura* 5.330–7), which suggests that he felt that he eventually managed to overcome the challenges of this task.⁹ Lucretius's reflections highlight difficulties for translations of technical material when the subject area and its key concepts have not yet been developed in the other language and culture to the same extent.

Scholars of the first century BCE: Cicero

Similar issues were faced by Lucretius's rough contemporary in the first century BCE, M. Tullius Cicero (106–43 BCE): Cicero wrote the first proper philosophical prose treatises in Latin, by which he introduced his compatriots to Greek philosophy, adopting material from Greek philosophical treatises; more specifically, he translated excerpts from Greek speeches, treatises and dramas into Latin.¹⁰ Thus, like Lucretius, Cicero talks about the difficulty of finding appropriate vocabulary, and he reflects on different types of translations, also in connection with different literary genres. In fact, translating Greek texts must have been regarded as such a standard and natural activity in educated circles in Cicero's time that he not only does it himself, but also has characters in his dialogues do it and talk about it (for example, Cicero, *De oratore* 1.155; *De republica* 1.65–8).

As regards vocabulary, Cicero notes that, through having been in use in Latin for some time, certain words originally adopted from Greek, such as *philosophia* ('philosophy'), have become established and can thus

be regarded as Latinised; they may therefore be employed in Latin texts as native words to express the same concepts as in Greek and would not appear as untranslated insertions (Cicero, *De finibus* 3.4–5 [Text 3e]). At the same time, Cicero has interlocutors in philosophical dialogues discuss the best Latin rendering of less established Greek philosophical terms, considering the individual nuances of the original Greek terms and possible Latin equivalents, as a recognised correspondence does not yet exist and, accordingly, technical meanings of particular Latin words and phrases or the choice of individual Latin words, conveying certain nuances, may have to be explained (Cicero, *De finibus* 3.26; 3.35; 3.39–40 [Texts 3g–i]: see also Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes* 4.10). These (fictional) linguistic discussions and his writing of philosophical treatises are in line with the fact that Cicero believes that the Latin language is capable of expressing philosophical topics whereas, according to him, others ‘were not confident that what they had learnt from the Greeks could be said in Latin’ (Cicero, *De natura deorum* 1.7–8 [Text 3j]: see also Cicero, *De finibus* 1.10; 5.96; *Tusculanae disputationes* 2.35).

More generally, in the prefaces to some of the philosophical dialogues and to his translations, Cicero talks about his method of translation and its reception by contemporaries. In one of these passages Cicero asks why contemporaries sceptical of Latin renderings of Greek philosophy read Latin plays translated word for word from the Greek but are not prepared to read philosophy in Latin (Cicero, *De finibus* 1.4 [Text 3d]). He goes on to describe his method for rendering philosophical texts as the approach not of a mere translator, but of someone who preserves the doctrines yet adds their own assessment; at the same time he states that even a direct translation would be a service to readers of Latin and that he is not averse to taking details over verbatim where it suits him (Cicero, *De finibus* 1.6–7 [Text 3d]). Elsewhere Cicero again wonders that people read Latin poets and do not read Latin philosophers, and he points out that in both cases the Latin writers have reproduced not the words but the meaning of the Greek texts (*Academica* 1.10 [Text 3c]).

As in Terence, there is thus some tension between Cicero’s various statements about translation methods of Roman dramatists, because in the first passage he characterises them as ‘verbatim’ and in the second passage as ‘not the words but the force’. Such descriptions again suggest that Roman playwrights used different variations of translation techniques within their output as a whole, so that aspects suitable to the argument may be highlighted. Indeed, in the first passage Cicero contrasts his own practice of freer adaptation with the more literal method of

playwrights, whereas in the second passage he creates a parallel to make his point and therefore emphasises a freer method also for playwrights.¹¹

Similarly, in the introduction to the translation of two Greek speeches, in order to illustrate a particular oratorical style, Cicero states that there is no reason not to read Latin translations of other literary genres if people willingly read those of Greek plays, and also explains that he has translated like an orator, not like an interpreter, with more focus on content and style, rather than on individual words (Cicero, *De optimo genere oratorum* 13–15, 18 [Texts 3a–b]). This fairly free kind of translation is chosen because of the purpose of this translation, while it is clearly still regarded as a form of translation that can be compared to others. Elsewhere, too, Cicero has one of his interlocutors claim freedom from word-for-word equivalency if this is required by the subject matter, as a more literary translator goes beyond just rendering individual words (Cicero, *De finibus* 3.15 [Text 3f]).

Clearly, by Cicero's time different forms of translation had established themselves in Rome, and they were applied to a variety of literary genres for various purposes. Thus, Cicero was able to choose whichever form was best suited to his purposes and to compare different approaches. Again, the fact that these theoretical issues were voiced in addition to providing translations indicates that interest in these matters extended beyond the author Cicero.

Scholars of the Augustan period: Horace

Soon after the period of Cicero's activity Q. Horatius Flaccus (65 BCE–8 CE), known in English as Horace, produced poetry partly based on the output of Greek lyric poets, and wrote an *Ars poetica* (Art of Poetry), in which he puts forward views on literature, addressed to aspiring writers, especially those of dramas.

While Horace does not discuss translation explicitly, he talks about the selection and treatment of subject matter, which touches on elements of translation. For he says that an author should make generally available material theirs by not rendering it word for word as a faithful interpreter and not being too much of an imitator (Horace, *Ars poetica* 128–35 [Text 4]). That again shows that the concept of 'translation' had become a standard category and that translation of a less literal kind was associated with the emergence of a greater personal identity of the writer, regarded as desirable.¹²

Scholars of the second century CE: Gellius

While the comments discussed so far, dating to the Republican and early Augustan periods in the third to the first centuries BCE, come from writers practising translation in the context of finding appropriate translations or setting off their style of translation from those of others, from the end of the first century CE onwards there is a shift to a more distanced and ‘theoretical’ attitude in that writers may assess the merits of engaging in translation in principle or of different ways of translating without providing any themselves.

This trend increases later in antiquity when scholars discuss and evaluate translations from Greek into Latin made by earlier authors. A famous example is the writer Aulus Gellius (c. 125–180 CE) in the second century CE: among many other things, he looks at early Latin dramas (for example, comedy: Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 2.23 [Text 5a]; tragedy: Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 11.4 [Text 5b]).¹³ Gellius discusses the comedy *Plocium* (Necklace) by Caecilius Statius (c. 230/220–168/167 BCE), who was active slightly before Terence, and the Greek model by Menander, quoting substantial excerpts from both plays (surviving only in fragments today), comparing and assessing them (Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 2.23 [Text 5a]). According to Gellius, Caecilius Statius’s version is perfectly fine if one reads it by itself; but if one reads both the Greek and the Latin versions and compares them, Caecilius Statius’s version appears dull and lifeless and very different from Menander. Whether or not modern scholars agree with this evaluative assessment is a separate matter, but as regards the analysis of translation it seems that Gellius has come to this view because he does not agree with or does not realise the kind of translation Caecilius has chosen: apparently, Caecilius has not produced a literal translation of the whole play and did not intend to do so; instead, he translated some sections fairly literally, left out others, adapted others considerably and elsewhere added material of his own. This is in line with what can be inferred about the methods of early Roman playwrights from other sources; as mentioned, one might just wonder whether such a process of transposition could still be called ‘translation’. In any case Gellius seems to assume that only a literal translation could lead to a play of the same literary quality (without considering the possibility of adjusting the material to a different cultural context and thus creating a different, but potentially equally valuable, play). Therefore, he is critical of what Caecilius has done, as it is not a successful translation according to the implied criteria. The fact that Gellius regards Caecilius’s script as a

satisfactory text if read by itself suggests that Caecilius was successful in creating a good play in Latin; it is just not a literal translation of the Greek version throughout.

Similarly, Gellius compares a section from the Latin tragedy *Hecuba* (Ennius, *Tragoediae* F 73 *Tragicorum Romanorum Fragmenta*) by Q. Ennius (239–169 BCE) with its Greek model (Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 11.4 [Text 5b]). Here, too, he finds that the lines are generally rendered well, while he does not approve of the translation of individual words. It is true that the nuances of the contrast between people with high social standing, and thus influence, and those with a low social status have shifted in Ennius's version. Yet, as is common with Roman playwrights, this is probably not due to the inability to reproduce the Greek terms literally; rather, it is a consequence of adjusting the Greek thought so that it fits more smoothly into the Roman value system. Again, conscious adaptation beyond literal translation is not a category considered by Gellius. Thus, his reactions inform both about his view of 'translation' and about the practices of early Roman playwrights.

Conclusions

In ancient Rome 'translation studies' did not exist as a recognised discipline, and there are no dedicated treatises on translation, but authors writing in Latin engage actively in translation from the beginnings of the composition of literary texts in the third century BCE and also comment on the process of translation and its different forms. The fact that they do so within various types of works, such as prologues to dramas performed on stage or treatises on other matters, suggests that questions of translation not only occupy the writers, but are regarded as being of sufficient relevance and interest to at least part of the audience to be brought to their attention.

Altogether these comments by Latin writers reveal that they are aware of a range of different formats of translation, from literal and complete to free and selective; that the effects of each method and the resulting pieces could be judged differently; that for translating certain technical concepts from Greek the Latin language had to be developed by coining new words or giving existing words new meanings; and that translations may be, but are not always, marked as such.¹⁴

While all this may sound rather basic and straightforward, one has to bear in mind that, without any models, the Romans were generating an understanding of translation practice alongside building their

literature on the basis of doing translations. In this process they created concepts, such as 'translating word for word', that have become established in the history of translation. Thus, it is worth looking to where it all began, as least as regards translation from one European language into another.

***Eunuchus* and *Adelphoe* (excerpts)**

By P. Terentius Afer (Terence)

Translated from Latin by Gesine Manuwald

Source texts: P. Terentius Afer (Terence) (c. 195–159 BCE), Eunuchus 7–8 and Adelphoe 6–14

***Eunuchus* 7–8 (Text 1a)**

That man [the playwright's opponent], by translating well and at the same time writing badly,
has turned good Greek [plays] into Latin ones that are not good.

***Adelphoe* 6–14 (Text 1b)**

Synapothnescontes [Those Dying Together, in Greek] is a comedy by Diphilus:

that play Plautus has turned into *Commorientes* [Those Dying Together, in Latin].

In the Greek [play] there is a young man, who abducts from a pimp a courtesan at the beginning of the play: that passage Plautus [10] left untouched. This [poet] has now taken that [passage] for himself

into *Adelphoe* [The Brothers, Greek title of this Latin play]; he set it forth, represented word for word.

That [play] we are now going to perform as a new one: check whether you believe that a theft has been made or that a passage has been taken hold of that was passed over out of carelessness.

***De rerum natura* (excerpts)**

By T. Lucretius Carus (Lucretius)

Translated from Latin by Gesine Manuwald

Source text: T. Lucretius Carus (Lucretius) (c. 94–55 BCE), De rerum natura 1.136–45, 1.830–3 and 3.258–61

***De rerum natura* 1.136–45 (Text 2a)**

And it is not unknown to me that it is difficult to elucidate
the complex discoveries of the Greeks in Latin verse,
especially since to a great extent it has to be done by means of
new words,
because of the poverty of the language and the novelty of the
matters;
[140] but your virtue and expected delight
of pleasant friendship still encourage me to undertake any labour
and prompt me to stay awake during tranquil nights,
seeking the words and the poem by which eventually
I could spread out clear lights before your mind,
[145] by which you could thoroughly examine hidden matters.

***De rerum natura* 1.830–3 (Text 2b)**

Now let us also examine the *homoeomeria* [Greek term; ‘likeness
of parts to the whole and to one another’] of Anaxagoras [a Greek
philosopher],
as the Greeks call it, and saying it in our language
is not allowed to us by poverty of the native tongue;
but still it is easy to explain the matter itself in words.

***De rerum natura* 3.258-61 (Text 2c)**

Now as I wish to give reasons in what manner those things are
intermingled among each other
and in which ways they are arranged to function,
[260] the poverty of the native tongue draws me away against
my will;
but still, as much I will be able to touch upon it summarily,
I will do so.

De optimo genere oratorum, Academica, De finibus, De natura deorum (excerpts)

By M. Tullius Cicero (Cicero)

Translated from Latin by Gesine Manuwald

Source texts: M. Tullius Cicero (Cicero) (106–43 BCE). De optimo genere oratorum 13–15, 18; Academica 1.10; De finibus 1.4–7, 3.5, 3.15, 3.26, 3.35, 3.39–40; and De natura deorum 1.7–8

De optimo genere oratorum 13–15 (Text 3a)

But since there was such a great misapprehension in that, what that style of speaking was like, I thought that I had to undertake a task useful for students, yet not necessary for me at any rate. [14] For I translated speeches, very famous and opposed to each other, of the two most eloquent men from the Attic [orators], of Aeschines and Demosthenes; and I did not translate like an interpreter, but like an orator, with the same ideas and their forms, figures almost, with the words adjusted to our usage. Therein I did not regard it as necessary to render word for word, but I have preserved the general style and force of the words. For I believed that I should not count those out to the reader, but weigh them out as it were. [15] This task of mine will achieve that our people understand what to demand from those who would like to be Atticists and to what pattern of speech, as it were, to refer them.

De optimo genere oratorum 18 (Text 3b)

Against this undertaking of ours [that is, translations of Greek speeches] two kinds of objections are raised. One [is] this: ‘But the Greeks [do this] better.’ Of such a person it should be asked whether they themselves could

[do anything] better in Latin. The other: ‘Why should I read those rather than the Greek [texts]?’ The same people accept *Andria* and *Synephebi* and also {they read Terence and Caecilius no less than Menander, and also} *Andromacha* or *Antiopa* or *Epigoni* in Latin {but still they read Ennius and Pacuvius and Accius rather than Euripides and Sophocles}.¹⁵ What then is their aversion as regards orations turned from the Greek, when there is none as regards poetry?

***Academica* 1.10 (Text 3c)**

‘... But you [the interlocutor] bring up a probable reason: for either those who are educated will prefer to read Greek [material] or those who do not know that [will read] not even this. But you do not prove that sufficiently for me; on the contrary, both those who will not be able [to read] that and those who will be able [to read] Greek [material] will not despise their own [texts in Latin]. For what is the reason that those educated in Greek [literature] read Latin poets and do not read [Latin] philosophers? Or indeed since Ennius, Pacuvius, Accius [Roman playwrights] and many others, who have represented not the words, but the force of Greek poets, please – by how much more will philosophers please, if, as those [imitated] Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides [Greek playwrights], these imitate Plato, Aristotle and Theophrastus [Greek philosophers]? I see that orators at any rate are praised if someone on our side has imitated Hyperides or Demosthenes [Greek orators]. ...’

***De finibus* 1.4–7 (Text 3d)**

[4] It is thus more difficult to give satisfaction to those who say that they disdain writings in Latin. As regards those, this is the first thing at which I am surprised, namely why the native language does not please them in the most serious matters, when the same people read Latin plays represented verbatim from Greek [plays] not unwillingly. For who is so inimical to the Roman name, as it were, that they despise and reject Ennius’s *Medea* or the *Antiopa* of Pacuvius, because they say that they are delighted by the same plays of Euripides and hate Latin literature? ‘Shall I read *Synephebi* [Young Comrades] of Caecilius’, says one, ‘or *Andria* [The Girl from Andros] of Terence rather than both plays of Menander?’ [5] With those people I disagree to such an extent that, even though Sophocles has written *Electra* in the best possible way, still I believe that I should read the badly translated version by Atilius, about whom Licinus [says]

'an iron writer; but, I believe, a writer all the same, so that he should be read'. For to be completely unfamiliar with our poets is a sign of either extreme indolent sluggishness or extreme dainty fastidiousness. To me at least nobody seems sufficiently educated to whom our [writings] are unknown. Or we read 'if only in the grove ...' [beginning of the tragedy *Medea*] no less than the very same [passage] in Greek, but as for what has been set out about living well and happily by Plato, unfolding this in Latin will not please?

[6] What? If we do not fulfil the role of interpreters, but rather preserve what was said by those whom we approve and add our view and our order of writing to that, what reason do they have that they place the Greek [versions] above what is both splendidly said and not translated from the Greeks? For if they will say that these matters have been dealt with by those [the Greeks], there is no reason why they read so many of the Greeks themselves as should be read. For what has been left out by Chrysippus among the Stoics? Still we read Diogenes, Antipater, Mnesarchus, Panaetius, many others, particularly our friend Posidonius [Greek Stoic philosophers]. What? Does Theophrastus only please moderately when he deals with points previously dealt with by Aristotle? What? Do the Epicureans desist from writing as it pleases them about the very same matters about which both Epicurus and the Ancients have written? If the Greeks are read by Greeks, when about the same matters something has been composed in another format, what is the reason that our [writers] are not read by our [people]?

[7] Still, if I simply translated Plato or Aristotle as our poets have translated plays, I would perform, I believe, a bad service for my fellow citizens if I brought across those divine talents for getting to know them. But neither have I done that so far, nor do I think that I am forbidden to do so. Certain passages, if it seems appropriate, I will take over, and particularly from those whom I have just named, when it happens that this could be done suitably, as Ennius is accustomed to [take material] from Homer [in epic] and Afranius from Menander [in comedy].

***De finibus* 3.4–5 (Text 3e)**

And so that I omit these tasteful and liberal arts, not even artisans could maintain their professions if they did not use vocabulary unknown to us while familiar to themselves. Even agriculture, which is remote from any more polished refinement, still denotes those things with which it occupies itself by novel terms. All the more this has to be done by the

philosopher; for philosophy is the art of life, talking about which one cannot snatch words from the street.

[5] Still, out of all philosophers, the Stoics have innovated the most, and Zeno, their founder, was not so much an inventor of things than of new words. And if in that language, which most people regard as the more copious, it is granted that the most learned individuals use unfamiliar words for matters not widely known, by how much more must that be conceded to us, who now dare for the first time to approach that? And since we have often said, and indeed with some protest not only of Greeks, but also of those who want themselves to be regarded as Greeks rather than as our people, that we are not only not beaten by the Greeks in copiousness of vocabulary, but are even superior in that, one must strive that we achieve that not only in our arts, but also in those of them. Yet as for those words, which we use as a result of the practices of the Ancients instead of Latin ones, like philosophy itself, like rhetoric, dialectic, grammar, geometry, music, although those could be said in Latin, still, since they have been established by usage, we shall regard them as ours.

***De finibus* 3.15 (Text 3f)**

‘For if it was permitted to Zeno, when he had discovered some unfamiliar matter, also to put an unheard name to that matter, why should it not be permitted to Cato [the speaker in the dialogue]? And yet it will not be necessary to render word for word, as non-eloquent interpreters are wont to do, when there is a more common word that expresses the same; I at any rate am used also to set out what the Greeks [say] with a single word, if I cannot [do] it otherwise, the same thing in several words. And still I believe that it ought to be granted to us to use a Greek word, if ever a Latin one will be less readily forthcoming, ...’

***De finibus* 3.26 (Text 3g)**

‘... For inasmuch as this is the final [aim] (for you notice, I believe, that for a long time already, what the Greeks call *telos* [‘end’, ‘aim’], I have called that ‘the final, ultimate, highest [aim]’; it will also be permitted to use ‘end’ for final or ultimate [aim]) – inasmuch then as this is the final [aim], to live in agreement and harmony with nature, it necessarily follows that all wise individuals always live happily, perfectly, fortunately, are not hindered by anything, are not restrained by anything, do not lack anything. ...’

De finibus 3.35 (Text 3h)

‘... And indeed disturbances of minds, which make the life of the unwise miserable and harsh, which the Greeks call *pathe* [‘emotions’, ‘passions’] – rendering the word itself, I could call them ‘illnesses’, but this does not suit everything: for who is accustomed to call pity or anger itself an illness? But they use *pathos*. Thus, it shall be ‘disturbance’, which by the very name seems to declare itself defective {and those disturbances are not moved by some natural force},¹⁶ and all those are four in terms of class, many in their manifestations: sorrow, fear, lust, and what the Stoics call with a common name for body and mind *hedone* [‘pleasure’], I would prefer to call ‘delight’, as if a sensuous elation of a mind in exultation. Disturbances, however, are not moved by any force of nature, and they are all opinions and judgements of fickleness. Therefore, the wise individual will always be free of these. ...’

De finibus 3.39–40 (Text 3i)

‘... But when we say that stupidity and timidity and injustice and intemperance are to be avoided because of those things that arise from them, we do not say it in such a way that this argument would seem to contradict what has been set down, namely that only that is evil that is disgraceful, for the reason that these are not referred to trouble of the body, but to disgraceful actions that arise from vices (for what the Greeks call *kakiae* [‘forms of badness’], I prefer to call “vices” rather than “forms of malice”).’

[40] ‘Indeed’, I [Cicero, the narrator] said, ‘you, Cato, [speak] with clear words and those that declare what you wish! Therefore, you seem to me to teach philosophy in Latin and to give citizenship to it as it were; until now it seemed to stay as a foreigner in Rome and not to offer itself to our conversations, and that [philosophy] of yours in particular because of a certain accurate fineness of things and words. (For I know that there are some who can do philosophy in any language; for they use no divisions, no definitions, and they say themselves that they only approve to which nature tacitly agrees; therefore in matters of very little obscurity there is not much effort among them for logical argument.) For that reason I listen to you studiously and commit to memory whichever names you place on those things about which this conversation is; for I will perhaps have to use the very same terms in future. To the virtues then you seem very rightly to me to have put vices in opposition in line with

the conventions of our language. For what is vituperable by itself, that I believe has been called a vice for that reason, or even [the expression] to be vituperable is derived from vice. But if you had rendered *kakia* as 'badness', to another, a single specific vice Latin usage would lead us; now to every virtue a vice is put in opposition with a term expressing contrast.

***De natura deorum* 1.7-8 (Text 3j)**

But if anyone asks which reason has prompted us that we commit this to writing so late in the day, there is nothing that we could explain so easily. For when we were languishing in idleness and the situation of the state was such that it was necessary for it to be governed by the counsel and care of a single person, I thought first that, for the sake of the state itself, philosophy had to be unfolded to our people, regarding it of great importance for the dignity and renown of the community that such important and such lofty matters were also contained in Latin literature. [8] And my undertaking causes me even less regret because I notice easily how I have encouraged the eagerness of many not only to learn but also to write. For a good number of people educated in Greek matters could not communicate what they had learnt to their fellow citizens, since they were not confident that what they had learnt from the Greeks could be said in Latin: in this respect we seem to have made so much progress so that we are beaten by the Greeks not even in the copiousness of words.

***Ars poetica* (excerpt)**

By Q. Horatius Flaccus (Horace)

Translated from Latin by Gesine Manuwald

Source text: Q. Horatius Flaccus (Horace) (65 BCE–8 CE), Ars poetica 128–35

***Ars poetica* 128–35 (Text 4)**

It is difficult [?] ¹⁷ to say what is common in your own way:
and it is better if you divide the song of Troy into acts
[130] than if you were putting forward something unknown and
unheard of for the first time.

Material available to all will be yours under private rights if
you do not linger along the cheap and broad pathway
and do not aim to render word for word as a faithful
interpreter and do not leap, as an imitator, into the narrow well,
[135] out of which either shame or the laws of the task will not
permit you to put forward a foot.

Noctes Atticae (excerpts)

By Aulus Gellius (Gellius)

Translated from Latin by Gesine Manuwald

Source text: Aulus Gellius (Gellius) (c. 125–80 CE), Noctes Atticae 2.23 and 11.4

Noctes Atticae 2.23 (Text 5a)

An enquiry and decision made about passages from that comedy by Menander and Caecilius that is entitled *Plocium* (Necklace).

[1] We often read comedies by our poets, taken and adapted from the Greek [poets] Menander or Posidippus or Apollodorus or Alexis and likewise some other comic playwrights. [2] And, while we are reading those, indeed they do not displease at all, as they seem to be written charmingly indeed and gracefully, to the extent that you think that nothing could be done better. [3] But when you compare and place them next to the Greek [material] itself, whence those have come, and you put individual passages through alternate readings, considerably and aptly combined, immediately what is Latin begins to be languid and be mean; to such an extent they are put in the dark by the elegance and light of the Greek [plays], which they could not rival.

[4] Recently an experience of this matter occurred to us. [5] We were reading Caecilius's *Plocium*; it did not displease me and those who were there. [6] The fancy took us to read also Menander's *Plocium*, from which he had adapted that comedy. [7] But after Menander had come into our hands, from the beginning immediately, by the gods, how considerably stiff and cold and how far moving away from Menander Caecilius seemed to be! By Hercules, Diomedes' and Glaucus' arms have not been assessed as of more different value. [8] Then the reading had reached that passage, in which the old husband complained about his rich and ugly wife, since he had been forced to sell his maid-servant, a

girl of not unskilled work and of a not ignoble appearance, as she was suspected by his wife as being his mistress. I will say nothing about how much the difference is; I have asked for the verses of both to be excerpted and to be put down for others to make a judgement. [9] ...

[11] But apart from the charm of subject matter and diction, in the two books by no means the same, I usually turn my mind to this: that what Menander wrote brilliantly, aptly and wittily, Caecilius has not attempted to reproduce, even where he could [have done so]; [12] but he has passed that by as if not to be approved at all and has dragged in some other farcical stuff; and what Menander took right from the life of human beings, simple, realistic and delightful, this for some reason he has omitted. ...

[19] All these emotions of his [just described] and states of mind are wonderfully strong and manifest in the Greek comedy; in Caecilius, however, all this is dull and free of dignity and grace of expression. [20] ...

[21] But whether Caecilius aimed to reach the sincerity and realism of these words, let us consider. These are the verses of Caecilius, saying something mutilated from Menander and patching words with tragic bombast: ...

Therefore, as I said above, when I read these [passages] of Caecilius by themselves, they seemed in no way unpleasant and sluggish; but when I compare the Greek and contrast, I do not believe that Caecilius should have followed what he was not able to achieve.

Noctes Atticae 11.4 (Text 5b)

In what way Q. Ennius has rivalled verses of Euripides.

[1] There are verses of Euripides in *Hecuba* outstanding and distinguished in terms of language, meaning and conciseness; [2] *Hecuba* is speaking to Odysseus:

Your reputation, even though you speak badly,
wins; for the same speech coming from people in ill repute
and from those in good repute does not have the same force.

[3] Those lines Q. Ennius, when he translated that tragedy, rivalled certainly not inappropriately. The Ennian verses, the same in number, are as follows:

Even if you will say this badly, you would easily move the Achivi;
for when the rich speak in the same way as the ignoble,
the same words and the same speech do not have value in the
same way.

[4] Well, as I have said, [rendered by] Ennius; but still ‘ignoble’ and ‘rich’ instead of “‘in ill repute” and “in good repute”” does not satisfy the sense; for neither are all ignoble people in ill repute <nor are all rich people in good repute>.

Notes

1. For a general introduction to Latin literature and some information on the writers mentioned see [Conte 1994](#); for details on early Roman writers see the contributions in [Suerbaum 2002](#).
2. Since this chapter is concerned not with a precise definition of translation and rather with different manifestations of the process recognised by Roman writers, the term ‘translation’ is not discussed further and is just employed to denote a transfer of a literary text from a source language into a target language. The discussions of the individual excerpts from the texts of Latin writers will bring out a range of variations and features of ‘translation’ as recognised by Roman authors. For an overview of the process of translation generally and aspects to be considered see, for example, [Bassnett 2013](#), 24–49.
3. For discussions of texts of Roman literature (especially early comedy) as instances of ‘translation’ see, for example, [Traina 1974](#), [Halporn 1993](#), [Barsby 2002](#), [Danese 2002](#).
4. For overviews of the practice of and reflections on translation in ancient Rome see, for example, [Richter 1938](#), [Traina 1974](#), [Brock 1979](#), [Lewis 1986](#), [Kytzler 1989](#), [Rochette 1995](#), [Seele 1995](#), [McElduff 2013](#); in antiquity more generally (including biblical translations) see [Brock 1979](#).
5. The only text from Graeco-Roman antiquity featured in the reader edited by [Venuti \(2021\)](#) is an excerpt from a text by Jerome, which already dates to late antiquity and is itself based on Cicero and his predecessors. [Weissbort and Eysteinsson \(2006\)](#) at least have a section ‘From Cicero to Caxton’, including a chapter on ‘Classical Latin and early Christian Latin translation’ that features a small number of excerpts from classical Latin authors starting with Cicero, but there is no reference to earlier periods and little discussion of these excerpts in their context. [Ballard \(1995\)](#) briefly sketches the development of ‘translation’ in Roman literature from the beginnings.
6. For lists and discussions of Latin terms in use to render what would now be described as ‘translation’ see, for example, [Lewis 1986](#), [McElduff 2013](#), 189–96; on Cicero’s use of these words see also [Powell 1995](#), 278.
7. [Fantham \(1989, 224\)](#) highlights that Terence deals with questions of ‘dramatic theory’ in his prologues, ‘which offer the first body of systematic dramatic criticism in Latin’.
8. On Terence’s attitude to translation and his descriptions of the process see also [McElduff 2004, 2013](#), 83–94.
9. On Lucretius’s comments on outlining philosophy in Latin verse see, for example, [Fögen 2000](#), 61–76, [McElduff 2013](#), 147–52.
10. On Cicero’s views on the Latin language in comparison with Greek see [Fögen 2000](#), 77–141; on Cicero’s comments on translation see [McElduff 2013](#), 96–121; on Cicero’s translations from the Greek and his views on translation see [Widmann 1968](#), [Mueller-Goldingen 1992](#), [Powell 1995](#) (with further references).
11. See also [Powell 1995](#), 276–7.
12. On Horace’s thoughts on translation see [McElduff 2013](#), 136–46.

13. On Gellius and translation (his translations and views on translation) see, for example, [Gamberale 1969](#) (esp. 31–46), [Steinmetz 1992](#), [Beall 1997](#), [Fögen 2000](#), 180–220, [McElduff 2013](#), 176–85.
14. Some of the key terminology occurring in comments by authors in classical Rome was taken up in late antiquity, for example, by Jerome (*Epistulae* 57.5): ‘ego enim non solum fateor, sed libera voce profiteor, me in interpretatione Graecorum, absque scripturis sanctis, ubi et verborum ordo mysterium est, non verbum e verbo, sed sensum exprimere de sensu’ (I not only state, but declare freely that in the rendering of the Greeks, apart from the holy scriptures, where even the order of words is a mystery, I have expressed not word for word, but sense for sense); Boethius (*In Isagogen Porphyrii commenta* 1.1.1): ‘secundus hic arreptae expositionis labor nostrae seriem translationis expedit, in qua quidem vereor ne subierim fidi interpretis culpam, cum verbum verbo expressum comparatumque reddiderim’ (This second work of our exposition taken on will unfold a principle of translation, in which indeed I fear that I have taken upon myself the fault of a faithful interpreter, when I have rendered a word as expressed and matched from a word); and John Scotus Eriugena (*Versio operum S. Dionysii Areopagitae, praef.* [PL 122, col. 1032C]): ‘sin vero obscuram minusque apertam praedictae interpretationis seriem iudicaverit, videat me interpretem huius operis esse, non expositorem. ubi valde pertimesco, ne forte culpam {in}fidi interpretis incurram’ (If, however, someone might regard the principle of the translation mentioned before as obscure and less straightforward, they should see me as the translator of this work, not the explainer. Here I very much fear that I may have incurred the fault of the faithful translator). Thus, these ideas entered subsequent discussions on principles of translation. (On the reception of these ideas in late antiquity and the Middle Ages see [Copeland 1989](#).)
15. The sections in {} are generally deleted, as there are probably versions of comments that have entered the text but were not included originally. Cicero refers to comedies and tragedies of early Roman playwrights for comparison with his own translation activity.
16. The passage in {} is usually deleted, as it is not regarded as an original part of the text.
17. The Latin text at the beginning of this excerpt is uncertain and can only be translated approximately.

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2 Medieval China

Discerning authenticity in Buddhist scriptures: an analysis of Sengyou's framework for identifying pseudotranslations

SIU Sai Yau

The development of Buddhist scripture translation in China before Sengyou

Buddhism was introduced to China during the Eastern Han Dynasty (25–220), ushering in a transformative era in Chinese intellectual and religious history. At first it circulated among the aristocracy and officialdom and then gradually permeated all levels of society, spurring an ever-expanding scale of scripture translation.¹ The earliest translations appeared in the Eastern Han and Three Kingdoms period (220–80), when monks and scholars rendered texts from various Indian and Central Asian languages into Classical Chinese. The translation activity matured during the Jin and Northern and Southern Dynasties (265–589) and reached its zenith in the Sui and Tang Dynasties (581–907).

In medieval China, the translation activities of Buddhist scriptures followed two basic modes. The first was individual translation, where translators who had mastered the Buddhist Tripiṭaka (*sanjangfashi* 三藏法師) would, through personal effort alone, translate Buddhist texts from Sanskrit or Central Asian languages into Chinese; a famous example is An Shigao 安世高 (148–80) of the Eastern Han era, who studied Chinese after arriving in China and, upon becoming proficient, translated a wide collection of Buddhist texts. The second was collaborative translation, where besides a Tripiṭaka master serving as the chief translator, multiple assistants provided collaboration. The assistants might be ordained monks, lay disciples, native Chinese or foreigners, each contributing their specific expertise to the process of rendering Buddhist scriptures into Chinese. Such a translation procedure mainly included reciting

the original text, interpreting the original into Chinese, recording the oral Chinese translation, as well as refining it into a definitive version, while implementing various processes to authenticate both the original and translated texts and ensure the translation did not deviate from correct Buddhist doctrine. Notable figures employing this method include Dharmarakṣa 竺法護 (229–306) of the Western Jin Dynasty (266–420), Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什 (344–413) during the Later Qin era (384–417) and Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–64) of the Tang Dynasty, each producing a vast body of translations.²

In addition to the above-discussed translation modes, translators adopted two primary approaches to the translation of Buddhist scriptures as below:

- (1) Literal translation. Translators strove to preserve both content and form, presenting the original as faithfully as possible. Lokakṣema 支婁迦讖, Dharmarakṣa and Xuanzang are notable examples.
- (2) Free translation. Translators placed emphasis on conveying the essence of the scriptures rather than strictly preserving their exact form. This method often involved rewriting, condensing or rearranging the source material. Kumārajīva, a prominent translator in the Later Qin era, excelled at this approach.

Furthermore, in the early stages of Buddhism in China, some translators incorporated Confucian and Taoist concepts into their renderings to make Buddhist teachings more accessible. This strategy – similar to domestication in modern translation theory – was later criticised by Kumārajīva for obscuring the precise teachings of Buddhism. His retranslation initiatives ultimately led to the gradual abandonment of this domestication method.

As Buddhism gained firm footing in China and experienced rapid growth in both followers and scriptures, an additional development took shape: the production of apocryphal texts.³ Contrary to the established translation practices for genuine Buddhist works, these counterfeit scriptures posed as legitimate translations or as works of recognised translators, an early form of what modern translation studies would call ‘pseudotranslation’. By the Sixteen Kingdoms period (304–439), the proliferation of such texts had become a serious concern. Noted monk Dao’an 道安 (312–85) addressed this issue by compiling scripture catalogues to distinguish genuine translations from forgeries, a practice continued and expanded upon by Sengyou 僧祐 (445–518), a leading monk of the Southern Liang Dynasty (502–57). Sengyou’s famous work, the

Chu Sanzang Jiji 出三藏記集 (Collection of Records on the Translation of the Tripiṭaka), established criteria for recognising pseudotranslations, examined the motivations behind them and contemplated their potential harm; this text remains the earliest surviving commentary on pseudo-translation within Chinese Buddhist translation circles.

The life of Sengyou and his contribution to authenticating translated Chinese Buddhist scriptures

Sengyou was a prominent monk of the Southern Liang Dynasty, based at Jianchu Monastery 建初寺 in the capital Jiankang 建康. Celebrated for his thorough observance of Buddhist precepts and his prolific literary output, Sengyou played a vital role in promoting and standardising Buddhism across China. His major writings – *Shijia Pu* 釋迦譜 (Genealogy of Śākyamuni), *Shijia Fangzhi* 釋迦方誌 (Gazetteer of Śākyamuni) and *Hongming Ji* 弘明集 (Collection for the Propagation and Clarification of Buddhism) – have endured in their influence. The earliest comprehensive account of his life appears in Huijiao 慧皎's (497–554) *Gaosengzhuan* 高僧傳 (Biographies of Eminent Monks), which records his many contributions to Chinese Buddhism (Huijiao 497–554, T2059, 402–3).

Among Sengyou's representative writings, the *Chu Sanzang Jiji* stands out as the earliest comprehensive catalogue of Chinese Buddhist translations. It assembles listings of scriptures rendered from the Eastern Han through the Southern Liang, documents the translation procedures of major sūtras, offers biographical sketches of their translators, and preserves ancillary materials – prefaces, colophons and certificates – making it indispensable for tracing the history of sūtra translation in China.

Sengyou's most enduring legacy was the classification system he devised to distinguish authentic translations from forgeries. He identified and labelled outright fabrications as 'pseudo-scriptures' (*weijing* 偽經) or 'pseudo-compositions' (*weizhuan* 偽撰), while works lacking credible translation records or suspected of being false translations pending further verification were marked 'doubtful scriptures' (*yijing* 疑經). This framework proved essential for safeguarding the integrity of the Chinese Buddhist canon.

In anticipating what modern translation theorists call 'pseudotranslation', Sengyou's approach was remarkably prescient.⁴ His criteria resonate with Gideon Toury's (1942–2016) definition of pseudotranslations as 'texts presented as translations without corresponding source texts' (Toury 1980) and with Anton Popovič's (1933–84) concept of 'fictitious

translation', which highlights the deliberate fabrication of such works (Popović 1976, 20). Though he never used these terms, Sengyou's analysis of motive, style and provenance shows that the principles underlying pseudotranslation were already being discussed in Chinese Buddhist circles over a millennium ago.

The translated excerpt in this chapter is derived from the section of the *Chu Sanzang Jiji* that deals with the pseudotranslation of Buddhist scriptures, titled 'Xinji Yijing Weizhuan Zalu' 新集疑經偽撰雜錄 (The Newly Compiled Record of Doubtful Scriptures and Pseudo-Compositions). In the section, Sengyou built on Master Dao'an's cataloguing efforts, distinguishing genuine texts from spurious ones. He compiled a comprehensive list for the Buddhist community's reference and catalogued 20 texts in 26 fascicles as suspicious or falsely translated texts. This guidance helped adherents avoid studying inauthentic scriptures in order to ensure the propagation of true teachings in China. The translated excerpt includes the introductory explanation of pseudotranslations, outlining the reasons and methods for distinguishing them, and the consequences of the spread of false scriptures, making it an essential early work on pseudotranslation with significant historical implications for translation studies.

Sengyou's conceptualisation of 'pseudotranslation' in Early Medieval Chinese Buddhism and his framework for identification

Sengyou's writing employed a rich vocabulary to characterise pseudo-Buddhist texts, reflecting the medieval Chinese Buddhist community's understanding of textual forgery. In addition to the 'pseudo-scriptures' (*weijing* 偽經), 'pseudo-compositions' (*weizhuan* 偽撰) and 'doubtful scriptures' (*yijing* 疑經), Sengyou coined terms such as 'texts falsely attributed to the Buddha' (*jiatuo zhi wen* 假託之文) and 'recklessly composed texts' (*wangzuan* 妄撰). These terms were used not only to describe texts incorrectly claimed to be the Buddha's words, but also to signify texts arbitrarily fabricated and not genuinely translated.

Moreover, Sengyou established detailed guidelines for distinguishing genuine scriptures and devised a framework to combat pseudotranslations. His framework was built upon two fundamental criteria: (1) the absence of a legitimate source, meaning that the source text did not originate from India or the Western Regions (不聞遠適外域); and (2) the absence of a legitimate translation process, indicating that the scriptures were not produced through translation activities (不見承譯西賓).

The first criterion (the absence of a legitimate source) finds its rationale in the medieval Chinese Buddhist scholars' belief that authentic Buddhist philosophy should be imported from India and could not be self-generated within China.⁵ While commentaries and treatises explaining Buddhist doctrines produced by Chinese Buddhists and scholars were acceptable, independently created ideas or writings by these same individuals claiming to be the Buddha's words were not. Only texts translated from India or the Western Regions could accurately transmit the philosophical teachings of the Buddha to China. This principle is reflected in another section of Sengyou's *Chu Sanzang Jiji*, where he stated that any text 'neither originating from the Buddha's sacred teachings nor rendered by an authorised translator' (義非金口，又無師譯) is considered an inauthentic Buddhist scripture (Sengyou 510–18, T2145, 40). This view persisted into the Sui Dynasty (581–618), where Buddhist bibliographers like Fajing 法經 maintained the same stance, asserting that texts 'not directly from the Buddha and through recognised translation processes' (經非金口，義無傳譯) should be classified as apocryphal Buddhist scriptures (Fajing 594, T2146, 127). This strict criterion for authenticity showcases the paramount importance placed on the Indian origin and proper translation of Buddhist texts in medieval Chinese Buddhist scholarship.

The second criterion (the absence of a legitimate translation process) can be linked to the importance of the translation process as a stringent verification system. As mentioned above, medieval Buddhist scripture translation typically involved either individual or collaborative translation methods. Both approaches required the involvement of Tripiṭaka masters as the chief translators.⁶ These Buddhist masters were not only well versed in Buddhist principles, but also proficient in Chinese, the source language or both. They first authenticated the original text to ensure doctrinal accuracy before beginning translation. The translation results were then subjected to careful verification to assess cultural compatibility and underwent multiple revisions before circulation.

Such practices are documented in many cases in the history of collaborative translation of Buddhist scriptures. For example, during the Former Qin Dynasty (351–94), the translation process of the *Abhidharmavibhāṣāśāstra* 阿毘曇毘婆沙論 involved five distinct steps. First, Saṃghabhadra 僧伽跋澄 orally recited the original Sanskrit text. Second, Dharmanandin 曇摩難提 transcribed the recited Sanskrit into written form. This transcription served a crucial purpose, helping to ensure the accuracy of the source text. With a clear written copy, translators could later verify whether the content was accurate and in accordance with Buddhist doctrine before proceeding with the translation. Third,

Buddharakṣa 佛圖羅剎 read the Sanskrit manuscript and orally translated it into Chinese. Fourth, the Chinese monk Minzhi 敏智 recorded Buddharakṣa's oral translation, refining and verifying the Chinese version. Finally, Zhao Zheng 趙正 added annotations to the entire text, clarifying any ambiguous points before publication (Sengyou 510–18, T2145, 73).

By the time of Sengyou in the Southern Liang Dynasty, the translation process had become even more rigorous. For instance, in 506, Emperor Wu of Liang 梁武帝 (464–549) initiated a translation project that spanned 13 years, producing 11 texts in 48 fascicles. The process involved multiple steps and participants. First, Saṃghapāla 僧伽婆羅 (460–524), proficient in multiple languages, verified the source texts. He then directly translated them into Chinese orally. Emperor Wu himself participated in the initial transcription, recording Saṃghapāla's oral translation. The draft was then passed to other Buddhist scholars like Baochang 寶唱, Huichao 慧超, Sengzhi 僧智, Fayun 法雲 and Yuan Tanyun 袁曇允 for collaborative verification, refinement and completion. Finally, the text underwent a detailed review (Daoxuan 645, T2060, 426). This comprehensive procedure, with its multiple stages of authentication and alteration, demonstrates how the act of translation functioned as a crucial mechanism for validating scriptural authenticity in medieval Chinese Buddhist groups. Such an approach explains Sengyou's insistence on translation as a criterion for identifying genuine Buddhist texts.⁷

In addition to these foundational criteria, Sengyou posited three key characteristics of pseudotranslations.

Firstly, pseudotranslations were credited to the Buddha without basis, often shallow and sometimes contradictory to Buddhist doctrines. Sengyou characterised these texts as recklessly composed works (妄撰) and as spurious works created by using genuine scriptures as templates (憑真以構偽). He described them as falsely attributed to the Buddha (假託之文), containing superficial and disorganised expressions (辭意淺雜), vulgar verses (文偈淺鄙) and contradictory doctrines (義理乖背). All of these were inconsistent with authentic Buddhist translations.

Secondly, the titles of pseudotranslations were self-determined by fabricators, mixing various non-Buddhist terms and concepts. Genuine Buddhist scripture titles usually derive from two sources: the Buddha's teachings themselves or closing phrases in original scriptures, which indicate the completion and title of the text.⁸ Pseudotranslations, being self-composed, often included terms from non-Buddhist traditions or mixed different ideological concepts.

Thirdly, the contents of pseudotranslations typically lacked elements from foreign cultures. Authentic Buddhist texts originating from India often contained descriptions of foreign customs and artefacts, and despite employing domestication strategies in translation, they still retained stylistic elements distinct from Chinese. Pseudotranslations, however, authored by local Chinese individuals, often exhibited a noticeable Chinese cultural bias.

To combat the spread of pseudotranslations, Sengyou advocated two main methods: cross-verification⁹ and cataloguing scriptures.¹⁰ He emphasised that later translators should follow Dao'an's original cataloguing approach to distinguish genuine scriptures from those falsely attributed. Furthermore, Sengyou warned readers that pseudotranslations could not only 'distort the Dharma' (令法淡薄), meaning that authentic Buddhist principles would become increasingly obscure, but also 'mislead and deceive future practitioners' (誑誤後學), causing them to risk deviating from the true path, or even to fall into misconceptions that could distort their character and behaviour.

Sengyou illustrated these principles with several examples in the *Chu Sanzang Jiji*. For instance, the *Biqiu Yinggong Faxing Jing* 比丘應供法行經 (The Sūtra on the Proper Conduct of Monks Receiving Offerings) was marked as a translation by Kumārajīva, but upon careful examination of Kumārajīva's translations and historical records, Sengyou found no such text, categorising it as a pseudotranslation. Similarly, the *Jushi Qingseng Futian Jing* 居士請僧福田經 (The Sūtra on Laypersons Inviting Monks for the Field of Merit) was attributed to Dharmarakṣa 曇無讖 (385–433) but had no corresponding translation history, leading to its classification as a false scripture. Another example is the *Guanding Duxing Zhaohun Duanjue Fulian Jing* 灌頂度星招魂斷絕復連經 (The Sūtra on Consecrating Stars for Summoning Souls, Severing Ties and Reconnecting Bonds). The title of this sūtra combined various non-Buddhist rituals and concepts, such as star rituals (*duxing* 度星) and summoning spirits (*Zhaohun* 招魂), which were incompatible with valid Buddhist teachings, reflecting Sengyou's criteria for identifying fabricated titles.

Conclusion

Sengyou's pioneering criteria for spotting pseudotranslations laid the groundwork for later generations of Buddhist translators and scholars, profoundly shaping the ways in which scriptures were authenticated and catalogued. Fei Changfang 費長房 in the Sui Dynasty – and Daoxuan

道宣, Yancong 彥琮 and Jingtai 靜泰 in the early Tang – all built upon his methods, refining the standards for identifying spurious texts. The pinnacle of these efforts was Zhisheng 智昇's *Kaiyuan Shijiao Lu* 開元釋教錄, a definitive catalogue of Great Tang-era translations that set a new benchmark for scriptural validation and ensured the faithful transmission of Buddhist doctrine throughout medieval China.

Sengyou's legacy extends beyond his era, with his methods of textual verification still relevant in modern translation studies. His focus on doctrinal consistency and textual authenticity parallels contemporary concerns regarding translation ethics and continues to inspire discussions on the responsible spread of religious and cultural knowledge.

‘Preface to the newly compiled record of doubtful scriptures and pseudo-compositions’

By Sengyou

Translated from Chinese by SIU Sai Yau¹¹

Source text: Sengyou, 新集疑經偽撰雜錄序 (*Xīn jí yí jīng wěi zhuàn zá lù xù*).

Available open access via CBETA .R1, T55, no. 2145 (pp. 38–9)

The *Dīrghāgama* recounts that as the Buddha approached his nirvāṇa, he imparted four major teachings to the bhikṣus. He emphasised the importance of cross-referencing the teachings with other scriptures to ensure their authenticity. He proclaimed that any doctrine contradicting his teachings should not be recognised as his own words. The *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* also mentions that after the Buddha’s passing, some bhikṣus would fabricate scriptures, thereby diluting and distorting the Dharma. These prescient observations have proven true in present times.

As adherence to authentic Buddhist teachings has declined, the prevalence of fraudulent practices has increased. Some individuals have used genuine scriptures as templates to create spurious ones or have interjected false content to muddy the true Dharma. Historically, Master Dao’an identified 26 pseudo-scriptures, and Master Huida dealt with these fabrications with great severity. Our forebears were vigilant in these matters, and it is incumbent upon us to continue their practices.

With a careful examination of various scriptures and extensive consultation of diverse opinions, I have distinguished authentic texts from recklessly composed works based on the profound teachings of the sūtras and vinayas. Authentic scriptures are characterised by their depth and far-reaching implications, whereas texts falsely attributed to the Buddha tend to be superficial and disorganised. The validity of a scripture can be

recognised as clearly as distinguishing jade and cinnabar from ordinary stones; such distinctions are unmistakable.

In this catalogue of scriptures, I have recorded my concerns about certain texts and appended a mark at the end of titles of recent fictitious scriptures.¹² These texts claim authenticity but are derived from mixed sources without any documented proof of transmission from foreign lands or translation by monks from the Western Regions.

When teachings purporting to be from the Buddha are based on hearsay, and their endorsement is supported only by personal feelings, such practices will undoubtedly mislead and deceive future practitioners. This is deeply disheartening. Having personally witnessed these issues, how can I remain silent? I sincerely urge future generations to exercise caution and attentively examine the genuineness of Buddhist texts.

Notes

1. This chapter uses 'scripture' (collectively termed *fojing* 佛經 or *fodian* 佛典 in Chinese Buddhist discourse) to represent both the valid Buddhist source texts in Indian and Central Asian languages and their translated versions in Classical Chinese. In Buddhism, 'scripture' traditionally signifies multiple textual categories, including *sūtra* (*jīng* 經), *vinaya* (*lǜ* 律) and *abhidharma* (*lun* 論), as well as different genres that fulfil a range of scholastic or ritual functions. Historically, Buddhist texts obtained 'scripture' status through their recognition as authentic teachings of the Buddha with verifiable origin and lineages of transmission. The Chinese Buddhist canon stayed open for constant additions through new translations and explanatory works, unlike the Christian Bible, which reached its final form through canon-forming councils. Therefore, in this chapter, the term 'scripture' should be understood within the context of Buddhist traditions rather than Western Christian frameworks.
2. For a detailed account of the evolution and steps in team-based Buddhist scripture translation in medieval China, refer to my monographs [Siu 2024a](#) and [2024b](#).
3. Regarding the causes of apocryphal *sūtra* creation in China, Makita Tairyō 牧田諦亮 (1912–2011), a renowned Japanese scholar of Buddhist studies, proposed six main reasons in his seminal work *Studies on Apocryphal Sūtras* (疑經研究) ([Makita 1976/2014](#)): aligning with the interests of ruling authorities; criticising government policies; conforming to traditional Chinese ethics; promoting specific doctrines or beliefs; highlighting or commemorating particular individuals; and serving practical purposes such as healing and seeking blessings.
4. While comprehensive monographs on Chinese Buddhist pseudotranslations remain relatively scarce, several scholars have made significant contributions to this field and established foundational research. Notable academic works that provide insightful analysis of Chinese Buddhist pseudotranslations include Makita 1976/2014, Wang 1997 and Buswell 1990. These works have been instrumental in shaping contemporary understanding of the phenomenon of pseudotranslations in Chinese Buddhism, offering critical exploration of their identification, classification and historical context.
5. Zhisheng, a medieval Chinese Buddhist bibliographer, summarised the criteria used by Buddhist scripture authenticators from the Sui and Tang Dynasties (581–907), such as Yancong 彦琮 (557–610) and Daoxuan 道宣. Zhisheng noted that authenticators labelled texts as apocryphal if they lacked Sanskrit originals (非梵本翻傳, 編於偽錄) ([Zhisheng 730](#), T2154, 674). This approach reflects the enduring belief among Buddhist scholars of the era that genuine Buddhist texts must be translations from original languages of the

Indian subcontinent or Central Asia. Texts not meeting this criterion were consistently considered spurious. This strict verification method, persisting through several dynasties, showcases the great importance medieval Chinese Buddhist scholars placed on a Buddhist text being a translation from an Indian source.

6. Aside from the Tripitaka masters (*sanzangfashi* 三藏法師), in late medieval China the qualifications for ordinary Buddhist translators became even more detailed and stringent. A set of principles known as the Eight Qualifications (*babei* 八備) by Yancong outlined comprehensive requirements for professional Buddhist translators (*Fayun* 1143, T2131, 1067). These included sincere dedication to spreading the Dharma, firm adherence to precepts, thorough understanding of Buddhist teachings, proficiency in literary composition, open-mindedness, commitment to Buddhist practices over fame and profit, proficiency in Sanskrit, and familiarity with Chinese classical texts and writing styles. This extensive list of qualifications further emphasises the rigorous standards applied to translation work in medieval Chinese Buddhist circles.
7. Beyond Sengyou of the Southern Liang Dynasty, Prabhākaramitra 波羅頗迦羅蜜多羅 (565–633), an Indian translation master who promoted team-based translation in the early Tang Dynasty, also commented on the significance of translation, especially large-scale collaborative translation, in authenticating Chinese Buddhist texts. He noted that the more people involved in the translation process, the better the effect of ‘collectively verifying the teachings in the scriptures, proving they are not mere hearsay’ (明德同證, 信非徒說) (*Daoxuan* 645, T2060, 440). This approach serves two purposes: it allows for a pooling of wisdom, ensuring the translation is as accurate and refined as possible, meeting target readers’ needs; and it provides multiple witnesses to testify that the scripture is indeed a translation rather than a fabrication. This practice helps prevent future generations from mistakenly believing that a certain scripture was not translated, thus labelling it as apocryphal incorrectly.
8. Titles of authentic Chinese Buddhist translations typically derive from two main sources. First, direct instruction from the Buddha, as in the *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā* 金剛般若波羅蜜經: when Subhūti asked, ‘What should this sūtra be named?’ the Buddha replied, ‘This sūtra is named “Diamond perfection of wisdom”’ (*Kumārājīva* 402–12, T235, 750). Second, the conventional concluding phrase of the original Sanskrit text, which states the title at its close. For example, the longer version of the *Prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya* 廣本般若波羅蜜多心經 ends with ‘iti prajñāpāramitāhṛdayam samāptam’, which means ‘Here ends the *Sūtra of the essence of the perfection of wisdom*’ (*Müller* 1881, 54). Translators consistently draw on this closing declaration when assigning their rendered titles.
9. Based on Buddha’s teachings in the *Dīrghāgama* 長阿含經, in the excerpt, Sengyou suggested that suspected texts should be cross-referenced with verified translated scriptures (於諸經推其虛實). This process involved using the orthodox doctrines found in established translations as a foundation to determine if the suspected text conveyed the same philosophical content. In the preface to his catalogue, Sengyou reiterated the importance of cross-referencing techniques, pointing out the significance of ‘referencing with prior knowledge, verifying with old hearings’ (參以前識, 驗以舊聞) (*Sengyou* 510–18, T2145, 1). This approach was crucial for ensuring the authenticity of Buddhist scriptures and their alignment with recognised doctrines.
10. In the excerpt, Sengyou emphasised that later translators should follow Dao’an’s practice of compiling catalogues to distinguish genuine scriptures from fabricated ones (嗚呼來葉, 慎而察焉). This would provide a reliable list of authentic translations, warn readers against pseudotranslations and help prevent the spread of false renderings while ensuring the circulation of genuine works.
11. For clarity, the English translation omits Sengyou’s extensive notes and his list of apocryphal scriptures. The false or fabricated Buddhist texts identified by Sengyou 僧祐 (445–518), referred to as ‘pseudo-scriptures’ (*weijing* 偽經), ‘pseudo-compositions’ (*weizhuan* 偽撰) and ‘doubtful scriptures’ (*yijing* 疑經) (*Sengyou* 510–18, T2145, 38–9), correspond to the modern concept of ‘pseudotranslation’ in translation studies, as explained above.
12. In his catalogue, Sengyou added 20 texts in 26 fascicles that he identified as new fake Buddhist texts. Moreover, extant catalogues of Buddhist scriptures, which include analyses of pseudo-Buddhist renderings, reveal that medieval Chinese translators employed diverse

terminology to describe what modern translation studies terms ‘pseudotranslation’. In addition to terms used by Sengyou, such as ‘pseudo-scriptures’ (*weijing* 偽經), ‘pseudo-compositions’ (*weizhuan* 偽撰), ‘doubtful scriptures’ (*yijing* 疑經), ‘texts falsely attributed to the Buddha’ (*jiatuo zhi wen* 假託之文) and ‘recklessly composed texts’ (*wangzuan* 妄撰) (Sengyou 510–18, T2145, 38–9), there were other names. For example, Li Kuo 李廓 from the Northern and Southern Dynasties (420–589) referred to them as ‘non-authentic scriptures’ (*fei zhenjing* 非真經), ‘non-authentic treatises’ (*fei zhenlun* 非真論) and ‘completely false scriptures recklessly attributed by fools’ (*quanfeijing yuren wangcheng* 全非經愚人妄稱) (Fei Changfang 597, T2034, 126). Fashang 法上 called them ‘human-made’ (*renzuo* 人作) (Fei Changfang 597, T2034, 126). During the Sui Dynasty (581–618), Fajing 法經 named them ‘doubtful sūtras’ (*yihuo* 疑惑) and ‘false sūtras’ (*weiwang* 偽妄) (Fei Changfang, 597, T2034, 126). During the Tang Dynasty (618–907), Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667) labelled them ‘doubtful and apocryphal scriptures and treatises’ (*yiwei jinglun* 疑偽經論) (Daoxuan 664, T2149, 333). Zhisheng 智昇 later termed them ‘texts doubted and needing further scrutiny’ (*yihuo zaixiang* 疑惑再詳) and ‘doubtful and false texts that confuse the genuine’ (*yiwang luanzhen* 疑妄亂真) (Zhisheng 730, T2154, 671).

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3 Medieval India

Translation and religion in Medieval India

Priyada Padhye

During the medieval period (1100–1800 CE), India witnessed extensive cultural exchange and translation activities, particularly in the realms of religion, philosophy and literature. Translations were undertaken by renowned scholars affiliated with prominent universities such as Nālandā, Vikramshilā and Odāntapuri.¹ For instance, Atisha Dipāṅkar, in collaboration with other scholars, translated the *Madhyamakaratnapradīpa* of the Buddhist scholar Bhāvaviveka (490–579 CE) into Tibetan at the Somāpuri library during the reign of King Dharampala (769–827 CE).² Similarly, Jagaddāla University in Bengal was a hub for translation,³ with Pandit Dānashila composing and translating into Tibetan the *Pustakpāthopāya*, a Sanskrit text on the art of reading.

However, no explicit treatises on translation theory exist (or have been preserved), from either the ancient or the medieval period. In fact, it is only in recent years that scholars such as Ganesh Narayandas Devy (1993, 1997) and Sachin Ketkar (2004) have embarked on a systematic exploration of Indian translation practices. Devy's contributions ('Literary history and translation: An Indian view'; 'Translation theory: An Indian perspective') interrogate the nature of translation in the Indian context, highlighting its unique cultural and historical dimensions. These issues are explored further in Ketkar's (2004) article titled 'Is there an Indian school of translation studies?' as well as in Hemang Ashwinkumar's (2023) recent examination of the 'Indian turn' in translation theory, in which Ashwinkumar demonstrates that the idea of translation in India has suffered continual slippages and remained extremely fluid. On medieval Indian translation more specifically, Ayyappa Paniker (1994) has explored the connections between translation practice and concerns with authenticity.

The present chapter is an attempt to showcase the vibrant translation practice of the Middle Ages in India, a period rarely covered in present-day scholarship because it has been overshadowed, superimposed and even

erased by the prescriptive translation practices imposed by long years of British colonialism. To illuminate this rich tradition, the focus will be on two texts: first, the *Bhāṣvārthadīpikā*, the Marathi translation of the Sanskrit philosophical-religious text the *Bhagwad Gītā*, hereafter referred to as the *Gītā*; second, the *Panchakhyānaka*, a rewriting of the secular Sanskrit text the *Panchatantra*. Interestingly, both medieval translators elaborate on their views on translation within their respective translations. These fragments conceptualise translation as an activity shaped by the aesthetic and religious considerations of the era and reflect on the ethical dilemmas and decision-making processes that medieval translators grappled with.

To investigate these texts more closely, this introductory essay will first provide a brief overview of the medieval Indian religious, cultural and intellectual landscape, followed by a detailed examination of the biography and sociocultural positioning of two translators – Dnyāneshwar and Purnabhadra Suri – and a comprehensive framework for understanding the selected excerpts in English translation. In conclusion, the essay will touch upon medieval Indian philosophy of translation, summarising the key observations and reflections.

The intersection of language, religion and culture in Medieval India

Unlike Europe, where the Middle Ages are often considered a dark period, this epoch witnessed the development of modern Indian languages (known as *Bhāshās*), such as Bengali, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Punjabi and Gujarati. A new language requires a literary tradition, and what better way to establish this than through translation? Hence, this period witnessed frenzied translation activity from Sanskrit into the *Bhāshās*.

Another defining characteristic of this period in Western India where the Marathi language was developing as an independent language since 1278 CE is the experimentation with religion, spirituality and philosophy. Various philosophical streams competed with one another: Shankara, Mādhava, Mahānubhāv and Rāmānuja, who were believers, contended with the sunyavādins and the chārvākas, representing the non-believers (Bhagwat [1954] 1979, xxxi). In addition to Buddhism and Jainism, which had already established themselves in competition with Hinduism, this period saw the founding of other religious sects such as the Nāth, Vārkarī, Shāṅkar, Kanthadi, Jangamjogi, Vishnusvāmi, Vaishnava, Shākta, Gāṇapatya, Vitthal, Kalankarnārgi, Sāṃkhya and Mahānubhāvpanth

(Pawar 1997, 349). These sects attempted to challenge the orthodoxy of the caste system, which excluded large sections of society from accessing spiritual knowledge. Any new sect, I believe, requires its own literature, and the translation of canonical Sanskrit works provided an effective means of creating a repertoire of religious texts for each sect. Sanskrit texts were inaccessible to non-Brahmin castes, as they were not permitted to learn the language. In this way, Sanskrit operated as a tool to preserve caste distinctions and hierarchies by ensuring that lower castes had no access to religious or scholarly knowledge. This exclusion reinforced the social stratification of the caste system in India. Therefore, this period marked a challenge to the hegemony of Sanskrit as the sole language of religious literature.

In this sense, many medieval Marathi translations were conceived as instruments of social change and religious awakening in Western India, where Marathi had been developing as an independent language. This period was marked by experimentation with religion, spirituality and philosophy. Marathi poet-saints like Dnyāneshwar played a key role in this movement by vernacularising and simplifying Sanskrit texts, translating them to make the scriptures accessible to the masses. At the same time, some translators of the Jain faith also instrumentalised the activity of translation to compete with other religions. While seeking to challenge the dominant Hindu religion, they translated Sanskrit texts from the same Hindu tradition with a dual purpose: to legitimise their translations by claiming equivalence to canonical Hindu texts, while simultaneously appropriating and reinterpreting these texts through additions, modifications or deletions in order to align them with the tenets of their own faith.

As evidenced in the selected excerpts, the translator of the *Bhāvārthadīpikā*, the saint-poet Dnyāneshwar – a Hindu Brahmin who is considered the founder of the Vārkarī sect – sought to democratise spiritual and philosophical knowledge by translating the *Gītā* into Marathi, thereby making it accessible to the masses regardless of caste. Conversely, the translator of the *Panchakhyānaka*, the Jain monk Purnabhadra Suri, rewrote the Sanskrit *Panchatantra* to align its narrative with the tenets of his religious sect, the Shwetāmbarā.⁴

The *Bhāvārthadīpikā*

The *Bhāvārthadīpikā* is, by the translator's own admission, an 'anuvād'. 'Anu' means to follow, and 'vād' means discourse. Thus, 'anuvād' signifies following a discourse. The *Bhāvārthadīpikā* closely follows the *Gītā*,

a philosophical text in Sanskrit, and serves as a commentary on it. The *Bhāvārthadīpikā* was translated by the Marathi poet-saint Dnyāneshwar in 1290, when he was just 15 years of age (Bhagwat [1954] 1979, xxii). This movement is centred around devotion to Lord Vitthal of Pandharpur, a form of God Vishnu. About 50 poet-saints are associated with this tradition, including prominent figures such as Dnyāneshwar, Nāmdev (1270–1350 CE), Chokhamelā (1273–1338 CE), Eknāth (1533–99 CE) and Tukārām (1608–50 CE). This sect advocates for the equality of all human beings, regardless of caste or gender, a revolutionary idea for its time. In view of this, Dnyāneshwar is hailed as a great reformer and reconciler (Bhagwat [1954] 1979, xxxi).

The *Gītā* was traditionally accessible only to the upper castes. The brevity of Sanskrit often hindered the understanding of the *Gītā*'s complex ideas. To make this profound text accessible to the common, non-Brahmanical folk, such as farmers, blacksmiths, shopkeepers and women, Dnyāneshwar simplified the philosophical concepts of the *Gītā* and incorporated everyday examples and illustrations, significantly expanding his translation to over 1,000 *Ovis*. To ensure the text's accessibility, Dnyāneshwar chose the *Ovi*, a popular folk meter used in songs, as the poetic form for his translation. By using this meter, the translator shifted the source text 'from elite to non-elite spaces' (Ketkar 2022, 24). In fact, using a folk meter to translate a philosophical text was a novel approach that had a sustained impact on subsequent poets in Maharashtra, including Dāsopant in the sixteenth century, Wāman Pandit in the seventeenth century and Amber Hussein, among others (Ketkar 2019, 13).

Thus, the *Bhāvārthadīpikā* represents an interventionist translation that challenged the hegemony of Sanskrit and the hierarchical social order. By translating the *Gītā* into Marathi, Dnyāneshwar aimed to democratise religion and open the 'Gates of Immortality' to all, regardless of caste, creed or gender. This conscious choice to translate into Marathi also elevated the status of the vernacular language, which is evident in his frequent references to Marathi as 'Mother Marathi'. Dnyāneshwar compares Marathi to the 'desire-yielding cow' (*Kāmadhenu*), because Marathi fulfils his desire of translating 'the *Gītā* truth'. Dnyāneshwar sought to bridge the gap between Sanskrit and the Bhāshās, fostering a harmonious alliance between the two. In the *Bhāvārthadīpikā*, he envisions Sanskrit and Marathi working together in a 'lovely alliance' to convey the profound message of the *Gītā*. This is revealed through various analogies, such as the comparison of the relationship between the two languages to a beautiful woman adorned with ornaments. The beautiful body represents the Sanskrit text of the *Gītā*, while the ornaments

symbolise the Marathi language. The translator poses a rhetorical question: is it the beautiful body that enhances the beauty of the ornaments or the ornaments that enhance the beauty of the body? (verse 43). In other words, without undermining the status of the Sanskrit language, he places the Marathi language on a par with it. Choudhuri (2010, 119) asserts, ‘The translators of the Middle Ages had no inhibitions. The poet writers attempting *Bhāshā* renderings of Sanskrit texts treated both the languages as their “own” languages.’

Dnyāneshwar’s elder brother Nivrattināth served as his mentor and guru. Throughout the *Bhāvārthadīpikā*, Dnyāneshwar expresses deep love and dedication to his brother. He humbly attributes the creation of the text to the blessings of his Guru, paying homage to his brother at the beginning of nearly every chapter. For Dnyāneshwar the blessings of his brother are like the sorcerer’s stone (*parees*) that can turn iron to gold or ambrosia (*amrut*) that can make the dead alive. It was believed that total submission to a Guru could unlock a disciple’s creative potential, as the Guru illuminates the path. Dnyāneshwar seems to allude to this belief when he states, ‘With the divine grace of my Guru, I have decided to take up this task.’ A more detailed discussion of this strategy follows later in the essay.

While the *Bhāvārthadīpikā* is a written text, it is intended to be read or sung aloud. It is even believed that Dnyāneshwar employed an amanuensis named Sachiddānand to transcribe his dictated text. Moreover, Dnyāneshwar shared portions of his work in progress with a wider audience, including his brother and Guru, Nivrattināth, the Maharashtra Mandali (the people of Maharashtra) and other saints like Nāmdev. This collaborative process allowed for feedback and suggestions, shaping the final form of the translation.

Indeed, the dialogic nature of the *Bhāvārthadīpikā* is evident from the beginning, where Dnyāneshwar invites his readers to participate actively in the translation process, rather than merely consuming it passively. It is up to them to inspire him and guide him, just like a puppeteer guides a puppet (*dāruyantra*) by pulling the strings. This participatory approach is further highlighted by instances when Dnyāneshwar digresses from the topic at hand and is interrupted by his brother Guru, who says, ‘Suffice now: there is hardly any need for you to say all this: hasten up and turn your attention to the composition’ (Bhagwat [1954] 1979, 6; see also Ketkar 2019, 12).

In line with Devy’s (1997, 405) assertion that the Indian translation tradition often involves ‘a revitalisation of the original text’, Dnyāneshwar initially acknowledges the inherent limitations of translating the sacred

Gitā, recognising the immense challenge of translating such a revered text. However, he subsequently argues that the original text's 'essence' cannot be fully conveyed without a translation into Marathi. This reflection on translation into Marathi highlights the tension between reverence for the source text and the necessity of adaptation for a new audience.

The *Panchakhyānaka*

The second text under analysis, the *Panchakhyānaka*, was translated by the Jain monk Purnabhadra Suri in 1166. Its source text is the *Panchatantra*, a Brahmanical (Hertel 1914, ix) text written between the third and fifth centuries CE that had achieved widespread global recognition through translation. The *Panchatantra* migrated to Iran in the sixth century CE, was translated into Old Syriac around 570 CE, reached Baghdad by 750 CE, was rendered into Greek in the eleventh century, into Hebrew in the twelfth century and into Latin in the thirteenth century, among other languages. It was highly regarded in the literary world. The translation was commissioned by Shri Soma Mantri, likely a court minister who sought a Jain retelling of this important work. Notably, this is a retelling into Sanskrit – transforming a Sanskrit text into a new Sanskrit version – as an effort to appropriate a traditional text in order to promote and edify Jain tenets. A high-ranking member of the Shvetāmbara sect within Jainism, Purnabhadra Suri adapted this secular Sanskrit text of Brahmanical origin to align it with the tenets of the Shvetāmbara faith. In fact, Purnabhadra is believed to belong to the Shvetāmbara sect of Jainism because the translation incorporates stories from the 'textus simplicior' that are critical of the rival Digambara sect. The text also includes an additional story (number 22 in Book I) about a treacherous Digambara monk.

The *Panchatantra* was a highly influential text. While the original version was extant at the time Purnabhadra was translating, various recensions and adaptations were produced, considered as near-originals. By reworking the *Panchatantra* into the *Panchakhyānaka*, Purnabhadra Suri secured a place for his version within the rich Hindu tradition of this text. Indeed, the *Panchakhyānaka* is the longest version of the *Panchatantra*, featuring a significantly larger number of stories. Several stories, including 9, 12, 14, 20, 22, 23, 24, 29 and 30 in Book I; 1, 5 and 8 in Book II; 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 14 and 17 in Book III; and 5 and 6 in Book IV, were added by the translator to edify the Jain community (Hertel 1914, 89). Purnabhadra Suri justified these additions in his *prāśasti*, an

epilogue that provides context for the text. This is the excerpt selected for translation in this chapter.

Jain authors often conclude their works with a *praśasti*, which present-day Sanskrit experts define as ‘something about the text’. The *Panchakhyānaka*’s *praśasti* serves as a translator’s note, detailing the translation’s inception, methodology, timeline and verse count. The excerpt can be divided into three parts: the translator’s expression of humility; the justification for textual modifications; and the translator’s perspective on the source text and the translation process. Notably, it also addresses the controversial issue of additions made to the source text. By exploring these aspects, the *praśasti* offers valuable insights into the translator’s rationale for their decisions. Moreover, the *praśasti*’s dual function as both a biographical sketch and a commentary on the text itself highlights the multifaceted nature of this genre. It serves as a bridge between the author and the reader, offering a glimpse into the creative process and the underlying motivations behind the translation. While the *praśasti* of the *Panchakhyānaka* is the only source of information on the translation process, containing implicit or explicit references to translation strategies or the mention of translator’s intentions, it is found only in the first and the tenth chapters of the *Bhāvārthadeepikā*, which has 18 chapters in all.

In the *praśasti*, the translator refers to the source text in verse 2 as an ‘ancient and worn-out text’ (*vishirnavarnam*). He describes his reworking of the text as a ‘revitalisation’ (*jeernoddhār*), further emphasising the ‘worn-out’ (*jeerna*) nature of the original. From a religious perspective, common in medieval India, the Jain monk’s characterisation of the Brahmanical text as needing revitalisation may be interpreted as a subtle critique of both the text and the religion it represents. By using terms like ‘revitalisation’, the translator subtly highlights his own contribution. Additionally, the inclusion of stories that satirise Digambara monks suggests a strategic use of the reworking process as a tool in inter-religious competition.

The translator claims to have meticulously translated each letter (*pratyaksharam*), word (*pratipadam*), sentence (*prativākyam*), statement (*pratikatham*) and verse (*pratishloka*) of the original text. In other words, he asserts that he has remained faithful to the original word for word. However, he also acknowledges adapting the content to suit the needs of his time (*samayopayogi*).

Furthermore, in verse 6, he explains that he has expanded (*vrid-dhim*) upon the ideas of the source text using his intellect (*matijalen*) – literally ‘the water of his intellect’ – likening the process to increasing crop

yield through irrigation. This euphemistic justification for adding new stories to the original text anticipates potential criticism while simultaneously revealing the underlying intention of transforming a Hindu text into a Jain one. This approach suggests a translation with a specific religious agenda.

Unlike the *Bhāvārthadīpikā*, the *Panchakhyānaka* did not have a significant impact on society, culture or literature. However, for scholars like Johannes Hertel who studied the *Panchatantra*, this retelling is an important recension.⁵ It is equally important for translation studies, offering valuable insights into the theoretical conceptualisation of translation in medieval India.

Medieval Indian thinking on translation

The most striking aspect of the translation discourse in the two excerpts is the emphasis on humility. In accordance with Hindu principles, ego is considered a significant impediment, prompting authors to express humility. This practice was prevalent in medieval literature, as Hertel (1914, xii) also argues: ‘In the epilogues of the authors one finds often apologies due to the inability of their skills for the task they have set themselves and the request to learned readers to correct the “mistakes.”’ There is also a Sanskrit verse that encapsulates this sentiment: *Vidyā Vinayen shobhate* means ‘it is knowledge only when it is adorned by humility’. Attributing creative abilities and accomplishments to the divine grace of the Guru demonstrates a profound humility and acknowledges the crucial role of the Guru–disciple relationship in shaping the translation process.

Given the oral tradition of composing texts, medieval interpretations often included appeals to readers to correct any errors or omissions and to be tolerant of any excesses. This suggests that readers were not passive recipients of knowledge but rather active participants (as co-translators) in the interpretive process. As Ashwinkumar (2023, 148) argues, in the Indian linguistic tradition, the hermeneutic of language (following Bhartrihari) is grounded not in the written word but in sound. It is posited that *śphota*, a kind of mental perception, is a revelation of meaning that occurs in a flash upon the hearing of speech sounds (*nāda*). This perspective offers an intriguing lens through which to view collaborative translation in twelfth-century India.

Furthermore, translations were often treated as ‘revitalisations of the original in another temporal space’ (Devy 1997, 405). The two translations discussed here exemplify this and represent the dynamic nature

of the medieval Indian translation scene. From the translators' metareflections, it is evident that Dnyāneshwar's translation is a target-reader-oriented interventionist production with a focus on accessibility of the text for ordinary Marathi listeners, while Purnabhadra Suri's is a manipulative reworking of the old and 'worn-out' Sanskrit source text.

Bhāvārthadīpikā athavā Jñāneshwari **(excerpts)**

By Saint Dnyāneshwar

Translated from (old) Marathi by Priyada Padhye

Source text: Saint Dnyāneshwar (1275–96), Bhāvārthadeepikā athava Jñāneshwari edited by Tryambak Hari Avate (1290), edited by Sakhare Maharaj. Pune: Chitrashala Press, Chapters 1 and 10. Available online at <https://ia802908.us.archive.org/34/items/in.ernet.dli.2015.326428/2015.326428.Sardh-Jnaneshwari.pdf> (accessed 3 March 2024)

Chapter 1, verses 63–82

(pp. 7–8 of the Sakhare Maharaj edition)

How can a dim-witted person like me grasp the meaning of this great work? How can I dare to take up this task? It is akin to trying to hold the sky in my arms. My arms will have to be larger than the sky.⁶ Can a glow-worm outshine the sun? Can a lapwing drain the ocean with its beak?⁷ Then, too I have taken up this task because I have the blessings of my Guru Nivrattināth. It is in the power of the sorcerer's stone to turn iron into gold. It is in the power of ambrosia to raise the dead to life. If Goddess Saraswati⁸ so wishes, she can make a dumb person talk. I have the wish-fulfilling cow *Kāmadhenu* as my mother. So what could I possibly lack? With the divine grace of my Guru I have decided to take up this task. I therefore request you, my listeners, to make good of any shortcomings and to tolerate what is more than necessary. It is up to you to inspire me like a puppet who dances when its strings are pulled.

Chapter 10, verses 42–46

(p. 302 of the Sakhare Maharaj edition)

If you read both the Sanskrit and the Marathi texts carefully and understand them, you will realise that you cannot discern which is the original. It is like not being able to say whether the body looks beautiful because of the ornaments or the ornaments look beautiful because of the beauty of the body. Both the Sanskrit and the Marathi language are necessary to express the essence of the *Gītā*. The divine utterance in Sanskrit and my Marathi verse meet in lovely alliance to illuminate and adorn the very soul of the Truth. The beauty and freshness of the Marathi language have brought out the wisdom of the *Gītā*. I have employed the beauty and youth of the Marathi language to impart the truth of the *Gītā*.

Panchakhyānaka, Praśasti (excerpt)

By Purnabhadra Suri

Translated from Sanskrit by Priyada Padhye

I acknowledge the help of the following in translating the praśasti in the Panchakhyānaka text of Purnabhadra: Professor Sudhir Kumar and Vijendra Singh of the Special School for Sanskrit and Indic Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University and Mr Todkar.

Source text: Purnabhadra Suri, The Panchatantra. A collection of ancient Hindu tales, in the recension called Panchakhyānaka and dated 1199 ad of the Jaina monk Purnabhadra (1166), edited by Johannes Hertel. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1908. Available online at <https://archive.org/details/panchatantracoll00purnuoft/page/2/mode/2up> (accessed 18 January 2024)

The fifth book called ‘Ill-considered action’⁹ comes to an end. The first verse of this book is as follows:

One must not act on the basis of something that has not been properly seen, understood, or checked. This is the mistake that the barber committed.

Vishnu Sharma, who wrote this wise and story-filled book on good governance, has done us a great service that will earn him a place in heaven. So say the wise.

I, *Shri Purnabhadra Suri*, have revitalised rebuilt [*sanshodhitam*]¹⁰ this ancient and worn out [*vishirnavarnam*] text by the name of Panchatantra so that people can discuss the treatise on good governance, on the command of my Guru *Shri Soma* by researching and studying it carefully.

I, *Shri Purnabhadra Suri*, have presented each and every word, phrase, sentence, statement and story after correcting the anomalies.

In case there is something here that I have not been able to present properly I request wise people to forgive me for this sin. That is what good people always do.

Shri Chandrabrahmā whose fame is everlasting like the flow of the Ganges may protect me from my sins.

I have modified the content so as to make it appropriate [*samayo-payogi*]¹¹ for our times. These modifications may please not be considered as errors by wise people. The deer shaped blot on the moon that is akin to the *tilak* on the forehead of the God of Eroticism (Kāmdeva) serves only to enhance the beauty of the moon, does it not?

I am fully aware of the fact that my work is not going to make a novel contribution to the world of knowledge. Having said this, I do believe that I have been able to take some of the knowledge of the wise men and enhance it on the basis of my intellect, just like a fist of rice grains, if irrigated and tended to properly, can yield a huge crop.

I have measured this text by counting the number of verses. It is 4,600 verses long. The revitalisation [*jeernoddhār*]¹² of this ancient text has been done in the year 1255, on Sunday on the 3rd of the month of *Falgun*, which corresponds to the time between February and March of the English calendar, in the second fortnight of the lunar month.

Notes

1. Nālandā lies 40 miles to the southwest of Patnā in Bihār. The exact date of its establishment is not known, but the Chinese scholar Hiuen-Tsang was at the university in 675 CE. The university achieved its highest glory in the ninth century CE. Towards the end of the twelfth century, the university was destroyed by Muslim invaders. Vikramasilā was founded in the eighth century CE. It was situated 24 miles east of present-day Bhāgalpur, Bihār. It was an important centre of learning for more than four centuries. Odantapuri university was established near the town of Biharsharif much before the eighth century CE.
2. The Somāpuri library was located in Pāhārpur in North Bengal. It had achieved a good reputation in the eighth century CE and continued to be important till the eleventh century, when it was destroyed by a fire.
3. King Rāmapāla, who reigned from 1084 to 1130 CE, established the university in the city of Rāmāvati in present-day North Bengal. Not much is known about how long it functioned as a university.
4. There are two main sects of the Jains: the Digambarās and the Shwetāmbarās.
5. In Johannes Hertel's important work on the *Panchatantra*, titled *Das Pancatantra: Seine Geschichte und seine Verbreitung*, he comments on the origin of the text: 'Das Pancatantra selbst ist ... brahmanischen, die meisten und in Indien einflussreichsten Bearbeitungen desselben sind jainistischen Ursprungs' (the *Panchatantra* itself is of Brahmanical origin, and the most influential reworked versions in India are of Jain origin) (Hertel 1914, ix).
6. This conveys the idea that in order to speak on the *Gītā* one would need a better-suited person.
7. This alludes to a well-known tale from ancient texts like the *Panchatantra*, in which a lapwing attempts to drain the ocean with its beak after its eggs are washed away by the waves.
8. Goddess of knowledge and learning.
9. This translation of the title of the fifth book of the *Panchatantra* is taken from Arthur Ryder's (1925) translation, *The Panchatantra of Vishnu Sharma* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).
10. The term *sanshodhitam*, literally meaning 'correcting', is rendered both as 'revitalised' (this interpretation is informed by its collocation with *vishirnavarnam*, literally meaning

‘worn-out’ text) and ‘rebuilt’, in the meaning of restoring it from a state of deterioration (this interpretation aligns with Hertel’s reference to ‘re-building a dilapidated temple’ in relation to the same term, which also appears later in the *praśasti*).

11. *Samayopayogi* is a composite noun formed of *Samay* and *upayogi*; *Samay* means time and *upayogi* means useful.
12. The term literally means ‘rebuilding something that has become dilapidated’ and is usually used in collocation with the noun ‘temple’.

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4 Early Modern Europe

Joachim Périon and after; or, the uses of Cicero

Theo Hermans

Christophe de Longueil (1488–1522), who Latinised his name to Christophorus Longolius, was of French and Flemish extraction but spent as much time as he could in Italy. There he befriended Pietro Bembo, an ardent Ciceronian. Longolius outdid his friend in Ciceronianism. An account written shortly after his premature death notes that he devoted five years to reading nothing but Cicero and vowed never to write a word not found in Cicero ([Vita 1524](#), 5).

Being a Ciceronian in the first half of the sixteenth century meant taking a stand in the debates about imitation. All literature, all writing imitated nature, but *imitatio* had a more specific sense as well, that of writers imitating other writers, especially the respected models of the past, and the Latin-writing Humanists of the time were keenly aware of the great authors of ancient Greece and Rome to whom they were so heavily indebted. The ultimate aim of *imitatio* was *aemulatio*, emulation, the attempt to outstrip the predecessor. Ciceronians like Bembo and Longolius argued that to cultivate a harmonious and consistent style, a writer should imitate a single model. For prose, that should be Cicero, the best Latin prose writer ever. Anti-Ciceronians, like Erasmus of Rotterdam, contended that writers should imitate a variety of models, depending on the topic, and that in any case one should choose a model that was congenial to one's own personality.

Erasmus's *Ciceronianus* (1528) was a savage attack on Ciceronianism and mentioned Longolius by name. Étienne Dolet came to Longolius's defence, first in a full-length book in 1535 and then in a pamphlet in 1540. In the same year, 1540, he also published the first independent treatise on translation in a European vernacular, *La manière de bien traduire d'une langue en aultre* (The Way to Translate Well from One Language to Another). The short treatise, a mere three pages, lists five points that the rhetorically adept translator should heed. The last and

longest point celebrates ‘the glory of eloquence’ that is the hallmark of all great writing (Dolet 1540, n.p.) – and Dolet makes it perfectly clear he means Ciceronian eloquence.

In this same year, 1540, the French Benedictine monk Joachim Périon (c. 1499–1559) brought out a bilingual edition of those parts of Plato’s *Timaeus* that Cicero had translated from Greek into Latin. He added annotations, which praised Cicero’s translation as not just comprehensive (‘the whole matches the whole’, *ut totus toti respondeat*) but stylistically brilliant (*quàm splendide, quàm ornatè, quàm copiose*; Périon 1540a, 54). His conclusion urged students of Greek ‘to read, to ponder and to imitate’ (*ad legendum, ad meditandum, ad imitandum*; Périon 1540a, 54) Cicero’s translation.

In the first major translation of his own, a Latin rendering of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* also published in that same year, 1540, Périon put his recommendation to imitate Cicero as a translator into practice. The translation (Aristotle 1540), printed simultaneously in Paris and Basel, came with extensive annotations, which were in fact longer than the translation itself. The annotations had their own title page, *De optimo genere interpretandi commentarii* (Commentaries on the Best Way of Translating; Périon 1540b), and a *Praefatio* (Preface) in which Périon set out his views on how to translate. This is the document translated in part in this chapter. Périon’s translation of Aristotle, his annotations to it and his edition of Cicero’s version of the *Timaeus* were usually bound together in one large volume.

The title *De optimo genere interpretandi* does not refer to Jerome’s famous letter to Pammachius (letter 57), often known as *De optimo genere interpretandi*, but, as Périon himself explains, was meant to echo Cicero’s *De optimo genere oratorum* (On the Best Kind of Orator). Périon’s treatise provided the justification of his approach to translating the *Nicomachean Ethics* and laid the groundwork for all his subsequent renderings of Aristotle. It remains an extraordinary document. In a nutshell, Périon proposes to translate Aristotle by imitating Cicero translating Plato.

Périon begins by observing that, while there are as many kinds of translating as there are kinds of writing or speaking, the Latin authors of antiquity each translated as they wrote. He disapproves of translators who employ one style in their own writings and another in their translations, because, he says, that makes it look as if the translations and the original writings have been produced by different writers. The main reason for this disparity, he reckons, is the tendency to translate word for word, as if all languages were isomorphic. Another shortcoming of many modern translators is that, while they may possess perfectly good subject

knowledge, they lack expressive skills. To remedy these faults, Périon describes the act of translating as comprising two phases, not unlike the ‘decomposition and recomposition’ model once favoured by Eugene Nida (1964, 57–69), but with distinctive touches.

In the first, analytical part of the process, Périon suggests, the translator penetrates the meaning of the base text, initially clause by clause and then taking it in as a whole. This phase is concerned with grasping the original’s subject matter, what Périon repeatedly calls its *res* (matter, as opposed to *verba*, words), the ideas or substance the text contains, that which it is about. The analytical operation is pushed as far as it will go: the translator ends up appropriating the original’s ideas as his own, so that they appear ‘invented by him, not by someone else’ (*a se, non ab alio inventam* [Aiir]) and ‘invented and thought up by him’ (*a se inventam et excogitatam* [Aiiiv]). The choice of words is remarkable: *inventam* points to *inventio* (invention), the first and pre-eminent part of rhetoric, without which the other parts (*dispositio*, the ordering of the material; *elocutio*, speaking well; *memoria*, memory; *pronunciatio*, the actual delivery of a speech or discourse) cannot even come into being. The terms are especially remarkable in the context of translation because they suggest the translator can claim ownership of the original’s ideas, something normally found only in the discourse on imitation, not that of translation. Imitation is predicated on the imitator’s sovereign ability to carve out a path reminiscent of but different from that of the predecessor, whereas translators must, as John Dryden put it 150 years later, ‘labour on another man’s plantation’ (Robinson 2002, 175). The translator’s sense of intellectual ownership means that the detail of verbal accuracy makes way for an overall sense of the whole.

The second part of the translation process is concerned with articulating in the new language the substance of the base text that the translator has appropriated. Here Périon’s argument has the brute force of a syllogism. The translator into Latin must write the best Latin possible. Cicero has written the best Latin there is. Therefore, the translator must write Ciceronian Latin. If translation were merely a matter of transferring meaning, Périon points out, we would not need to pay much attention to phrasing in the receptor language. But translation is discourse (*oratio*), and discourse needs to be ‘noble, copious and splendid’ (Aiiiiv). Here, too, Périon is prepared to go far. Since translation is about more than conveying meaning across languages, it calls for the same deployment of rhetorical resources as original composition. That this involves departing from the original’s exact meaning is something he takes into the bargain, especially as the rhetorical resources derive from Cicero. But then, Cicero

is the appropriate source: he is not just a philosopher in his own right and the best interpreter of Aristotle, his entire work is a web of translations of and allusions to Greek texts. That, together with his stylistic excellence, makes it imperative for the modern translator to follow his example.

As it happens, the combination of the two phases – appropriating the original's ideas, avoiding literal translation, shaping the end product by means of a consistent style – leads to a profoundly Ciceronian way of translating. As Siobhán McElduff has shown (2013, 108–9), Cicero, too, was keen to use his own judgement and style to stamp his personality on his translations and ensure the original voice never overwhelmed his own. The fact that, in Périon's case, the personality and voice informing the translation were Ciceronian, and therefore borrowed rather than his own, does not appear to have troubled him.

Périon's treatise was clearly a statement of principle. He regularly referred back to it in subsequent years. In the 'Observationes' attached to his version of Porphyry to explain his translation choices, for instance, he noted that philosophical thought was of itself 'dark and complex' (*obscura & involuta*; Périon 1548, 1), and to make it accessible he had to put it into elegant – that is, Ciceronian – language, in contrast with the literal translators of the past:

Whether out of ignorance of Latin or because they felt they had to translate word for word, the fact is that they used words that were inappropriate and not properly Latin. Those who, in those days, engaged in philosophy, instead of using good Latin, wasted and squandered the words that made philosophy accessible. That being the case, if I seek to restore to philosophy the ornaments which it received in Cicero's time and which ever since it has lacked or of which it has been robbed, surely no-one will hold that against me, except if they resent his fame (Périon 1548, 1).

And just as in 1540 he stated emphatically that his approach to translation derived entirely from Cicero, he repeated in 1548 that 'I have borrowed everything from Cicero' (*sum enim ea omnia a Cicerone mutuatus*; Périon 1548, 1).

Périon's radical positioning as a translator made for translations that were markedly different from their predecessors. Among the Latin versions of Aristotle available at the time, the most important were the literal thirteenth-century one by William of Moerbeke, which was still being used occasionally in Périon's day, and the fifteenth-century one by Joannes Argyropoulos, first printed in 1496 and reissued some 40 times

before 1600. Through these and other translations, Aristotle's philosophical terminology had become well established. Périon's Ciceronian vocabulary broke with this tradition (Crantz 1976, 360–4). One particularly noticeable choice concerned the Greek term ψυχή (*psuchè*): Aristotle's book, widely known even today by its Latin title *De anima*, became in Périon's version *De animo*. The difference was subtle (Étienne Dolet's *La manière de bien traduire d'une langue en aultre* opens with a reflection on the nuances distinguishing *animus* from *anima*), but since Cicero had rendered ψυχή as *animus*, Périon followed him. In 1557 Henri Estienne compiled an edition of all of Cicero's extant translations and adaptations from the Greek, adding a glossary that duly listed *animus* (and not *anima*) as Cicero's equivalent of ψυχή (Stephanus 1557, 110).

Not surprisingly, Périon's differential choices were hard on readers used to the traditional terminology. He was aware of translating for an intellectual minority, noting as early as 1543 that 'very few will appreciate my undertaking, most will dislike it' (*fore ut hoc meum institutum paucissimis probaretur, plurimis displiceret*; Aristotle 1543, aar). As an aid to readers, the 1548 translation of Porphyry's *Institutions*, which was issued together with Aristotle's *Organon*, was preceded by a two-page word list setting the terms Périon derived from Cicero alongside the traditional terms used by Argyropoulos and others (Porphyry 1548, 1–2). At the end of the century a Latin commentary on Aristotle's *De anima* was prefaced by a similar glossary (Faba 1596, A1r–A2r). Perhaps inevitably, Périon's translations underwent revision by others. From the early 1550s, Nicolas Grouchy (Gruchius) published a series of amended versions. Périon resented them and attacked Grouchy in an *Oratio* of almost 200 pages (Grouchy and Travers 1878, 82–3; Stegman 1976, 377).

There was acclaim for Périon's undertaking. The publisher Joannes Oporinus lauded his translations as 'plain, idiomatic and lucid' (*plane, latine, dilucideque*) and suggested they could be used to learn both how to translate from Greek and how to write good Latin (Aristotle 1554, a5r–a5v). In his monumental *Interpretatio linguarum* of 1559, Lawrence Humphrey, too, praised Périon for his elegant Latin, as we will see.

The criticisms, however, were much more numerous. Périon's earliest opponents included Jacobus Strebaeus (Jacques d'Estrebay), who as early as 1543 condemned Périon's rejection of so many terms that had for so long been part of the Latin vocabulary to represent and discuss Aristotle. The translator Denys Lambin, who disputed with Périon in person in the early 1550s and apparently got him to admit that Aristotle and Plato were different writers but that Périon would impose the same Ciceronian mould on both, produced his own translations of Aristotle,

against Périon. The humanist Marc-Antoine Muret wrote a preface to one of Lambin's translations arguing that, in his eagerness to use only words taken from Cicero, Périon had strayed far from Aristotle's meaning (Stegman 1976, 377; O'Brien 1989, 270–4). Périon responded at length to these attacks, pointing out it was not a matter of using Ciceronian language exclusively but primarily, and employing other forms of diction insofar as they were compatible with Cicero's style (Périon 1551, 10; O'Brien 1989, 269).

But if the revisions of Grouchy, the countertranslations by Denys Lambin and the attacks by Strebaeus and Muret could be seen as direct polemics with Périon, there were also criticisms in the more general reflections on translation that appeared at the time and in subsequent decades.

The most impressive of these general works is Lawrence Humphrey's *Interpretatio linguarum* (The Translation of Languages), which appeared in Basel in 1559. Its scope and erudition, displayed over 622 pages, make it by far the most significant Early Modern contribution to the field. It is mainly concerned with translation from Greek and Hebrew into Latin but also celebrates vernacular languages, including a survey of recent translators into English. The first of its three parts offers a comprehensive theoretical account of translation, secular as well as sacred. The second part covers imitation, including its difference from translation. Part three features practical examples and applications aimed at budding translators. Throughout, Humphrey remains alive to the paradoxes of translation, noting, for instance, it should strive for 'erudite simplicity, faithful elegance' (1559, 30) and that languages display kinship and similarity but also manifest difference (1559, 100).

Humphrey's critique of Périon is informed and measured. He mentions Périon in one breath with Jerome and Cicero right in the opening pages (1559, 4). Périon's name appears again when Humphrey presents his tripartite division of translation methods into over-literal, over-liberal and the moderate 'middle way' that combines accuracy of rendering with elegance of expression. While Humphrey respects Périon for his graceful Latin, as a translator Périon is too free when he makes Aristotle sound like Cicero (1559, 28–9). In the same way, Humphrey is critical of Longolius, who, he says, would have given us an *Evangelium Ciceronianum* (1559, 51–2). In the section on imitation Humphrey points out that Cicero can serve as a stylistic model in general but he did not leave us a clear model of translation (1559, 243, 245–6). Périon's Ciceronian diction, exemplary in many respects, nicely emulated Aristotle, but emulation belongs with imitation and not with translation (1559, 252). This, for

Humphrey, seems to be the crux of the matter. The translator should follow, not seek to surpass (1559, 251). In discussing over-loose translation in the first part of his book, Humphrey had already stressed that, while writers are free to act according to their own inclination, translators are constrained and must not only follow someone else's invention but also craft a diction that matches that of the foreign tongue (1559, 23–4). This, clearly, is a position incompatible with the sovereign liberties and ownership that Périon claimed. Humphrey appears to read Périon's Ciceronianism as emulative inasmuch as it implies the claim to a diction superior to Aristotle's own. He rounds off his argument in the final part of his book when he states that, in respecting stylistic diversity, the translator should be Protean (1559, 416). A translator cannot be both Protean and Ciceronian.

Several other independent accounts of translation appeared in the second half of the sixteenth century, though none with Humphrey's range and depth. Among them were three Italian discourses, written for different Italian academies. All invoked Cicero but in ways very different from the use Périon had made of him. Whereas Périon had relied on Cicero's practice as a translator, the Italian theorists referred to Cicero's distinction, in *De optimo genere oratorum*, of translating 'as an orator' (*ut orator*) and giving the original's overall meaning, rather than 'as a translator' (*ut interpres*) who counted out individual words.

Sebastiano Fausto da Longiano's *Dialogo del modo de lo tradurre d'una lingua in altra secondo le regole mostrate da Cicerone* (Dialogue on the Way of Translating from One Language into Another Following Cicero's Rules) of 1556 was concerned with translation into Italian as well as Latin. Fausto rejected the disjunction between word-for-word and sense-for-sense translation. He argued that, when Cicero spoke of translating 'as an orator', he did not intend to render only the sense of his Greek original but wanted to hold on to 'the power of the words' (*la virtù de le parole*) as well as to the forms and figures of thought found in the original (Fausto 1556, 16v; Norton 1984, 200).

Fausto's immediate target was Guido Loglio, whom he quoted and lambasted without mentioning his name. Loglio had brought out an Italian version of Cicero's *Epistulae familiares* in 1545, a year after Fausto's own version. Its title stressed that the translation 'accorded with the author's true sense' (*secondo i veri sensi dell' autore*) and its preface repeated that the translator had followed Cicero's precept of translating 'as an orator' while also cultivating the natural resources of the receiving language (Cicero 1545, Aiiiv–Aiiir). Fausto and Loglio obviously differed in their reading of Cicero, with Loglio's position resembling Périon's in

being content to render the original's substance, even though Loglio stopped well short of claiming ownership of this substance, and his care of the vernacular did not aim at a specifically Ciceronian diction.

If Fausto's view of translation was already much stricter than that of either Loglio or Périon, Orazio Toscanella's 'Discorso del tradurre' was stricter still, and by some margin. The 'Discorso', printed in 1575 but probably written about 10 years earlier, concerned translation from Latin into Italian and defended the word-for-word principle. Toscanella pushed the principle quite far, arguing, for instance, that Latin *lucidus* should be rendered as *lucide* (clear, lucid) rather than *chiaro* (clear) because *lucidus* and *lucide* shared the same number of syllables (1575, 33). Not surprisingly, he took the view that when Cicero spoke of translating 'as an orator', not counting words but accounting for their combined weight, he was not speaking about translation at all (1575, 35).

Girolamo Catena, in his *Discorso sopra la traduttione delle scienze, & d'altre facultà* of 1581 (the dedication is dated 1579), shared this view of Cicero. His *Discorso* addressed the translation of professional and doctrinal texts, and it made much of the 'office' of the 'faithful' translator obligated to render an author's 'true meaning' as set down in the original's exact words, which had to be preserved as nearly as possible, even at the risk of sounding awkward. Catena quoted with approval Jerome's preface to Origen's homily on the Song of Songs, which he said he had translated 'faithfully rather than elegantly' (*fideliter magis quam ornate*), going on to note that translating *ornate* (elegantly) was the main fault of modern translators in general and of Joachim Périon in particular (Catena 1581, 4, 55). Where Aristotle was 'dry, compact and succinct' (*secco, presso, & conciso*), Périon and others had translated him *amplamente, & copiosamente* out of their desire to be taken for good Ciceronians (*per esser tenuti buoni Ciceroniani*; 1581, 55). To prove his case, Catena gave examples of Cicero translating very close to the Greek when working 'as a translator' rather than 'as an orator'.

In the seventeenth century Périon's name came up again in Pierre-Daniel Huet's two-part *De interpretatione* (On Translation, 1661, expanded editions in 1680 and 1683), which took the form of an imagined conversation between historical figures. In Book One, *De optimo genere interpretandi* (On the Best Kind of Translating), Huet drew explicitly on Girolamo Catena and, like him, sharply criticised modern translators. But whereas Catena had remained unspecific about who, apart from Périon, he ranged under that label, Huet's target were the so-called *belles infidèles* translators whose free renderings into French had been gathering cultural prestige since the 1630s (DeLater 2002, 17–18). Like Catena and

Toscanello, Huet favoured literalism if and when possible. Like Lawrence Humphrey, he called on translators to become Protean, more mutable than a chameleon (Huetius 1683, 19). In this context he delivered his first stab at Périon, whose Ciceronian manner, he said, dilated Aristotle's terse diction. Some pages later, having argued that Cicero, when working as a translator and not as an orator, translated word for word, he concluded that Périon was misguided when he enlisted Cicero to justify his own licence and that early critics like Grouchy and Strebaeus had been right to denounce him (Huetius 1683, 58).

De interpretatione Book Two, called *De claris interpretibus* (On Famous Translators), supplied a historical survey of translators from the Ancients up to Huet's own time. Périon's name came up here, too. Huet quoted from the voluminous *Historia sui temporis* (History of his Own Time) by Jacques de Thou, one of the participants in the book's imagined conversation. De Thou had noted that, while Joannes Argyropoulos's Aristotle translation placed accuracy above elegance, Périon went to the other extreme and therefore deserved the censure of the likes of Grouchy and Strebaeus (Thuanus 1620, 708). Huet added Denys Lambin and Marc-Antoine Muret to the list of critics and agreed that Périon had wallowed in verbal excess. He pointedly went on to praise Adrien Turnèbe (Hadrianus Turnebus), who, although a Ciceronian as well, had produced good Latin while remaining close to his Greek original (Huetius 1683, 212). Huet ended his historical overview by slamming modern translators, the majority of whom, he said, went about their business with so much licence and so little fidelity (*maxima licentia & levissima fide*; 1683, 236) that they could scarcely be called translators.

The modern translators Huet was so critical of were mostly writing in French rather than in Latin. Elsewhere in Europe, too, translations into vernacular languages had been gaining in number and significance. Ciceronianism, very much a sixteenth-century phenomenon, was now definitively consigned to the past. The combination of the rise of the vernaculars and the demise of Ciceronianism sealed Périon's fate. Yet he deserves to be remembered and even to be studied again, for at least two reasons. One is the boldness of his vision. He posited translators taking ownership of the substance of what they translated and then shaping a new diction grafted on the work of a model translator. He had the courage, the knowledge and the skill to put this vision into effect, and to elucidate and justify it in hundreds of pages of detailed annotations to his translations. The other reason is that even a cursory look at Périon and his critics has allowed us to glimpse an entire translation culture: a web

of interdependent translations accompanied by extensive and sustained reflection on translation. The books by Humphrey and Huet together with the *discorsi* by Fausto, Toscanella and Catena add up to around a thousand pages of translation theory, showing an acute awareness of translation principles, of the history of translation and of previous thought about translation. And this is just one small part of just one of the more than 20 ‘centuries of incidental and desultory attention’ that James Holmes ([1972] 2000, 173) so casually dismissed.

Commentaries on the Best Way of Translating: preface (excerpts)

By Joachim Périon

Translated from Latin by Olivia Cockburn, with thanks to Gesine Manuwald for reviewing the translation

Source text: 'Praefatio' in Ioachimi Perionii Benedict. Cormoeriaceni de Optimo genere interpretandi Commentarii. Paris: Simon de Colines, 1540, pp. aiir–aivv

As there are many different ways of speaking, thus there are of translating. There is therefore hardly anyone who would set out to translate anything unless he pursues it with that very ability in speaking, however much he possesses, diligently and with care. And indeed, among the ancient and most important authors writing in the Latin language, ability was equal in both, so they did not translate differently from how they spoke. And this may be observed in the writings of Cicero, Sallust and T. Livy. For if anyone reads the pieces translated by them from the Greek and that are included in their books, of which there are many, their discourse in those will scarcely seem to be different to him. However, many writers show themselves to be so unpolished and unequal in this regard, that, if their translation is compared with other writings, they all seem to have been written not by one but by many. I know that this has often happened to others, and indeed to me more often than I would like or the dignity of the arts should demand. For as regards that preface that they put before the entire work, I find fault with that elaborateness and language that is splendid but dissimilar to the subsequent work and altogether incompatible with it.

Although the common cause and ground of that situation prove to me that it is one thing to express the thoughts of others that are uncertain

and need explaining and another thing to express the feelings of one's own mind that are free and are formed as we wish, still there are some other things that are both greater and more important and, as I tell myself, truer. One of these things, which those individuals of whom we speak pass by and neglect or surely seem to, which is the key principle of this art, is to first grasp, in their mind, the meaning of the book that they aim to translate, clause by clause, then to ponder with oneself how, if, as regards the matter that they have in mind, invented by themselves, not by another, they might wish to express it in speaking, and to do so eloquently and illustriously. For there can be no doubt that, if they were making an effort in this, they would both appraise the ideas of others on the basis of their own and take them on as their own, so that certainly their effort and diligence would no longer leave any room for the previous approach. Now, since they weigh out each single word more superstitiously and pursue it more curiously, they are compelled to accept the idea, as if it were a religion, that, unless they translate word for word, they would never think they have followed the author's meaning. As if all languages use exactly the same patterns of speaking.

Another issue is that, if they excel in some single art, they still strive to execute that in another that they cannot handle abundantly and eloquently. For there are many men who are unable to articulate eloquently that which they fully understand in many disciplines. This can be observed in many other arts but mostly keenly perhaps in Philosophy, where we see how meagrely, how poorly and how ineloquently all its parts have been translated from the Greeks. This happens because, while they are knowledgeable yet ineloquent in these disciplines and arts, these men neglect to learn elegant speech from the one man among us who handled Philosophy in the Latin language and taught in Latin, who all should select to be the one master in this matter. For although there are many and different ways of translating, as I said, there is indeed only Cicero who flourished in the best genre of speaking and translating. And not only in one art and discipline, but indeed in all that he dealt with, he attained such fame and glory that, if anyone should carefully read all his writings, and observe and note all the ways of his writing, it seems to me in fact that he alone was able to translate all the Greek disciplines skillfully. But for some reason his praise shines most brightly in Philosophy. For all the books that he wrote on Philosophy are full of examples and opinions from Plato, Aristotle and other philosophers, some of whom he refers to, others he translates from. He translated *Protagoras* and *Timaeus* by Plato and *Oeconomicus* by Xenophon.

If all the books translated by him were extant, it would certainly be the most reliable rule to which the discourses of those who aim to be active and to excel in this field could be directed. Now only *Timaeus* or rather a part of that book has been passed down to us; yet on the basis of that work, as we have set out, the best way of translating can be learnt and compared. And so that all might be able to achieve this more easily, I thought that the Greek of Plato and the Latin of Cicero should be added to these commentaries, in such a way that a page of Latin should correspond to a Greek one as if from the other side. And for this very reason I titled this book *On the Best Kind of Translating*, in which I confess I imitated Cicero. For as he titled a single treatise *On the Best Kind of Orators* or *Speaking*, for when he had approved Demosthenes and Aeschines as the best and most excellent orators, he translated their two opposing speeches, from which the best kind of speech could be procured, and published this translation: in the same way, since I understand that Cicero excelled in the best way of translating, on account of his translation, which, as the best, I put forward for all to imitate, I title this book, which is full of his examples and precepts of this art, *On the Best Kind of Translating*.

For when, in the two circumstances and reasons that I have just adduced regarding a defective kind of translating, I noticed that faults were committed by many and the greatest error to be in this, in what way something could be translated in the best way from Greek into Latin, I considered that I should take the task upon myself, useful, as I hope, to scholars, if not so necessary to me, but certainly enjoyable. And so, when translating the 10 books by Aristotle that he wrote on Ethics addressed to his son Nicomachus, I had put forward only Cicero for me to imitate, and I was not reluctant to do so, so that whatever of this kind I had come across in his works, I would transmit to all. However, whether we have imitated him, since this is both a very significant achievement and an improper thing to say about oneself, will be for others who have read our works to judge. For I will not hesitate to speak about the best way of translating, that I have gathered many precepts of this art scattered and dispersed widely throughout his works in this one book; by reading and retaining these, as he himself says, we will create a more copious Latin translation.

Before we proceed to those topics, I would like to first say a few things about them here. Let it therefore be the aim of all to completely avoid those two vices to which I referred a little earlier. For by avoiding them, we will achieve more easily the best kind that we seek. For whoever has not only understood how he would tackle and explain a

matter that he has grasped and conceived deep in his mind, invented and thought out by him, but has also devoted much time and effort to Cicero's writings: he will avoid almost all faults. For if he considers the substance, he will disregard the words except insofar as they pertain to the reasoning behind our speech: he will certainly not believe that he should express word for word. And if he has made himself very familiar with Cicero's works, he will at once understand which single words need to be explained with which several words. And so that everyone, from the very beginning and as if in the entrance hall to this art, understands that a word should not be rendered by a word, I will provide Cicero's words, from which our entire discourse will flow. For he writes in Book 3 of *De finibus* roughly in these terms: 'It will not be necessary to translate word for word, as inelegant translators tend to do, when there is a word that means the same and is more or less unusual. Indeed, I also tend to use several words to render what is expressed in Greek with one, if I cannot do otherwise.' He says the same thing in many places, which we will put forward in their appropriate places if the matter requires. And this very precept of Cicero's is so uniformly displayed in the body of this art that, with it removed, no place remains for the art. If it is retained, we can easily achieve the rest. For he calls those translators who act otherwise inelegant, and those who wish to follow this, they will devote themselves entirely to Cicero, whom I have called the single best master of this art (pp. aiiir–aiiir). ...

Therefore, may it be proposed in this part to everyone that they should diligently join those books of Cicero that contain the same material as the Greek ones with those. In this way, we will retain the simple and proper Latin words of each art and treat the same eloquently and abundantly when joined and arranged together. For those who flee from this work, it is necessary to often express many words, both simple and compound, in a spiritless and barbarous manner. For, while there are many words of that kind that can be expressed word for word in Latin, there are also others denoting the same thing, and if they will not set forth those and always use that single word, how meagre and poor their discourse will be. ...

For if translation had been devised for the sole purpose of transferring the opinions of others faithfully, that would indeed be sufficient. But since translation is discourse, and discourse should be noble, copious and splendid, we must ensure that translation does not lack these splendours of its own or rather is not deprived of them (p. aiiiv). ...

Now, from the few things that I have mentioned, it can sufficiently be understood, as was our aim, that, if we wish to translate something

eloquently from Greek, we must necessarily bear in mind these two things: firstly, that we should not think that a word should be rendered by a word, and secondly, that we should link the Greek with the Latin of Cicero of the same kind as much as we can. And he who will neglect these two things will inevitably render many things not just ineloquently but barbarously (p.aivr).

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5 Swahili Coast, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

Creativity, visibility and the bodily dimension of translating in classical Swahili poetry

Serena Talento

Texts in context

Until the twentieth century, written Swahili literature consisted primarily of poetry, and was used in what is now Kenya and Tanzania and their archipelagos to fulfil a variety of social functions – religious, historical and moral.¹ Poetry was (and is) the favoured medium through which values and world views are conveyed in Swahili culture. It is also a privileged channel of philosophical thought and intellectual practice (see [Kresse 2007](#)). Poetry has historically held an elevated position in the Swahili literary domain, and was also used as a cultural means of exhibiting status and power within a defined elite ([Talento 2021](#), 85–106).

The two excerpts presented here are from two classical Swahili poems, the *Utenzi wa Rasi l’Ghuli* (Poem of Ra’s al-Ghūl; henceforth *Ras*) and the *Utendi wa Katirifu* (Poem of Katirifu; henceforth *Katirifu*).² This essay will contextualise these excerpts and explore poetry as a language of translation, examining translation as both creative writing and as a physically demanding meditative process. The essay will also discuss the visibility of the translation act and that of its Swahili practitioners.

Ras is among the longest Swahili poems, at 4,584 stanzas. It was composed between 1850 and 1855, and is conventionally attributed to Mwalimu Mgeni bin Faqihi, who was born on the island of Tumbatu, off the northern tip of Zanzibar, and later moved to Mbweni, Bagamoyo, becoming a religious teacher at the Islamic institutions there ([bin Faqihi 1979](#), vi; [Topan 2001](#), 114). Not much is known of his life except that he was a renowned Islamic preacher.³ This suggests that he was a member of the affluent professional class of the *ulamaa* (Islamic scholars and

judges), characterised by their refined way of speaking, multilingualism (at least in Swahili and Arabic), cosmopolitanism and mobility (among centres of Islamic education across the Indian Ocean), and patrician identity. Members of this class held important cultural, social and material capital, the latter in the form of manuscripts kept in their private libraries.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a period characterised by increasing Omani, Arabic and Islamic influence, the literary translation of Arabic historical and legendary narratives into Swahili was a significant activity among the *ulamaa* class. The translations targeted a cultivated public, in a language considered to be prestigious and literary in the East African context. Translators were thus also the leading writers of classical Swahili literature and members of the highest level of the social hierarchy.

The *Ras* is the translation of the *Futūḥ al-Yaman* (Victory over Yemen), an Arabic text by the Mamluk author Abu al-Hasan al-Bakri, probably dating from the thirteenth century, narrating the military expedition led by ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad, against a Yemenite tribe led by Mukhārik ibn Shihāb, called Ra’s al-Ghūl (demon’s head) for his ferocity and the size of his head (Bellino 2017, 184).

The *Katirifu* tells of the romance between a wealthy Muslim and the daughter of a pagan king, Hasina, that led to conspiracies and a series of battles between Muslims and infidels. The poem is dated to the second half of the eighteenth century (Zhukov 2004, 5) or the first half of the nineteenth century (Miehe 1990, 206). A prose version of the story in Arabic is assumed to have served as the source of this Swahili poem (Knappert 1999, 76), but no (direct) source text has been identified. Abu Bakari bin Bwana Mwengo, the author of the *Katirifu*, was the son of the well-known court poet Bwana Mwengo of Pate, author of the *Utendi wa Tambuka* (Poem on the Battle of Tabūk), some stanzas of which were reprised in the *Katirifu*. Not much is known about him; Bertoncini Zúbková (2000, 32) describes him as a ‘well-known local figure and a poet of fair poetic value’.

The *Ras* and *Katirifu* belong to the tradition of the *utendi*, a form of extended narrative poetry with a defined metre and rhyme scheme used for epic, hagiographic, historical, moralising and didactic functions. *Tendi* usually deal with the lives of the Prophet, saints and heroes, as well as wars against the unfaithful (Harries 1950, 58). In line with their didactic function, *tendi* were often recited in public to give instructions

on social behaviour and religious practice (Harries 1962, 24; Zhukov 2004, 7). However, they also pertain to a familiar, intimate dimension, and as such are associated with gatherings in private houses, or with weddings, funerals and religious celebrations (Allen 1971, 22). In other words, they are often recited in socially circumscribed places where family circles or groups bound by social ties assemble.

Tendi are texts of a dual nature: they are both a written genre and a performance genre. This dual nature is alluded to through fictionalised metatextual comments. Classical Swahili poems have a rigid formulaic structure composed of three parts. The *dibaji* (preamble) contains invocations of God and blessings of the Prophet Muhammad and his entourage, after which the poet introduces the subject of the poem. Then there is the core text. The narration ends with the *tamati* (epilogue), in which the poets provide details of their identities and comment on their work. *Tendi* thus have a double level of narration: that of the specific story, and that of metanarration or textual reflexivity, in which the narrator interrupts the narration with comments on the activity of narrating, writing and often translating. During this period, reflections on literary translation were typically inserted in the works themselves, as part of the narrative structure and fictionalisation of the narrative performance, rather than being presented as an independent body of knowledge. These embedded and fictionalised reflections constitute a significant resource for tracing the self-positioning of individual translators and the social and professional expectations around the modalities of this literary enterprise.

Poetry as the language of translation

The textual transfer of narratives from the Middle East took place through a variegated series of rewriting processes, but most importantly through versification. In other words, transfer processes tended to use a form and a medium that fit the conventional forms and modalities of disseminating knowledge within the Swahili context. In both the *Ras* and *Katirifu*, as in many other classical Swahili poems, the literary transfer consists of and is described as an act of versification.⁴ For example, after mentioning the pre-existing Arabic text that he reflected on and now wants to narrate, bin Faqihi declares his desire to compose in verse, ‘Kutunga kwa ushairi’ (stanza 28), thereby implying not only a linguistic shift but also a shift of genre that transforms the Arabic story or tradition, *hadithi*, into a poem.

Although Bwana Mwengo and bin Faqihi, like many other translators/composers of their time,⁵ refer to their translations as acts of ‘repetition’, using the verb *kudhukuri* (to repeat) and the noun *qarari* (repetition), the process of translation is clearly envisaged as one that implies the transformation and renewal of forms. In this sense, translation emerges as a metaliterary form (Holmes 1988), that is, a poem on and inspired by a previous text. The switch of genre is representative of a textual processing that, on a literary level, discloses a profound dimension of (re)creation. At the same time, on an extra-literary level, it emphasises the link between poetic (re)production and social status. The fact that translation was synonymous with versification is connected with the social implications of the poetic genre in the community. Poetic composition, as well as translation, was in fact a hallmark of patrician distinction in the stratified Swahili society of the time (see Talento 2021, 103–5).

Translation is/as creative writing

Bin Faqihi and Abu Bakari describe translation as a valuable form of art equal to and at the same level as what is defined as creative writing. In stanza 4572, for example, bin Faqihi states that for composing (in verse), one must be either a poet or a translator (from Arabic), thus including translation within the realm of legitimate poetic composition. Later in the poem, like many composers-cum-translators of his time, bin Faqihi conceptualised poetic activity as being not only an act of *kutunga* (composing) but also an act of *kubadili* (changing), a verb often used in classical Swahili poems to refer to the linguistic transformation from Arabic to Swahili. Similarly, Bwana Mwengo refers to the act of translation using the verb *kukalibu* (mould), evoking the idea of ‘changing’ the Arabic words in the sense of ‘moulding’ them or forming them anew (as defined in Rechenbach 1967, 165). Bwana Mwengo refers to himself as *mwenye kutunga* (the one who composes), a formula that makes explicit reference to an act of (re)creation of which translation is a part. In these examples, the figure of the poet proves interchangeable with that of the translator. In fact, the motives and tropes implicated in composing a new text are often the same for translating an existing text. In classical Swahili poetry, both types of textual production contain formulaic *topoi*, such as the composer asking the scribe to take up ink and paper and start writing, or expressing their humility via apologies for their lack of knowledge and talent and alluding to their destitution.⁶ Taken together with Bwana Mwengo’s and bin Faqihi’s references to translation, the similarities in

the images used in both processes imply that translation was not viewed as a separate literary endeavour.

Such levelling runs counter to the historical and hierarchical opposition between creative writing and translation, which stigmatises translation in particular in terms of the opposition between art and craft (Hermans 2001, 8; Malmkjær 2020, 3) and prevalent concepts of authorship (Venuti 2003, 2). The way in which bin Faqihi and Bwana Mwengo conceptualise translation speaks to the recent 'creative turn' (Loffredo and Perteghella 2006, 1) in translation studies that, at long last, revisits the historical subordination of the translation to the original by bringing into focus the notion of creativity at the centre of translation practice. Susan Bassnett and Peter Bush (2006, 2), for example, vehemently demand that translation be recognised 'as an art to be celebrated, not concealed'. The distinction between writing and translating, as Bassnett (2006, 175) rightly points out, 'starts to break down once it is scrutinised closely'.

Furthermore, in the Swahili context, the notion of creativity is embedded in an understanding of translation in the sense of assimilation, the borrowing and rewriting of pre-existing material at the basis of any writing process. This is evident in classical Swahili poetry in general and particularly in the excerpts presented here. Bwana Mwengo, for instance, makes clear reference to his predecessors (stanza 444) for the reason that demonstrating an acquaintance with pre-existing texts and personalities was part and parcel of classical Swahili poetic practice. Quoting and borrowing from someone else's poem were common literary devices; they were a form of tribute as well as evidence of literary skill and the capacity to preserve literary continuity, something that was seen as being at the core of the creative process (Kresse 2009, 161; Talento 2021, 80, 105).⁷

Translation as meditative exercise and physical effort

Bin Faqihi also emphasises the bodily and corporeal dimension of poetry translation, presenting himself in terms of his body and describing the translation process using a corporeal language that renders the very act of translation corporeal too.

The sense of sight is the first instrument used in apprehending the source text. The visual faculty also recalls the importance of the eyewitness in Islamic doctrine, through which the reliability of information about the Prophet and his companions is endorsed (Motzki 2004, 287). Bin Faqihi sees the text and reads it (stanza 27), inspiring a meditative

exercise that involves his heart (*mtima, moyo*), the organ understood as the locus of knowledge and emotions (Kraska-Szlenk 2014, 49–50). Bin Faqihi uses the corporeal image of the heart as a metaphor to describe the internalising of the text: reading and pondering on the text functions as a medicament for his heart; bin Faqihi uses the verb *kutibu*, with the meaning of ‘soothe, alleviate, relieve’. This provokes an irresistible desire to make sense of the text,⁸ or a longing to translate it, which entails a feeling of freedom. Bin Faqihi uses the verb *kulekeza* (in the expression ‘Moyoni nikilekeza’ – ‘I aimed in my heart’), which means not only ‘aim, plan carefully, direct’ but also ‘let go free, release’ (as defined in Knappert and van Kessel 2010, 345). Ultimately, the effort yields a feeling of personal satisfaction in the work of translation (stanza 28).

The physicality of the act of translating is further suggested by bin Faqihi’s list of criteria for good writing conditions, which includes the need for a serene, private place to which a composer can retire to meditate and concentrate. In stanzas 4573 and 4574, bin Faqihi makes reference to an auricular dimension (the calm and quietude of the working environment), as well as to a gustative one (having food at hand). Overall, there is thus an emphasis on the body needing nourishment and a suitable physical environment in order to be able to make sense and produce meaning(ful words): to write and translate, *kutunga na kubadili*.⁹

For bin Faqihi, the body is an organ of perception that accesses something before communicating it (again). Bin Faqihi’s physicality as translator has also to do with the physicality of the place or the interaction between him as a composer and his environment. If, as Merleau-Ponty (1945, 96) notes, ‘regarder un objet, c’est venir l’habiter’ (to look at an object is to inhabit it), the poet bin Faqihi ‘inhabits’ the object, the *hadithi*, in a place of exclusive dedication. Bin Faqihi brings in the role of contextual features, the physical environment that influences textual production, or the ‘situative embeddedness’ (Risku et al. 2016, 53) that influences translation beyond mental processes. The physical presence of the translator thus occupies a specific space that is integrated into the translation process, and the translation is presented not solely as a mental process, but as one that involves the whole body – something truly physical, incorporating senses and emotions. This has recently been endorsed by the inclusion of Embodiment Theories in translation studies, a modest current of research that explores translators’ bodies and their embodied subjectivities as crucial elements in understanding translation and translating (see Ivančić and Zepter 2022).

Visibility of the act of translation and of translators

The portrayal of translation as a meditative exercise and physical effort not only frames the composer as a human being, made of flesh, but constructs them as a persona and ultimately also brings the visibility of the translator to the fore. In the poems discussed here, as for most classical Swahili poems presented as translations, there is a clear indication of the translators' names and other details. Bwana Mwengo, for instance, mentions kinship (stanzas 448–9) – surely because of the literary prestige of his father – as well as his place of birth and current place of residence. What is particularly interesting here is not solely the indication of the translator's identity, but the references to predecessors invoked both to inscribe the composer in a chain of authors (serving to illustrate literary continuity, mentioned above) as well as to legitimise the translator's requests for celebrity and fame, as the author of the *Katirifu* deliberately does (stanzas 444–5). The *dibaji* and *tamati* are thus sites where the presence of the Swahili composer as translator is made tangible and visible. The visibility is enhanced by the provision of background information about how the translators came into contact with the source text, what motivated them to translate it, how they conceived the craft of translation and what their expectations were. The Swahili poets want to be seen translating, showing themselves capable of navigating between several idioms, with the competence to understand the complex meaning of the Arabic and to convey it with responsibility, creativity and a notable amount of mental and physical effort. Translation is thus ultimately conceived as a literary practice with the potential to enhance the prestige of those who produce it, so long as it is put on display and not concealed or effaced.

Poem of Ra's al-Ghūl (excerpts)

By Mgeni bin Faqihi

Translated from Swahili by Serena Talento

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Source text: Mgeni bin Faqihi, Utenzi wa Rasi 'lGhuli (Poem of Ra's al-Ghūl), edited by Leo van Kessel (Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House, 1979, pp. 2, 229)

25

There is a wonderful story
Written in a book
In the language of the Arabs
And this story is excellent

26

That story, you should know,
Contains well-known words
On the Yemeni war
In the time of the Bringer of the Good Message¹⁰

27

I saw it, and I read it –
That is, I understood (it)
I found relief for my heart
Thinking of and considering it

28

Being able to reflect
I found that it pleased me
I aimed in my heart
To compose in poetry

29

I wanted to transform it
Into the Swahili language
Arabic is permitted¹¹ for
Those who know how to translate

30

I gave myself the troublesome responsibility¹²
I evaluated the Arabic
I composed the words
To give you the full story

4564

This is the end of the story
From the beginning to the end,
(The story) of the allies and the infidels,
Of our Prophet, the Bringer of the Good Message

4566

And me, having discernment,
I took on the task and the work
(Of) composing this poem,
Thinking of and considering (it)

4567

It is me, (who is) obedient to God
The one and only, who has no equal
Mgeni bin Faqihi –
That is (my) famous name

4572

For the task of composing,
You have to be a bard –
Or the Arabic words,
You have to know how to translate (them)

4573

You should also get a place (to stay)
It should be well isolated
And (your) heart should be calm
You should be attentive to the repetition

4574

Finally, you should have (sufficient) time

You should not be worried

(While) thinking and measuring¹³

Also, food must be at hand

4575

When you get into this state

You are then pervaded by a mind

Of composing and changing

You stay focused amid the (act of) repeating

Poem of Katirifu (excerpts)

By Abu Bakari bin Bwana Mwengo

Translated from Swahili by Serena Talento

Source text: Abu Bakari bin Bwana Mwengo, Utendi wa Katirifu, in 'The Utenzi wa Katirifu or Ghazwa ya Sesebani' by Jan Knappert, Afrika und Übersee, 52.3–4: 81–104, 264–313 (1969), pp. 86–7, 298–303

10

I have a great story
My brother, I will tell it
It happened in the land of Syria,
In the time of the Bringer of the Good Message

11

This story, know ye,
I saw it in a book
It is about the children of Isban,
I would love to repeat it

12

That is its name, certainly,
'(The Story) of the Children of Isban'
You who read, know ye,
The name is well known

13

You who mention it by name
Every person has heard of it
I will tell you this story
From the beginning to the end

430

The story is finished
The words are complete
Just as they are complete
In the (Arabic) story I refer to

431

Of the Arabic story
I moulded the words
Arranging the letters
Clearly so that there would be no mysteries

432

Because I wanted you to understand (it),
To recognise its language,
So that the ignorant one will not be exposed
When he receives the translation

439

I did not compose (it) out of desire
For worldly things,
But to praise the Prophet, the Intercessor
I composed (it) with great effort

444

Those who wrote in the past
Of honourable deaths and of wisdom,
Their words were good
This is only an abridgement of their work

445

The person who composed (this) today,
Even if it is only one eighth of their work,
Reckon him with them
That he too may be famous

446

And whoever sees a fault
And takes it out, that is commendable¹⁴
I will not say (that person) is contentious
What I have (done) is evident

448

He who composed the poem,
Of letters and lines,
Is a son of Bwana Mwengo
His name is Abu Bakar

449

His origin (is from) Lamu,
His residence is in Pate
The Arabic story,
I have repeated (it) in the Ajami script

Notes

1. From a historical point of view, the term 'Swahili coast' refers to the area extending from north of Mogadishu, in what is now Somalia, southwards to Cape Delgado, in Mozambique, passing through the archipelagos of Lamu, Zanzibar and the Comoros.
2. *Utendi*, pl. *tendi*, is the spelling of northern Swahili dialects, while *utenzi*, pl. *tenzi*, is the spelling of the southern Swahili dialects.
3. Generally speaking, the reconstruction of biographies of Swahili translators of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries relies on fragmentary information.
4. In several classical Swahili poems, the act of translation is denoted by the verb *kunudhumu* (to write in verse, write poetry) or *kudiriji* (to compose verse), for example in the *Ukawafi wa Miraji*, *Siri li-Asirari* and *Utendi wa kadhi Kassim bin Jafaar* (see [Talento 2021](#), 81).
5. For other examples of translation being described as the (alleged) exact reproduction and repetition of a previous text, see [Talento 2021](#), 68–70, 76–9.
6. See, for example, the following excerpts: 31. *Nachelea ni mjinga/Sijui sana kutunga/Na maneno kuyapanga/Yataka mtu mahiri*. 35. *Ewe mwanangu Khamisi/Shika hima qaratasi/Na kalamu kwa upesi/Pasiwe na kuusiri* (31. I fear I am ignorant/I don't know (how) to compose/Or arrange the words/(It) requires a clever person. 35. You, my dear Khamisi/Hold fast the paper/And the pen, quickly/Without delaying) (*Ras*, bin Faqih 1979, 2); 6. *Ahi patiya kalamu/na karatasi ya Shamu/na wino wema wa Rumu/mnetee taisiri* (*Katirifu*, Knappert 1969, 86) (6. My brother, bring the pen/And the Syrian paper/And the good ink of Constantinople/Bring them quickly).
7. Something I have described elsewhere as 'retrospective creativity' ([Talento 2025](#)).
8. See also another example from the *Utendi wa Barasisi* (Poem of Barsis): 5. *Bwene chuo makutubu/Kwa lugha ya Kiarabu/Nami yakanijibu/hapenda kuandikiya* (I have seen a book written/In the Arabic language/And it appealed to me/And I desired to write about it) ([Harries 1964](#), 5, 24, revised translation). Other classical Swahili poems deploy the image of the heart and the urge to translate: for instance, 60. *Mbwene hadithi chuoni/Ya tangu tumwa amini/Moyowa ukatamani/Lugha kuwagauziya* (Allen 1971, 87) (I saw in a book a story/Of the time of the Prophet/And my heart desired/To transform its language for you), from the *Utendi wa ngamia na paa* (Poem of the Camel and the Gazelle); or 45. *Niyawenepo chuoni/Moyo wangu hatamani/Kubadili kimangani/Kwa kisawahili kuioa* (Buttner 1894, 6) (When I saw it in the book/My heart desired/To change the Arabic [language]/And write it in Swahili), from the *Utenzi wa shufaka* (Poem of Compassion).
9. Several other classical Swahili poems evidence this. See, for instance, the following two examples: 216. *Kitunga huno utenzi/Naliwete ni mkazi/Sikwenda kwa utembezi/Ni makazi ya kukaa* (While composing this poem/I was oblivious; I was rooted in place/I did not wander around/It was a sedentary work) (*Utendi wa Barasisi*, [Harries 1964](#), 24);

5. *Kutunga kwataka moyo/Uwe mahali pekeyo/Utimize na chajiyo/Chakula na kukalia.*
6. *Na ulalapo na ndaa/Kutunga hakutofaa/Kuwaza na kushangaa/Vina havitolekea* (5. Composing requires heart [also soul or mind]/You should be alone in a place/You should finish supper/and be settled. 6. If you go to sleep hungry/The composing will be hampered/[You] will think and be dumbfounded/The rhymes will not flow) (*Utendi wa Mikidadi na Mayasa*, Allen 1971, 272).
10. This refers to the Prophet Muhammad.
11. *Qalili* has also the meaning of 'beloved', 'friend'.
12. *Kujikalifu* indicates taking on a responsibility or a task (cf. Knappert and van Kessel 2010, 228), but also 'to force/drive oneself; torment oneself' (Rechenbach 1967, 165). I have translated it as 'troublesome responsibility' to convey the sense of the tormented effort.
13. The verb *kuqisi* also generally means 'to evaluate, to examine'. I have opted for 'to measure', given the context of the rigidity of the Swahili prosodic system.
14. *Fani* can be used to refer to 'art, craft' in Swahili classical poetry.

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6 Brazil, 1813

Thinking and translating in the Brazilian Enlightenment

Dennys Silva-Reis and John Milton

It will come as a surprise to many to learn that printing presses were only officially permitted in Brazil in 1808, with the arrival of the Portuguese royal family, who were fleeing Napoleon. Of course, before that, many books were smuggled into Brazil, and there were illegal printing presses (Silva-Reis and Milton 2016, 11–12). Prior to 1808, French works from the Enlightenment were generally banned and feared, as they could give ‘wrong ideas’ and propagate concepts of democracy. A case in point is the revolt in the captaincy of Minas Gerais in 1789, when the local plutocracy, tired of paying excessive taxes on gold exported to the Portuguese crown, staged a revolt, the *Inconfidência*, which was quickly repressed by the forces of the Portuguese crown. The inventory of the libraries of the intellectuals involved in the conspiracy, such as the poets and translators Tomás Antônio Gonzaga and Cláudio Manuel da Costa, shows that they possessed works such as Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations*, Paul Thiry d’Holbach’s *Système de la nature*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Du contrat social ou Principes du droit politique*, encyclopedias, dictionaries and general reference books (Silva-Reis and Milton 2016, 11–12). An examination of the confiscated libraries of the Inconfidentes shows that, despite censorship, they included the complete works of French Enlightenment philosophers such as d’Alembert, Buffon, Diderot, Helvetius, Montesquieu and Rousseau (Villalta 2006, 370).

Furthermore, the leader of the conspiracy, and the only one to be executed, Lieutenant Tiradentes, passed around his copy of *Recueil des loix constitutives des États-Unis de l’Amérique*, a collection of the constitutional documents of the founding of the United States of America, the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation, asking his fellow soldiers to read it and, if they knew French, to translate it (Villalta 1999, 10).

With the creation of the Royal Press, which lasted until 1821, there was an effort to create a reading public, as well as a space to translate and produce national texts with official approval. Before long, books commissioned by the Court, manuals to help in higher education in the Brazilian Empire, and newspapers and magazines intended for all who could read came out of the royal press (Freitas 2006, 54).

'Discourse on translation' was published in the newspaper *O Patriota*, an important periodical responsible for spreading the ideas of the Enlightenment and disseminating new scientific methods and techniques from the natural sciences, human sciences and medical sciences (Freitas 2006, 57). In addition, it featured information on literature, as its subtitle 'Jornal Literário, Político, Mercantil &c. do Rio de Janeiro' indicated (Freitas 2006, 55). The journal was founded by Manuel Ferreira de Araújo Guimarães, who was also the author of the excerpt featured in this chapter. Guimarães was born in the state of Bahia, and was a teacher, mathematician, Latin scholar, poet, soldier, politician, essayist and translator (Rizzini 1988, 337).

Guimarães is well known in Brazilian history for his translations in the area of mathematics (for example, *Elementos de mathematica* by Abbot Marie) and his various scientific essays (the best known being *Elementos de astronomia para uso dos alumnos da Academia Real Militar*). As a professor at the Royal Military Academy, after a period of study in Lisbon, he established in Brazil, through his translations, manuals that standardised Brazilian teaching and practices in arithmetic, algebra, geometry, physics, mechanics and optics (Carolino 2012, 257). Most of the knowledge acquired and transmitted by Guimarães was of French origin, and most of his translations were from French. Furthermore, his involvement and interest in the hard sciences made him a great propagator and thinker of technical-scientific ideas, contributing to his appointment as head of *O Patriota*.

The target audience of *O Patriota* was the educated elite, which made up around 15 per cent of the total population at the time (Ferreira 2007, 43). With regard to the ideas of the Enlightenment, the newspaper had a clear political stance, publishing articles on geography, history and politics that included information about reforms and transformations that would mark Europe and Brazil after the Napoleonic era. As the journal's title indicated, *O Patriota* saw itself as having a patriotic role in terms of its efforts to improve education in Brazil. It thus disseminated techniques, methods and knowledge of navigation, mineralogy, botany, chemistry and medicine with the aim of aiding progress in these areas and supporting those who were working in these fields. Furthermore, the

periodical was one of the first attempts to implement ‘cultural journalism’ in Brazil, aiming to provide practical and clear guidance and teachings to its readers. In addition, it had a section on books that were available in the capital of Rio de Janeiro, frequently recommending authors and works, introducing them via reviews and praise for their translators (Ferreira 2007, 52).

When ‘Discourse on translation’ was published, concepts of what constituted authorship, rights, privileges or concessions over texts published or translated in the newspaper *O Patriota* did not exist; as historian Tânia Ferreira (2007, 54) explains, there was a lack of agreement regarding the idea of intellectual property. This meant that there were many possibilities for translators to take extremely free approaches to translation, and according to Ferreira, this was indeed characteristic of this period in the incipient Brazilian press. This phenomenon is confirmed by Pallares-Burke (1996, 129), who describes translations as being mostly tropicalised, that is, translated with significant modifications, adapted to the reality of tropical Brazil.

Guimarães appears to have bucked this trend, and to have come in for criticism for taking a faithful approach to translation. This can be deduced from the irritated tone with which he begins his essay: a certain ‘Wise Man’ described one of Guimarães’s translations as ‘very faithful’, intending this as an insult. On the contrary, Guimarães says, to describe his translations as ‘very faithful’ is to praise rather than condemn them. Guimarães also notes that when he tried to defend himself previously, ‘a modern writer’ labelled his efforts ‘Sermons, which are of no use’. In ‘Discourse on translation’, Guimarães sets out to further argue his case, defending the validity of his faithful translation approach by appealing to the canonical Latin authors Cicero and Horace as well as to French translators Pierre-Daniel Huet and Nicolas Beauzée.

The bulk of the essay is taken up with defending faithful translation and explaining what is meant by it. Guimarães proposes a definition of translation as ‘the copy that is made in one language of a discourse already made in another’. Although Guimarães uses the word ‘copy’, he does not refer to copying as accuracy, but as the transposing of ‘thoughts, images, figures, and even words’. Translations will not always be *ipsis litteris*, but should nevertheless always be faithful to the ‘beauties’ and ‘idiomatic expressions’ of the original text. It is this that will result in a ‘perfect and faithful copy’ – to the extent that such an approach is possible, since ‘the circumstance brings with it considerable difficulties’.

As Guimarães states, his conceptualisation of translation is based on that of Nicolas Beauzée, a French grammarian, translator and philosopher. Guimarães is citing from Beauzée's entry on 'Translation and version' in the *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*; the longer passage from which the citation is taken reads as follows:

Translation or Version. Both words are equally understood to mean a copy into a language of a discourse first expressed in another language as from Hebrew into Greek, from Greek into Latin, from Latin into French, etc. Ordinary usage, however, shows that these two words differ slightly, since the former is used in many cases when one could not use the latter; concerning the Scriptures, one talks about the Septuagint VERSION, the Latin (Vulgate) VERSION of the Bible, not the Septuagint TRANSLATION or the Latin (Vulgate) TRANSLATION. In contrast, Vaugelas is said to have provided not an excellent version, but an excellent translation from Quintus Curtius.

It seems to me that a version is more literal, more attached to the original language's own processes, and more dependent, in its methods, on the technique of analytical construction. Translation is more concerned with the substance of thoughts, more careful to present them in a suitable form in the new language, and more dependent in its style on turns of phrase and idiomatic expressions in this language (Beauzée [1765] 2006).

Beauzée thus distinguishes between two different kinds of 'copy': 'version', which is more literal, and 'translation', which is more concerned with the thoughts behind the words and which pays more attention to the style of the target language. While 'translation' might thus seem to allow the translator considerable freedom, Beauzée goes on to insist that 'nothing may be cut off, nothing may be changed; otherwise it would no longer be a *version* or a *translation*, it would be a *commentary*'. While not actually citing this later part of Beauzée's text, Guimarães is similarly concerned to emphasise fidelity to the source author as a *sine qua non* condition of translation.

Guimarães supports his view by contesting the reading of Cicero and Horace that many translators around him were using to justify a very free translation approach. Arguing that such approaches are 'the child of laziness' and 'lose the fidelity of the copy', Guimarães cites Cicero's

famous ‘not as a translator, but as an orator’ passage – once again echoing Beauzée, who concludes his entry in the *Encyclopédie* with the very same citation. Guimarães argues that this passage from Cicero ‘contains all the precepts of translation’, namely the need to translocate thoughts, employ the same tropes and even the same words. He marshals further passages from Cicero and from Horace to support his argument.

While Guimarães insists throughout the piece that those who have used Cicero and Horace to ‘claim the authority to translate freely’ are misguided, he nevertheless argues that in the case of poetry, considerable latitude is needed: in such cases, fidelity should obtain primarily on the level of sentences, tropes and figures, with fidelity to words only obtaining ‘quantum fieri possit’ (as much as possible). Echoing Cicero’s ‘not as a translator, but as an orator’ distinction, Guimarães states: ‘This is why I believe that the translation by a Poet should not be made as a Translator but rather as a Poet.’ For Guimarães, poetic translation is creative by nature and should be carried out by translators who are themselves poets. Like Cicero’s ‘orator’, the translator who translates as a poet should consider the ‘weight’ rather than number of the words, or in other words their genius and energy. In this way, Guimarães still reiterates the importance of fidelity, concluding his essay with citations from the seventeenth-century French translator Pierre-Daniel Huet to further support his view. As we saw in [Chapter 4](#) of this volume, Huet favoured literal translation approaches wherever possible, and argued strongly against the free translation approaches taken by the *belles infidèles* translators. Guimarães cites from Huet’s essay ‘De optimo genere interpretandi’, approving of Huet’s view that ‘the best kind of translating is when before all else the translator adheres very closely to the Author’s thought, and ... even to his very words’. At the same time, Guimarães emphasises the provisory ‘si fieri possit’ (if it can be done) clause with which Huet nuances each of his statements.

In his conclusion, Guimarães commends Huet’s approach to new translators, arguing that it needs to be combined with mastery of both languages and the kind of taste that comes with extensive knowledge of the classics. Targeting his words once more at his critics, he suggests that any mockery that is made of such translations will be down to the fact that a certain degree of impossibility always accompanies the translation task.

While further traces of the debate between Guimarães and his critics are difficult to find, it seems likely that Guimarães’s effort to outline translation principles in this essay will have served other Brazilian translators, particularly given Guimarães’s status as a scholar and a

contributor to *O Patriota*, one of the most read and respected newspapers of the time. Whatever the subsequent influence of the essay, 'Discourse on translation' is a valuable document that shows that there was vibrant debate about translation in early-nineteenth-century Brazil, and that it drew both from Latin texts and from the work of French translators Huet (writing in Latin) and Beauzée. The document thus adds a South American dimension to what has generally been perceived as a European translation tradition.

‘Discourse on translation’

By Manuel Ferreira de Araújo Guimarães

Translated from Portuguese by Dennys
Silva-Reis and John Milton

Source text: ‘Discurso sobre a tradução’ by Manuel Ferreira de Araújo Guimarães, O patriota, Jornal litterário, politico, mercantil, etc. do Rio de Janeiro, 3 March 1813. Available online in the original language at <https://memoria.bn.gov.br/DocReader/DocReader.aspx?bib=700177&pesq=traduc%C3%A7%C3%A3o&pasta=ano%20181&hf=memoria.bn.br&pagfis=309> (accessed 7 August 2024)

I have appeared before the Public as a translator so many times, and as such have been exposed to frequently indiscreet reproaches, so that today I consider it my duty to deal with Translations. There is in this Court a very respectable witness to the *very faithful* note that a Wise Man wrote about my first translation. He gave me praise, when he intended to condemn me. On a number of occasions after this I have written my thoughts on this subject; which a modern writer calls *Sermons*, which are of no use. Not wanting to respond personally, I shall disregard insulting sarcasm, and go directly to my target.

I call translation *the copy, which is made in one language, of a discourse, already made in another*. This definition, which belongs to M. Nicolas Beauzée, seems accurate to me and comprises the germ of what I have to say in this essay.

First it shows that one must know *one language and another* very well, and the subject of the discourse. Second, the rigour with which thoughts, images, figures, and even words must be transposed.¹

With regard to the first, who would doubt that, in order to translate well, it is not enough to simply know the Grammars of the languages, but it is necessary not to miss the smallest of their beauties, a single idiomatic expression, a single sentence? How can a perfect and faithful copy be

made? This circumstance brings with it considerable difficulties. Phrases from one language often cannot be transferred to another, and they must be replaced by equivalent ones, for example, one metaphor by another. The geniuses of languages, as different as the appearances of nations, do not always undergo a simple substitution of words; it is necessary to write, as A. wrote, in the language into which one translates, and thus appear an infinite number of language errors. What are commonly called synonyms pose another difficulty.

Two words that are the same indicate different points of view or meanings, and one can never be taken for the other. Some Authors, who may be worthy of praise, but who are not very careful with their mother tongue, have fallen into this defect. If I wished to point them out, I would have a wide field to choose from, but our language still lacks a Dictionary of Synonyms, and my distinctions seem arbitrary. Everyone knows that the lack of this knowledge caused a non-Frenchman in Paris to say *boyaux* instead of *entrailles*, and that in the act of ignoring this delicacy the famous Marquez de Galli called General Massena *L'enfant pourri de la victoire* instead of *L'enfant gâté*, which provoked the wrath of this Marshal.

But what should I say, when I see that many undertake this work even without knowledge of the grammar of their mother tongue? Instead of the serious and laborious study of languages, do they undertake the arid task of blindly joining words to words, even though their union does not take place in ordinary language? But perhaps I indirectly accuse my own defects.²

As, however, each art, each science, and in general each object, has its own terms, who can translate well without knowledge of the subject of the Work? For example, would someone who in Geometry translated *droite* as *right* be translating correctly? Yet here's what someone who didn't have a certain knowledge of Geometry would do. Every day we read inappropriate sentences generated by the replacement of loose words, which, linked and valued in speech, say nothing intelligible. I will spare the reader from examples, which can be found everywhere.

These considerations already give rise to many difficulties in this genre of writing, and also no small merit to those who perform it with dignity. A translation is nothing more than a translation, so say some so-called literati. It is an evident proposition: all things are no more than they are. Therefore, that negative definition of a translation means nothing, this is called the desire to produce *inania verba*.

It is necessary to understand A's meaning well, to know the energy of the language he uses, and to transpose his thought, without detriment

to the expression, as far as the analogy of the two languages allows, as I shall prove.

Some, perhaps terrified by the difficulties they face, will imagine that it is easier to evade them than to overcome them; and therefore they will claim the freedom to dress the portrait in other costumes, which is a copy. I mean, they think that once the Author's thought has been transposed, it does not matter whether the expressions are different, and even their combination; not remembering that this art loses fidelity of the copy, besides being very difficult to use other words without detriment to the meaning. To support this system, the child of laziness, they rely on two well-known texts by Cicero and Horace. Let us, therefore, analyse these passages, and show that these great Masters say the opposite of what they think.

Cicero's passage is as follows:

Nec converti, ut Interpres, sed ut orator; sentiis iisdem, et earum formis tanquam figuris, verbis ad nostram consuetudinem aptis: in quibus non verbum pro verbo necesse habui reddere, sed genus omnium verborum, vimque servavi; non enim ea me adnumerare lectori putavi oportere, sed tanquam appendere.³

I did not transpose (the Orations of Demosthenes and Aeschines), as a Translator, but as an orator, with the same thoughts, and with expressions adapted to the genius of our language, which I did not deem it necessary to put word for word, but I preserved the genus and strength of all of them; because I did not consider it necessary to give an account to the reader of the number of words, but rather of their weight.

These words contain (in my opinion) all the precepts of translation, *ut interpres*: 1st it must translocate the thoughts *sentiis iisdem*, employ the same tropes *figuris*, and even the same words *verbis*. If Cicero departed from these precepts, it is because he was not a Translator but rather an Orator *ut orator*. If this explanation seems arbitrary to anyone, many other places clearly prove it. *Totidem fere verbis interpretatus sum* (*De fin.* XXX, 100) *fungar interpretis munere, ne quis me fingere putet* (*Tusc.*), *expressa ad verbum duxi etc.*⁴ In all of them, scrupulous fidelity to the same words is recommended, without wishing to invent, transposing verbally.

The freedom that many translators have claimed, based on this passage, or on another from Horace that is even better known – *Nec verbum*

*verbo curabis reddere fidus interpres*⁵ – therefore disappears, or rather condemns Cicero. It should be noted that many worthy writers understood from this passage that Translations should not be faithful. Candido Luzitano, a well-known writer, following Dacier, Sanadon, and other commentators, shares this opinion. Others, however, no less knowledgeable, and perhaps more sensible, consult the Poet's obvious and literal meaning.

Horace does not speak here of Translation, but rather of imitation: suppose that the Poet proposes to treat a subject already known – *Publica materies privati juris erit*,⁶ and then it would be ridiculous to steal from A, who first dealt with it, all the thoughts already known and trod – *Nec circa vilem*,⁷ use the same words *verbum verbo*,⁸ as a faithful translator would do. The demanding critic is so far from condemning faithful translations that he never separates these two qualities. [Louis Marie] Desprez understood this passage well, expressing it in these terms, *nec verbum verbo explicare studeas, ut fidelis interpres*.⁹ And it is so decisive that one has to close one's eyes to the light to not understand it.

It is very easy to find examples. Virgil draws many episodes, and comparisons from Homer, and Camões from Virgil, but far from limiting themselves to the expressions of the originals, they make them even more beautiful. Commentators have become tired of pointing out these imitations, in Virgil, for example, the descent into Hell, the shield of Aeneas, and many others, are rather improved than extracted; in Camões, the immortal episode of Castro, the speech of Bacchus, the comparison with ants, and other great beauties are (to put it this way) refinements of the Latin Epic. What is the point of talking about Milton and Tasso? If these great geniuses, the former imitator of the Greek, and the latter of the Latin, had translated their models, they would be as reprehensible as the Translator who wanted to get ahead of the Original.

Horace is no less a fertile source of imitation. Our Ferreira and Sá will use his sentences with great felicity, and the philosophy, which breathes in their verses, almost exclusively: the immortal Garção inherited his sublime genius in his Odes etc. Boileau, and Pope among those from abroad, and all Poets of common sense, are imitators, *non ut fidus interpres*. It may be more difficult to translate it faithfully! If Ovid lives among us through a Translation, which is a masterpiece in my opinion, it is because of the patience and erudition of one of the greatest writers of our time. I admire Barreto's *Aeneid*, but I did not dare call it Translation. Similarly, however, I believe with unequal merit, we find *Jerusalem delivered* by Tasso, translated by Jacinto Freire de Andrade.

It is not my intention to condemn the works of these two distinguished writers, both classics of our language. I appreciate both works infinitely more than I do the translation of a Poet into prose, however scrupulous and faithful it may be. The charms of Poetry cannot be copied into a language that is foreign to it. To continue with my comparison, the colour of the painting is lost when a piece is transposed into prose; it will give the outline, and nothing else. This is why I believe that the translation by a Poet should not be made as a Translator but rather as a Poet, keeping as closely as possible to the text, but without losing sight of the rhythm, which is an essential part of its original.

It follows that only a Poet should translate another. Although, if we must give credit to our excellent *Filinto Elysio*, only a Poet is capable of feeling the beauties and what is fine, so to speak, of another, and because, according to Pope, *Whoever feels it better, expresses it better*, literature would not be monopolised by mercantile translations. In these cases, fidelity must be limited to sentences, and to tropes and figures, *sententiis et figuris*,¹⁰ and as for words, follow the sentiment of the famous Pierre-Daniel Huet, *quantum fieri possit*,¹¹ as I shall soon say.

To conclude this subject, I will quote the illustrious Huet in his excellent treatise *De interpretatione*.

Optimum ergo illum esse dico interpretandi modum, cum auctoris sententiae primum, deinde ipsis etiam, si ita fert utriusque linguae facultas, verbis arctissime adhaeret interpretes et nativum postremo auctoris characterem, quoad ejus fieri potest, adumbrat; idque unum studet, ut nulla eum detractioe imminutum, nullo additamento auctum, sed integrum, suique omni ex parte simillimum, perquam fideliter exhibeat ...

Universe ergo verbum de verbo exprimendum, et vocum etiam collocationem retinendam esse pronuncio, modo per linguae, quâ utitur interpretes, facultatem liceat. Hoc itaque generale scitum esto, quod in omni interpretatione versetur, verbum verbo, si fieri possit, referendum esse, nec vocum ordinem temere deserendum.¹²

This *si fieri possit*¹³ clause seems to constitute one of the greatest difficulties in translations. It is necessary to exactly know the genius of both languages, to masterfully possess the language into which one translates, to know whether one expression corresponds to another, and when this does not happen, what should be substituted. This requires considerable

taste, acquired through the enduring study of the classics, and this will always be an option for those who acquire the language through commerce with people who are poorly educated, or even very ignorant.

Those who have claimed the authority to translate freely will undoubtedly respond victoriously to this Memoir, which the short length of this periodical forces me to limit to this brief sketch. However, it seems to me to be sufficient not only to guide new Translators in carrying out their painful task but even to show that the mockery, which is made of a well-made Translation, perhaps arises from the impossibility of doing much more. *Mes écrits sont mauvais, les tiens valent-ils mieux?*¹⁴ (Boileau).

Notes

1. In Portuguese, there are two words, *traduzir* and *transladar*, for 'translate'. In order to differentiate in English we used 'transposed' for *transladar*.
2. Guimarães writes 'accuso os meus defeitos'.
3. The English translation that follows is our translation into English of Guimarães's Portuguese translation. For an alternative English translation, see [McElduff 2013](#), 112: 'I did not translate them as an interpreter, but as an orator, with the same ideas, forms and, as it were, shape, and with language fitted to our usage. I did not think it necessary to render word for word, but instead preserved every category and the force of the words. For I did not think that I should dole them out piece by piece to the reader, but rather, shall we say, pay them out by weight.' See also Gesine Manuwald's translation in [Chapter 1](#) of this volume.
4. 'I interpreted almost as many words' (from 'De fin'; that is, *De finibus bonorum et malorum*); 'I will act as an interpreter, so that no one thinks that I am impersonating' (from 'Tusc.'; that is, *Tusculanae disputationes*); 'I took it verbatim etc.' (unattributed). See [Cicero 1914](#), 190; [2014](#), 274–5.
5. 'if you do not seek to render word for word as a slavish translator' ([Horace 1926](#), 461).
6. 'Public affairs will be subject to private law.'
7. The longer citation from which these words are taken is 'si non circa vilem patulumque moraberis orbem', meaning 'if you do not linger along the easy and open pathway' ([Horace 1926](#), 460–1).
8. 'word for word'
9. 'nor attempt to explain it word for word, like a faithful translator'
10. 'thoughts and figures'
11. 'as much as possible'
12. James [DeLater \(2002, 45, 48\)](#) offers the following translation: 'Now I say then, that the best kind of translating is when before all else the translator adheres very closely to the Author's thought, and next, even to his very words – if the capacity of both languages so allows it, and finally, when he represents the outlines of the author's original style as much as possible; for that reason the translator's sole aim is as faithfully as possible to display the author as diminished by no subtraction and augmented by no addition, but whole, and most like him in every part ... I declare that in general, then, word should be expressed by word, and the arrangement of words should be retained as well, provided that the capacity of the language the Translator uses allows it ... And so, let this be known to all: what should abide in every translation is that, if possible, word ought to be reproduced by word, and the order of words should not be abandoned rashly.'
13. 'if it can be done'
14. 'My writings are bad, are yours better?'

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7 France, 1830

Madame de Rochmondet's *Études sur la traduction de l'anglais* (1830): a meeting of theory and practice

Hannah Overton-Gill

The year 1830 was characterised by political upheaval in France, with the July Revolution marking a shift in power from the autocratic Bourbon monarchy to the more liberal July Monarchy. The legacy of the Napoleonic Empire had also created instability beyond the borders of France, and challenged ideas of nationhood and cultural and political identity. This changing political landscape in the early nineteenth century was reflected in changing tastes and trends within literature and translation. In fact, Jacques Bereaud speaks of a 'revolution' in translation theory and practice during the Romantic period, writing that 'the change in aesthetic sensibility at the beginning of the nineteenth century, a new taste for the particular and not the general, a greater respect for the individuality of genius that can break through the formalism of rules and genres, would lead to a revolution in theory, and later in the practice of translation' (Bereaud 1971, 229).¹

This 'change in aesthetic sensibility' alludes to the shift away from eighteenth-century trends of adapting foreign texts to suit French tastes, towards a nineteenth-century ideal of bringing texts to a French audience in a way that maintains an essence of the foreign.² It is against this backdrop that Madame G. M. de Rochmondet's book *Études sur la traduction de l'anglais* was published. Its 260 pages offer an exploration of both translation theory and practice, centred around 20 extracts of English novels, set in parallel with the author's own translations. The author is named as Madame G. M. de Rochmondet, but this is where the clues to her identity end. History has largely forgotten her contribution to nineteenth-century translation discourse, but a close reading of Rochmondet's text offers an insight into the richness of debates on translation and language at that time, and the diffusion of such discussions beyond the boundaries

of canonised literature and male-dominated literary circles. The *Études* is representative of the shift in translation theory and practices that Bereaud points towards, which can be summarised as a balance between eighteenth-century practices of assimilation and nineteenth-century ideals of appreciation. Where Rochmondet's contribution is unique is in the presentation of her treatise, which takes the form of an educational handbook for both translators and students of English. This approach foreshadows the scientific, linguistic-oriented approach towards the study of translation that emerged in the 1950s and 1960s, with texts such as Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet's *Stylistique comparée du français et de l'anglais* (1958), Roman Jakobson's 'On linguistic aspects of translation' (1959) and Eugene Nida's *Toward a science of translating* (1964). By incorporating this methodological approach alongside her own translations and translator commentaries, Rochmondet successfully blends theoretical principles with practical applications, thus bringing early-nineteenth-century translation discourse to a new circle of readers.

Equivalence and synonymy

A thread that runs through Rochmondet's *Études* is the question of the possibility of equivalence between languages. The opening lines of her introduction suggest that 'a system of concordance' is impossible to achieve due to words having more than one purpose, and more than one application, within a single language. Rochmondet asserts that the direct meaning of words is consistent across languages because words are born of sentiments that are common to all mankind. However, the way in which these meanings are expressed, through idioms and analogies, necessarily differs over time and across geographies, because of the differences in human experience (Rochmondet 1830, 7–8). This points towards an understanding of the relationship between language and imagination popularised by the Enlightenment, a link that Rochmondet later confirms in a reference to Étienne Bonnot de Condillac's 'language of action' in her conclusion (Rochmondet 1830, 260). Condillac's 'language of action' refers to the idea that language originated as physical gestures used to communicate needs, desires and emotions. Language development is therefore rooted in sensory experience and is an extension of humans' interaction with the physical world.³

Since Rochmondet conforms to the view that language is rooted in sensory experience, and as such evolves over time and space, she concedes that there is no room for 'invariable rules of concordance' within

the practice of translation (Rochmondet 1830, 8). This is particularly true when it comes to the translation of figures and imagery, which ‘can rarely be transported from one language to another in a literal way’ (Rochmondet 1830, 260). This challenge is demonstrated in her translation of Hugh Blair’s *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, which she admits was difficult to produce because the source text consists of ‘abstract ideas and nuanced expressions that translation cannot exactly reproduce’ (Rochmondet 1830, 54). She advises that translators must pay particular attention to their choice of words in such cases, as ‘expressions that appear equivalent in the two languages are often susceptible to a different interpretation, or custom has modified their application in each’ (Rochmondet 1830, 54).

In response to this question of whether equivalence can be found between languages, Rochmondet proposes that there are three different kinds of synonymy within translation: ‘synonymy of ideas’, ‘synonymy of words’ and ‘synonymy of style’. Synonymy of ideas is the most crucial according to Rochmondet’s evaluation of the translation process, as she states that ‘ideas should never be altered in translation’ (Rochmondet 1830, 259). To achieve this, synonymy of words may be sacrificed. As for ‘synonymy of style’, or ‘movement’, Rochmondet allows translators a more nuanced approach: changes may be made, but only for the benefit of ‘the harmony of language, or of the composition as a whole’ (Rochmondet 1830, 259). Translators must therefore strike a delicate balance between communicating the meaning of the source text and writing in a way that befits the target language, all while working towards the ultimate purpose of a translation: ‘to deliver the meaning, and produce the same effect as the original’ (Rochmondet 1830, 259).

Several similarities can be drawn between Rochmondet’s definitions of synonymy, and those of her contemporaries. For example, the distinction between synonymy of words and of ideas echoes Alfred de Vigny’s reflections on his translation of *The Merchant of Venice* in 1830. In an effort to defend his work against critics who accused him of not being ‘literal’ enough in his translation, Vigny claimed that he ‘sought to reproduce the spirit, not the letter’ of Shakespeare (Vigny 1830). The fact that his translation was attacked for its distancing from the source text is indicative of the shift at the beginning of the nineteenth century towards a taste for literal translations. However, Vigny’s defence of his work, and his continued success as a translator, suggests that a practice of reworking the source text was still very much alive. The distinction between Vigny and his eighteenth-century counterparts is found in his motivations

behind making such changes; Vigny's proclaimed intention of reproducing 'the spirit' of Shakespeare signifies a desire to capture the essence and style of the source text, rather than an aim to manipulate it to fit the tastes of a new target audience, which would erase the source author entirely. This is in keeping with Rochmondet's promotion of 'synonymy of style' and producing 'the same effect as the original' when translating.

Rochmondet's comments on the variability of language across time and space also share similarities with the poet Charles Loyson's thesis in 1813, in which he discusses the translation of Classical poetry. In answer to the question of whether one should translate the Classical poets 'in prose or in verse', Loyson suggests that there is not a universal rule, and the translator should 'examine each poet in particular' to see what 'the time and the genre in which they have written can have in common with the poetic style of the language of the translator' (Loyson 1813). Rochmondet uses a strikingly similar reasoning and example to highlight the need for retranslation:

At an interval of one hundred years, the same expressions could not be translated in the same way from one language to another; there would have been changes to the language of the original, as there would have been to that of the translation ... The same observation explains the need to retranslate Greek and Latin authors at certain times; we hardly understand the old translations, and the Ancients should take on our modern forms, so that we can recognise their original charm and quality (Rochmondet 1830, 8).

These parallels with Loyson and Vigny demonstrate that Rochmondet's view of language and translation as a dynamic process, dependent on cultural and historical context, echoes contemporary nineteenth-century literary discourse.

Where Rochmondet's text differs from those of her contemporaries is in her clear-cut, almost scientific definitions of synonymy, which more closely resonate with the writings of twentieth-century translation scholars. For example, Roman Jakobson's exploration of the problem of equivalence in meaning in his paper 'On linguistic aspects of translation' can be set in parallel with Rochmondet's definition of 'synonymy of ideas'. Jakobson states that interlingual translation involves 'substitut[ing] messages in one language not for separate code-units but for entire messages in some other language' (Jakobson 1959, 233). Similarly, Rochmondet asserts that 'to translate is to transport the ideas of a composition from one language to another' (Rochmondet 1830, 259). For both Jakobson

and Rochmondet, then, equivalence is found not on the level of individual words, but on the level of concepts and meaning.

Rochmondet's understanding of 'synonymy of style' can also be shown to anticipate Eugene Nida's theory of dynamic equivalence, and the 'principle of equivalent effect', which dictates that 'the relationship between receptor and message should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original receptors and the message' (Nida 1964, 159). Rochmondet's 'synonymy of style' follows the same reasoning, arguing that 'synonymy of style' is what constitutes 'effect', and that while words and expressions may be altered, it is the 'effect' that must be reproduced in translation (Rochmondet 1830, 260). Therefore, while these concepts of equivalence resonate with the ideas expressed by other writers in early-nineteenth-century France, Rochmondet's clinical definitions of synonymy foreshadow the works of translation scholars over a century later.

The role of the translator

Rochmondet offers a clear definition of the role of translation in her concluding statements:

There are ultimately two kinds of translation: that which limits itself to making the foreign language known in its specific 'génie', i.e. literal translation, and that which aims to transport the ideas of the author from one language to another, so as to make the author known in all his specificity.

The best translation is that which fulfils the latter, while submitting as much as possible to the demands of the former (Rochmondet 1830, 260).

This definition demonstrates a balance between the liberal approaches of the previous century and the calls for literal translation that were beginning to be made in the first half of the nineteenth century.⁴ Rochmondet recognises the creativity and skill required of a translator, as demonstrated in her citing of Charles Batteux's claim that 'it is necessary to have, if not as much genius, then at least as much taste, to translate well, as to compose. Perhaps, even, it is necessary to have more' (Batteux 1748, 353). Yet, for Rochmondet, the translator's creativity finds its place in

overcoming challenges of translating figurative and idiomatic language in a way that captures the meaning of the source text, without adding to it. In other words, the translator has the freedom to adapt words and expressions, but only with the goal of reproducing the essence of the source text.

The ‘two kinds of translation’ envisioned by Rochmondet are therefore both centred on transporting aspects of the source text to the target reader, whether that be the language itself, or its author. This nuance is reflective of the clearer division between translator and author that began to take shape at the turn of the nineteenth century, with a line being drawn between writing and rewriting, creation and imitation.⁵ Rochmondet’s conclusion appears to support this image of the translator as a conduit for the source text, with a need to minimise the visibility of their own voice, as she summarises the task of translation as ‘to transport from one language to another, the ideas of a composition, and to imitate the forms in which they are found’ (Rochmondet 1830, 259).

This appreciation of the ideas and forms of the source text is somewhat reminiscent of Germaine de Staël’s 1816 article ‘De l’esprit des traductions’, in which Staël denounces the tendency of the French to adapt texts to their own tastes: ‘But to draw a real benefit from translation, we must not, like the French, give our own colour to everything we translate ... We wouldn’t discover new ways of thinking, and we would keep seeing the same face with barely different features’ (Staël 1816). This encapsulates the increasing desire in the nineteenth century to look beyond the borders of France and to appreciate the richness and variety of literary styles and genres from elsewhere. When we compare Rochmondet’s definition of translation with the views pronounced by Staël, we can see they are closely aligned when it comes to appreciating the particularities of the source language and source author.

However, Rochmondet adds a degree of nuance by suggesting that the best kind of translation is one that manages to both maintain proximity to the source text and communicate ideas in a way that suits the target language and target reader. We can here draw similarities with Nida’s ‘four basic requirements of translation’: ‘(1) making sense, (2) conveying the spirit and manner of the original, (3) having a natural and easy form of expression, and (4) producing a similar response’ (Nida 1964, 164). Nida’s four requirements, and Rochmondet’s definition, point towards the role of the translator as a tool for transporting the ideas and style of an author from one audience to another; the translator’s hand may be visible, but the target text is still that of the source author.

Translation and education

Beyond the role of translation as mediation, it is clear from the outset that the author of the *Études* views translation as a means of learning a foreign language. Rochmondet indicates that she first began to think about the quality of translations ‘while learning English’, and she later asserts that the practice of translation ‘is not only necessary for having an exact idea of the essence and the vocabulary of the language one is studying, but it is also the best way to learn how to write correctly’ (Rochmondet 1830, 9). The *Études* itself is presented as a handbook for students of English to follow, with parallel source and target texts, and detailed commentaries explaining the grammatical and linguistic differences between English and French. Rochmondet sees this format as a powerful learning tool, as it offers the reader direct comparisons between two languages, and highlights the nuances and subtleties that are unique to each one (Rochmondet 1830, 10). In this way, it could be said that her text represents a view of translation as a secondary activity, to be used as a means for language students to access texts until they are able to read the source text itself.

However, the detail of Rochmondet’s commentaries, and her exploration of the differences between English and French, take her text beyond this rudimentary view of translation, and bring it more closely in line with the scientific investigation of translation that found popularity in the mid twentieth century. There are thus two levels to the *Études*’ relationship with education: that of translation as a language-learning tool, and that of the *Études* as an educational tool for translators. In line with this, Benoit Léger describes Rochmondet as the ‘Vinay and Darbelnet of her century’: both Rochmondet’s *Études* and Vinay and Darbelnet’s *Stylistique comparée du français et de l’anglais* are presented as tools for professional translation, translation in education and translation in linguistic research (Léger 2009, xxxiv). The similarities also extend to the authors’ motivations behind producing their texts. Rochmondet writes that her enquiry into translation arose from questioning ‘whether it would be possible to reduce the art of translation to a type of procedure whose laws were broadly invariable’ (Rochmondet 1830, 7). Similarly, Vinay and Darbelnet outline their intentions for producing a translation methodology by conceding that, while it is ‘partly true’ that translation is an ‘art’, it is also ‘an exact discipline, with its own methods and particular problems’ (Vinay and Darbelnet 1958, 7).

It is this didactic approach that Frédéric Weinmann believes makes the *Études* worthy of attention:

[Rochmondet's work] transposes the ambiguities and principles of Mme de Staël into the domain of education, no doubt because its author is not an academic dissertating on the translation of the great authors of Antiquity, but a woman theorising on the translation of English authors (Weinmann 2012, 70).

In other words, Rochmondet's use of modern English writers as examples, her clear presentation of translation difficulties and solutions, and her broad target audience, enable the *Études* to bring early-nineteenth-century translation discourse beyond the walls of academic institutions and into the hands of women and students who would otherwise be excluded from such discussions. In light of this position of exclusion and marginality from which Rochmondet was writing, it is perhaps not completely appropriate to align Rochmondet with scholars such as Vinay and Darbelnet, Jakobson, and Nida, who operated from within the field of academia. Rather, we can see Rochmondet as a writer and translator who recognised the complexities of the translation process, and the value that studying and analysing that process can offer to theoreticians, practitioners and language enthusiasts alike.

Studies on Translating from English **(excerpt)**

By Madame G. M. de Rochmondet

Translated from French by Hannah Overton-Gill

Source text: Madame G. M. de Rochmondet, Études sur la traduction de l'anglais. Published by the author, Paris, 1830. A modern edition of the source text is available as Études sur la traduction de l'anglais by Madame G. M. de Rochmondet with introduction, notes and bibliography by Benoit Léger (Ottawa: Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 2009)

Introduction

(pp. 7–8)

While learning English, I often found myself consulting translations from French into English, and from English into French; I more often came across imitations than true translations, and I asked myself whether it would be possible to reduce the art of translation to a type of procedure whose laws were broadly invariable.

If words only had a single meaning in each language, if they did not serve dual purposes, or if they at least never deviated from their ‘analogie’ [analogy],⁶ it would indeed be feasible to conceive of the possibility of a system of concordance, which responds to all the demands of translation. The direct meaning of words is consistent in each language, because the needs of all men are similar, and because ideas are formed and analysed in the same way in relation to feeling; figurative expressions would also find their equivalent: if the imagination is not applied to the same objects across different peoples, it is susceptible at least to the same impressions and it possesses the same faculties; but the ‘tours ingénieux’ [witticisms, nuances, character] of each idiom, and the modifications that time and

caprice, much more than fortunate combinations, bring to language, do not allow for two idioms, that are still each undergoing changes, to be submitted to invariable rules of concordance.

The study of languages through translation offers a wide range of observations on the course of ideas, and on the movement of minds. At an interval of one hundred years, the same expressions could not be translated in the same way from one language to another; there would have been changes to the language of the original, as there would have been to that of the translation. This distinction, if it could be made, would serve as a guiding thread in this inextricable labyrinth of human thought, considered in relation to the changes it undergoes, and the influence that is exerted over it by the course of history.

The same observation explains the need to retranslate Greek and Latin authors at certain times; we hardly understand the old translations, and we must clothe the Ancients in our modern forms, so that we can recognise their original charm and quality.

Summary or principles of translation

(pp. 259–60)

Translation should deliver the meaning, and produce the same effect as the original.

There is no work that does not have its own discrete identity: it is determined by the nature of the composition, and modified by the character, the talent, or the intention of the author. These diverse features should be carefully observed, or rather, felt: one should identify with the composition being reproduced, and make it one's own in expression.

Thought, the manner of conceptualising in a language, depends on its ideology, or specific 'génie' [genius]; the way of expressing, or arranging the different parts of discourse, is part of the syntax of each language.

To translate is to transport the ideas of a composition from one language to another, and to imitate the forms in which they are presented.

Translation is composed of synonymies.

Synonymy of idea forms the identity of the composition.

Synonymy of words, or rather of expressions, produces exactitude.

Synonymy of style, or similitude of movement, forms the effect.

Ideas should never be altered in translation.

Words or expressions are often altered in favour of the meaning of the original.

Difference in idiom, or in the meaning of words in each language, and in their use in discourse, requires such modifications.

The style or the movement of a composition cannot be changed without altering the effect.

Translation should not allow for changes in this regard, unless they are for the benefit of the harmony of language, or of the composition as a whole.

Rhetorical forms or movements are never opposed to syntax; they form what Condillac calls the 'language of action'.⁷ This natural expression of the movements of the soul, shared by all men, has also governed the formation of all languages.

Figures or images, strictly speaking, are ingenious expressions that serve to transform an abstract idea into a tangible form.

Modified by the specific 'génie' of each language, images undergo various changes in translation.

Figurative expressions can rarely be transported literally from one language to another, when these languages do not share the same 'analogue' of ideas and expressions.

The perfect image, which is nothing more than a sustained metaphor or allegory, is conveyed by the principal idea, when the two terms of comparison are analogous in the two languages; but the different connotations of this image can rarely result in a perfect concordance.

While the principal abstractions are consistent in two languages that are equally developed, their mode of existence and their terms of comparison are subject to the ideology of each.

An image can be translated using a different illustration, if the language of the translation presents that illustration as analogous to the idea intended in the original composition.

Images or figures are to style or rhetorical movements as are words to an idea; with the difference that style is not always composed of images, but ideas can only be expressed by words.

There are ultimately two kinds of translation: that which limits itself to making the foreign language known in its specific 'génie', i.e., literal translation, and that which aims to transport the ideas of the author from one language to another, so as to make the author known in all his specificity.

The best translation is that which achieves the latter, while submitting as much as possible to the demands of the former.

Notes

1. All translations are my own.
2. For more on eighteenth-century translation trends in France, see D'Hulst 1990, Candler Hayes 2009 and Weinmann 2012.
3. The concept of 'language of action' was developed in Étienne Bonnot de Condillac's *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge* (1746) and *Course of Study* (1775). Condillac was greatly influenced by John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), and his understanding of the origins of language and knowledge was shared by other Enlightenment thinkers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau (*Essay on the Origin of Languages*, 1781), and Adam Smith (*Considerations Concerning the First Formation of Languages*, 1761).
4. The liberal translation practices of the eighteenth century can be summarised by the following definition of the terms 'version' and 'translation' by the French linguist Nicolas Beauzée in 1751: 'It seems to me that "version" is more literal, more attached to the processes of the original language ... and that "translation" is more concerned with the essence of the ideas, more intent on presenting them in a form that suits the new language, and more subjected in its expressions to the idiosyncrasies of that language ... Translation adds to the discoveries of the literal version, to the particularities of the language in which it is communicating ... It should deliver these ideas as if it had conceived them, without drawing on a foreign language.' This practice of adding to the source text and moulding it to the target language led to the coining of the term 'les belles infidèles', which has been used to describe translations from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that are characterised by their emphasis on creating a pleasing and readable text in the target language, often at the expense of staying 'faithful' to the source material.
5. For more on the division between authorship and translatorship in the nineteenth century, see Grutman 2012.
6. Rochmondet's use of the term 'analogie' here refers to the concept of the link between signs and ideas within Étienne Bonnot de Condillac's theory of language formation. According to this theory, 'analogie' is a process through which new words are formed, as the human mind draws connections between physical experiences and the words that are used to denote them. In the context of Rochmondet's introduction, 'analogie' can therefore be understood as the origin or history of a word, particularly in relation to its links with the physical world and with existing vocabulary within a language.
7. This is a reference to Étienne Bonnot de Condillac's 'language d'action', coined in his *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge* in 1746.

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8 Ethiopia, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

A traditional Ethiopian hermeneutic approach to translation

Bethlehem Attfield

With a manuscript writing and translation tradition that started in late antiquity, Ethiopia offers significant potential for challenging existing narratives about the development of translation studies. Located in the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia's written civilisation is believed to have started during the first millennium BCE, and the manuscript tradition developed when Christianity was adopted as a state religion in the fourth century CE (Bausi 2014). The literary language of this period was Ge'ez. This ancient sub-Saharan African script is still used today, with little variation, to write Amharic. The literary tradition is based on two sources: original works written in Ge'ez, and translation from foreign sources. Most manuscripts translated during the empire of Aksum (150 BCE to seventh century CE), located in what is now Northern Ethiopia, were from Greek to Ge'ez.

The decline of the Aksumite Empire disrupted Ethiopian literary tradition until a renaissance took place during the Solomonic dynasty, which lasted seven hundred years. This revival started during the reign of the first King of the Solomonic dynasty, Yekunno Amlak (1270–85 CE), who strengthened the link between church and state. Translation from Coptic Arabic thrived during this period, and it became widely known as the Golden Age for Ge'ez literature (Haile 1995, 45).

The Ethiopian Orthodox church uses the literary language Ge'ez, together with an exegesis tradition called *andemta*. *Andem* interpretation was traditionally taught orally by church scholars who used concepts from Ge'ez manuscripts and expounded on the various Amharic interpretations. Although there is a substantial corpus of translated work that has *andem* commentary, academic discourse about it is scarce.

This essay will focus on the significance of *andem* as a hermeneutic tradition. Apart from biblical exegesis, *andem* was used for interpreting historical and philosophical books as well as teaching the *Fetha Nagast*,

an Ethiopian medieval law. By drawing on the *andem* interpretation tradition, Ethiopian traditional scholars went beyond acquiring knowledge from foreign sources via interlingual translation to being knowledge transformers. In the same manner, the *andem* hermeneutics tradition can be used as a critical approach for studying translation and developing indigenous theories.

Background to the excerpt and the author

The excerpt is taken from the book *Tentawi yeEthiopia Serate Timhirt* (Early Ethiopian education system) written by Habte Mariam Workneh. Workneh was born in Gondar province in 1923, and mastered the highest stages of traditional church education, including *zema bet* (study of sacred music), *qine bet* (study of poetry and rhetoric) and *andem* interpretation of the Old and New Testaments. He further studied at a modern theological college, Trinity College in Addis Ababa, before travelling to Greece to study for an undergraduate degree in theology. On his return he served as the dean of Trinity Theology College, and soon after he was appointed as bishop of the Trinity Cathedral. During these years he played an important role in modernising the teaching of the Ethiopian Orthodox church, as well as writing and publishing 21 books. He also played a significant role in the preservation and archival of ancient *andemta* manuscripts.

In the excerpt, Workneh lists the succession of scholars who instructed the New Testament commentary beginning from the eighteenth century, down to his teacher and him. Besides Amharic, which was his mother tongue, he was fluent in Ge'ez, Hebrew, Geek, Arabic and English. Workneh was ordained bishop in 1991 and was given the name Melka Zadik. He was honoured for his extraordinary service by the Ethiopian Orthodox church in California, where he served as a bishop towards the end of his career, and his birthday, 19 July, is declared Melka Zadik Day ([Tewahedo Church Blog n.d.](#)). Workneh's seminal work on the teaching and practice of *andem* interpretive tradition is an important foundation for any academic work that focuses on the role of indigenous traditions.

Definition and significance of the *andem* tradition

Andem commentary is mostly used on biblical texts, but in a few cases it is used on obscure secular texts that make understanding difficult, such as philosophy and law. Initially, these texts were mostly translated

by foreign scholars who brought the books from Europe and the Middle East, translating them mainly from Greek and Arabic to Ge'ez. The *andemta* corpus comprises these Ge'ez texts, their Amharic translation and the *andem* commentary (*tirguame* or *hatata*) on the Amharic translation (Cowley 1983).

As explained in the excerpt, the meaning of *andem* is based on the word አንድ (*and*), which in Amharic means 'one'. *Andem* in this sense implies 'and here is one way of interpreting'. This process can be defined as an exegesis or interpretation that provides a critical explanation to reveal meaning. Each interpretation introduces a different perspective through several commentaries that always begin with *andem*. Instead of saying 'the second', 'the third' and so on, saying 'and one' provides non-hierarchical views for broader understanding. *Andem* interpretation is believed to have started in Ethiopia with the advent of the Jewish religion in the early Aksumite period, tenth century BCE. The አንድም *andem* interpretation and translation tradition attained its current definitive form during the Gondarin period (sixteenth to eighteenth centuries).

The tradition has a global epistemological as well as historical significance. Firstly, the ancient Ethiopian manuscript corpus had global significance in preserving manuscripts considered extinct in the rest of the world, such as the Ethiopic Book of Enoch. According to 'The Ethiopic *andemta* commentary on Ethiopic Enoch', this book was written in 4014 BCE and entered the country when Jewish teachers and priests accompanying King Menelik brought with them the Old Testament (Lee 2014). It should be noted, however, that most historians place the writing of the Book of Enoch between the third and second century BCE. Secondly, the tradition provides important information about the archival and written historical documentation of the processes involved, with the *andem* commentaries listing the scholars who contributed to the corpus and taught the Old Testament from the time of Menelik I, Ethiopia's first Christian bishop, until the late seventeenth century (Cowley 1983).

The *lay bet andemta* corpus, which is considered obsolete, can be accessed digitally by the public at four libraries including the national archive and library of Ethiopia (Mengistie 2010). On the other hand, the fact that scholars like *memher* Esdros (mentioned in the excerpt) spent a substantial amount of time in researching and revising the *tach bet andem* interpretation suggests that although *andem* had specific principles, it had a dynamic nature allowing it to evolve and stay alive to this day.

Methodology of the *andem* tradition

In the excerpt, Workneh often refers to *andem* as *tirgum* or *tirguame*. The latter two terms are synonymous Amharic words that mean ‘meaning making’. In an Ethiopian context, *tirgum* emphasises that translation is the act of rendering the meaning of a text or utterance from an unknown language to a known language or making an obscure text comprehensible within the same language. The term can be used interchangeably for both interpretation and translation, and in my translation of the excerpt I use the English term that is most closely suggested by the context. If one is to find a metaphor for *tirgum* it would be ‘transformation’, as it involves contextualisation with the intent of making understanding possible in Ethiopian culture, which inevitably transforms the text.

The example below, of a single verse from the Old Testament book of Numbers 21:9, helps to illustrate *tirgum* and show how it differs from literal translation. In this example Lee (2011) provides a literal English translation of the authoritative Ge’ez text together with the English translation of the non-literal Amharic translation to make this clear. In addition, I have included his English translations of the *andem* commentaries that accompany the verse to give a sense of how this complements *tirgum*:

(Ge’ez) And Moses made a serpent out of bronze and raised it up to be shown as a sign and whenever a serpent bit a man he would look to that bronze serpent and he would be saved.

(Amharic) Moses made a serpent of bronze and he raised it up in a place where it could be seen, whenever a snake bit a man he would look at that serpent and would be saved; this is a symbol: the snake of the devil; the bronze serpent of the Lord; with a living animal the snake which bit them the bronze serpent would save them; the devil who is living by nature and who harmed them, the Lord suffered and died in his body for salvation, this is a symbol.

ANDM: the snake which has poison which bit them, the bronze serpent saved them – the devil who has the poison of sin bit them, the Lord who is pure in nature saved him, this is a symbol.

ANDM: the snake [is a symbol] of Adam, the bronze serpent of the Lord; this is a symbol of those who were bitten

by the poison of the snake, the bronze serpent saved them – Adam was bitten by sin, the Lord by his goodness saved them.

ANDM: bronze is pure, and the nature of the Lord is pure.

ANDM: bronze is red, for the Lord having broken his flesh, and poured out his blood, he saved the world.

ANDM: The sound of bronze is heard from far off, for the suffering and death of the Lord from one border to another is heard.

ANDM: bronze is found in hot lowlands and in temperate highland; the Lord will beget children from the Nation (the Jews) and from the Nations (the Gentiles) and the Apostles are those who were saved having heard his voice and seen his face; those saved having just heard his voice are the believers who are raised up until the day of his coming (Lee 2011, 53–4).

As evidenced in the third to sixth commentary above, the *andem* commentary is often very different from the Ge'ez text to the extent that this authoritative work may not be recognisable. It should also be noted that the Amharic translation contextualises the symbolism of the bronze serpent, showing that the translator had agency to elaborate the text to make it comprehensible to the reader. Although not evident in this example, *andem* commentary also often explores discrepancies between texts, including marginal glosses, alternative titles and headings, and textual revisions.

As a field of study that pursues understanding through interpretation, *andem* was linked with other dynamic indigenous hermeneutics traditions such as *qine*. *Qine* typically emphasises the deeper meanings that can be conveyed via symbolic and semantic inferences, and *andem* interpretation often uses the Ethiopian *qine* hermeneutic tradition to explain the meaning of a passage (Lee 2011). However, as Mennasemay argues, such explanations are never exhaustive, and the idea of incompleteness is fundamental to the *qine* tradition:

understanding even if it is comprehensive, is always incomplete ...
qine hermeneutics affirms the necessity of developing unorthodox
directions and multiple perspectives to map out more adequately the
various dimensions – the different and contradictory, the familiar
and unfamiliar, the new and the old, the visible and invisible,
the given and the repressed – of the issue at hand (Mennasemay
2021, 71–2).

The phenomenon of incompleteness in *qine* hermeneutics means that constant critique and openness to new ideas is required to achieve a more comprehensive understanding. This open-endedness of interpretation paves the way to a third principle, *zaraḥa*. Meaning ‘plunder’, *zaraḥa* refers to the concept of appropriation. In *qine* practice, while *andem* and *tirgum* serve to interpret and translate a concept by reframing it in different contexts, *zaraḥa* is used to decentre hegemonic thinking by rerouting and configuring it as a new horizon. For example, the *Fetha Nagast*, the medieval Ethiopian law, was taught from a version with *andem* commentary that was appropriated (using *zaraḥa*) from Roman sources, and hence the translation was culturally as well as conceptually opaque. The *andem* commentary involves interpreting obscure passages in different ways, sometimes paraphrasing and giving examples from lived experiences and customs using different rhetorical devices such as aphorisms, syllogisms, epithets. For example, as Abba Paulos Tzadua (1968), translator of the *andem* commentary of the *Fetha Nagast* into English, explains, in *andem* interpretation *jure belli* ‘the law of war’ in particular with reference to the right to pillage during war of conquest is expressed by the common Ethiopian adage ‘with the neck of the horse and with the language of the spear’ (1968: xx). This adage serves to contextualise the concept in a distinct Ethiopian traditional semiotic framing. Another example where reference to the Ethiopian way of life is used to expound a concept is the translation of ‘bringing a lawsuit’ as ‘to litigate [while] holding a stick upright, after appointing a judge’ (1968: xx). Again, in this case, as well as contextualising the concept with cultural reference, the translation incorporates the symbolism of holding a stick upright, a distinctive marker of traditional litigators presenting a case.

The case of the *Fetha Nagast* shows that *andem* interpreters and translators had a high degree of agency, which allowed them to change existing knowledge by exploring multiple dimensions, including introducing new horizons. In this sense the scholars went beyond acquiring knowledge from foreign sources via interlingual translation to being knowledge transformers.

The teaching of *andem* interpretation

As mentioned in the excerpt, the study and practice of traditional Amharic *andem* commentary on Ge’ez text is one of the highest stages of the traditional education system called *metsehafbet* ‘House of Books’, which takes five years of study. According to Ethiopian tradition, the oral practice of

the commentary existed among the Jewish community in the country well before Christianity arrived. However, production of authoritative written corpus was achieved during the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries CE. Although traditional scholars are known by the title of *liqawnt*, those who completed the four highest stages of *andem* interpretation are called four-eyed because of their total commitment to learning and research. The four stages encompass commentary on the New Testament, commentary on the Old Testament, commentary on the books of scholars including the *Fetha Nagast* and commentary on monastic literature. In the introduction of the *Fetha Nagast* commentary, prominent *liqawnt* who disciplined other important *Fetha Nagast* scholars are listed according to their succession beginning from the sixteenth century.

As noted above, although most of the *andem* commentary corpus was written down during the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, much of the ontological discussion and debate in which these scholars engaged was oral, rather than textual, discourse. Mennasemay (2021) suggests that it is the orality of this discourse that partly led Ethiopian policy makers to disregard the *qine* and *andemta* traditions and instead embrace social studies modelled in Western modernity, without decentring it through *zarafa*.

The discussions above show that Ethiopia was home to a strong indigenous critical study of translation and praxis long before translation started to be studied as a discipline in anglophone countries. Moreover, despite the undermining effect modern education had in traditional knowledge formation and interpretation systems, *tach bet andemta* has survived as a living interpretive tradition and is practised and taught to a lesser extent within the Ethiopian Orthodox church.

According to Kobus Marais (2013), one of the main issues that has caused the narrowing of perspective in translation studies is its tendency towards reductionism, particularly its preoccupation with interlingual literary study. Studying traditional interpretative systems as an approach to critical theory can enable the discipline to go beyond this tendency. Furthermore, ongoing research in developing a translation theoretical framework informed by *andem* hermeneutic tradition fosters the efforts to expand indigenous African epistemology, carrying the baton of Ethiopian traditional literary scholars to become knowledge transformers.

Early Ethiopian Education System **(excerpts)**

By Liqe Siltanat Habte Mariam Workneh

Translated from Amharic by Bethlehem Attfield

Translation published with the kind permission of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa University

Source text: Habte Mariam Workneh, ጥንታዊ የኢትዮጵያ ትምህርት (Tentawi ye Ethiopia Serate Timhirt). Brehan ena Selam Publishing, Addis Ababa, 1962 EC (1970)

History of interpretation

Exactly when the *andem* approach to book *tirguame* [interpretation]¹ began in our country is not evident; moreover, who introduced it or where it originated from is not entirely clear. However, if we proceed with conjectures, there is a belief that the study of ancient *andem tirgum* [interpretation] may have arrived in the country during the time the Old Testament was translated from Hebrew to Ge'ez. Furthermore, there is a presumption about the Old Testament arriving in the country with the [Jewish] scholars who accompanied Menilik I [10 BCE] during the reign of Queen Sheba, and that these scholars have been translating and teaching the *andem* approach ...

***Ye-tirguame* [interpretation] methods in Gondar**

During the Gondarin period, as knowledge became specialised and categorised, the interpretation [*tirguame*] of books also became a specialised field that attracted attention and got many disciples, developing in the direction of the definitive form it has now. Furthermore, it was

transmitted to the present day via several scholars who gained numerous pupils. The scholars were not all Ethiopians. There were some foreign scholars among them. The most prominent among these were Mualem Petros (German citizen), and the Arab Paulos Zekri ...

In such [historical] narration, although there were earlier Ethiopian scholars, by way of example they recount from [relatively] recent history of how Paulos Zekri taught Abba Pauli, who in turn taught Serewe Kirstos, who taught Tsege Dingil, who taught Abba Yacob, who taught Betre Kirstos, and he taught Aleqa Guangul, who taught *memhir* [teacher] Esdros ... Although this man was blind, he was known as the four-eyed because of the depth of his research. Scholars not only need to learn but to research, which requires reading, thus his spirit convicted him to retire to a monastery at Tana and read numerous books as part of his research. He had several disciples who had scattered to different parts of the country to teach. Upon his return, having consolidated his findings, he summoned his disciples saying that there were areas that need further exploration in the field. While many of his disciples acknowledged his call and went to him a few ... refused to go back to school. Thus, most scholars study with the new version while a few kept the old version. That is why *andem* interpretation has two categories known as *lay bet*, upper house and *tach bet* lower house. The one called upper house is the interpretation used by scholars who refused to comply to their master's call to reconvene and revise the existing *andem* interpretation. This is also known as House of Gojam interpretation and has many commentaries. What is known as lower house interpretation is the version practised by those who discussed with their master and revised it by integrating the new findings. It is also called House of Gondar's interpretation, and this is what is more visible today as its use is more widespread ...

... Each disciple could recount the line of scholars his teacher studied with ... with regards to my line, I similarly recount from *memhir* Wolda Michael [the third generation of disciples who studied under the line of *memhir* Esdros] ... instructed Abune Abraham, who taught Seife Selassie ... who taught ... and *liqe Siltanat*² Habte Mariam ...

Andem tirguame [interpretation]

What is called *andem* interpretation is when after a translation is done once, it further undergoes 10 to 15 successive commentaries. Regarding *andem*'s meaning, it is *aw bo* [or there is] in Ge'ez, which means 'there is also another interpretation like this', as a way of giving alternative meaning. In Amharic it does not say second, or third, instead it keeps listing

up to 15 alternative interpretations by introducing each as *andem* [and one], regardless, it implies the same meaning as second, third. As the *andem* interpretation [framework] was fixed, even when some pupil had new insight, they were restricted from amending it ...

Nevertheless, there were a few scholars who deviated from it and hence were highly regarded and gained a reputation for breaking the bondage of such culture. They [either] interpreted by keeping the *andem* framework, or without it just by following the *zaybe* [Amharic translation of a Ge'ez text], or the signified meaning. This implies they were following different approaches. Similarly, when they interpret without following the framework, independently of the *esmae* [because] and *keme* [as], they explored various approaches. Besides, some interpret without following the *zaybe* but [still] interpret along the line of the implied meaning. In this regard, they interpret by telling anecdotes, giving examples and clarifications. They justify the reason for each remark in a sentence, quoting verses to evidence it. Generally, they compare and contrast ideas, offer definitions, reveal the obscure, explain proverbs in order to make sense.

Netela tirguame [literal translation]

Literal translation is an approach that is used to directly translate a text without providing further commentary. This is the type of approach that was used to translate ancient manuscripts from foreign languages into Ge'ez ... these were further translated to Amharic. However, the scholars must have found the direct Amharic translation strange because they were used to exploring multiple perspectives through the *andem* tradition. *Andem* interpretation was suitable for contextualising through different perspectives, for clarifying dense text, which they feared if left unexplained may cause misunderstanding and lead to apostasy.

Mistir tirguame [translation of implied meaning]

This is an approach that only translates the concept, without relying on the text or its structure. For example, *belwa lezati quntsil*³ is translated as – ‘say to Herod’ ... The mature and experienced [practitioners] preferred this approach because they were already aware of the implied meaning from *andem* explication. But those who studied other languages and who were familiar with other approaches, preferred literal translation because they have to directly translate the text as they understand it.

Tirgum [commentary] of books in the current era

In this current twentieth century, art has developed, and knowledge has also improved, so to enable us to keep pace with the rest of the world, all our books have been interpreted using the approaches discussed above. Not only that, but they have also been published and made widely available ...

Books published with *andem tirgum* [commentary]:

- 1 The four gospels
- 2 Books of the monks
- 3 Fourteen services of the liturgy, in full
- 4 The book of John Chrysostom, two sections
- 5 The praises of Mary and the liturgy of Mary
- 6 *Fetha Nagast*, the law of the kings
- 7 Ecclesiasticus and the books of Solomon

Notes

1. Workneh refers to *andem* as an approach to '*tirguame/tirgum*', which can mean translation, interpretation or commentary, depending on how it is used.
2. A title given to Workneh as dean of Holy Trinity Theological college and chief of ecclesiastical affairs.
3. The literal translation is 'tell that fox', referring to Herod.

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9 Arab world, late Ottoman era (1896–1914)

Recalling ‘past presents’ for future generations: translation (studies) in the Arab world during the late Ottoman era (1896–1914)

Ruth Abou Rached¹

Introduction

Translation has been a key site of knowledge creation across the diverse languages of Middle East North Africa (MENA) for centuries under the auspices – and patronages – of varying governing authorities, geopolitical, religious and cultural. Arabic, Greek and Syriac (Salama-Carr 1990; Gutas 1998; Baker and Hanna 2009; Al-Musawi 2015; Abdulla 2020) were translated across many regions of the Islamic Empires, alongside Hebrew and Aramaic in the contexts of Holy Scriptures (Shamma 2022a) and philosophy (Mallette 2017). Discourses across these languages often circulated into European geocultural spaces such as Andalusia and Sicily (Schippers 1994; Burnett 2001; Hasse 2006; Wartenburg 2015). By the nineteenth century, translation was, in the words of Tarek Shamma (2022b, 7), ‘instrumental to the intellectual, as well as material, renaissance of Arab societies’ governed for centuries by the Ottoman Empire. Many translations circulated via a burgeoning Arabic-language press, state censorship of which was ‘the norm, not the exception’ (Cioeta 1979, 167), as was the case in most parts of the world when books and newspapers were first printed. The presence of Ottoman censorship did not, however, preclude Arab scholars from taking part in discourses in – and about – translation as a medium of knowledge in the Arab world press before and after the turn of the twentieth century. Neither were they deterred by other restrictions such as erratic sources of patronage, lack of resources, potentially reactionary societal mores or the shifting colonial politics in the region.

In this chapter, I discuss excerpts by two Arab world scholars, Salim Sarkis and Abdul Fatah al-Rikabi, both of whom situate translation and the study of translation as a valuable source of knowledge production, the development of which was restricted in their respective contexts for different reasons. The first excerpt 'الترجمة عند العرب' (Translation among the Arabs) by Abdul Fatah Al-Sukari al-Rikabi, published in 1914, is a detailed account of how translation and translators during the Umayyad/Abbasid Empire eras were deployed to generate knowledge in rapidly changing political landscapes. In his article, al-Rikabi calls on the Arab intellectuals in Syria of his 1914 present to create a similarly large-scale collective by which European schoolbooks be translated into Arabic to build the knowledge of children in newly established schools in the region. The second excerpt features extracts from 'غرائب المكتوبجي' (The Weird and Wonderful Ways of the *Maktubji*) (1896) by Salim Sarkis. In these extracts, Sarkis describes the cat-and-mouse games between Arab journalists striving to publish translated works in the Arab press and the censors, or *maktubjis*, who were officials consigned to serve the interests of the Ottoman Empire ruled by Sultan Abdul Hamid II.

Published before the First World War, al-Rikabi's article is one of many articles in which histories of translation were debated in Arabic and translation strategies analysed through the (usually critical) lens of the extent that specific works could help bring Arab societies to a state of modernity congruent with Europe. During this era, debates on what to translate, suitable translation strategies to follow and the rationale for studying translation were commonplace, and academic in tone. Notable scholars of this era included Butrus Al-Bustani, Sulaiman Al-Bustani, Ahmad Al-Shidyaq, Ibrahim al-Yazji and Khalil Baidas, among many others (Shamma and Salama-Carr 2022). As a historiography of translation practices within the Arab world, al-Rikabi's article thus reads as consciously connected to this genre of writing calling for a systematic programme of translation within a strong framework of patronage. While the intellectual will and the linguistic expertise on the part of many Arab scholars existed, such a programme as envisioned by al-Rikabi in the Levant was never realised due to many factors, among them a lack of stable financial patronage. Curbs on socio-political freedoms, as exposed in humorous fashion in Sarkis's (1896) book a decade earlier, also contributed to why the setting up of such a collective would have been fraught with great difficulties at this time. In their own ways, the two excerpts do, however, shed light on why translation as a craft attracted attention in MENA before and after the 'turn' of the twentieth century and why – decades before 1972 – the value and potential fragility of its study and critical scope were recognised and debated.

'Translation among the Arabs'

Published in June 1914, prior to the outbreak of the First World War, al-Rikabi's article 'Translation among the Arabs' featured in the monthly periodical *Al-Muqtabas*, which circulated alongside the highly influential daily newspaper *Al-Muqtabas*, founded and edited by Muhammad Kurd Ali in 1908. The year 1908 had been a crucial year for periodicals and newspapers in the Ottoman lands. First, it was the year when Sultan Abdul Hamid II was forced by the revolutionaries of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) to re-establish the Constitution of Turkey that he had unilaterally suspended in 1878 to rule Turkey on his own terms. Secondly, it was when the freedom of press was enshrined in this constitution (Ezzerelli 2018). According to Filip de Terrazi (1933, 129; cf. Ezzerelli 2018), about 40 newspapers and periodicals were founded in Damascus alone, with hundreds across the Levant lands being in circulation between 1908 and 1914 due to the ease in obtaining permissions to publish from 1908. *Al-Muqtabas* periodical and newspaper commanded a certain political independence due its sources of funding: subscriptions, direct sales and advertising. Al-Rikabi's article would not have been read in a political vacuum. Shaping and influencing all press in the Levant were three blocs: Syrian personages with varying standpoints towards Arab independence and Turkish Unionist influence; post-1908 Turkish authorities; and the British, French and German colonials seeking to control a depleting Turkish Empire (Kayali 1997). It is within such 'shape-shifting' contexts that al-Rikabi summarised firstly how translation traditions of the past make sense in his 'now', and secondly how past rationales for translating scientific works into Arabic form a basis or set of precepts on which new precepts for knowledge could occur in the future.

Penned in Damascus, al-Rikabi's article was the third in the June 1914 issue of *Al-Muqtabas*. The overall focus of the issue was on emerging nations developing via new knowledge, and the relationships of the Arab world to other civilisations. The first article, 'المستشرقون ومؤتمرهم', or 'Orientalists and their conference', presumably by the editor Muhammed Kurd Ali, for example, issued a call for all notables to 'get on boats and trains' to attend a 1915 conference hosted by Orientalist scholars in Oxford. In the next article, 'عبرة من حربين' (Lessons learnt from two wars), Ali condemns recent atrocities occurring in Ottoman lands, citing newspapers from France and Brazil as sources. Following al-Rikabi's 'الترجمة عند العرب' (Translation among the Arabs), the remaining articles cover different perspectives on society-building: the bilingual learning

policies in Finland; cultural events celebrating publications for children in the Arab world; and observations on hospitality cultures linking the East and West. If we read each article as a sum part of the June 1914 issue, each article functions as a 'case study' to support al-Rikabi's belief that life in Arab societies can be improved via knowledge from other lands.

The article of al-Rikabi is a work of two halves: the fulfilment of a promise in the first, and in the second, an expectation of others, namely the notables and intellectuals of the time, to 'follow up' with concrete action on their part. In his preamble, al-Rikabi articulates his 'promise' clearly: he is providing this synopsis of translation practices among the Arabs of old as a point of departure for Levant scholars to set up a group or collective whose task would be to translate scientific and scholarly books published in other languages into Arabic for Arab world schools. One rationale for translating schoolbooks into Arabic was to rebuild and create the resources for an Arabic language that had not previously functioned as a useable means of writing for many Arabic speakers living under Ottoman rule for centuries. As Ibrahim Yazji had famously stated more than 15 years earlier, 'Writing in this language has become a task of endurance and a doorway to toil' (Yazji 1897; cf. [Abou Rached 2022](#), 260). Part of its 'non-useability' was, according to Yazji, the terminologies not reflecting the everyday needs of its users as the terminologies did not actually exist ([Abou Rached 2022](#), 261). A second rationale for a 'translation collective' was for people of the Levant to acquire modern forms of knowledge, under the tutelage of emergent systems of Arab governance. Al-Rikabi cites the translation policy of Muhammed Pasha in Egypt as a salient example (531). In this article, al-Rikabi is not advocating any overturning of authority, nor is he configuring translation as a vector for change to overturn existing societal structures. He configures translation and its practices as a site for reforming knowledge to support existing systems of governance rather than challenging them.

Al-Rikabi's support for institutional structures of power did not entail a lack of critique of how institutions of knowledge were run in the times in which he was writing. He also did not hide that he was calling for the 'overturning' of ideas of knowledge (532), a word carefully chosen to keep the meaning of – while avoiding – the term 'revolution' within a newspaper with one of the largest readerships in the Ottoman Empire ([Ezzerelli 2018](#), 200). Along with minute detail on all people involved in the large-scale translation projects and milieus in which they were operating during the Abbasid era, al-Rikabi explicitly mentions the spirit of political openness that allowed scholarly knowledge to flourish: 'If proofs existed, there was no killing of ideas' (522). This phrase called on readers

to compare the past with their 1914 contexts where the transmission of knowledge and ideas may be ‘killed’ not only by censorship and political force but by societal refusal of new ideas. Iraqi poet Jamil al-Zahawi’s seminal article ‘المرأة والدفاع عنها’ (Woman and her defence) (1910) in Egyptian newspaper *al-Mu’ayyad* (Bashkin 2011, 53) condemning patriarchal religious laws towards women in Iraq, for example, had resulted in his house being mobbed and him being dismissed from his post. Such polemics conversely established articles on literature and history in the press as powerful vehicles for political commentary to burgeoning readerships of Arabic whose numbers were rapidly increasing in the wake of increased literacy from the mid nineteenth century (Ceylan 2011, 204–14) and as sites of vulnerability for their writers. By recalling the ‘glories’ of intellectual freedoms enjoyed by translators working at the behest of patrons in the Arab world in the past, al-Rikabi was calling on patrons of the present to also protect translators and ideas from death.

The press, translation and the *maktubji* as censor

Prior to 1908, it was, however, censorship of the Ottoman Empire that exerted onerous influence over what knowledge circulated in Arabic translation via the press and what did not. As we read in Salim Sarkis’s *The Weird and Wonderful Ways of the Maktubji* (1896), the Ottoman censors or *maktubjis* had developed their own specific ‘ways’ to rationalise what was permitted and what was *yoqtur*, or not permitted, to move into Arabic from other languages via translation (Farah 2010). Sarkis reports that translating ‘love stories’ into Arabic was forbidden for fear that it would teach people how to fall in love. Stories in the British press report on similar incidents. The Shah’s death in Persia by assassination was reported in Ottoman territories as a ‘sudden’ death due to him ‘feeling unwell’ (*Eastern Evening News*, 5 May 1896, 4). *Home News for India, China, and the Colonies* (28 February 1896, 14) reports a journal being banned after using the symbol H_2O to explain scientific discoveries of Dr Burton Coxe as ‘it was interpreted by the Turkish censors as follows: “Hamid II Is 0 – a cipher – a nobody”’. As reported by *The Glasgow Courier* (25 July 1857, 2), the many blanks in Ottoman newspapers testified to *maktubji* control of what information was forbidden. In his book, Sarkis gives a detailed account of how specific words such as ‘apprehensions and doubts’ were deemed unacceptable, even if the context was an innocuous poem translated from French. Practices mocked by Sarkis in 1896 thus seem a world away from those of al-Rikabi a decade later.

It is said that an execution order in absentia was issued for Sarkis in 1898. Sarkis's problems with many forms of authority could have been for many reasons, including for publishing this book on the *maktubji*. Its first chapter is a letter from an unnamed 'English editor' of the journal *Al-Mushir* (The Counsellor) (1896, 2) who expresses his solidarity with Sarkis concerning the Ottoman censor. As Sarkis was the editor of *Al-Mushir*, this 'English' letter had a political function: to show that person-ages connected to other political spheres of influence – here, the British Empire – are criticising censorship practices of the Ottoman Empire. In another preliminary chapter, Sarkis identifies himself as living *nakbat*, catastrophes, due to being born in Beirut and thus by default being born a subject of the Ottoman Empire (1896, 4–6). Sarkis then makes his rebukes towards the authorities of this empire unambiguously personal via the book's dedication in which Sarkis directly addresses Sultan Abdul Hamid II himself. He begins as follows: 'My Lord: it pains me to be one of your subjects because it pains me to be one of your slaves. You accustomed us to your treatment of us your subjects as slaves who exist to serve you, instead of seeing the truth, which is that it is you who exist to serve us' (1896, 6). Other reports, however, state that the execution order was issued for other reasons: Sarkis writing an article in which he mocked the Kaiser of Germany's moustache in 1898, or for an article in which he stated that Sultan had bribed the Kaiser (Goodhouse 2020). Whatever the reasons for the execution order, in this excerpt about the *maktubji*, we can read Sarkis's reactions to specific censorial understandings of translation and the actions available to him as a translator and newspaper editor in the Arab world at this time. It offers a rare insight into Ottoman censor perceptions of 'good' examples of translation based on political precepts of appropriateness and how a translator documents how he openly called them into question.

The study of translation in Arabic: a praxis of negotiation and hope

Read alongside Sarkis's tales of the *maktubji*, al-Rikabi's article 'Translation among the Arabs' gives us a skilful demonstration of how a writer – in 1914 in Syria – could imply political critique while bypassing potential negative consequences to the article (it being censored or cut) and to himself as a writer: by situating the concept of freedom in a very distant past but espoused by ruling authorities of the Islamic and Arab world. In contrast to Sarkis, al-Rikabi appears strangely trusting of any

political authority wishing to gain knowledge and to build its empire via translation. In the second part of the article, al-Rikabi states: 'Recalling the past is of no benefit ... if we do not follow or weave from its fabrics the banner of science and knowledge, holding it aloft for all to be educated in the mores of its spirit and study' (531). Part of 'its spirit and study', according to al-Rikabi, was, however, how the concept of *al-nahda*, an intellectual movement of 'awakening' in the Arab world in the nineteenth century, could be compared to the then recent developments in European Orientalist knowledge of the Middle East. In June 1914, al-Rikabi was not condemning Napoleon's earlier 'entry into Egypt in 1797' (532). He did not configure the transportation of Arab world artefacts to Europe as theft. Nor did he deem the Orientalist scholars 'becoming the expert scholars on books of the Arabs' (532) as cultural appropriators. He explains simply that the Orientalists 'revived' their civilisations in part by using knowledge of the Arabs and translating from Arabic into their languages of use. He states that just as the Islamic civilisations had built their achievements via translating knowledge of other civilisations into Arabic, the Europeans have thus rebuilt their civilisations via translating sources of knowledge published in Arabic into European languages. He concludes: 'Language is the weight of a nation and no *nahda* occurs without a *nahda* of the language' (531).

He also situates the European Orientalists as beneficiaries of powerful patrons who remunerated them for 'transmitting' this knowledge, like the translators of the Abbasid Empires (529). He presents the desire of the Orientalists to 'take' from Arab lands and translate from Arabic as a sign of their societies' progress. He urges Arab intellectuals to imitate such progress by remembering the Abbasids of old: 'whenever a nation feels the urge to translate scientific books into their language, it is a sign of an 'awakening' (*nahda*) and source of benefit' (532). Clearly, al-Rikabi's notion of Arab world '*nahda*' and Orientalism operating as symbiotic inter-reflections was poles apart from Edward Said's blistering critiques of Orientalists in 1978. Al-Rikabi's admiration for the European rulers who showed a regard for translation could also be read as his (1914) concern for Arab thinkers' lack of equivalent support for translation in the future. Al-Rikabi's sense of 'progress' via translation and European colonisation was, however, articulated prior to European powers redrawing maps of the Middle East, one example being the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, two years after al-Rikabi's article was published. Such colonial activities would happen in ways that would debunk any illusion of political equity that Arab intellectuals could think actually existed between Arab citizens and European empires.²

In contrast to the lampooning tone of Sarkis's book published nearly a decade earlier, al-Rikabi's article reflects a spirit of innocence or an idealistic perception of some agencies of power surrounding Arabic and the development of its speakers' nascent nations, of which many were not yet literate. Al-Rikabi believed that the practice of translation could enhance knowledge of Arabic for future generations by introducing new terminologies that in Arabic may not yet have existed (532). The translations of 'worth' for al-Rikabi were thus the books from which children and adults gain scientific knowledge for their future, rather than for their enjoyment. Sarkis's noting of the potential demand for translated romance novels is one astute harbinger of the potential tensions that would arise between different social groups wanting to read Arabic literature and the intellectuals who were co-creating the materials to be read. Al-Rikabi focused on the materials generated at the behest of rulers with great financial, religious and political resources at their disposal rather than the works that perhaps were not allowed by ruling authorities, the focus of Sarkis's whole book. Nonetheless, al-Rikabi's article shows what a scholarly theorisation on a nascent field of knowledge – the study of translation – may have looked like in a 1914 Arab world periodical. He gives a rationale for his contribution, a detailed historical background and several case studies that relate to genres of translation. In effect, he synthesises past translation practices and argues for the practices to be 'applied' in new contexts. The personages to whom he refers are still locatable via current research tools.

Conclusion

Within Arabic-language discourses on translation at the turn of the twentieth century, the act of translation was conceptualised as a multifaceted means of knowledge-building spanning centuries, empires and shifts in national borders over centuries. These two excerpts from Salim Sarkis and Abdul Fattah al-Sukari al-Rikabi are two among a plethora of detailed commentaries about translation circulating in Arabic shortly before and after the turn of the twentieth century ([Shamma and Salama-Carr 2022](#)). The cross-lingual contexts on which both scholars comment reflect the multifaceted specificities of their contexts. Both shed light on the kinds of knowledge that could be shared, whether at political, institutional or at times intellectual levels. They also show how Sarkis and al-Rikabi believed translation could benefit their societies even when the transmission of knowledge was limited by a variety of factors. Sarkis as a

newspaper editor had to be in the physical presence of a *maktubji*, pen in hand, who could literally cross out any word, phrase or entire article on the spot. A whole sub-genre of literature – romance novels – for example, was prevented from entering the Arabic-language public sphere via the Arab world press at a specific point in time. Such acts of censorship are indicative of how development or theorisation of translation can be precluded from the outset.

While the boundaries for knowledge transmitted via translation were less overtly and personally imposed within Arab lands of the Ottoman Empire in 1914, Arab scholars such as al-Rikabi did face other barriers: lack of finance, fragile organisational infrastructure, colonial ambitions shaping the politics of Ottoman jurisdiction, and potentially reactionary societal mores. Al-Rikabi also could not have foreseen the momentous impacts that subsequent wars, starting with the First World War (1914–18), would have on Arab lands, including on the conceptualisations, roles and functions of translation in these final years of the Ottoman era. It is thus difficult in some ways to equate the earlier Arab world discourses circulating about translation and its study, as described by Sarkis and al-Rikabi, with the field of translation studies described (using European languages) 60 years later. That said, it would be remiss to state that nothing of significance happened before 1972 in terms of the study of translation in the Arab world. Sarkis and al-Rikabi are two examples of the many scholars setting out to explain phenomena of translation and how practices of translation were conceptualised and envisioned in Arabic, be they by *maktubji*, readers of newspapers or intellectuals. All were trying to grasp what it meant to translate to and from Arabic in a late Ottoman era world: a world whose borders, intellectual landscapes and languages of knowledge were in flux, and would remain so for many years.

Translation among the Arabs (excerpts)

By Abdul Fatah al-Sukari al-Rikabi

Translated from Arabic by Ruth Abou Rached

Source text: Abdul Fatah al-Sukari al-Rikabi, عبد الفتاح السكري الركابي، 'الترجمة عند العرب'. Publisher: مجلة المقتبس – Majallat al-Muqtabas, 89, Cairo.

Date of publication: 1 June 1914

I published an article in *Al-Maqtabas* in which I have proposed to our esteemed Syrian colleagues that a collective be founded whose aim would be to translate all relevant school textbooks in foreign languages into Arabic. As an intercession for this proposal, I promised to write a synopsis of translation practices that occurred during the Umayyad and Abbasid eras when its leaders considered translation a critical task, in that a language can never truly spread its wings as a vector of knowledge without having terms of reference for material and worldly sciences, as is now the case, for example, for German, English and French (p. 519).

...

Translation as a practice began during the Umayyad era, when the famed physician Masawayh Al-Basri, a contemporary of Marwan Ibn Al-Hakam, transmitted some of the most important scribings of the cleric Ahrun Bin Ayain from Syriac into Arabic. After Caliph Umar took on the mantel of the Caliphate, he discovered a book buried in the annals of the libraries in the Levant, whose covers he believed it fruitful and wise to be dusted off for its knowledge to be revealed for the benefit of others. He enjoined the translation of other books for scholarly benefit (p. 519).

...

When the Caliphate had moved to the Abbasids, its rule augured a scientific *nahda* or revival where the role of the Caliphate would have been seen as where literary persons, poets and scholars were brought together via the Caliphs' interest in knowledge and glorification of them.

They bestowed great prestige and favour to scholars of knowledge by summoning them to court, dining them, sitting with them, engaging them in parlance and drawing on their council. There was not a single purveyor of knowledge, science, literature or treatise not in Baghdad,³ and upon whom was not bestowed a prize, gift or remuneration. How wonderful it would have been for a learned scholar to witness himself and his ideas feted and honoured within an ambience of freedom with no authority serving as an impediment to his convictions. If proofs existed, there was no killing of ideas. New ideas abounded in Abbasid eras as its rulers were protectors of opinions held by men of learning and of science, even of those with opinions that went against the rulers' prevailing knowledges. The distinguishing aspect of this era was that the fruits of knowledge could ripen and mature so that their wonderful flavours could be fully savoured. Knowledge can only fully develop and mature under the tutelage of those able to foster it amongst those with similar creeds and beliefs to that of their rulers (pp. 521–2).

...

When the Abbasid Caliphate had moved to Caliph Al-Ma'mun, he developed the prior *nahda* of knowledge with the translations and compositions that he had grown up on, to even further fruition. Caliph Al-Ma'mun was entranced by knowledge in ways never to be seen again (p. 524).

...

Al-Ma'mun and his kin were dedicated to scientific knowledge and scholarship. They were the pinnacle of Allah's Caliphate and best of His Servants as they devoted their life to honing their natural talents and, in doing so, disseminated science and wisdom to their peoples. They were beacons, and the world would have been consigned to ignorance and barbarity if it were not for them.

The care and attention of Al-Ma'mun to the translation of books is more than can be imagined, specifically books concerning Logic and Philosophy. It was said that Al-Ma'mun called for books to be transported to Baghdad on one hundred mules and that one condition for the peace treaty between himself and the Byzantine Emperor Michel the Third was being gifted a library of Constantinople. In its archives existed a work of Ptolemy on Mathematics and Astronomy that Al-Ma'mun ordered to be translated into Arabic under the title *Al-Magest* (pp. 525–6).

...

He also commissioned the translation of philosophy by Aristotle and others. He impressed upon his people to consult these books in order that they learn from them. He attended seminaries given by scholars

diligently, and in this way Al-Ma'mun brought many people of wealth and influence into Baghdad to gain knowledge. Many translators flocked to Baghdad from the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, Levant, Persia, amongst them, Nestorians, Jacobians, Sabians, Zoroastrian, Romans, Brahmins translating from Greek, Persian, Syriac, Sanskrit, Nabatean, Latin and other languages. Many papermakers and booksellers, salons for literature and debates proliferated in Baghdad. The people themselves became scholars and this *nahda* continued after Al-Ma'mun, with books of the Greek Ancients translated into Arabic (p. 526).

...

When Al-Ma'mun wished the philosophy of Greece to be translated into Arabic, he sought counsel about who was capable of this. They counselled him: 'Hanin. His knowledge is unsurpassed, and he is still young of age.' Al-Ma'mun turned to a group of translators, namely Al-Hajjaj Ibn Matar, Yahya Ibn Al-Batriq, and eminents of the 'House of Wisdom' led by Hanin, and convened them to appropriately render all that they could of it, the weight rendered into Arabic recompensed in gold. Being of sharp intelligence, Hanin wrote in large letters, widely spaced, on thick paper to enhance the size of the tomes. It is said that Hanin travelled to Eastern lands of Rome to request books on the behest of Al-Ma'mun (pp. 527–8).

...

Most of the aforementioned translators made their living from their craft and were paid by kings, rulers and those seeking knowledge. One exception was Arabian philosopher Yaqub Ibn Ishaq Al-Kindi, of a ruling family, who translated for himself and not for remuneration (p. 529).

...

Overall, the Abbasid rulers were greatly preoccupied with translation and spent stupendous sums on furthering this honourable aim. They inaugurated an institute called School of Languages, opened for the training of translators, led by a Nestorian physician (p. 530).

...

This is a synopsis of the history of translation during the Umayyad and Abbasid eras ... If it were not for their dedication towards the transmission of knowledge and sciences, the Arabic language, its architecture and its civilisation would not have been enriched to the levels that it has been, which is something that all Arabs can be proud of. Recalling the past is of no benefit, however, if we do not follow or weave from its fabrics the banner of science and knowledge, holding it aloft for all to be educated in the mores of its spirit and study (p. 530).

...

Any scholar studying the revival of nations can see that evolution only occurs through the translation of scientific books and scholarship. If it were not for Muhammed Pasha sending emissaries to the West and caring to have translated many books of scientific knowledge into Arabic, we would not have seen the revival of Egypt whose light shines on the whole Arab world at this time. And the Umayyads and Abbasids could not have built their great cities if it had not been for the translation of books containing knowledge not available previously. Similarly, when Europeans, constricted by their primitive settlements, were seeking to build cities of knowledge, their first step was to translate ... Arabic books into their languages (p. 531).

...

The 'enlightenment' (*nahda*) spread to other parts of Europe, and the numbers of those studying Eastern languages has increased, which in turn has led to artefacts of Arab civilisation becoming more numerous in libraries, including in Paris, Madrid, Leiden, Oxford and London, with the publication of Arabic works by eminent Arab scholars and their literatures. In 1795, the School of Modern Eastern languages was founded in France, which has led to a revival of literature for the French. When Napoleon entered Egypt in 1797, he was accompanied by many scholars who took the opportunity to learn the Arabic language from the Egyptians. When they returned to France, they published there, making them the expert scholars on books by the Arabs (p. 532).

...

In sum, whenever a nation feels an urge to translate scientific books into their language, it is a sign of 'awakening' (*nahda*) and source of benefit. These books build great men who cause concepts to be overturned. Language is the weight of a nation, and no *nahda* occurs without a *nahda* of the language. *Nahdas* cannot happen if language for the material and moral sciences does not exist. Where are the scholars of this honourable language? It is they who must form a group for translation and transmission as it is they more than any others who must bear the burden for honest labourers who toil to fulfil their lives, reliably and peacefully (p. 532).

The Weird and Wonderful Ways of the Maktubji (excerpts)

By Salim Sarkis

Translated from Arabic by Ruth Abou Rached

Source text: Salim Sarkis, 'غرائب المكتوبجي' - سليم سرقيس. Publisher: جريدة المشير - Jarīdat al-Mushīr, Cairo, date of first publication 1896

39: The ban on publishing love stories

I wanted to publish in *Lisan Al-Hal* some stories about love that have been translated from foreign languages. But then a decree was announced: that it was forbidden to publish such stories on the basis that they would teach people to fall in love (p. 47).

...

47: 'Apprehensions and doubts'

My friend Prince Amin Arslan offered me the sum of 80 francs from his own purse and requested me to make this sum the value of a prize for a competition for readers of the newspaper, akin to similar competitions run in European papers. I profusely thanked the prince for his great generosity, and I chose a poem by the French poet Alfred de Musset, titled 'Souvenir: remember this'. I published it in *Lisan Al-Hal* in the original French with its translation in literal word-for-word prose for the benefit of those who did not know French. I had proposed to poets that they compose this poem in the form of Arabic poetry, keeping all its meanings but without adding any Arabic rhetorical devices. I published the prerequisites and the criteria for the prize. This detailed explanation made up four columns, and I took the final version personally to the *maktubji*

Abdullah Effendi Naghib. He looked at the French version of poem and asked: 'what is this?' After I had explained, he crossed it all out, stating 'the distinguishing feature of your newspaper is that you publish in the Arabic language'.

He ordered me to read out what remained of the article, so I read the translation of a verse:

If the tresses of the night have become old and grey
and the sun rises upon your dazzling palace to start the
day, remember this:

He said, 'What does "remember this" mean, and who is being reproached?', to which I replied: 'The poet wanted the bride to remember his visits.' He crossed it out and said, 'Trivialities!', which meant anything that was incomprehensible to him. I kept my patience and read another verse:

if the day then becomes overcast with clouds,
and night falls, bringing all its apprehensions and doubts,
remember this

I had barely pronounced the words 'apprehensions and doubts' when he rose from his chair, shouting 'the phrase apprehensions and doubts is *yoqtur*', meaning that the phrase 'apprehensions and doubts' cannot be published, and the whole article would be crossed out. Instead of completing my reading, I stormed out of the office, cursing the hour that my family and forefathers had come to Turkey to thus consign me to the 'guardianship' of this district.

As the district governor, now exiled in Cyprus, Khalid Bek Effendi understood both French and Arabic, I explained the affair to him ... and he burst out laughing. He said, 'I cannot oppose the *maktubji* concerning the French original, but do not worry about the Arabic version.' He called upon the eminent Michel Effendi, the official translator for the district, and I requested him to ask the *maktubji* to accept the translated version (of the poem). He returned, saying, 'the only thing to do is to remove the whole page relating to this poem. The *maktubji* is extremely set against it. If he is impressed upon for the article to be published, he will take vengeance upon you by removing many more elements and articles from future issues.' I saw the wisdom in his advice, which was why the article was removed. Talk of the 'apprehensions and doubts affair', however, resounded throughout Beirut literary scenes. News of the affair was published in European newspapers, *kashf al-niqāb* in Paris and

The Daily Graphic in London, with a caricature of the *maktubji* and one of me opposite him, drawn as quaking in fear while holding the newspaper *Lisan Al-Hal* with the headline ‘apprehensions and doubts’ emblazoned across it (pp. 55–6).

48: The health of French soldiers

One day I translated from (foreign) newspapers that the health of French soldiers in the Kingdom of Dahomey⁴ was not faring well. The *maktubji* struck this out and ordered me to state that the health of the French soldiers there had improved (p. 56).

Notes

1. Many thanks to Professors Myriam Salama-Carr and Tarek Shamma for inviting me to be part of their research project ‘Arabic Discourses in Translation’ (2015–2020), Qatar Foundation/University of Manchester and for sharing their illuminating insights about translation practices of the *nahda* era.
2. One of many instances of Middle East maps being redrawn without consultation of residents of these lands was the Sykes–Picot Agreement (May 1916), a secret convention agreed during the First World War between Great Britain and France about the ‘dividing up’ of Ottoman Empire territories. Imperial Russia assented ([Encyclopedia Britannica 2024](#)).
3. Al-Rikabi refers to Baghdad using its epithet here in Arabic, *dār as-salām* or ‘the house of peace’.
4. A West African kingdom located within present-day Benin that existed from 1600 until 1904.

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10 China, 1903

Translator training before James Holmes: the School of Translation Studies at China's Imperial University of Peking

Shuyin Zhang and Caiwen Wang

Introduction

Referring to translator training as the most important component in his delineation of applied translation studies, James Holmes (1972/1988, 77) pointed out that the situation at the time had raised 'a number of questions that fairly cry for answers: questions that have to do primarily with teaching methods, testing techniques, and curriculum planning'. This remark understandably reflects the West-Eurocentric stance regarding translator training but does not make reference to the situation elsewhere in Europe, let alone beyond Europe.

This chapter looks into translator training in China in the 1900s, to investigate the situation relevant to Holmes's remark. We explore the role of the School of Translation Studies (STS) (译学馆) of the Imperial University of Peking (now Peking University) (京师大学堂) in translator training in the 1900s by examining the two policy documents or charters issued by the late Qing government for the STS to operate its translator training programme.¹

The Imperial University of Peking was established in 1898 during the Reform Movement (戊戌变法)² and was intended to be 'the example for all provinces to follow and the university for all countries to look up to' (各省之表率, 万国所瞻仰) (Liang and Kang 1898/1993, 81). It was the first national university to be established in China (CPC News 2015; Museum of Peking University History, online access).³ The proposal to establish the University was directly triggered by the First Sino-Japanese War of 1894–5, with China having to sign the Treaty of Shimonoseki. The proposal was presented to Emperor Guangxu in 1896, by Li Duanfen

(李端棻), the deputy minister of the Ministry of Law of the Qing Dynasty and a well-known statesman, reformer and educator, at a time when the Qing government saw the country as in decline and needing to be made great via education (Shen et al. 2017). Li Duanfen proposed establishing four schools: School of Teacher Training (师范馆), School of Continuing Education for Officials (仕学馆), School of Translation Studies (译学馆; STS) and School of Medical Studies (医学馆). In addition, there would be a Translation Section (京师大学堂译书局), to be established by Sun Jianai (孙家鼐) and Liang Qichao and with responsibility for translating textbooks for use at the university (Zhang 2003).⁴ Although Empress Dowager Cixi subsequently crushed the Reform Movement, deprived Emperor Guangxu of his power and abolished almost all that was advocated in the Reform Movement, the proposal to found the University remained and Peking was selected as the location. The Translation Section was established in 1896 and the STS in 1903.

The STS traces its origins back to the School of Combined Learning (SCL) (京师同文馆).⁵ The latter was a junior foreign-language school founded in 1862 by Yixin (奕訢), Prince Gong of the Aisin-Gioro clan, along with the Westernisation Group (洋务派) during the Self-Strengthening Movement (洋务运动) for the purpose of training linguists and translators for foreign affairs.⁶ In 1902, the SCL merged with the Imperial University of Peking, becoming its Translation Department (翻译科). The same year, Yan Fu was appointed Head of the Translation Section. As a translator, Yan Fu was well known both for translating *Evolution and Ethics* by British biologist Thomas Henry Huxley and for his three principles of translation, namely, *xin* (信; faithfulness), *da* (达; fluency) and *ya* (雅; elegance). After the merger of the SCL and the Imperial University of Peking, a proposal was put forward to set up specialised courses in English, French, Russian, German and Japanese at both the preparatory and the advanced level. In 1903, the Translation Department was renamed the STS, becoming the first translation division in a modern Chinese university and a milestone in the history of tertiary-level translation education in China.⁷

In the end, the STS was short-lived: in the wake of the Xinhai Revolution (辛亥革命), it closed in 1911. The following year, the Imperial University was renamed Peking University at the proposal of Cai Yuanpei (蔡元培),⁸ the Head of the Ministry of Education of the government of Yuan Shikai (袁世凯), who along with Sun Yat-sen overthrew the Qing Dynasty and founded the Republic of China, thus ending China's feudal period. The first President of Peking University was none other than Yan Fu, the leading translator and translation scholar.

We conducted a reading of the *Authorised Charter (AC) of the School of Translation Studies* (奏定译学馆章程), along with its earlier preliminary version known as the Protocol Charter of the School of Translation Studies of the Imperial University of Peking (拟定大学堂译学馆章程).⁹ This Charter was issued by the STS in 1903. The programme as stipulated in the two charters belongs to the first systematic, state-promulgated and nationwide academic system in modern China, the Renyin-Kuimao school system (壬寅癸卯学制), which symbolises the establishment of a new education system (Li 2008). Both charters were drawn up by Zhang Baixi (张百熙), Zhang Zhidong (张之洞) and Rong Qing (荣庆), who were representatives of the Self-Strengthening Movement, and both were initiated by the Qing government. This was during China's third translation boom (which occurred between the late Qing dynasty and the early era of the Republic of China). The charters indicate the early development of translation studies as an independent discipline in China. The two charters presented in this chapter were published in Chinese by the Research Office for the History of Peking University in 1993.

The Authorised Charter contains seven chapters: General Principles of the Establishment of the School (立学总义), Curriculum (学科程度), Enrolment and Graduation (入学毕业), Student Rules (学生规则), Teaching and Administrative Staff (教员管理员), Affiliated School (附学) and Compilation of Dictionaries (编纂文典). The Protocol Charter consists of 10 chapters: General Programme (总纲), Employment of Teachers and Teachers' Responsibilities (延聘教习及教习之职务), Student Enrolment and Graduation (学生入馆及卒业), Curriculum and Assessment (学程及计分考验), Student Rules (学生规则), School Etiquette and Semesters (馆中礼节及学期), Dictionaries (文典), Codes of Conduct (办事), Affiliated School (附学) and Expenditure (经费). It was later revised and reissued as part of the Authorised Charter. Compared with the Protocol Charter, the Authorised Charter is brief, which is why we also referred to the Protocol Charter when necessary.

Our reading focuses on curriculum planning, teaching methods and testing techniques for the STS's translation programme as mapped out in the two charters. The two charters are policy or programmatic documents that stipulated how the translation programme at the STS should be operated at the macro level. As such, they did not contain information on the actual translation pedagogy or translation quality evaluation criteria. Existing studies of the STS's micro-level teaching and assessment are limited and demand future research. Where possible, however, we tried to enrich the relevant contents.

Curriculum planning

There are two distinctive features of the STS's translation programme. Firstly, while the curriculum offered five language strands, from which students were to choose one (Excerpt 3, AC), students were also required to study general subjects each year and additional specialised subjects from the third year (Excerpt 5, AC). This design can be explained on the basis that the primary objective of the STS was to foster talented translators with exemplary characters and a well-rounded education that included general knowledge and specialised expertise, preparing them for important national needs (Excerpt 2, AC).¹⁰ Secondly, the curriculum spanned a total of five years and was structured in two stages (Excerpt 8, AC). Stage 1 teaching took place over the first two years and was generally conducted by Chinese tutors. Stage 2 teaching took place over the remaining three years and was conducted by foreign tutors whose native language aligned with the relevant foreign language strand (Qiu 2011). Translation was taught under the generic label 'Foreign Languages', and was tailored to the students' proficiency level of the foreign language in question. Foreign literature was taught along with translation from Year 4. Although the Authorised Charter stresses translation skills from foreign languages into Chinese (Excerpt 1, AC), an examination paper we identified shows that the STS also taught translation out of Chinese (Research Office for the History of Peking University 1993, 275–8).

Teaching methods

Classes

The STS implemented a stratified teaching approach by placing students in different classes based on their proficiency in their chosen foreign language upon enrolment (Excerpt 9, AC), and accordingly teaching different elements of their chosen foreign language (Excerpt 4, AC). Such an arrangement remained in place throughout their studies until graduation, reflecting the STS's objective to offer tailored training.

The teaching methods combined in-class lectures with students' autonomous learning (Excerpt 10, PC). During autonomous learning sessions, students were encouraged to conduct discussions and revise learning in their designated language-specific classrooms (Excerpt 10, PC).

This underscores the STS's acknowledgement of the importance of self-directed and subject-based learning. The teaching went through a review process at the end of each semester (Excerpts 1–2, PC), allowing necessary adjustments in future semesters.

Textbooks

The STS had different requirements in selecting and developing teaching materials, to adapt to different subject areas. For general subjects, the STS shared the textbooks used in other schools of the Imperial University of Peking. As part of its responsibilities, the Imperial University of Peking's Translation Section had organised the translation of a huge number of foreign textbooks covering a wide range of subjects for STS's teaching programme (Zhang 2003).¹¹ In cases where the required textbooks were unavailable, the teachers at the STS would compile their own materials. For specialised subjects, textbooks imported from foreign countries were used (Excerpt 6, AC). This practice embraced the concept of Western Learning for Application within the principle of Chinese-Style Westernisation (中体西用), which advocated Chinese Learning as Substance, Western Learning for Application (中学为体, 西学为用) (Sun 1896/1998, 226; see also note 6), and ensured that students would receive comprehensive and up-to-date knowledge in these specific fields.

We were not able to determine whether there were textbooks specifically for translation classes or not. The first author paid a visit to the Archives of Peking University in June 2024 in the hope of finding any relevant information, as well as the teaching plans/summaries as required in Excerpt 2 of the Protocol Charter, but was not successful. We assume that the tutors at the time compiled their own teaching materials, and hope that future research will be able to identify such materials along with the translation teaching plans/summaries.

Assessment

The STS's assessment included assessing students' performance both in their everyday learning and in their exams. Attendance, participation and conduct were also taken into account (Excerpts 5 and 9, PC). Instances of absence and demerits were duly recorded (Excerpts 3–4, PC); discipline held significant importance because the students were expected to assume official positions within the Qing government upon graduation, roles that demanded a strong sense of proper conduct.

Examinations were conducted monthly throughout the academic year, with a final exam at the end of each year's second semester. The graduation exam took place on the last day of the five-year programme (Excerpt 7, PC). The rigorous nature of this assessment schedule ensured continuous monitoring of student progress and allowed for timely interventions when necessary. Students were evaluated through their written responses to questions on learnt topics, demonstrating their understanding via comments and critical reviews (Excerpt 8, PC).

Due to their programmatic nature, the two charters did not provide assessment criteria for specific subjects including translation. We were not able to identify any relevant information from literature on the STS or its training programmes. We assume that Yan Fu's *xin, da* and *ya* principles were the evaluation criteria for translation assessment, partly because of their influential status, and partly because of the fact that at the time Yan Fu was Head of the Translation Section of the Imperial University of Peking. In this role, he was responsible for organising the translation of foreign textbooks for their use at the university including the STS. As we show in the next section ('The relevance of the STS in history and today'), the principles *xin, da* and *ya* were associated with the success of the STS's translation programme by a former teacher at the STS, Cai Yuanpei. Given his teaching role, Cai can be assumed to have had knowledge of how translation quality was evaluated at the STS.

The Charters do, however, contain information about the bands of assessment marks in relation to quality of learning. The grading system assigned a maximum score of 100 for each subject. Upon graduation, the average score of all subjects was calculated, with the pass score being 60 or above (Excerpt 6, PC). Students were ranked in accordance with their scores, with five categories indicating performance: Best, Good, Medium, Low and Bottom. Students would be referred to the government for a post based on their test results (Excerpt 10, AC). This direct link between academic performance and professional opportunities highlights the practical side of the STS curriculum and its alignment with the nation's need for well-rounded translators.

The relevance of the STS in history and today

The STS operated from 1903 to 1911, witnessing five cohorts of students before its closure. Its graduates embarked on careers in diplomatic affairs, foreign trade, translation and interpreting for the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic of China. It had achieved what the Charters had

stipulated, namely, producing skilled translators for national needs. The historical significance of the STS and the charters has been widely acknowledged (Li 1996; Hao 2006; Huang and Chu 2012). On the 20th anniversary of the STS's closure, a book was produced to record all the STS alumni. Leading figures of the time contributed commendations of the achievements of the STS and its students (Chen 1931/1978). The below quote from the contribution by Cai Yuanpei (Cai 1931/1991) epitomises the sentiments that the alumni expressed:

译学馆为偏重外国语之学校, 其所以与同文馆、广方言馆等不同者, 有两点; 一兼习国文; 一兼授其它学科; 是也。有此二者, 是以译学馆虽办理不久, 同学亦为数不多, 然而其中之高材生, 或服务社会, 卓著成绩; 或更求深造, 成为专门学者; 或从事译著, 有信、达、雅三长; 使此短期之学校, 在历史上可以不朽。

The STS focused on foreign languages. Two traits made the STS distinctly different from the Peking School of Combined Learning (京师同文馆), the Shanghai School of Combined Learning (广方言馆) and the like.¹² Firstly, the STS taught the Chinese language, and secondly, the STS taught additional subjects (in addition to translation). Thanks to these two characteristics, even though the STS was short-lived and its students were of a humble number, its graduates have either become very successful in society or have continued to pursue higher education, becoming experts in their own fields, or have become translators excelling in *xin*, *da* and *ya*. The STS is immortal in China's history.

As argued above, Cai Yuanpei's endorsement of Yan Fu's translation principles in relation to the STS translator training makes it appropriate to assume that Yan Fu's translation principles, the Protocol Charter and the Authorised Charter were closely aligned. Furthermore, Yan Fu was an influential figure within the university more broadly; when the Imperial University of Peking was established, he was invited to formulate the university's general charters (Pengpai News 2021) alongside another well-known translator, Lin Shu (林纾). The influence of Yan Fu on both translation activities and translator training in the years of the STS thus appears to have been considerable, continuing beyond the years following the STS's closure and still relevant in today's China.¹³

Translator training in China today continues to align with national interests, which distinguishes it from the objectives of many European translator training institutions (Du 2022). Mainstream universities are

still required to propose their new programmes to the top government department, namely, the Ministry of Education of China, and wait for the official approval. The principle of Chinese-Style Westernisation has been developed further in modern times: there are joint translator training programmes between some Chinese universities and overseas universities; large numbers of Chinese translation students go abroad to be trained and then return to China for career development. Modern translator training in China also continues to acknowledge the importance of science and technology, and additionally requires that translation students be trained to use technologies, such as various CAT tools, to assist their translation activities.

The STS practice of classifying students into different classes based on their language proficiency is now seldom seen in modern translation education programmes in China, however. Instead, a minimal level of proficiency in a foreign language is set as the entry requirement. Although today's students are still expected to devote significant time to self-study, this is not formally assessed. The practice of course review by senior teaching and managerial personnel remains active.

Today's translator training programmes in China also test students' knowledge of other subject domains, such as Chinese, Finance, International Law, History, Chemistry, Mathematics and Physics. The assessment scheme also includes regular performance evaluations and a final examination.

It is clear that the two charters for the STS's translator training programme in the early twentieth century have functioned as the prototype for the curriculum of translator training programmes in modern China, and the STS holds a pivotal position in the history of contemporary China's applied translation studies in the sense of the term used by James Holmes.

The Authorised Charter of the School of Translation Studies (奏定译学馆章程) (excerpts)

*Translated from Chinese by Shuyin Zhang and
Caiwen Wang*

Source text: Research Office for the History of Peking University (北京大学校史研究室) (ed.), 'Authorised Charter of the School of Translation Studies' (奏定译学馆章程). In Historical materials about Peking University (北京大学史料第一卷) (1898–1911), Vol. 1, edited by Research Office for the History of Peking University, 169–74. Beijing: Peking University Press (北京大学出版社), 1993

Excerpt 1

The School of Translation Studies has been established to cater for students who study foreign languages. The aim is to teach students to translate from foreign languages and be expert at the Chinese language (Chapter 1, General Principles of the Establishment of the School).

Excerpt 2

Current political affairs highlight the necessity of translation studies. Students admitted to this School are talented individuals preparing to serve the country. Students shall first cultivate a good character and then study general subjects (Chapter 1, General Principles of the Establishment of the School).

Excerpt 3

Foreign languages are English, French, Russian, German and Japanese. Each student shall choose one language to specialise in; there is no requirement to study all the languages. Regardless of their foreign language specialisation, students must also study general subjects and the specialised subjects Diplomacy, Finance and Education ([Chapter 2](#), Curriculum).

Excerpt 4

Foreign language teaching should begin with spelling, pronunciation, translation, conversation, grammar and essay writing. After two or three years, the history and literature of countries representing the foreign language should then be taught ([Chapter 2](#), Curriculum).

Excerpt 5

There are nine general subjects: Human Relations and Morality, Chinese Literature, History, Geography, Mathematics, Natural History, Physics and Chemistry, Drawing and Painting, and Physical Exercises. There are three specialised subjects in addition to foreign languages: Diplomacy, Finance and Education ([Chapter 2](#), Curriculum).

Excerpt 6

General subjects will use textbooks prepared by the Imperial University of Peking; if unavailable, the teachers at the School shall compile their own materials. Law and Diplomacy will use textbooks imported from foreign countries ([Chapter 2](#), Curriculum).

Excerpt 7

[Tables 10.1–10.5](#), from [Chapter 2](#), Curriculum.

Table 10.1 Year 1 Curriculum, *The Authorised Charter*, School of Translation Studies at China's Imperial University of Peking, 1903.

Subject	Level	Hours per week
Human Relations and Morality	An excerpt from studies on various cases of Confucianism in the Song, Yuan, and Ming dynasties	1
Chinese Literature	Selected readings from <i>Profound Mirror of Ancient Essays</i> (古文渊鉴; <i>gu wen yuan jian</i>) and memorials and compositions by famous officials from past dynasties; essay writing	3
History	Chinese history	2
Geography	Chinese geography	2
Foreign Language	Spelling, pronunciation, translation	16
Mathematics	Arithmetic	4
Natural History	Biology, hygienics, minerals	2
Physics and Chemistry	Physics	2
Drawing	Free drawing, instrument drawing	2
Gymnastics	Calisthenics	2
Total		36

Table 10.2 Year 2 Curriculum, *The Authorised Charter*, School of Translation Studies at China's Imperial University of Peking, 1903.

Subject	Level	Hours per week
Human Relations and Morality	Same as previous year	1
Chinese Literature	Same as previous year	3
History	Same as previous year	2

(continued)

Subject	Level	Hours per week
Geography	Asia and Oceania	2
Foreign Language	Translation, conversation, grammar, and essay writing	16
Mathematics	Arithmetic, algebra	4
Natural History	Plants, animals	2
Physics and Chemistry	Chemistry	2
Drawing	Free drawing, instrument drawing	2
Gymnastics	Gymnastics with apparatus	2
Total		36

Table 10.3 Year 3 Curriculum, *The Authorised Charter*, School of Translation Studies at China's Imperial University of Peking, 1903.

Subject	Level	Hours per week
Human Relations and Morality	Same as previous year	1
Chinese Literature	Same as previous year	2
History	Asian countries' histories	2
Geography	Europe	2
Foreign Language	Translation	18
Mathematics	Algebra, geometry	3
Law and Diplomacy	General theory of law	3
Finance	General theory of finance	3
Gymnastics	Gymnastics with apparatus	2
Total		36

Table 10.4 Year 4 Curriculum, *The Authorised Charter*, School of Translation Studies at China's Imperial University of Peking, 1903.

Subject	Level	Hours per week
Human Relations and Morality	Same as previous year	1
Chinese Literature	Same as previous year	2
History	Western history	2
Geography	Africa, America	2
Foreign Language	Translation, conversation, grammar, essay writing, canonical literature	18
Mathematics	Geometry, triangles	3
Law and Diplomacy	International law	3
Finance	Business finance	3
Gymnastics	Gymnastics with apparatus	2
Total		36

Table 10.5 Year 5 Curriculum, *The Authorised Charter*, School of Translation Studies at China's Imperial University of Peking, 1903.

Subject	Level	Hours per week
Human Relations and Morality	Same as previous year	1
Chinese Literature	Same as previous year	2
History	Western history	2
Geography	Physiography	2
Foreign Language	Same as previous year	18
Law and Diplomacy	Civil law	3
Finance	State finance	3
Education	Japanese textbooks on education were used temporarily	3
Gymnastics	Gymnastics with apparatus	2
Total		36

Excerpt 8

Now, to combine the two statements: in the first two years, students shall study general subjects in addition to languages, and in the subsequent three years, students shall study Diplomacy, Finance, Education and the specialised subjects in addition to languages and the key general subjects ([Chapter 2](#), Curriculum).

Excerpt 9

Students shall be placed into classes based on foreign language proficiency, as assessed by foreign teachers upon enrolment ([Chapter 3](#), Enrolment and Graduation).

Excerpt 10

Students who complete the graduation test after five years of study shall be awarded a title and a government post based on their performance categories: Best, Good, Medium, Low and Bottom ([Chapter 3](#), Enrolment and Graduation).

The Protocol Charter of the School of Translation Studies (拟定大学堂译学馆章程) (excerpts)

*Translated from Chinese by Shuyin Zhang and
Caiwen Wang*

Source text: Research Office for the History of Peking University (北京大学校史研究室) (ed.), 'Protocol Charter of the School of Translation Studies of the Imperial University of Peking' (拟定大学堂译学馆章程). In Historical materials about Peking University (北京大学史料第一卷) (1898–1911), Vol. 1, edited by Research Office for the History of Peking University, 160–9. Beijing: Peking University Press (北京大学出版社), 1993

Excerpt 1

Foreign language teachers shall provide a list of textbooks and the outline of each book before the start of each semester. The supervisor and chief teacher will review and approve the proposals, and subsequently purchase the books for teaching. At the end of each semester, foreign language teachers shall submit reports to the supervisor, who shall then forward the reports to the chief teacher for review ([Chapter 2](#), Employment of Teachers and Teachers' Responsibilities).

Excerpt 2

General subject teachers shall provide a list of textbooks before the start of each semester for the chief teacher to review. All teachers shall also provide a detailed plan of their teaching. At the end of the semester, they shall summarise all the teaching and send the summary to the chief teacher for review ([Chapter 2](#), Employment of Teachers and Teachers' Responsibilities).

Excerpt 3

The School provides student work scorebooks for each subject. The foreign language scorebooks shall be completed by foreign language teachers, and the general subject scorebook shall be completed by general subject teachers. Student absences and leave requests shall also be recorded in the scorebooks ([Chapter 2](#), Employment of Teachers and Teachers' Responsibilities).

Excerpt 4

The School has student demerit books. Each teacher has one. Teachers are responsible for consistently monitoring students' temperament and conduct for any infractions. Any rule violation shall be promptly recorded in the demerit book. The demerit books shall be submitted to the chief teacher for weekly review ([Chapter 2](#), Employment of Teachers and Teachers' Responsibilities).

Excerpt 5

Student work shall be scored. Foreign language subjects shall be graded daily by foreign language teachers, and general subjects by general subject teachers ([Chapter 4](#), Curriculum and Assessment).

Excerpt 6

Each subject shall be graded on a 100-point scale. Upon graduation, the average score for each subject shall be calculated, and a score of 60 or higher is a pass grade ([Chapter 4](#), Curriculum and Assessment).

Excerpt 7

Homework shall be evaluated. Monthly examinations shall take place on the last day of each month. Annual examinations shall be conducted on the last day of the second semester every year. Graduation examinations

shall be held every five years, on the last day of the fifth year ([Chapter 4](#), Curriculum and Assessment).

Excerpt 8

Regarding testing techniques, students shall be evaluated on their written answers to questions on any topics covered in class. They shall be required to provide written comments and critiques to demonstrate their understandings of the topics. No other written tests shall be conducted ([Chapter 4](#), Curriculum and Assessment).

Excerpt 9

The examination scores shall consider daily diligence and commitment to studies, as well as moral integrity. The final scores should be averaged with the daily scores ([Chapter 4](#), Curriculum and Assessment).

Excerpt 10

After lectures, students shall independently study and revise. This is known as self-study. Due to limited space, there will not be any dedicated rooms for self-study. Instead, the classrooms are used for this purpose. For self-study, students shall sit in the same classroom where they study their foreign language. For example, a student who studies English should go to their English classroom for self-study, and a student who studies French should go to their French classroom. This practice shall be followed to avoid confusion ([Chapter 5](#), Student Rules).

Notes

1. The School's English name at that time was College of Languages. We instead adopted a literal translation of its Chinese name. For further discussion on the School, see [Pan 2014](#).
2. Following the First Sino-Japanese War (甲午战争), bourgeois reformists led by Kang Youwei (康有为) and Liang Qichao launched the Reform Movement of 1898 (also known as the Hundred Days' Reform) (维新运动) to modernise China and promote capitalist development.
3. Peiyang University (北洋大学堂; now Tianjin University), also known as Imperial Tientsin University, was established in 1895 in Tianjin, and thus is arguably the first state university in modern China ([Tianjin University n.d.](#)). However, the Imperial University of Peking was

- the first national and comprehensive university. By the time the STS was founded, there was no translation-related subject offered at Peiyang University (Wu 2021).
4. The Translation Section would become Peking University Press in the modern era. The Section closed temporarily before being reopened in 1902 under the Headship of Yan Fu. Yan Fu would resign from the post in 1904. Further details about the Translation Section can be found in the section ‘The relevance of the STS in history and today’ in this chapter and in [note 11](#).
 5. The establishment of the SCL met with resistance from conservative officials, resulting in low enrolment at the start. Students of the SCL struggled with traditional mindsets and discouraged their descendants from pursuing translation careers. However, by the time of the STS’s establishment, attitudes had shifted dramatically. In 1904, the STS saw high demand, with applicants from elite families. This change reflected a broader shift in Chinese society’s recognition and acknowledgement of foreign language education (Li 1996).
 6. The Self-Strengthening Movement arose in the 1860s as a military and political reform initiative committed to adapting Western institutional and military advancements to Chinese needs. It was supported by prominent political figures at the time, such as Zeng Guofan (曾国藩), Zuo Zongtang (左宗棠), Li Hongzhang (李鸿章) and Yixin. The principle of Chinese-Style Westernisation (中体西用) was part of this initiative.
 7. Further readings include [Liu 1925/1993](#), [Li 1903/1954](#) and [Zhang 1904/1993](#).
 8. Cai Yuanpei is recognised as one of China’s greatest educators over the country’s history. He was the successor of Yan Fu as the president of Peking University.
 9. We chose the word ‘charter’ to translate 章程 for its sense ‘a grant or guarantee of rights, franchises, or privileges from the sovereign power of a state or country’ ([Merriam-Webster n.d.](#)), because the two charters were presented to Emperor Guangxu’s ministers before they were presented to the Emperor for approval. The word 奏 in 奏定译学馆章程 refers to a minister’s advising or presenting to their emperor or empress in feudal China ([Handian n.d.](#)). 定 means ‘agree to’. Literally, 奏定译学馆章程 means ‘the School of Translation Studies’ Regulations presented to and agreed to by the Emperor’, hence our translation ‘the Authorised Charter of the School of Translation Studies’. Additionally, 拟 in 拟定译学馆章程 means ‘at the initial stage or draft’ (初步设计编制或起草) ([Handian n.d.](#)), hence our translation ‘the Protocol Charter of the School of Translation Studies’.
 10. For more details about the curriculum, please refer to alumni memoirs about the STS, notably those by [Zhang \(2000\)](#), [Cai \(2000\)](#) and [Chen \(1940/1986\)](#).
 11. The Translation Section was an institute primarily responsible for translating and introducing foreign books to be used as textbooks at the Imperial University of Peking (see also [note 4](#)). It is different from the STS, which was dedicated to translator training. The STS, however, also introduced textbooks from foreign countries.
 12. The late Qing dynasty witnessed an increase in translation schools that functioned as translation institutions. These schools, promoted by the Westernisation Group, were government-run with clear regulations. At the time, there were three well-known schools of combined learning in the country: one in Beijing, one in Shanghai and one in Guangzhou, all running similar translation programmes. See [Huang and Chu 2012](#) for discussions of the institutionalisation of translation studies in the late Qing dynasty.
 13. On the impact of Yan Fu and his three principles, see, for example, [Hermans 2003](#), [Chan 2004](#), [Cheung 2006](#), [Huang 2016](#) and [Lv 2017](#).

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11 Ukraine, 1912

The art of translation: Ivan Franko's pioneering insights in Ukrainian translation studies

Oksana Dzera and Yuliia Naniak

The emergence of Translation Studies in Ukraine during the twentieth century began with the work of Ivan Franko, whose 1912 article 'Kamenari. Ukrainskyi tekst i polskyi pereklad. Deshcho pro shtuku perekladannia' (*Kamenari. The Ukrainian text and its Polish translation. Something about the art of translation*) laid the foundation for translation quality assessment analysis.

A towering figure in Ukrainian literature, a Ukrainian poet, writer, social and literary critic, journalist, ethnographer, economist, political activist and doctor of philosophy (obtained from the University of Vienna in 1893), Franko devoted much of his time and effort to translating and elaborating the principles of translation criticism. A polyglot from his youth, Franko commenced his translation endeavours while still a pupil at secondary school, thereby establishing it as a lifelong vocation. His translations encompassed a wide array of genres and epochs, from Babylonian hymns and the Book of Genesis to the works of his contemporaries. Franko played a foundational role in Ukrainian translation studies at a time when the field was just beginning to take shape. Although the lack of institutionalised translation studies limited his opportunities for formal academic work, Franko frequently edited translations by other Ukrainian authors, including Mykhailo Starytskyi, Stepan Rudanskyi, Ahatanhel Krymskyi, Panteleimon Kulish, Osyp Makovei, Antin Krushelnyskyi and Osyp Shukhevych, elaborating his ideas about translation in reviews and prefaces.

In his artistic pursuits, which were characterised by a broad spectrum of interests and an extensive repository of knowledge, Franko can be compared to illustrious figures of German Romanticism such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) and Wilhelm von Humboldt

(1767–1835). Goethe, in particular, exerted a significant impact on Franko, influencing both his nascent poetic undertakings and his intellectual development and comprehension of translation. Franko drew inspiration from Goethe's conception of world literature as an instrument for cultural exchange and development of national language through translations, and this perspective profoundly shaped his translation methodology, highlighting the importance of fidelity to the original text alongside the necessity to encapsulate its essence and aesthetic appeal (Bondar 2009). It is therefore unsurprising that Franko's initial efforts to articulate his translation methodology were expressed in the essay that accompanied his translation of *Faust* in 1880. This event is identified by Zorivchak (2016) and Shmiher (2009, 40) as a foundational moment for the field of Translation Studies in Ukraine.

Franko prioritised the educational role of translation, a perspective that was particularly significant in the socio-political context of Galicia (Halychyna) in the late nineteenth century, where translation played a vital role in language and cultural development. He viewed translations as catalysts for the growth of the target literature, believing that each printed translation contributed to the overall development of the language and literature.

The article selected for inclusion in this volume is an essay first published in an education journal in 1911, and republished the following year as a separate booklet. The essay focuses on the Polish translation of Franko's own poem, *Kameniari* (Stonemasons). This poem is a significant work within Ukrainian literature, known for its realistic depiction of the heroic struggle. Composed in 1878, the lyric poem-allegory reflects Franko's endorsement of the collective struggle for a brighter future, celebrating the people's courage and selflessness. Franko is still referred to as 'Kameniar' today.

'*Kameniari*. The Ukrainian text and its Polish translation. Something about the art of translation' represents the culmination of Franko's ideas on translation criticism. This work serves as a comprehensive summary of his earlier writings and reflections, reflecting his extensive experience as a translator as well as his insights as a literary and translation critic. In this text, Franko consolidates the principles he developed over years of practice, offering a final synthesis of his beliefs on the art and role of translation within Ukrainian culture.

Franko's initial statement in the article highlights translations as fundamental to cultural advancement, positioning them as 'an important cultural factor' that familiarises a nation with foreign achievements and, thus, acts as a driver of cultural establishment and stabilisation,

especially for societies striving to enhance their literary status or cultural identity. This sentiment aligns closely with Even-Zohar's polysystem theory (1978), particularly his idea that translations can assume a 'primary position' within the cultural 'polysystem' of a nation, if that nation's own literary system is underdeveloped or culturally 'weak' due to historical, socio-political or economic conditions.

Franko's remark that 'the development of this [Ukrainian] literature took place in such unusual and abnormal circumstances that ... the art of translation from foreign languages could not develop much' reflects the uniquely challenging context in which Ukrainian literary culture evolved. Since the late eighteenth century, Ukraine had been divided between the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires, both of which imposed significant linguistic and cultural constraints. In Galicia, under Austro-Hungarian rule, the cultural landscape was marked by a struggle between two ideological movements: the *Narodovtsi*, who advocated for Ukrainian linguistic and cultural identity, and the *Moskvophiles*, who, often on the payroll of the Russian Empire, favoured alignment with Russian language and culture, perceiving it as a protective force against Polish and Hungarian influence. This split led to conflicting visions for Ukrainian culture, complicating efforts to establish a cohesive literary tradition.

In Russian-controlled Ukraine, policies aimed at suppressing Ukrainian identity were more direct and restrictive. The 1863 Valuyev Circular, for instance, prohibited the publication of most Ukrainian-language works, declaring that 'there never was, is not, and cannot be any separate Little Russian language' (the term 'Little Russian language' was used to deny Ukrainian linguistic and national distinction). This was followed by the 1876 Ems Ukaz, which extended restrictions to nearly all Ukrainian publications and performances. Together, these policies severely restricted Ukrainian language development and hindered the production and circulation of Ukrainian translations.

Franko's reference to 'abnormal circumstances' aptly describes the struggle for Ukrainian literature and translation to thrive amid these political and cultural pressures. Itamar Even-Zohar's polysystem theory suggests that 'vacuums' or gaps in a nation's literary culture arise when the production of original works is insufficient to meet cultural and intellectual needs. Franko mirrors this idea, highlighting how periodicals, journals and newspapers in Galicia responded to the limited availability of Ukrainian-language original works by turning to translations. He notes that these publications were 'compelled to consistently and systematically furnish their readership with intellectual nourishment' and, in the absence of 'original compositions of sufficient merit', turned to translated

works to fill this cultural need. Due to relatively favourable conditions in Galicia under Austro-Hungarian rule, these periodicals could more effectively address these ‘vacuums’, illustrating how sociocultural and political contexts determine the role and prevalence of translation in a literary system.

Franko’s further emphasis on the ‘obvious’ requirement for Ukrainian translators to be fluent in both the source and target languages reflects an enduring principle, famously articulated by Étienne Dolet back in 1540 (in Bassnett 1980, 63). Yet for Franko, this linguistic precision was crucial, especially in Galicia, where Moscophile writers often used ‘yazychiye’, an artificial blend of Church Slavonic and Russian, undermining linguistic clarity. Additionally, Franko observed that some intellectuals ‘sometimes know a foreign language better than their own’, a situation prevalent on both banks of Ukraine. His requirement, therefore, was not merely technical but a call for lingual and, consequently, national unity across Ukraine.

In Franko’s poem, the central symbol, a towering granite rock, represents falsehood and oppression, with thousands of fighters chained to it but each holding a ‘heavy iron hammer’ to break the rock and pave the way for future generations, emphasising their collective struggle and belief in the significance of their cause, even if their names are forgotten. The poem reflects the original author’s style, making it both a powerful narrative and an educational cultural artefact, resonating with the broader context of the Ukrainian people’s quest for freedom and justice.

The article encompasses two key aspects of translation analysis: the historical-literary (or literary-critical) and the aesthetic (or interpretative-stylistic). Additionally, elements of statistical analysis are also present in this work. Franko’s decision to analyse his own original work reflects his intention to fully address both aspects – exploring the social and personal circumstances surrounding the text’s creation, as well as the author’s intent and psychology.

The aesthetic (interpretative-stylistic) analysis follows a multi-layered structure, beginning with the poem’s meter and extending to comparisons in the frequency and types of parts of speech used in the original and the translation. This approach allows Franko to examine the artistic and stylistic nuances of translation at multiple levels, from the rhythm and form to the linguistic choices that shape the reader’s experience. Through this detailed analysis, Franko offers insights not only into the craft of translation but also into the deeper connections between language, form and cultural context.

Franko's analysis extends beyond a straightforward comparison of the original text and its translation; it embodies a holistic vision of reproducing the semantic and stylistic details within the entire structural framework of the original. Rather than examining isolated aspects of language, Franko's approach considers each element in relation to the whole, a method strikingly similar to the hermeneutic circle concept of the German Romantics. In this view, understanding a text requires interpreting its parts within the context of the entire work, while the meaning of the whole is simultaneously shaped by its individual components.

For Franko, each semantic and stylistic nuance must be preserved in translation not as an isolated detail but as part of the intricate system of relationships that defines the original. This vision aligns with the German Romantic idea that true comprehension – and, by extension, authentic translation – requires a continuous interplay between the parts and the whole. His approach suggests that effective translation demands a deep engagement with the text's inner structure and the cultural and literary system it represents. In this way, Franko's translation criticism is not only linguistic and stylistic but philosophical, aiming to recreate the original's artistic essence within a different linguistic and cultural framework.

As a poet, Franko was a master of rhyme and meter, and he expected translators to demonstrate similar skill in these areas. In several of his essays and reviews, including '*Kameniar*', he emphasised the importance of maintaining the original verse structure, rhyme scheme and equalin-earity in translation. However, Franko did not see this as a simple matter of imitating form. Rather, he advocated for a deeper form of equivalence, one that captures the original's functional impact rather than rigidly replicating its structure. This approach aligns with what James Holmes (1970, 97) would later term the 'analogous form' of verse translation, where the form chosen by the translator serves a similar function to that in the original text.

Franko explains this using *Kameniar*, which he wrote in Alexandrine verse, with stanzas following the rhyme scheme *a b a a b*, where *a* represents feminine rhymes and *b* represents masculine rhymes. This form of his programmatic poem is designed to 'compel the reader to hold their breath in the middle of the stanza and breathe more freely at the end' (Franko 1912, 12). In the case of translating between Ukrainian and Polish, Franko acknowledged the inherent linguistic differences that shape how rhyme and meter can be reproduced. For example, achieving masculine rhymes in Polish often requires monosyllabic words, a limitation that can conflict with the original's syllabic demands. In translating *Kameniar*, for

instance, Franko suggests that the Polish translator needed to prioritise the 13-syllable line structure typical of Ukrainian poetry. To do so, the translator opted to avoid masculine rhymes, which would have disrupted the intended syllabic rhythm.

Franko's perspective reveals his nuanced understanding of linguistic constraints and his belief that effective translation requires adaptability rather than rigid adherence to form. By advocating for functional equivalence, he allowed translators the flexibility to adapt rhyme and meter as needed to convey the original's artistic impact, respecting both the spirit and structure of the work within the target language's capacities.

Franko cautions against unwarranted morphological transformations. He contests the excessive substitution of words in one category with those from another. When commenting on Sydir Tverdokhlib's translation of *Kameniarî* into Polish, the poet criticises the overuse of words from the main parts of speech – nouns, adjectives and verbs – at the expense of secondary categories like pronouns, adverbs and conjunctions. In Franko's view, words from the first category correspond to meaning and action, while those from the second category serve as 'shading in painting, which animates and plasticises the picture'. The addition of words from the main categories leads to an 'overloading of verses with content, obscuring the images, and sometimes distorting the contours'. Despite this criticism of Tverdokhlib's translation, Franko nevertheless concludes that the translation ultimately shows evidence of 'skill, boldness in structure, and depth of expression'.

To sum up, Franko's holistic approach to translation set a remarkable foundation for the development of modern Ukrainian translation studies. By emphasising linguistic accuracy alongside deep cultural understanding, Franko advocated for a method of translation that integrates literary, linguistic and cultural elements, enhancing both the understanding and appreciation of translated texts. His insights demonstrate that translation is not a mechanical act of linguistic conversion but a sophisticated, multidimensional process requiring sensitivity to both the original work's artistic nuances and the receiving culture's unique linguistic constraints.

Franko viewed translation as a powerful nation-shaping tool, essential to the development of Ukrainian culture and identity. For him, translation extended far beyond achieving linguistic accuracy; it held profound cultural and national significance, uniting Ukrainians across the divides imposed by empires. By preserving cultural meaning and function within translation, he sought to foster a shared cultural foundation, transcending regional differences and forging a cohesive national identity. This vision reveals his commitment to a Ukrainian literary culture that could

draw upon international knowledge while simultaneously asserting its own distinctiveness.

Franko's approach continues to resonate with contemporary translation scholars and practitioners, highlighting the enduring relevance of his pioneering insights. His ideas foreshadowed several core principles later articulated in translation theory, such as Holmes's concept of analogous form of verse translation, and intersect with polysystem theory's view of translation as a tool to address sociocultural 'vacuums' within a literary system. Franko's work highlights the translator's role as a cultural mediator, a creator and a unifier, whose efforts contribute not only to the enrichment of national literature but to the broader intellectual and cultural vitality of a nation.

'Kameniarî. The Ukrainian text and its Polish translation. Something about the art of translation' (excerpt)

By Ivan Franko

Translated from Ukrainian by Yuliia Naniak

Source text: Ivan Franko, Kameniarî. Ukrainskyi tekst i polskyi pereklad. Deshcho pro shtuku perekladannia. Lviv: Zahalna drukarnia, 1912

Foreword

Under the title 'Something about the art of translation', I published an essay in the 1911 issues 13–14 and 15–16 of *Uchytel* (The Teacher). This essay analyses my poem *Kameniarî* from a historical, literary and aesthetic perspective, and compares the Ukrainian original with the Polish translation made by the young Ukrainian writer Sydir Tverdokhlib. Given the pedagogical importance of this essay for both students and teachers, who far too often lack appropriate guidelines for the analysis, explanation and assessment of literary works, I am publishing it as a separate booklet. I hope that beyond the academic milieu, it will garner support and contribute to the cultivation of literary taste.

For every nation, translations of foreign works, whether literary or scientific, are an important cultural factor, enabling the masses of the people to become familiar with the works and labours of the human spirit, which in other lands at different times have contributed to the spread of enlightenment and the rise of the general level of culture. Good translations of important and impactful works of other peoples' literature have constituted the fundamental elements of every cultured nation since the ancient Romans. The extent to which the peoples of Western Europe, including the French, Germans, English and Italians, have drawn upon translations of Greek and Roman antiquity is well known for those who have engaged in the study of these nations' literary and cultural histories.

The golden age of Polish national literature in the sixteenth century is perhaps best characterised by numerous translations of the greatest works of Italian Renaissance literature. In early modern Russian literature at the beginning of the modern era of its national development, alongside the names of Pushkin, Hohol and Lermontov, there are the names of Gniedich, who translated the *Iliad*, and Zhukovsky, who among other works translated the *Odyssey*.

Our Ukrainian literature, in its early beginnings in the princely era, began and for a long time relied almost exclusively on translations from Greek. In more recent times, the development of this literature took place in such unusual and abnormal circumstances that, among other spheres of spiritual activity, the art of translation from foreign languages could not develop much. Nevertheless, during the century of its development, our new national literature, in addition to its distinguished authors, garnered a multitude of highly esteemed translators. Among these, it is particularly noteworthy to highlight Stepan Rudanskyi for his translation of the *Iliad*; Petro Nishchynskyi for his rendition of the *Odyssey*; Kulish for his translation of 13 of Shakespeare's plays; Volodymyr Samiilenko for his adaptation of Molière's *Tartuffe*; Mykhailo Starytskyi for his translation of Serbian ballads and songs, alongside a plethora of other works from diverse literatures, as well as Pavlo Hrabovskiy.

The emergence of periodicals, journals with literary and scientific purposes, and newspapers with literary ambitions have particularly contributed much to the development of translated literature. These publishing houses are obliged to constantly and periodically provide readers with spiritual food and, unable to find original writings of adequate value, must also provide readers with translations. Certainly, the periodicity of such publications and the need to provide ready-made food for a certain period of time both increase the number of translators and, on the other hand, force them to hurry. This results in the significant drawback that translations done by people lacking adequate preparation, and particularly when they are hastily published without external evaluation and critique, tend to be deficient and insufficient. It is an obvious fact that translating any work requires the translator to be familiar with at least two languages, namely the language into which they are translating, whether it is their native language or not, and then the language from which they are translating. Regrettably, it is imperative to say that a large number of translators, especially ours, meet the first elementary requirement of the art of translation to a very limited extent, knowing very little of their own language, much less of foreign languages, or sometimes knowing a foreign language better than their own.

It is equally obvious that to translate a scientific work well, one must be well acquainted with the science the translated work represents. This can be described by the technical term *professionalism*. In order to translate a historical work well, one must be, generally speaking, a professional historian or at least familiar enough with history and its various auxiliary sciences to avoid making mistakes in translation. The aforementioned observation is equally applicable to publications within the realms of natural history and philosophy, in addition to formal academic textbooks and studies in diverse specialised scientific disciplines. It is evident that the exigencies of practical life deter non-professional translators from engaging with such specialised materials; however, it is regrettable to note that a considerable number of untrained individuals have undertaken the translation of educational textbooks.

In some ways, the situation is different when translating literary works. The popular demand for such works is greater than for scientific works, and translating them, especially prosaic works, seems easier than translating scientific works. Those who read a literary work in a foreign language, especially one close to their native language, with pleasure and some understanding, often feel the urge to translate it into their native language, and whenever they have free time, they take up translation. No special competence seems to be required for this. As soon as the translation is grammatically correct and does not contain too many visible absurdities, editors and publishers are ready to publish it. This is how many translations of dubious value appear; however, such originals are usually of equally low literary value, satisfying the spiritual hunger and taste of the average, poorly educated public. But very often such dilettantes, having enough free time, take on translating works of high literary value that are beyond their understanding, particularly in the original language; they translate English or French, Greek, Latin or Italian works from German, Polish or Russian translations. In more recent times, the fashion for works by Danish, Swedish and Norwegian writers has produced many translators who render these texts from German, Polish or Russian without ever having laid eyes on the originals.

The special situation of our Ukrainian literature has recently created the need for translators who consider it necessary and possible to introduce the works of our literature to the public of other nationalities. The works of our most prominent writers, namely Shevchenko, Marko Vovchok and Fed'kovych, have long attracted the attention of translators, especially among the Russian and Polish public. The celebrated Russian writer Turgenev translated Marko Vovchok's *Ukrainian Stories* into Russian. Shevchenko has been and is being translated into that language

by various Russians and Russian-educated Ukrainians. Another prominent Russian writer, M. Zlatovratsky, translated some of Fed'kovych's stories into Russian. Russian translations of stories by myself, Hrinchenko and Kotsiubynskyi, three of the more recent Ukrainian writers, are common. Poetry by newer poets strangely does not find anyone eager to translate it into the Russian language.

Prominent Polish writers and poets Syrokomla (Kondratowicz) and Leonard Sowinski began translating Shevchenko's poetry into Polish in the 1860s, Sowinski being brave enough to tackle *The Haidamaks*. Along with them, we should mention the talented and smart translator Gorzałczyński, whose volume of translations, mostly of Shevchenko's lyric poems, was published in Kyiv shortly after the poet's death. Fed'kovych's short stories and poems were translated into Polish and published in various Galician-Polish journals. Among the translators, I believe, was also the gifted Polish poet Bolesław Czerwiński. Only in recent times have some of the younger Ukrainian writers, who also speak Polish well, felt the need to acquaint the Polish public with the works of our literature to a greater extent than has been the case until now. Thanks to the work of such translators, collections of short stories by Kotsiubynskyi, Stefanyk and Yatskov appeared in Polish translations. In 1909, a collection of short stories by younger Ukrainian writers was published under the title *Młoda Ukraina* (Young Ukraine), and in early 1911, *Antologia współczesnych poetów ukraińskich, przełożył Sydir Tverdochlib, wstępem zaopatrzył Wł. Orkan, rzeźba ozdobił Z. Kurczyński* (Anthology of Contemporary Ukrainian Poets, Translated by Sydir Tverdokhlib, Preface by Wł. Orkan, Illustrated by Z. Kurczyński). This anthology presents poetry by 10 authors from Galicia, 10 from Russian Ukraine and two allegedly from Bukovyna, which is completely *per nefas*, because both of these authors, Ostap Lutskyi and Osyp Makovei, are from Galicia and have only temporarily lived or are living in Bukovyna.

I will discuss this anthology in more detail at some point, but for now I will focus on the most recent translation by D. Sydir Tverdokhlib, namely my poem *Kameniarî*, which appeared in the 20th volume of the second annual of the journal *Życie*, published in Lviv. D. Sydir Tverdokhlib is a rather unusual translator because he made a name for himself with his collection of Ukrainian poems *In the Candlelight of the Plain*. At the same time, he is known to speak Polish very well, to be in close and friendly relations with many Polish writers of the younger generation, and to have gone far beyond his Galician Ukrainian background in developing a broad spiritual culture and an impressive aesthetic taste. That is

why I want to show the wider community some of the secrets of the art of translation, mental phenomena and aesthetic facts that every intelligent reader feels but fails to perceive fully and clearly.

...

For the sake of completeness, I include the following bibliographical detail: shortly after this poem was published, it was translated into German by an unidentified writer and published in print in the Vienna weekly *Die Heimat* in 1879. I had that translation in my hands but did not compare it with the original at the time and cannot now say anything about it other than that the translator rendered my poem in unrhymed verse.

I read the Polish translation by Mr S. Tverdokhlib with interest and cannot deny that it made a rather strong impression on me. I also do not deny that this impression is quite different from the one elicited by the original itself. The reason for this lies primarily in the language and the technical difficulties that translation imposes, especially with languages so closely related to each other and at the same time fundamentally different, such as Ukrainian and Polish. The primary and most significant distinction in translating poetry is in the stresses; whereas the Ukrainian language, like Greek, has a variety of stresses, even more varied than Greek (for instance, the village name Nahuievychi has the stress on the fourth syllable, while Tustanovychi on the fifth from the end, which never occurs in Greek), the Polish language, like Latin, has all stresses on the penultimate syllable, and one must always use a monosyllabic word to achieve a masculine rhyme in a verse.

Mr Tverdokhlib, in his translation of 'Kameniar', used the same 13-syllable meter (with masculine rhyme, it becomes 12-syllable) and circumvented the difficulty of rhyming by using only feminine rhymes throughout. This gives each stanza a gentler, almost softer tone than the alternation of feminine and masculine rhymes. However, the translator did not avoid this difficulty with the caesura, which is masculine throughout my poem, and therefore had to sometimes force the Polish language to necessarily fit a monosyllabic word.

...

I think that after this analysis, careful readers will be able to form their own judgement about my poem and its Polish translation. I will limit myself to presenting some further observations about the differences between the original and the translation. The original uses a total of 388 words, while the translation uses 426, which is 27 words more. This difference is quite significant, as it exceeds the average word count of one stanza, which typically contains around 35 words. In the original, there are 109 nouns, 46 adjectives and 49 verbs; in the translation, there are

104 nouns, 59 adjectives and 57 verbs. Particularly in nouns, the difference is very substantial because the translator often replaced simple sentences with complex and figurative ones. Calculating the percentage ratios of nouns, adjectives and verbs to the total number of words in both works, we see that in the original, nouns constitute 25.37 per cent, adjectives 11.56 per cent and verbs 12.31 per cent, whereas in the Polish translation, nouns make up 33.36 per cent, adjectives 13.84 per cent and verbs 13.38 per cent. Combining these three important categories of words, we see that in the original, they account for slightly less than half of all words (49.24 per cent), while in the translation, they make up almost two thirds of all words (60.88 per cent). The rest in both texts consists of secondary words such as pronouns, adverbs indicating place and time, and conjunctions. When words from the first three categories form the main basis of the literary work, providing it with meaning and emphasis, words from the second category are like shading in painting, which animates and plasticises the picture. The strong predominance of words from the first category in the translation causes the overstressing of the poem's content, obscuring its imagery and sometimes distorting its contours, as noted in the analysis of the translation. These are the main flaws in the translation, but ultimately, one cannot deny its talent, boldness in formation and richness of expression.

Lviv, 8–24 May, 1911

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12 Russia, 1920

The pre-revolutionary roots of Soviet translation theory: comparative philology and the translator's subconscious

Brian James Baer

The essay by Fedor Dmitrievich Batiushkov (1857–1920) titled ‘The tasks of literary translation’ appeared as the introduction to the second edition of the in-house guide for translators *Principles of Literary Translation* at the World Literature Publishing House. The first edition, published only a year before, consisted of two essays, one on the translation of literary prose, written by the translator and writer Kornei Chukovskii, and the other on poetry translation, written by the poet and translator Nikolai Gumilev. The second edition was expanded to include a third chapter, by Batiushkov, on drama translation, as well as his introductory essay. Batiushkov was a member of the editorial board of the publisher's so-called Western series, focusing on Western European literature. Batiushkov, along with the poet Aleksandr Blok and the philologist Fedor Braun, represented German literature. Batiushkov and Braun were the only board members in the Western series holding advanced degrees.

Not only was Batiushkov a professor for many years in the department of the History of Western European Literatures in the School of Historical Philology at St Petersburg University, where he taught courses on literature and the French language, he also taught a course on Western European literature at the Higher Courses for Women, where he was head of the department of World Literature, or, as it was then called, Universal Literature (*Vseobshchaia literatura*). When he left that position in 1899, he intensified his editorial work. Having served for several years as head of the Russian edition of the journal *Kosmopolis*, he became chief editor of the journal *Mir Bozhii* (1902–6). In 1912 he was appointed to the literary-theatrical committee of the Petersburg Imperial Theatres, and

for a short time following the February Revolution of 1917 he was head of the Petersburg state theatres. He was removed from that position following the Bolshevik Revolution in October 1917 and was named to the editorial board of *World Literature* in 1918, despite his class background and liberal politics. Batiushkov's relationship with the founder of the publishing house, the writer Maksim Gorkii, may have helped: Batiushkov published Gorkii's short story 'The reader' in the journal *Kosmopolis* in 1897, during an especially difficult time for Gorkii, following his release from a tsarist prison. Batiushkov's livelihood, however, was precarious in those years, and he would die of malnutrition before the release of the second edition of *Principles*. Upon hearing of Batiushkov's untimely death at the age of 62, Chukovskii (1991, 141) wrote, 'Poor, polite, noble, the most tactful and gentlemanly of everyone on the editorial board'. His co-author Nikolai Gumilev would be executed a year later as a monarchist, making any reissue of *Principles* unthinkable.

Of all the board members, Batiushkov, arguably, had the least experience as a translator, although in his various professional roles, he interacted critically with translations. In addition to two monographs on the teaching of French language and literature and one on the 'female types' in the tragedies of Racine, he was involved in two monumental comparative studies of Western European literatures, editing the four-volume *History of Western Literature (1800–1910)* (1912–17), with Fedor Braun and others, and authoring *Western Literature on the Verge of the Nineteenth Century*, published posthumously in 1924. In those works, Batiushkov provided the occasional translation of English, French and German titles and cited passages. He also interacted with translations as an editor of the journal *Mir Bozhii*, in which it was typical for translations to make up anywhere from one third to half of the contributions in section one. His theorising of translation, however, emerged in three review articles that appeared in *Mir Bozhii* in 1901, the year before he assumed the editorship of the journal.

As a member of the editorial board at the World Literature Publishing House, Batiushkov was a prolific contributor of prefaces to new Russian translations of works of French literature by Voltaire, Balzac and others. It is clear that Batiushkov's academic credentials, specifically in the field of comparative Romance philology, earned him the privilege of authoring the introductory essay for the second edition of *Principles*. His broad knowledge of Western European languages and literatures made it possible for him to provide a global perspective for the three chapters, which consisted largely of pragmatic advice for translators based on the authors' experiences.

In his introduction, Batiushkov lays the theoretical foundations for what would later be referred to as ‘philologically-accurate translation’ (Baskina 2021), by critiquing the concept of ‘subjective translation’ while advocating for what he theorised as ‘adequate translation’ and aligning translation with the field of philology. In what follows, I will attempt to establish the genealogy of those theoretical positions and to describe their subsequent influence on Soviet translation studies.

Genealogies

It is clear from the many sources cited in the essay that Batiushkov’s theorising of translation was shaped by recent scholarly writings on linguistics, including sound philology, as well as discussions of new translations. The sources for the most original concepts laid out in the essay, however, are not named. That being said, his previous writings on other subjects as well as his three articles on translations and translators, mentioned above, allow us to establish some of the intellectual sources for those concepts and to map their development in Batiushkov’s thinking.

Batiushkov’s notion of subjective translation is elaborated over the three review essays he published in *Mir Bozhii*, the first two dedicated to new Russian translations of Baudelaire’s *Fleurs du mal* and the third celebrating the scholar-translator Petr Veinberg. The first essay, titled ‘Baudelaire and his Russian translator P.Ia’, was published in issue eight of 1901, and the follow-up essay, written in reaction to the translator’s response to Batiushkov’s initial review, was published in the tenth issue of that year. In these two essays, which are quite sophisticated examples of translation criticism, Batiushkov (1901b, 8) accuses Iakubovich’s translations of being ‘subjective’, as reflected in the ‘arbitrariness’ of the translator’s decision making, ‘not justified by the text or the context’.

Batiushkov begins by making it clear that the task of translation criticism is not to provide a list of the translator’s *progreshnosti*, or errors, which are inevitable, especially in the case of verse translation, but to provide a more ‘systematic’ evaluation of the translator’s ‘divergences’ from the original in order to assess how they shape the overall image presented of the original author’s work. As Batiushkov (1901a, 16) explains, ‘We are object-ing only to the *new* and subjective colouring given by the translator to the general contents of Baudelaire’s poetry, as a result of which his evaluation of the French poet turns out to be just as arbitrary.’

Batiushkov (1901b, 11) attempts to systematise these divergences not by attributing them to some ‘deliberate or arbitrary “misunderstanding”

of the [original] text', but by locating what he calls 'the key – in the unconscious workings of the translator's thought'. In the first essay, the proposed key is the lasting influence of Iakubovich's initial, naïve reading of Baudelaire in his youth, which led the translator consistently to play down Baudelaire's pessimism by 'elevating the tone, smoothing over and softening the style, and, finally, even altering the images' (Batiushkov 1901a, 19), which, when taken together, reveal 'the excessively subjective prism of the translation and of the assessment of the French poet, who is presented differently from how he actually was' (Batiushkov 1901a, 19).

In the second essay, Batiushkov sees in Iakubovich's divergences traces of his own poetic style and world view – Iakubovich was himself a poet and included his own poetry alongside his translations from Baudelaire in the volume under review. As Batiushkov explains:

Acknowledging the indubitable talent of several of the poems of Mr. P. Ia., we thought it sufficient to show, on the basis of two or three examples, that the different poetic temperaments and completely alien worldviews [of the two poets] resulted in Mr. P. Ia. producing many translations that were closer to original works 'on motifs' from Baudelaire than on actual translations (Batiushkov 1901b, 11).

He further elaborates the characteristics of subjective translation in his tribute to Veinberg:

[translation] is thankless for it requires the constant alienation of one's own 'I' so as not to get carried away by an image, lending it a subjective meaning, attributing to the author your own disposition (Batiushkov 1901c, 16).

While condemning subjectivity – and betraying a certain degree of historical positivism in the process – Batiushkov (1901b, 12) does not assert the possibility of an 'objective' alternative, acknowledging, 'Of course, some subjectivity in the rendering is almost unavoidable.' This helps to explain his use of the qualifier 'excessively' when referring to Iakubovich's subjective rendering.

The concept of *adekvatnyi perevod*, or adequate translation, as the positive alternative to subjective translation, was theorised by Batiushkov as an approach that pays equal attention to form and content. It owes much to the German classicist Tycho Mommsen (1819–1900). Although unmentioned by Batiushkov, Mommsen's monograph *Die Kunst des deutschen Übersetzers aus neueren Sprachen* (1858) clearly

informed Batiushkov's historicised typology of translation approaches.¹ In his tripartite typology, Mommsen (1858, 8) labels the first approach 'styleless' translation, in which 'the foreign content is quite faithfully transferred but it loses its poetic form'; the second approach, 'original poetry in a foreign style'; and the third, strict or stylish translation, which is achieved 'when form and content are finally transmitted as faithfully as possible and can indeed be transferred in a beautiful and understandable way'. Unlike the many previous typologies, such as those of Dryden (1680, 1697), Pope (1715), Batteux (1747–8) and Tytler (1791), that propose timeless prescriptions grounded in the Aristotelian concept of the golden mean (especially evident in Dryden's 1697 essay), Mommsen introduces historical consciousness. He situates the three types in a kind of developmental progression, suggesting that each prepares the ground for the next, and describes the third approach, which is analogous to Batiushkov's adequate translation, as 'new', having been introduced only in the late eighteenth century by German Romantic writers.²

Batiushkov expands this historical dimension by explicitly connecting the three approaches to historically shifting levels of 'spiritual development' in the source and target cultures, unequal in the first two cases, and equal in the third. Spiritual, or *dukhovnoe*, here should not be interpreted in the narrow religious sense. The Russian adjective is formed from the noun *dukh*, or spirit, which is the established Russian translation of Hegel's *Geist*, which would allow an alternative translation as 'the development of Geist'. Such a reading is confirmed by a later critical reference to 'the Hegelian foundations' (Balukhatyi and Lesnitsskii 1936, 260) of Batiushkov's aesthetic philosophy. In other writings, Batiushkov uses the adjective *dukhovnyi* to mean something like culture: for example, 'dukhovnaia deiatel'nost' cheloveka', or 'the spiritual activity of humankind'. He describes the object of philology as 'the study of the distinct spiritual life [*dukhovnaia zhizn*] of a given people (or group of peoples), insofar as it is reflected in its language and literature' (Batiushkov 1886, 288). In his essay on Veinberg, he defines cultural maturity in the following terms: 'A national literature achieves its full degree of maturity only when it possesses a sufficiently flexible language and a variety of artistic forms so as to make works of foreign literature their own property' (Batiushkov 1901c, 17).

Batiushkov's historical-comparative perspective also leads him to acknowledge that different countries have different cultures of translation and that shifts within those cultures can take place, as occurred in nineteenth-century France, when the radically domesticating approaches of the eighteenth century (*les belles infidèles*) were abandoned in favour

of greater accuracy.³ Batiushkov's focus on the uneven development of *Geist* among different peoples was certainly informed by his academic training in the field of historical comparative philology. At the same time, it was very likely shaped by his perspective as a Russian. Over the course of his lifetime, he witnessed the rapid rise in prestige of Russian culture, especially in the realms of literature and music, in the eyes of Western Europeans, who had long dismissed Russian culture as imitative and belated. It was also the time when Russian literature reached its 'maturity' (Batiushkov 1901c, 17).

Another original contribution made by Batiushkov in his introductory essay is his theorising of translation as a branch of philology. As Batiushkov puts it, 'The translator, like the philologist, recognises that which has already been recognised.' This distinction was previously made by Batiushkov in his review of recent German works on philology. There Batiushkov (1886, 299) mentions the definition of philology proposed by August Böckh: 'Böckh defines the general task of philology as the recognition of that which has already been recognised (das Erkennen des Erkannten)'. In this way, Batiushkov situates the study of translation firmly within the discipline of philology, distinguishing it from the performing arts. (His co-author of *Principles*, Kornei Chukovskii, likened the translator to an actor.) As a result, Batiushkov (1901c, 16) advocates for an approach to translation predicated on the 'penetrating study of those great writers, the study of whom almost never occurs except for when one sets before oneself the task – of literary translation'.

Afterlives

Several of the concepts introduced or promoted by Batiushkov would have a lasting influence on Soviet translation studies. The notion of subjective translation, central to his criticism of Iakubovich's translations of Baudelaire, would, along with arbitrariness, come to define poor-quality translations in the Soviet Union. For instance, in 1929 Serhiy Dlozhevsky articulated the object of translation studies as 'embod[ying] the essence of deviations in a translation from the original that are motivated by differences in the language, culture, or the translator's *subjective* perception' (Shmihor 2021, 10; italics added). Unlike Batiushkov, however, some Soviet theorists would posit the possibility of an objective translation. The notion that translators should not translate authors whose artistic temperament and/or worldview is fundamentally different from their own was also taken up by Soviet theorists but politicised in the

Stalinist period to mean that a translator of one social class should not translate an author of another. That being said, the idea that a translator-poet might leave a stylistic trace on a translation was hotly debated. In the most repressive periods, the idea that translators should ‘minimise their artistic personalities’, subordinating themselves to that of the original author, was enforced – a position that had already been put forward by Gumilev in his 1919 chapter on poetry translation – while the idea of poet-translators leaving their stylistic imprint on a translation, what Fedorov (1930, 118) described metaphorically as ‘signed’ translations, was celebrated in less repressive times.

Batiushkov’s notion that translation practice will be shaped by the relative level of ‘spiritual development’ in the source and target cultures aligned very neatly with the Marxist-Leninist stagist model of economic development. And while the Soviet state defined itself as anti-imperialist and sought to create a World Literature that acknowledged the literary traditions of cultures East and West and peoples large and small, the approach taken to the translation of those literatures was quite different. For example, Western literature tended to be translated far more frequently, Eastern literatures tended to be heavily annotated and the literatures of smaller nations tended to be translated using the dubious practice of interlinear trots, often of poor quality, which were then lent style and literariness by a target-language poet or writer who typically had little acquaintance with the source language at all, let alone the source culture.

More lasting and perhaps more resistant to politicisation was Batiushkov’s notion of adequate translation, as signifying an approach in which the translator pays equal attention to rendering the form and the content of the original. Informed by the notion that form and content are inseparable, adequate translation was popular among those who resisted the increasingly domesticating practice of the so-called Soviet School of Translation. In Aleksandr Smirnov and Mikhail Alekseev’s entry on translation in the *Literary encyclopaedia*, it is allotted the final paragraph in the section devoted to translation theory. There it is presented as a kind of golden mean, distinguished from free translation, on the one hand, and literalism, on the other:

In contrast to free translation, exact translation (or adequate) aims for the accurate re-creation of the text of the original with all the particularities of its verbal makeup. It is perfectly obvious, however, that such translation must not be confused with mechanical

‘calquing’ (literal, word-for-word rendering) of the original, in which all the beauty and expressiveness of the original is lost (Smirnov and Alekssev 1934, 515).

In fact, the concept of adequate translation travelled within Soviet translation circles with fairly little distortion, at least in the pre-Second World War period, as evident in the following article by the Armenian translator Karen Mikayelian from the late 1930s:

To translate the ideational content of a work in a form that is arbitrarily chosen by the translator, without observing the distinctive characteristics of the original, with which the author worked, under our conditions can be done by anyone endowed with poetic talent. Such a translation might be beautiful, but it will not be true, or, as we say, *adequate*. Applying this principle of translation to Armenian poetry, which was distinguished over the course of its thousand-year history by a wonderful variety and abundant richness of forms – means failing to give a true representation (quoted in Frank 2023, 58).

‘Adequate’ would later be used synonymously with the term *polnotsennyi*, or full value, a term that became widespread in Soviet translation circles to describe a translation that need not be considered inferior to the original.

Batiushkov’s class background and lack of affiliation with the Bolshevik party led to his increasing marginalisation in official Soviet culture following his death in 1920, as evidenced in the laconic entry on Batiushkov in the 1927 *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia*, which ends with the following assessment: ‘Unoriginal in his judgements, Batiushkov aligned himself with liberal criticism.’ However, as laid out above, his introductory essay of 1920 ended up exerting a profound and enduring influence on Soviet translation studies, despite their intellectual origins and often without attribution to Batiushkov.

'The tasks of literary translation' (excerpt)

By Fedor Dmitrievich Batiushkov

Translated from Russian by Brian James Baer

Source text: Fedor Batiushkov, 'Zadachi perevodchika'. In Printsipy khudozhestvennogo perevoda. Petrograd: Vsemirnaia Literatura, 1920, pp. 7–15

There are three basic principles for the translation of literary works that have been applied in the past depending on the degree of cultural development of a nation.

(a) In cases where the translator belongs to a nation that stands or thinks it stands higher in terms of artistic development than the nation that has produced the original, then inaccuracy is elevated to the status of a principle. Eighteenth-century France is very instructive in this regard. At this time the French thought that they possessed authentic 'good taste', that they alone knew the rules of artistic creation, and so looked somewhat haughtily on works of foreign literature. While acknowledging their quality in terms of plot, individual attitudes and the accurate representation of the movements of the human heart, they found them unsatisfactory in regard to form and style. The translations of authors who had a profound influence on eighteenth-century literature in France as elsewhere, such as Richardson, Shakespeare and Cervantes, were all subjected to the requirement that they be adapted to French taste ('accommoder à son goût'). Without such 'corrections', which were undertaken according to French notions of style and forms of expression, these translations would not have been recognised by French readers; they would have made no impression. Out of habit, this tendency continued for quite a while, until roughly the middle of the nineteenth century, when a reversal took place, which will be discussed below.

(b) The second case is when the literary culture of the translator's nation stands below that of the nation from whose language the translation is done; then a slavish dependence on the language of the original is observed in the translation. Our literature from that same eighteenth century can serve as an example. The literary language in Russia was still developing; it did not yet have its 'own taste'; its lexicon was peppered with foreign expressions; there were felicitous and infelicitous constructions, apt, characteristically Russian words as well as completely unsuitable ones – all mixed together. ... The translator was clearly at a loss for words and expressions, copying the foreign original, unable to find Russian words and not knowing how to correctly express himself in a language that was not yet fully formed.

(c) The third case is when two nations are at the same level of spiritual development, which presumes a sufficient level of education to understand the difference between one's own and the foreign. The principle of literary translation in this case involves the attempt to render not only the precise meaning of the original but also, as much as possible, to observe the form, searching out corresponding expressions that would meet the average understanding of the readers of the translation. The translation must be *adekvaten* [comparable] to the original.

The ideal norm for such a model translation is the Greek translation of the [Hebrew] Bible done by 70 exegetes.⁴ Here two fundamental conditions are observed:

- (1) The accurate rendering of the meaning was confirmed by the fact that all 70 translators, without consulting among themselves, produced one and the same translation.
- (2) The common language of the translation is established by the sameness of the expression: all render the text using the same words.

Of course, such a collective assessment of the quality of a translation is based on a legend, but the legend itself serves to indicate the ideal toward which translators must strive.

Not only can we not sit translators today in different rooms and have them translate the same texts while forbidding them to communicate among themselves, but it would also be difficult to find 70 individuals of the same talent to undergo such a test. Nonetheless, the legend is instructive in the sense that it indicates the absolute demand that the translator subordinate his individuality to that of the author of the text being translated and the necessity that the translator, in his choice of words

and expressions, be governed by generally accepted turns of phrase so as not to violate the norms of his language; otherwise the coordination of renderings among various individuals will not occur. The exegetes had in mind 'an average understanding'.

It is unnecessary to prove that the first two principles of literary translation, which have played a secondary role in history, are unsatisfactory. In their time, however, they made sense. Underdeveloped nations were raised on translated literature. The textual rendering of originals was a school for developing their language while at the same time acquiring new concepts and images. The lexicon of the language was enriched with foreign expressions, many of which found acceptance, as every language at some stage in its development represents a complex admixture of native and foreign elements. Foreign words and expressions fell out of use, but for a time they were used to create native expressions.

The principle of inaccuracy of translations is founded on the erroneous view that there is only one standard of 'good taste', common to all. There are no absolute measures of aesthetic perception, and there can never be. Good taste is singular only in an abstract sense. It is possible to know many of the same things, but it is impossible to experience them in the same way all the time.

There is another type of inaccuracy in translation, which is founded not on an understanding of good taste but on some kind of underdevelopment. It has been established by linguists that the human brain in its initial stage of development did not possess the capacity for clear delimitation. Therefore, many old words that appear to be the result of broad generalisation are essentially founded on confusion. An underdeveloped person, especially one who has little education, has difficulty distinguishing what is native from what is foreign; therefore, he is inclined to place an equal sign between what are essentially different forms of thought, images and concepts. All shades of difference escape him. If he does not simply copy an original, then he undertakes to adapt it, reinterpreting it in his own way, aligning it with his own understanding of the world. Therefore, in the field of literature entire works were often 'appropriated' in the form of adaptations, adapting them to the native way of life; this happens most frequently with dramatic works, where this technique was considered entirely normal. But the theatre is subject to its own particular conditions.

It is useful more often to recall the postulate expressed in the following axiom: no translation, not even the most perfect, can completely replace reading a literary work in the original.

If Goethe recommended that a reader visit the country of a poet in order to achieve a better understanding of his work, then the necessity of knowing the language of a poet when studying his work appears even more obvious. A word is a symbol, the complete meaning of which is revealed only to one who dedicates himself to its secret sense. It is important to remember what Michel Bréal called 'les idées latentes du langage', that is, the hidden, implied shades of meaning, the host of associations called forth by this or that word-symbol or turn of phrase; in most cases this is ungraspable without a knowledge of the language, even without some familiarity with its history, as the meaning of words changes – words live their own particular lives. Ordynskii, the Russian translator of Aristotle's *Poetics*, correctly remarked in the 1850s that 'there are no completely corresponding words in different languages, and there cannot be. Every people looks at things through its own eyes, constructs its own opinion about them and expresses that understanding in its own way.' The scientific basis of that position, by the way, is laid out by Potebnia: 'Language tunes every mechanism of thought in its own, shall we say, individual way.' In his opinion, every translation from one language into another is always 'a substitution with one's own words', which changes the content of the original: 'When translating a poetic work ... the content of the meaning is altered more than in a pencil drawing of an oil painting ... And so, it is impossible to maintain even the general outline' (see his *Poetics*). However, a basic knowledge of a foreign language is a difficult and long-term project. One cannot know all languages, and the kind of superficial acquaintance with a foreign language that is generally considered sufficient will not lead us to an understanding of its essence. Therefore, we might introduce another postulate: 'It is better to use a good translation than to read a literary work in the original with an imperfect knowledge of the foreign language.'

From the principle that it is possible to create a translation that is comparable to the original [*adekvatnost*], it would not be difficult to define the qualities a translation must possess to be considered good. Those requirements can be reduced to the following: 1) An accurate rendering of the meaning. 2) A recreation of the style that is as close as possible to that of the original. 3) Preserving the particular features of the author's language, but without resorting to Gallicisms, without recreating linguistic idiosyncrasies, and without violating the norms and the elementary grammatical rules of the translator's native language. 4) The last quality, which is not so much a requirement as it is a desideratum, involves observing the external emotionality of the language, which may require some explanation.

The purely external vocal aspect of a language – phonetics and rhythm – are dependent on the general makeup of the language, its qualities and distinct features. ... Not only are words pronounced differently but the structure of the thorax is different in different peoples, as are breathing and the capacity to regulate it. Sound physiology has been enriched by many discoveries in this direction. Moreover, a sentence functions, in a purely external dimension, according to its pronunciation. One cannot demand that the translator preserve the phonetic qualities and the rhythm of the original. One can only point to some non-obligatory desiderata.

And so, we will pause here on the acknowledgement that there is only one principle for true literary translation: the quest for *adekvatnost'*. The conditions for achieving it, however, vary. A translator is dependent not only on his ability to use the linguistic means of his native language but also on the general nature of that language and the general qualities of his people.

... The translator, as noted above, is to some extent connected to his nation. If the process of broadening public taste moves slowly, then acquiring new skills, getting to know a foreign mentality and grasping an alien way of thinking take even longer. However, it is precisely through translations that a nation educates itself, broadening its horizons.

Translators are the propagators and engines of culture.

The view that 'the translator of artistic prose does not photograph the original' is correct in the sense that he need not return to the strategy of slavish subordination to a foreign model when the nation to which he belongs has achieved a level of maturity and a sufficiently high level of spiritual development. But he cannot be likened to an actor or a sculptor or a painter. An artist's portrayal differs from a photograph in that it requires the artistic recreation of the image. Sculptors and painters are entirely independent creators, embodying their own artistic plans, creating their own images that reflect nature in their understanding of it. An actor, it is true, is subordinated to the artistic plan of the author. But with every artistic plan there is a host of possibilities, and the actor creates one of these possibilities. Rossi's Othello, Salvini's Othello, Aldridge's Othello, Zacconi's Othello and so on – these are all different Othellos on the basis of Shakespeare's artistic plan. The actor at times reveals new things, even to the author ... The translator cannot take advantage of such freedom when 'recreating a text'. He must recreate that which is given. An actor when embodying a character has the opportunity to reveal something new; the translator, like the philologist, recognises that which has already been recognised.⁵

Notes

1. Mommsen was regularly cited in Soviet works on translation theory in the 1920s and 1930s (for example, in [Finkel 1929](#) and [Aleksseev 1931](#)). [Aleksseev \(1931, 22\)](#) suggests an affinity between Mommsen's typology and Batiushkov's.
2. Despite the claims of Soviet scholars, Mommsen is by no means the first to introduce historical consciousness into translation discourse. While there are isolated examples in the pre-modern period – for example, in [Huet \(1661\)](#) Praemontius describes Huet's literal approach as 'new to me' ([2002, 164](#)), and [John Denham \(1648\)](#) describes Sir Richard Fanshawe's translation of *Pastor Fido* as 'A new and nobler way thou dost pursue' ([2002, 155](#)) – it is in the eighteenth century, under the influence of Enlightenment ideas of history as progressive, that historical consciousness definitively enters translation discourse. See, for example, Samuel Johnson's 1759 essay in *The Idler* in which he locates a significant 'improvement of the art of translation' in the Elizabethan Age, although, he complains, 'the old practice was not suddenly forsaken' ([\[1759\] 2002, 205](#)).
3. See [Chapter 7](#) of this volume for further discussion.
4. In the latter half of the third century BCE, Ptolemy II, Pharaoh of Ptolemaic Egypt, requested a translation into Greek of 'the law of the Jews' for his library in Alexandria. According to legend, six translators from each of the tribes of Israel were commissioned to carry out the translation, known today as the Septuagint, or the translation of the 70. In the account of Phil Judaeus (c. 20 BCE), they retreated to the island of Pharos and, after labouring for 72 days, produced translations that were identical to one another: 'They became as it were possessed, and, under inspiration, wrote, not each several scribe something different, but the same word for word, as through dictated to each by an invisible prompter' ([Judaeus 2002, 14](#)).
5. This distinction Batiushkov derived from German writings on the field of philology, specifically, August Böckh's *Encyklopädie und Methodologie der philologischen Wissenschaften* (1877), in particular, the passage: 'Das Handeln und Produciren, womit sich die Politik und Kunsttheorie beschäftigen, geht den Philologen nichts an; aber das Erkennen des von jenen Theorien Producirten. Hiernach scheint die eigentliche Aufgabe der Philologie das Erkennen des vom menschlichen Geist Producirten, d.h. des Erkannten zu sein. Es wird überall von der Philologie ein gegebenes Wissen vorausgesetzt, welches sie wiederzuerkennen hat. Die Geschichte aller Wissenschaften ist also philologisch' (Taking action and producing, which politics and art theory deal with, are no concern of the philologist; but the recognition of that which has been produced by those theories is. Accordingly, the actual task of philology seems to be the recognition of that which has been produced by the human mind, i.e., that which has been cognised. It is assumed by philology everywhere that there is a given knowledge that philology must recognise. The history of all sciences is thus philological) (10).

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13 Ukraine, 1927–1932

Discussions of translation methods in Soviet Ukraine in the late 1920s–early 1930s

Lada Kolomiyets and Oleksandr Kalnychenko¹

Introduction

By Lada Kolomiyets and Oleksandr Kalnychenko

After their defeat in the Ukrainian War of Independence, which lasted from February 1917 to November 1921, Ukrainians found themselves as the largest stateless nation in Europe. Although an independent Ukrainian state emerged and developed during this time, much of it was eventually incorporated into the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, part of the USSR since 1922. Despite the defeat of the Ukrainian People's Republic, the war resulted in the Bolsheviks finally recognising Ukrainians as a separate nationality from Russians (something that did not exist in the Russian Empire) with their own language, traditions and way of life. In 1923, to strengthen their control over national republics and enhance the national profile of the state and Party institutions and thus legitimise Soviet rule in the eyes of the local population, the Bolsheviks launched a policy of 'indigenisation', promoting the use of native languages in education, publishing, workplaces and government; in Ukraine, this policy was known as 'Ukrainisation'.

It was the idea of national revival that sparked substantial growth in both literary and non-literary translation in the 1920s and early 1930s. This era is commemorated in Ukrainian history as the National Revival period. Between 1917 and 1927, Ukrainian publishing houses – state-owned, cooperative and private – produced an unprecedented volume of translated literature. The translation surge reached its peak in the late 1920s and early 1930s, resulting in hundreds of translations from various languages, both living and dead.

In general, it was a period of growing theoretical understanding of translation as a scholarly and educational discipline, involving the history, theory, criticism and didactics of translation. Ukraine witnessed numerous publications on translation, along with reviews in various journals, including the first monograph on translation, Oleksandr Finkel's 1929 work *Teoriia i praktyka perekladu* (Theory and Practice of Translation), which extended translation theory beyond literature. While Finkel was the first in Eastern Europe to publish a monograph on translation, there were many other individuals who made significant contributions to the elaboration of translation theory. Among them were Volodymyr Derzhavyn (1899–1964) and Mykola Zerov (1890–1937), whose essays 'The problem of verse translation' and 'On the matter of verse translation' are presented here in English for the first time.

However, this promising age of translation studies in Ukraine was tragically cut short. The year 1930 marked a significant turning point in Soviet policy towards Ukrainian intellectuals. The orchestrated trial of the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine (SVU), coupled with the forced decline of the private translation market and the absorption of cooperative and independent publishing houses into the State Publishing House of Ukraine (DVU), led to the formation of a state commission that imposed strict censorship and standardised publishing practices on the selection and translation of foreign works (for more detail about censorship practices see [Kolomiyets and Kalnychenko 2024](#)). Most Ukrainian journals featuring avant-garde discussions on translation and the aesthetics of creative writing were discontinued. The culmination of these repressive measures was the targeted elimination of a generation of Ukrainian intellectuals, including Mykola Zerov and numerous other prominent Ukrainian translators and academics, a tragedy later dubbed the 'Executed Renaissance' by Jerzy Giedroyc during his Paris-based initiative to compile an anthology of Ukrainian literature from 1917 to 1933.

Mykola Zerov was shot on 3 November 1937, one of nearly three hundred members of the Ukrainian renaissance executed at Sandarmokh, a mass killing site in Karelia, northwest Russia. Volodymyr Derzhavyn escaped the killings, but redirected his focus to research on ancient history, stopped writing on translation and mainly concentrated on translation and editorial work. As a displaced person in Munich post-Second World War, he lectured on literature and history at the Ukrainian Free University and contributed to the publication of the exile collection of Mykola Zerov's preserved writings, which had been banned in the Soviet Union. In one of his postwar articles, Derzhavyn articulated Zerov's quintessence of literary translation culture: 'classical style with its balance and

acmeism, vivid epithets and a rigorous flow of thought – the most fundamental characteristic of *grand art*' (Derzhavyn 1948, 11). While living in Germany for a decade before his death, Derzhavyn did not return to his earlier theorising on translation.

Nowadays we can say that Zerov and Derzhavyn were subjected to a twofold erasure during the twentieth century. The Soviet regime's suppression in the 1930s marginalised their work, and the Cold War's information barriers further limited their visibility in the West. This devalued their translation concepts and hindered our ability to fully appreciate their significance, leaving us to draw parallels to contemporary translation theories such as Reiss's correlation of text types and translation methods, Toury's initial norm and Venuti's domesticating and foreignising approaches, while cautiously acknowledging the shortcomings of such comparisons.

Nevertheless, in the last two decades, significant work has been done to bring this erased period of Ukrainian translation history to the attention of today's translation studies scholars, both in and beyond Ukraine. In the early 2000s, Kharkiv University's Mykola Lukash Department of Translation Studies initiated three milestone Ukrainian publications of collective theoretical works: Volodymyr Derzhavyn's *Pro Mystetstvo Perekladu: Statti ta Retsenzii, 1927–1931* (On the Art of Translation: Articles and reviews, 1927–1931) in 2015, Oleksandr Finkel's under the title *Oleksandr Finkel – zabutyi teoretyk ukrainskoho perekladoznavstva* (Oleksandr Finkel: A forgotten theorist of Ukrainian translation studies) in 2007 and an anthology of Ukrainian translation thinking of the 1920s–early 1930s, compiled by Kalnychenko and Poliakova in 2011. Zerov's oeuvre was also brought to light in numerous authoritative editions, among them the 2015 Smoloskyp publication of his selected works (Zerov 2015). The new collections restored the Ukrainian mainstream's access to these foundational texts and paved the way for numerous subsequent studies that offered a pointed perspective on Derzhavyn's, Zerov's and Finkel's translation conceptualisations, as well as on the translation thought of other important scholars of the time (Pavlo Fylypovych, Oleksandr Biletsky, Hryhorii Maifet and many others) (Shmiher 2009, 2024; Bryska 2017; Odrekhyvska 2021). Under the 2022 EST Translation Prize, Brian Baer, in partnership with Oleksandr Kalnychenko, is currently translating Finkel's 1929 Ukrainian-language monograph *Teoriia i praktyka perekladu* into English. In 2021, an abbreviated version of Finkel's 1929 Ukrainian article 'H. F. Kvitka as the translator of his own works' was published in English translation by Mercedes Bullock in *Translation and Interpreting Studies*, using a Russian-language

version ‘On autotranslation’ (1962) as the source text (with scholarly introduction by [Kalnychenko 2021](#)).

The authors of this chapter have also published extensively in the Ukrainian and international academic press to situate Finkel’s, Zerov’s and Derzhavyn’s conceptualisations within the broader geopolitical space of knowledge-making on translation, in addition to reconsidering their approaches through a pedagogical lens ([Kalnychenko 2011, 2017, 2021, 2025](#); [Kalnychenko and Zarubina 2016](#); [Kolomiyets 2020](#)). We have also seen the publication of the English-language open-access volume *Translation Studies in Ukraine as an Integral Part of the European Context* ([Djovčoš et al. 2023](#)), which includes chapters on both Derzhavyn and Zerov. We refer our readers to that volume for detailed commentary on the essays presented here, as well as an overview of other relevant contributions by these and other scholars from this period. Below, we provide concise outlines of Derzhavyn and Zerov’s work prior to introducing their theoretical articles in English translation to our readers.

Setting stricter requirements for translation: Volodymyr Derzhavyn on homologous and analogous translation

By Oleksandr Kalnychenko

Volodymyr Derzhavyn (1899–1964) was a Ukrainian literary scholar, linguist, reviewer, historian, translator, editor and translation theorist. He was born in St Petersburg on 30 January 1899, but his social background is unknown (for details of Derzhavyn’s biography see the following works: [Yendyk 1966](#); [Dotsenko and Lysenko 1990](#); [Astafiev 2007](#); [Kachurovskyi 2008](#)). Possibly to evade Bolshevik persecution, he invented a story claiming he was the son of a sexton. Derzhavyn identified himself as ‘a Ukrainian by conviction’, exemplifying a person from a dominant culture who embraced an oppressed culture, creating works influenced by its spiritual, aesthetic and linguistic elements.

Derzhavyn attended a German classical gymnasium in St Petersburg (1909–17), studied Classical Philology at Petrograd University (from 1917), and History and Philology at Kharkiv University (1918–21). In March 1922, he became a postgraduate student in ancient culture at the Kharkiv Institute of Public Education and was appointed as a research fellow there by April 1925. According to Ihor [Kachurovskyi \(2008, 233\)](#), in 1927, Derzhavyn joined a new Research Department of Literary Studies after writing and presenting the work ‘The problems of literary

translation'. To date, no traces of this work have been found. However, the article 'The problem of verse translation', which we present in this chapter, probably contained the main provisions of this work.

After 1931, when the 'new Soviet reader'-oriented approach began to triumph and when the ideologisation of norms began, Derzhavyn ceased writing articles and reviews on translation, as noted above. He then served as an associate professor of German (1935–8), Latin and later Latin literature. In September 1940, he became an associate professor of ancient Oriental history. In 1941, he defended his Candidate of Sciences thesis on the 'Athenaion Politeia of Xenophon' (*Constitution of the Athenians* [Pseudo-Xenophon]) and became an Extraordinary Professor of Ancient History at the University of Kharkiv. In 1944, he emigrated and became a professor at the Ukrainian Free University (Ukrainskyi vilnyi universytet) in Munich from 1946. Between 1945 and 1960 Derzhavyn authored about 1,500 different works, including monographs, papers, critical essays, political articles and translations from several languages. Sadly, by 1960, he was paralysed due to alcohol abuse and passed away in 1964.

'The problem of verse translation' was first published in 1927 in *Pluzhany*, the monthly journal of literature and art of the Pluh (Plough) Writers' Association. In this article, Derzhavyn theorises the philologically accurate approach that he and others had begun to explore. The article launched a vivid discussion, centred around the essence of translation: should translation be an analogy of the original ('nativeness'-oriented or 'analogous' translation) or should it represent its stylisation ('foreignness'-oriented translation or 'homologous'/'stylising translation' [*pereklad-stylizatsiya*])?

As I explain in [Kalnychenko \(2023\)](#), Derzhavyn views artistic translation as a method that aims to convey the artistic essence of the original work, rather than its ideological or psychological content, and reflects the literary era of the original. He calls this approach 'stylisation-translation' ([Kalnychenko and Poliakova 2015](#), 58). Derzhavyn emphasises that literary translation should strive to be as literal as possible – not by translating each word individually, but by capturing the artistic value of each sentence, word and structure in the translation. In his later works, Derzhavyn referred to translations focused on maintaining the foreignness of the original text as 'homologous' or 'stylising'. Conversely, he described translations aimed at adapting the text to the native language as 'analogous' (see, for example, [Derzhavyn 1930](#)). In his own translations, Derzhavyn consistently used the homologous method. He contributed to a Ukrainian anthology of ancient literature ([Biletsky 1938](#)), translating

works from Homer, Pindar, Sophocles and others. His translations covered multiple languages, including Latin (Pseudo-Seneca, Horace), ancient Greek (Longus), German (Hölderlin, Hofmannsthal), English (*On the Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin), French (Maupassant's *Bel-Ami*, Parnassians) and Georgian classical poetry.

In the 1920s, translation theory was significantly shaped by the concept of adequate translation (*adekvatnyi pereklad*), and Derzhavyn starts his essay with the remark that 'literary translation is normally required to be "adequate" [*adekvatnyi*] to the original', explaining that this means matching the key stylistic features of the original and embodying them in one way or another. At the end of the essay, he adds that an adequate translation of a text considered 'exotic' – meaning anything generally foreign to our cultural awareness – inevitably retains some stylistic exoticism. In relation to translation theory, the term 'adequacy' (*adekvatnost*) was probably first used by Fedor Batiushkov in the 1920 edition of *Principles of Literary Translation* featured in [Chapter 12](#) of this volume. Batiushkov posited that when the target culture views itself as superior to the source culture, translations tend to emphasise content over form, as seen in the '*belles infidèles*' of seventeenth- to eighteenth-century France. Conversely, when the target culture feels inferior, translations focus more on form, often leading to the unsystematic borrowing of vocabulary and structures, as observed in eighteenth-century Russian translations from Western European languages. Batiushkov argued that only when the source and target cultures are at a similar level of 'spiritual development' can a truly adequate translation be achieved, balancing both form and content. Although all the facts presented by Batiushkov are true, his scheme is easy to dismantle, as it is simple to find many examples that do not fit it. Moreover, Batiushkov failed to explain why different translation methods occur. However, according to [Finkel \(1929: 61\)](#), it should be acknowledged that Batiushkov took the right approach in solving this problem as he considered translations not only from a technical perspective but also from a cultural and social viewpoint. Acknowledging the value of such a perspective, Derzhavyn emphasises the relevance of language functions, distinguishing three types of translation: 'account-translation (*pereklad-vyklad*)', transcription-translation (*pereklad-transkriptsiya*) [applied to foreign proper names and terms] and stylisation-translation (*pereklad-stylizatsiya*), with only the latter being artistic to one degree or another, although it almost never exists in a pure form' (quoted in [Kalnychenko and Poliakova 2015: 53](#)).

As his sources, Derzhavyn directly refers to the linguistic views of Oleksander Potebnia, who shared with Wilhelm von Humboldt the view

that some texts should retain a foreign flavour to transform the target culture. Aligning with Potebnia's ideas on the relationship between language and cognition and with the concept of the 'inner form' of the word, which refers to the underlying image or idea that a word evokes, Derzhavyn believed that the artistic function of words lies in their external and inner forms. According to Potebnia, the external form is the sound form of a sign; the internal form is a fragment of meaning immediately represented in the external form (Potebnia [1862] 1993). Derzhavyn argued that aesthetic perception requires sensory receptiveness, which is absent in practical messages or scientific terminology. Derzhavyn stated that the artistic function of language is evident in its sound structure, morphology, syntax and lexis, historically understood through etymology. Literary translation is artistic if it recreates these aspects. Another source of ideas for Derzhavyn was the stylistics of Bally, from which Derzhavyn derived the idea of the functions of language (see Pym 2016).

The discussion was joined by Hryhorii Maifet, Mykola Zerov,² Oleksander Finkel and Ivan Kulyk (see Kalnychenko 2023 for further details). Finkel's 1929 book *Teoriya y praktyka perekladu* was also a response to Derzhavyn, his friend and colleague from the department. Finkel, however, took the opposite stance, advocating for analogous translation. The Ukrainian discussion also sparked responses from Russian scholars Andrei Fedorov and Dmitrii Usov and, as Anthony Pym (2023: 20) notes, was international in scope, involving not just Russians and Ukrainians but also incorporating sources from various European languages.

Away from cultural provincialism: Mykola Zerov's theory of balanced translation

By Lada Kolomiyets

Ukrainian poet, translator, literary historian and polemicist Mykola Zerov (26 April 1890–3 November 1937) is best known as a master of the sonnet form and a translator of ancient poetry from Latin. Having graduated from the History and Philology Department of Saint Volodymyr Kyiv University (now Taras Shevchenko National University), he taught Ukrainian studies and Latin from 1918–20 and until early 1920 worked as an editor of the bibliography journal *Knyhar* (Bookseller). That year two notable anthologies, prepared by Zerov, were published in Kyiv: *The Anthology of Roman Poetry* (Drukar Publishing House, 63 pp.), which

included 22 translations by Zerov of poems by Catullus, Virgil, Horace, Propertius, Ovid and Martial; and *The New Ukrainian Poetry* anthology (State Publishing House of Ukraine, abbreviated as DVU). The latter was published with a cover design by Heorhiy Narbut (1886–1920), a prominent Ukrainian graphic artist.

In 1920, Zerov moved from Kyiv, which was starving at the time, to a town in the Kyiv region, Baryshivka, to teach at the local socio-economic school. It was in Baryshivka that a circle of poets began to form, first including Zerov and his close friends Oswald Burghardt and Pavlo Fylypovych. Inspired by classical literature, in 1923 the poets declared themselves a literary group of Neoclassicists. Zerov, who wrote sonnets according to a strict classical model (following the poetic values of the Parnassians)³ and masterfully conveyed the ‘forged stanzas’ of Ancient Roman poets to his readers, was considered the leader of the group. The central theme of the Neoclassicists, especially Zerov, was culture (Skurativskyi 1988, 6). When Zerov returned to Kyiv in 1923, the circle expanded to include Maksym Rylsky and Mykhailo Drai-Khmara.⁴

In Baryshivka, Zerov wrote his first collection of poetry, *Kamena*, which appeared in 1924 in the Kyiv publishing house Slovo and included in its 80 pages translations of works by José María Heredia, Ivan Bunin and the ancient masters of verse – Horace, Tibullus, Ovid and Martial. Oleksandr Biletsky,⁵ a specialist in ancient literature, wrote in his review of this collection that it was a perfect example of the skilful language which could be achieved by following the school of the ancient masters, and that from a technical point of view *Kamena* contained the best Ukrainian poems that had appeared by 1924.⁶

On 1 October 1923, Mykola Zerov was appointed a professor of Ukrainian literature at the Kyiv Institute of Public Education (now Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv). Zerov’s oratorical skills, scholarly erudition and phenomenal memory contributed to his immense popularity among students and Kyiv residents interested in literary topics. His audiences were always overflowing, and his lectures were copied and retold. The Neoclassicists sought to develop a common artistic platform with talented representatives of various literary groups and stylistic trends and organised literary meetings to discuss issues of professionalism and the state and prospects of Ukrainian literature.

The year 1925 represented the pinnacle of Zerov’s literary and critical output. In the course of the year, 17 articles written by Zerov were published in the monthly journal *Zhyttia i revoliutsiia* (Life and Revolution). In addition, he contributed to other periodicals, delivered lectures and made public speeches. Furthermore, he provided translations of

14 poems for the anthology of Valerii Brusov's works, published by the State Publishing House in Kyiv in 1925. In this same year, the Literary Discussion of 1925–8 commenced, spearheaded by the polemicist writer and publicist Mykola Khvylovy (1893–1933). Khvylovy's ideological struggle for the project of a Soviet Ukrainian literature independent from Russian patterns set the stage for the ensuing discourse on the ways for its autonomous development.

From 1926, Zerov devoted himself primarily to translations and historical-literary research. Key publications included his translation with introduction of Juliusz Słowacki's tragedy *Mazepa*, a lengthy article, 'Our literary critics and polemicists', published by the magazine *Chervonyi shliakh* (Red Path), and a collection of articles with the telling title *Do Dzherel* (To the Sources). This latter volume offered a response to Khvylovy's question, 'Quo vadis?' (Where are you going?), posed as the title of a series of polemical pamphlets in which Khvylovy criticised the provincialism of the Ukrainianisation programme. Zerov's response was 'ad fontes', to the original sources, to the roots: 'We must get to know the sources of European culture, and we must make them our own. We must know them, or else we shall always be provincials' (1926, 72).⁷ In this, Zerov echoed Khvylovy's orientation towards the heights of classical European art, and in his own voice urged Ukrainian artists to study the beginnings and foundations of the European classics, such as examples of classical Greco-Roman art, the work of French Parnassian poets and other milestones of European art of past centuries. These were the sources that, according to Zerov, could contribute to the artistic flowering of Ukraine, which Khvylovy saw as the centre of the 'Asiatic Renaissance' in the new Europe.

Zerov would go on to develop this response in the essay that is the focus of this chapter, 'On the matter of verse translation', first published in the journal *Life and Revolution* in 1928. In this programmatic article, Zerov summarises the experience of Ukrainian translation in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and formulates his requirements for verse translation (Zerov 1928), responding in particular to the debate over 'homologous' vs 'analogous' translation as elaborated by Volodymyr Derzhavyn (1927). Zerov is broadly supportive of Derzhavyn's source-text-oriented theory of verse translation, a theory of homologous translation that prioritises rendering the source-text style over other translational goals and justifies stylistic accuracy in translation as opposed to its adaptation to stylistic patterns of the target poetic language. However, Zerov also presents a number of objections, arguing for a middle ground between homologous and analogous

(target-culture-oriented) translation rather than fully taking the side of Derzhavyn's categorical prioritisation of the source-text stylistic features. The overall naturalness and organicity of the target language was something that, in Zerov's view, could not be compromised. Reassuring his readers that translations must be made into 'our natural language', the language of 'our feelings', Zerov wants the target text to flow easily and smoothly, and the language to sound modern. While agreeing with Derzhavyn that translation should reflect the stylistic features of the original, Zerov argues for a selective approach that should be limited by the translator's sense of proportion and moderation.

For Ukrainian translators who were seeking to develop the Ukrainian literary language, Zerov puts forward his recommendations as a list of five desiderata: (1) careful lexical choice between the words of different (high and low) styles, preventing them from becoming a disorderly hodgepodge; (2) fullest attention to the tropes and figures of the original work; (3) preservation of the metrical features of the original work, but not at any cost, keeping in mind that the choice of the verse meter should 'reckon with our rhythmic sense and at the same time try to expand its limits'; (4) the euphony of the original work should not be neglected; and (5) 'the beauty (and thus the naturalness, the ease) of the mother tongue should not be sacrificed for anything, because only under this condition will verse translation become a ladder to the higher stages of our literary and linguistic development'.

In his argument, Zerov appeals to the requirement by I. Annensky – a leading poet-translator of the early Silver Age – of perfect understanding of the source text as a planned artistic structure and its stylistic tendencies in the harmony of all elements.⁸ Developing the idea of interaction between the external plot and the undercurrent (emotional) movements in a literary work, Zerov quotes Annensky's apprentice N. Gumilev,⁹ a precarious move given that Gumilev had been shot by the Soviet authorities in 1921. The idea of the stylistic functionality of translation in the development of the target literature connects Zerov with the perceptual theory, a current of thinking that was emerging in the late 1920s and was associated notably with the works of Michail Alekseev (*A Problem of Artistic Translation*, Irkutsk, 1931) and the socio-psychological approach developed by Ivan Kulyk, among others.

In the years that followed, Zerov would go on to elaborate on his theoretical position in the lecture course 'Metodyka perekladu' (Methods of Translation),¹⁰ designed as an extension of Mykhailo Kalynovych's course 'Methodology of Translation'.¹¹ Developing Finkel's ideas about the relationship of translation to the general poetic philosophy of a certain

literary school,¹² the lecture course analyses the history of Ukrainian literary translation in the context of advancements of Ukrainian-language literature under different socio-political systems. Along with Kalynovych, Zerov was the first to introduce the history of Ukrainian literary translation – an integral segment of national literature – into the structure of translation studies as an academic discipline. Together, they introduced the term *perekladoznavstvo* (translation studies) and laid down the theory of translation studies as a ramified field of research dealing with the study of translation at large.

In his lectures, Zerov addressed a range of issues, such as the problem of accurate and adequate translation, terms that were understood as synonyms in the late 1920s but that by the mid 1930s had come to be interpreted as opposites by Soviet theoreticians. Zerov classified translations into six major types: foreignised translation (literally, ‘close to a foreign text colouring’), translation-analogue, translation-compromise, free translation, translation-stylisation and translation-montage. The stylistic colouring and expressive role of lexical units – each in its place – were central to Zerov’s hierarchy of priorities, both as a practising translator and translation theorist. In his lecture course, he introduced into translation studies the terminology of stylistic techniques (*variation*, *explication*, *gradation*), as well as terms and concepts from literary, cultural and art studies, such as *social dialect*, *cultural relief* of the word and its *associative saturation*. Zerov’s conceptual opposition between a native-language-centred strategy (his term: *svoiemovnist*’) and a foreign-language-centred strategy (his term: *chuzhomovnist*’) correlates with the opposition between domesticating (target-oriented) and foreignising (source-oriented) strategies in later Western theories of translation. For further discussion of Kalynovych’s and Zerov’s syllabi and Zerov’s contribution to translation pedagogies, see [Kolomiyets 2023](#).

As outlined in the introduction to this chapter, Zerov’s career came to an abrupt end in the early 1930s. In October 1933, Zerov was dismissed from his post as Head of the Department of Theory and History of Translation at the Kyiv Institute of Linguistic Education. Accused of ‘detachment from life’, Zerov was stripped of his teaching position on 1 September 1934 and dismissed from the Kyiv State University as a researcher on 1 November. After the assassination of the Bolshevik leader Sergei Kirov on 1 December 1934, a new wave of repression against the Ukrainian intelligentsia began. In January 1935, Zerov left for Moscow to escape arrest, but on the night of 27 April 1935 he was arrested. Accused of leading a counterrevolutionary terrorist nationalist organisation, he was sent to Karelia, in the Solovets Islands, at the end of winter 1936.

In letters to his wife, the last of which is dated 19 September 1937, he wrote that he managed to complete the Ukrainian translation of Virgil's *Aeneid* in the Solovets prison. However, the manuscript of this translation was lost or deliberately destroyed.¹³ On 9 October 1937, the 'Zerov case' was reviewed by the special troika of the NKVD. Along with many other prominent representatives of Ukrainian culture, Zerov was sentenced to death as an 'enemy of the people'. He was executed on 3 November 1937 in the Sandarmokh tract (Karelia) by NKVD captain Mikhail Matveev (for more detail see [Ukraine History 2023](#)).

In general, Zerov's ideas about translation and his own translations demonstrate a trajectory towards the five objectives (*desiderata*) he outlines in 'On the matter of verse translation' (Kolomiyets 2015, 2025). This trajectory reaches its zenith in a balance between the author and the reader, which can be described as a kind of golden mean. Furthermore, his lecture course on translation methods demonstrates the evolving nature of the concepts presented in the article, particularly with regard to the perspective of Ukrainian translations as an integral and significant aspect of national literary history. Nevertheless, the most valuable facet of Zerov's intellectual legacy can be argued to be his distinctive and highly artistic poetic translations. As Vadym [Dzhuvaha \(2012\)](#), historian and journalist, put it recently, 'The name of this man has become one of the symbols of the heights that the Ukrainian word can reach.'

'The problem of verse translation'

By Volodymyr Derzhavyn

*Translated from Ukrainian by Ihor Illyin and
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Source text: Volodymyr Derzhavyn, 'Problema virshovanoho perekladu',
Pluzhanyn, nos. 9–10 (13–14) (1927): 44–51

1

Literary translation is normally required to be 'adequate' [*adekvatnyi*] to the original, i.e., to correspond to the prominent stylistic features of the latter and reflect them in this way or another. In principle, this widespread requirement seems indisputable: indeed, by denying it, we, therefore, deny the very possibility of literary translation per se and reduce it to a simple rehash [*perekaz*] of the contents of a certain work in a different language. Yet, taken separately, this requirement, in its general wording, apparently is insufficient and must be clarified. When attempting to apply it to the criticism or evaluation of existing 'literary translations' (i.e., translations of literary texts that aspire to something greater than a simple rehash of the given content) we are inevitably faced with a string of questions of secondary importance, which nonetheless need to be resolved. The first is: where is the borderline between a literary translation and a non-literary one? Any translation can be called artistic [*khudozhnyi*] to the degree corresponding to its accuracy; so, does artistry in translation just mean accuracy [*tochnist'*] brought to the degree of virtuosity? Or can only an original work be called 'artistic' in the proper sense [of the word], whereas a translation can be called so only because the translator, knowingly and willingly, deviates from the text of the original to create something new themselves? And if the original's artistry is to be reflected in the translation, then what is the essence of such a reflection and by what means is it achieved? The very fact of applying a foreign

language itself constitutes some constraints on the translator's liberties and on the approximation of the translated text to the original. These constraints cannot be lifted without some violence against the reader's sense of language and without some risk of misunderstanding. Does the translator have the right to take such a risk and ignore the peculiar structure of his or her language, and if so, under which 'mitigating circumstances'? Or, maybe, he or she must by all means try and reproduce the original's poetic features. Finally, where should one draw the borderline between the 'distinct' [*kharakterni*] artistic features of the original, which must be reproduced, and elements of secondary importance, which lend themselves to change and simplification? All these questions, which, in their abstract formulation, may sound somewhat scholastically detached, immediately acquire concrete meaning and considerable significance when transposed into the realm of poetic translation, let alone the issue of metrics ('is a change of metre permissible?' or 'how to render a metre foreign to the metric system of the source language, for instance, syllabic French?');¹⁴ in poetry translation, the issues that emphatically arise are those of rendering the original syntax (rhythmic-syntactic figures) of the poetic idiom and the merely phonetic aspect of the original (rhyme and lexical instrumentation). Yet, there is no principal difference whatsoever between the problem of poetic translation and that of artistic translation. The fact of a poetic metre as such does not create a specific language; it only compels the translator to perceive more vividly all features of poetic idiom possible in literary prose as well. By devoting this article to the problem of poetry translation and presenting, further on, some examples from the extant translations of verse, we would like to demonstrate that poetic translation is an artistic translation par excellence (predominantly): an artistic idiom does not have to be in verse, but any piece of poetry is, without a doubt, artistic (to what extent, though, is another question). That is why poetic idiom is particularly suited for formulating the above-mentioned problem and illustrating it: and so, basically, everything written below about poetic translation will deal with literary translation as a whole (with the exception of purely metrical issues).

One cannot assert that the issue of poetry translation has escaped the attention of poets, critics or literary scholars;¹⁵ on the contrary, even such a second-rate question as whether rhyme is permissible in translations of classical [*antychnyi*] (non-rhymed) verse has generated extensive studies. What they lack, however, is an objectified, scholarly rigorous approach to this problem and profundity in addressing the linguistic side of it. With some rare exceptions, the researchers' argumentation regarding poetry translation comes down to either references to the commonly

accepted tradition, to a more or less common convention etc., or just the dogmatic claims based on an unwavering conviction of one's own 'good taste'. Scientifically, both lines of argumentation are equally erroneous and may appeal only to thinkalikes or to those with an authoritative type of thinking. Conversely, proceeding from a linguistic angle we can, above all, objectively define the nature of literary translation per se, understand its aim; and then, move on to the issue of poetry translation, in general, bearing in mind how limited and relative the linguistic means available to the translator are. Therefore, a little excursus into theoretical linguistics could be more than welcome.

2

A natural language simultaneously performs – in every particular case to a variable extent, though – three functions: communicative [*komunikatyvna*], cognitive [*piznaval'na*] and artistic [*khudozhnia*], which lend themselves to translation to a varying degree. Moreover, all three functions of language are different to such an extent that the comprehension of translation per se, when applied to each of them separately, acquires an entirely different meaning. We will start with the communicative function of language, which is the most common and therefore considered by many linguists to be the only one,¹⁶ which, however, is not true (although we cannot deny that it almost always occupies the most prominent place in the mind of the speaker). This means language as a means of communication of some (prepared and processed) content of consciousness (mind) [*zmist svidomosti*] to another person. In this case, the meaning of language will correspond to that entity of real circumstances that the given language indicates – real even in the case when it comes to merely psychic entities, since the latter *really* exists in the speaker's mind. Real as real can be, this meaning always exists beyond the language and independently of it, and, therefore, it may be conveyed into any language, and, sometimes, even into the body language; hence, the communicative function of language always lends itself to translation in principle, since it is not the meaning of the word that is rendered, but the objective reality that the meaning of the word refers to, the reality that, by its nature, does not depend on the language spoken. In other words, what is translated is not what is said but what it is said about. This kind of translation, which is focused exclusively on the communicative function of language, or on its practical use for communication, can never be literal [*doslivnyi*], but can always be accurate enough. On the other hand, it is its connectedness

with the merely practical aspect of language that precludes any possibility of artistry of any kind; in other words, it is not even a translation, but a rendition of objective facts and thoughts into another language, i.e., an account-translation [*pereklad-vyklad*]. Hence a very significant, though negative, conclusion as regards literary translation: under no circumstances can literary translation be accurate in the factual (extralingual) attitude. When factual accuracy does occasionally crop up in the literary translation, without being detrimental to the artistic side of things, it is, evidently, acceptable, no more, no less; for it is neither plus, nor minus.

In this case, there is not much to say about the second (or cognitive) function of the word. It lies in the coining and retaining of scientific terminology, i.e., such words which, as opposed to account-words, are essential not only to those who perceive them, but also to those who utter them, as they enable the latter to combine a range of specific features that until then have been taken only separately into a single concept and fix them in the language consciousness. In contrast to the account-word [*slovo-povidomlennia*], whose meaning varies depending on the particular use of language, the term-word [*slovo-termin*] has a precise and definite meaning, once and for all solely linked to this language expression. Therefore, an approach to the term should be transcription rather than translation. One result of an effort to coin a correspondent term by means of one's mother tongue can be double terminology at best and, consequently, confusion; whereas there is no point in shunning foreign terms for they simply cannot 'violate the purity' of the language, because their meaning, in the end, is extralingual and purely logical, so their usage can do no more harm to the purity of the language, than the use of mathematical symbols.¹⁷ Naturally, transcription-translation [*pereklad-traskryptsiia*] can have no claims to artistic significance. In literary translation, it is justifiable only in the case where the corresponding terms are present in the original itself, with a replacement of any term by any other term of a similar, even though remotely so, meaning; since the terminological (scientific and cognitive) function of language per se is entirely indifferent to an artistic work.

Everything said above about term-words holds true in the case with proper names, which are the primary (initial) manifestations of the cognitive function of language.¹⁸ Since, in poetic texts, proper names occur relatively often, the translator must firmly keep in mind that they 1) should not be translated, but transcribed,¹⁹ 2) should be used only there where they are present in the original text, and, yet, 3) they can always be replaced by other [proper names], similar ones, as required by the metre, rhythm, etc.

As we turn to the third, or artistic, function of the word, we cannot help but note that before we have dealt exclusively with the elements of the meaning and, besides, the meaning remote, or extralingual, as it was derived not from the set of sounds and grammatical structure of the word but determined either by a practical need of a message or by needs of scientific and cognitive thinking. Hence it follows that the artistic function of the word should only be sought in its external [*zovnishnia*] and internal [*vnutrishnia*] form, as did O. O. Potebnia.²⁰ And indeed, no aesthetic perception is possible where there is no sensual receptiveness [*chuttieve uiavlennia*] (imagery), which is not to be found either in a practical message or in scientific terminology. Conversely, it is the sound form (external form) of a language that introduces to us the very sensual-and-perceptive elements of the word, while morphology and syntax, in a way, induce our ability for sensual perception (imagery), though, they do not operate with extrasensory [*poza-chuttievi*] values. On the other hand, since the entire grammatical structure of language is completely detached from the logical side (and, similarly, from the convenience of understanding), the very existence of the grammar elements of language can be explained only by their primary artistic function. With the passage of time the latter eventually fades away, though not without a trace. In everyday speech, grammatical categories become automated and mandatory to all [language bearers], but they always retain the ability to express their artistic value in an appropriate context; this is just what happens in the poetic language (Potebnia's 'inner form restoration'). Thus, the artistic function of language is manifested only in its sound structure, morphology, syntax and lexis (to be understood historically, in relation to its etymology); and literary translation is an artistic translation in as much as it recreates these particular aspects of the work. The only question lies in the ways by which the conveyance of the external and internal forms of language is at all achievable.

Apparently, an immediate transfer is only possible when we deal with languages that are very close (related by their origin); for example, when one translates from one Slavic language to another,²¹ or when one language is a direct continuation of another (for example, Modern French and Old French). However, even here one has to resort to artificial devices in transferring sound and grammatical structure of the original, whereas in translation from a relatively distant language the use of such devices becomes a rule. It is but impossible to replicate the structure of a foreign language;²² but it is quite possible to produce something similar by successfully combining sound and grammatical material available in the native language. Not surprisingly, the language [of the translation]

comes across as somewhat unusual or vague, if not artificial in places, but that is the way it ought to be.²³ The translator cannot convey the artistic side of a foreign language without some deal of violence towards his or her own language; so, they have the right to require hard effort on the part of the reader as well. An 'easy-to-read' translation is always akin to a fake, for it is not a reproduction of the artistic side of the original; its easiness is a false easiness, whereas a 'hard-to-read' translation, though it requires by far more combinatory skills in the field of poetic language on the part of the translator, may produce an impression that, in principle, more or less corresponds to the artistic structure of the original; as sound and grammar possibilities of any language are so ample that, if you do not adhere to the commonplace 'standardised' build-up of language, or much-clichéd belles-lettres 'evenness' [fluency or mediocrity; *rivnist*], you can always seek out a combination of language elements more or less homogeneous with the structure of a foreign poetic idiom. A proof of this can be found in an unlimited potential of stylisation, which operates with the same devices as literary translation. So, the latter can be defined as a 'stylisation-translation' [*pereklad-stylizatsiia*].

3

This means that there are three types of translation: account-translation [*pereklad-vyklad*],²⁴ transcription-translation [*pereklad-transkriptsii*] (not used separately) and stylisation-translation [*pereklad-stylizatsiia*],²⁵ with only the latter being artistic to one degree or another, although it almost never exists in a pure form: we typically come across some traces of practical language in it (account-translation), without which the text runs the risk of becoming absolutely incomprehensible; however, the more stylisation the translator can infuse into translation without making it incomprehensible, the better the translation is in an artistic sense. This is a general principle of an objective evaluation of literary translation; meanwhile, the borderline between incomprehensibility and an accepted degree of complicated interpretation can only be drawn by the translators following their language tact – any general rule is hardly possible here.

Now, we can come onto analysing some separate aspects of poetic translation (phonetics, grammar, vocabulary) and the ways of their possible recreation in a foreign language. Let us begin with the phonetic aspect of the language and, in particular, with the metrics, where the need for such a stylistic recreation is especially pressing. Indeed, not a

single translator who respects himself will dare to change the original's metre, when the same metre exists in the target language metrical system. The times when Homer was translated by means of Alexandrine verse and classical tragedies in iambic pentameter are probably irreversibly gone. However, considerable difficulties arise when the original's metre is organically alien to the target language. With regard to the Ukrainian language, this is true for translations from French. French syllabic verse cannot be accurately recreated in Ukrainian, as the latter has a manifested non-fixed stress. Translating French verse by means of various accentual-syllabic metres (as is usually the case) means ignoring the metric artistry of the original and, still worse, it is not ignoring (ignoring would be a translation in prose), but a falsification of poetic translation, or rather corruption of the text; for it is the substitution of good French verse with knowingly bad Ukrainian verse, as the use of a random metric foot, that has nothing in common with the original, can lead to nothing but deliberately bad verse (from the point of view of translation). Now, there is no need to try to prove that the employment of commonplace metric feet gives an air of cheapness to the translated texts, in principle. So, what is the way out? Apparently, syllabic verse with an even number of syllables should be translated into iambus and with an odd number of syllables into trochee; with as many metric 'inaccuracies' and deviations from iambic and trochaic metres as possible, because this is the only way to render the rhythmic flexibility of syllabic verse, with its broad variation potential. A good idea could be to use metric pauses to render the reduced (dropped) French *e* (*e muet*), which, similarly to a pause, is perceived by ear only by those who wish to perceive it.

Antique classical metric verse can only be translated by means of an accentual verse [*pavznyk*], which seems to be the case now.

In rendering Polish syllabic verse most suitable are Old Ukrainian syllabic meters. As for the reduction or extension of verse in translation (which is severely criticised by many, including, for instance, N. Gumilev and V. Bryusov), there seems to be nothing wrong with it if some particular verse does not break down into strophes; otherwise, what is admissible is the reduction or extension of entire strophes.

In the phonetic aspect of translation, of paramount importance is the rendering of rhyme; and in this field there is still a lot of laxity. Of course, no one any more will think of translating rhymed verse without rhyme, and the other way round; but this is not enough, as one should take into account the phonetic character of rhyme (rich rhyme or poor rhyme, deep rhyme or approximate rhyme, etc.), grammatical character of rhyme (verb and noun rhymes, stem rhyme, compound rhyme,

grammatically homogeneous or heterogeneous rhymes), lexical character of rhyme (the use of proper names or borrowings) and – whenever possible – render main trends [style] of a particular author. As a negative example, one can point out Dmytro Zahul's translations from Schiller, spoiled with rhymes like *домі – долоні, видко – Єгипту*, etc., impossible in classical German poetry.

As regards the so-called phonetic devices [alliteration, consonance and euphony], which are basically an aggregation of certain sounds with the view to gaining particular expressiveness, unlike Bryusov,²⁶ we do not see any problem here, since it is almost impossible to discern where a particular sound pattern begins or an accidental aggregation of certain sounds ends, which can be quite typical of the given language. Only in the case of indisputable onomatopoeia, the rendition of the sound pattern becomes entirely compelling. In principle, one should not *ad libitum* deviate from the phonetic specifics of the given foreign language, which, of course, is not always possible, though a lot can be done in this direction without much effort; for instance, avoiding sibilants while translating from French or, vice versa, increasing their number while translating from German and so on.

The hardest of all is rendering the original's grammatical structure. As for morphology, here only compound words can be used extensively for morphological stylisation (for translations from German, English or ancient Greek)²⁷ and, needless to say, archaic forms of the mother tongue can be employed in order to render the source language morphology, which is especially the case for Russian–Ukrainian translations.²⁸

In the field of syntax, though, broadest vistas, however little researched, open before stylisation-translation. Clearly, if, for example, there is no verb or verb structures in the Chinese language, there should be no verb or verb structures in translations from this language. In any language there exist preferable syntactic structures and word-order patterns that can be reproduced by the means of any other language. Incomprehensible? Well, but who says that the aesthetics of a foreign culture, or foreign worldview or language is easy to comprehend? The grammatical canons of the mother tongue violated? But who says that literary translation is an exercise in grammar?²⁹ And since its main aim is to reproduce something principally foreign to the native language consciousness, no syntactic norms are applicable to literary translation; since its inception, it has been beyond grammatical good and evil. It is especially true for poetic translation, because without rendering foreign syntax it is impossible to render foreign rhythm, which is the most prominent aspect

of verse.³⁰ The best examples of reproducing the original's rhythm and syntax in Ukrainian translated literature are M. T. Ulezko's translations from Goethe (accentual verse in *Faust*) and [Aleksandr] Blok's translations from Heine in Russian translated literature.

What remains is to discuss lexis and semantics of the translated verse. As for the latter, one should make it a rule to literally preserve all the tropes and semantic figures (metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, antonomasia etc.) of the original, no matter how artificial and incomprehensible they sound to the contemporary reader. The worst thing is when such a figure is deliberately simplified (vulgarised) or substituted by another more habitual to the reader: it means deliberately turning an artistic image into a trite vulgarity – and this is the worst lip service the translator could pay to the original. To shun images that can seem to us, bearers of another culture, too weird or unnatural means shunning the corresponding poetry and, then, one should stay away from translation at all.

As for the lexis, the usage of words borrowed from the original's language is quite permissible, if not desirable, because it enhances the 'local colouring' and, thus, considerably enhances the stylisation artistry. Conversely, borrowings from other languages are only welcome if they are present in the source text itself; otherwise, they will be a case of conspicuous anachronism.³¹ The same holds true with neologisms coined after the patterns of the source language, and for dialecticisms. The widespread attempts to render the colloquial speech or street jargon of the original with the help of native dialecticisms or colloquialisms are especially detrimental. An introduction into the translation of language means, closely tied with the translator's native linguistic and cultural environment, is most glaring and tasteless anachronism, leading to the loss of the main goal of translation, which is recreation of the artistic originality of the primary source as a sample of a foreign cultural and language world. One may argue that this is the way to preserve the correlation of the folk [colloquial] and literary elements of the original; well, possibly, but the work itself ceases to be a translation per se and, at best, can be considered only an imitation [*nasliduvannia*].

4

Summing up the above, it is necessary, first of all, to admit that literary translation (stylisation-translation) should be, if possible, a literal one – not in the sense that every word of the source should be translated separately, but in the sense that the artistic value of every sentence, word,

grammatical or phonetic structure of the source should, if possible, be embodied in the style of translation. Such a translation would be viewed by many as an extremely 'exotic' one if not on the edge of a parody; even so, it always depends upon the translator's stylistic tactfulness whether to retain the distinction between a parody and stylisation or not; in any case, even a parody renders the artistic originality of the source better than flat literary clichés. As for the 'exotic', as a matter of course, an adequate translation of the exotic text (and we call 'exotic' anything that in general terms is foreign to our own cultural consciousness) cannot escape stylistic exoticism.

Translations of works of art are generally made with the aim of (1) acquainting readers with the content of foreign literature, which includes countless translations of belles lettres thrown into the book market every year without any claims to artistic value whatsoever; (2) developing and enriching one's native literary language, in which case the content of the translated work becomes an object of literary imitation and, so to say, a pretext for the realisation of the artistic potential of one's mother tongue; this is a very important and culturally valuable kind of literary and language work that, in fact, is not a translation *per se*, since it implies that the artistic aspect of the original is not recreated, but, on the contrary, is consistently replaced by another and – totally different! – one; (3) providing artistic translation in a narrow sense of the word, stylisation-translation, which occurs comparatively rarely and requires a high level of literary and language competence from both, the translator and the reader; it is this kind of translation that seeks to convey the artistic value of the original (rather than its ideological or psychological message), as well as the contemporary literary era permeating the original; and this task is worth the effort. Verse translation, which by definition is focused on the artistic aspect of the work, cannot be anything else but stylisation: otherwise, it is no longer a translation, and can only be regarded as an independent poetic work.

'On the matter of verse translation. Notes'

By Mykola Zerov

Translated from Ukrainian by Lada Kolomiyets

Source text: Mykola Zerov, 'U spravi virshovanoho perekladu: Notatky', *Zhyttia i revoliutsiia*, IX (1928): 133–46. Translated from the edition: Mykola Zerov. *Nove ukrayins'ke pys'menstvo: Istorychnyi Narys. Vypusk pershyi* (New Ukrainian Writing: A historical essay. Issue 1). *Elektronna biblioteka ukrayins'koyi literatury* (Electronic Library of Ukrainian Literature), <https://tarnawsky.artsci.utoronto.ca/elul/history/Zerov/Nove-pysmenstvo/Stattia%204.html> (accessed 29 December 2024)

1

In light of the prevailing monotony, mediocrity and general lack of innovation in each new book of the original poems, it is encouraging to observe the expansion of translated works, both in quantity and quality. A new, enlarged edition of selected Verhaeren translated by M. Tereshchenko,³² two books of German ballads translated by Dm. Zahul,³³ as well as Mickiewicz's *Pan Tadeusz* translated by M. Rylsky, selected Pushkin in translation by a group of poets under the editorship of P. Fylypovych, Shakespeare's tragedies in adaptations by M. Voronyi³⁴ and translations by M. Johansen³⁵ and V. Shcherbanenko,³⁶ and an anthology of American poetry compiled and translated by I. Yu. Kulyk.³⁷ These are the most significant acquisitions of recent years, including various unsuccessful attempts, such as Ulezko's³⁸ translation of Goethe's *Faust*. Only a high estimation of the possibilities of Ukrainian poetic translation can explain why O. I. Biletsky and M. A. Plevako³⁹ in Kharkiv ventured to compile a large five-volume textbook that would best present in Ukrainian the entire centuries-long development of Western European poetry from antiquity to recent times.⁴⁰

There is no need to say how useful this literature in translation is and how much it can be a source of inspiration for the creation of new forms of poetic expression. The point is clear: new themes, new tasks, a thousand incentives for mobilising all the stylistic and lexical resources of our language.

It is a positive sign for the future that, in addition to practical work in the field of translated poetry, there is a growing theoretical interest in its problems. I have in mind three articles: V. M. Derzhavyn's 'A problem of verse translation',⁴¹ Yuri Savchenko's 'Pochyn' (Undertaking) (*Pluzhany*, 1927, 9–10, pp. 44–50, 63–71)⁴² and Hr. Maifet's 'From the remarks on the theory of translation' (*Criticism*, 1928, book 3, pp. 84–93).⁴³ Some of the reviews, which in one way or another raise theoretical questions, should also be mentioned (V. M. Derzhavyn's review of selected Pushkin works published by Knyhospilka, a review of the translation of Ulezko by O. Burghardt and P. I. Tykhovsky etc.).⁴⁴

Some of these works (Derzhavyn's and Maifet's articles) appeared without any obvious connection to the Ukrainian practice of artistic translation. Both of them are closer to the interest that has been aroused in Russian theoretical literature. From there it has spread to our research departments. But both Derzhavyn, briefly and succinctly outlining the problem of poetry translation, and Hr. Maifet, drawing on Scholz's Anglo-American book on *The Art of Translation*, illustrate their points with contemporary Ukrainian translations of poetry and engage in discussions of its means, shortcomings and achievements. Even if the illustrations are not entirely fortunate, and even if, following V. M. Derzhavyn, we ask whether the so-called 'art' of translation is not merely 'accuracy' elevated to virtuosity, we can hardly agree with Derzhavyn's characterisation of Ulezko's *Faust* as the best and most unquestionable example of this virtuosic accuracy. But the theorist's entry into our current work is symptomatic and deserves to be applauded. ...

2

Thus, the high level of requirements is a consequence of the high estimation of our literary language's expressive means ...

Two years ago, when I wrote about Kulish's 'poetic activity' and studied the materials of his collection *The Borrowed Kobza*⁴⁵ – albeit from a historical and literary point of view – I came to the conclusion that, compared to his predecessors and even to many of his contemporaries,

Kulish the translator was a great step forward. And some of the stylistic features of his translations have not lost their significance even for our time, as a perfect example of the cultivation of ‘artistic and artful words’ on the basis of folk poetry and the old-fashioned book style. Kulish is already history to our theoreticians. His ‘artistic word’ sounds heavy, ugly, archaic, and his methods of handling the original work do not meet today’s requirements in the least.

Hr. Maifet rather briefly analyses Goethe’s *Mignon* – ‘Kennst du das Land?’ – in Kulish’s translation (*Min’iona*). He does not like the increased number of lines compared to the original and Kulish’s ‘fudge’, especially since the increased number of lines is not so much the result of rhetorical amplification as of a banal ‘saying whatever comes to mind’. Instead of Goethe’s two lines: ‘Знав ти той край? туди, туди // З тобою б нам, о любий мій, піти’ (‘Did you know that land? there, there // With you, oh my dearest, I wish we’d go’) [translated by M. Rylsky, in *Beethoven*, Collected Songs, vol. II, Knyhospilka, pp. 11–15; it is interesting to compare Kulish’s version with the translation by Cherniavsky in the 1880s (*Works*, vol. VI) and the recent one by Zahul (‘Selection of German ballads’)], we read four full lines:⁴⁶

Чи знаєш ти це все? Туди б, туди
З тобою нам заїхати-зайти,
З тобою, дороге моє кохання,
Моїх очей і серця чарування!
Do you know it all? There, there,
With you, if only we could go, reach there
With you, my dear love,
Magic of my eyes and heart!

...

Reviewing Kulish’s translations brings us to the first requirement we make of our other translators: that they have a complete understanding of the text they are translating into their native language. It is not enough to understand the words themselves; one must feel through them the world view of the author, be guided by his (her) stylistic direction, know the circumstances in which this text was born and its place in the life and development of this author. Indeed, how can one translate Blok’s famous ‘The girl singing in the church choir’⁴⁷ without recognising the stylistic tendencies of the Symbolist poet, without knowing the occasion on which this poem was written (apparently, the naval defeats in the

Japanese war: the poem is dated August 1905) and without connecting it with those works in which the poet treats the theme of Asia and the yellow race ('Kulikovo Pole', 'Scythians' etc.)?

The requirement of a perfect understanding of the text has been formulated more than once by masters and experts in verse translation.

...

The second requirement that our literary critics raise and insist on is the famous accuracy of translation.

In my opinion, this requirement, which is quite appropriate and clear in business and scientific translation, loses even the slightest bit of clarity when it comes to translating poetry.

...

I would add that anyone who has had to translate into verse knows that even in the happiest of cases – when translating from close languages (from Russian or Polish into Ukrainian) – one cannot speak of identity. It is usual to speak of the adequacy of a translation, understanding by this word its maximum correspondence with the semantic and stylistic features of the original source. In his article V. M. Derzhavyn is much more cautious: 'It is necessary that the translation in some way reflects the characteristic stylistic features of the original.'⁴⁸

... Anyone who undertakes the thankless task of translating an ancient or modern lyricist faces two dangers at once. To establish the predominance of semantic elements means to neglect formal elements (rhythm, melody). Paying primary attention to the rhythmic and euphonic features of a work is almost like writing a new work on the basis of a given rhythmic and melodic scheme. 'This danger of deviating, of subordinating the whole to a single component, can destroy the whole work, which in translation must represent the solid unity of all the elements that condition each other' (Ya. Savchenko).⁴⁹ The position of the translator of a literary work is thus similar to that of a knight in a fairy tale at a crossroads: to go left or right is to lose one's head, while to take the middle path is to condemn oneself to insurmountable, invincible difficulties.

There is only one way out of this dilemma: not to talk about the identity or even the complete accuracy of a verse translation, not to condemn the translator to a strict adherence to every detail of the original work. I would be afraid to adopt the position taken by V. M. Derzhavyn, who, in his article 'The problem of verse translation', wrote the following: 'It is impossible to reproduce the structure of a foreign language exactly, but it is possible to create something similar by successfully combining the sound and grammatical material available in the native

language'; I think that with this attitude, secondary tasks would replace the primary task of transmitting what is the core, the essence of the work. It is at this core that I believe a translator's main efforts should be concentrated. Secondary details can be left in the shadows, even without being reproduced.

...

3

I must add a caveat to my thoughts. In advocating a certain freedom of movement for the translator, understanding the translator as a poet-creator rather than as a literary technician with a trained eye and a well-developed hand, I do not want to underestimate the demands on a translator and encourage unconscious amateurism.

My only fear is that a lot of pedantic rules and secondary tasks will distract the translator from conveying the main point of the original work. And this 'main point' can lie in the semantic as well as in the formal components of a poem. In translating Hugo, one cannot overlook his spectacular syntax, his brilliant oratorical apparatus; there can be no elementarily decent translation of Verlaine without maximum attention to his sound devices, and a translator of Verhaeren will pronounce a death sentence on themselves by losing in their work the rich metaphorical character of the poet's French text.

And now, let us take a closer look at the desiderata that our literary critics have set forth in the works cited, and that everyone who cares about the development of our literary language must join in, in whole or in part.

1. First of all, I would like to raise the question of certain lexical choices, and I would like our translators to navigate our lexical stock as best they can, distinguishing between, to use the old-fashioned term, words of 'high and low style' and preventing them from becoming a disorderly, anti-artistic hodgepodge. Lexical units in a literary work each play their own stylistic role, and a word artist has no right to ignore this. In the history of nineteenth-century Ukrainian poetry there are many examples of how works of high style were rewritten in 'low' style, and how 'giving a Greek (in general, non-local) face to the Cossack inside' brought the features of the rudest and needless buffoonery into works conceived as translations (Hrebinka's 'Poltava' and Dumytrashko's 'Zhabomyshodrakivka').⁵⁰ Later, the orientation to the folk-poetic style brought Rudanskyi's⁵¹ translations with their characteristic tuning of the

Homeric melody in the tone and manner of folk song [see S. Rudanskyi, *Poetry*, ed. by V. Herasymenko – my note on the translation of the *Iliad*. Literature on the subject is also listed there]. Finally, since the time of Kulish and the younger generation of the 1890s, works of high style have appeared in Ukrainian translated poetry. This aspiration is formulated in Kulish's preface to *The Borrowed Kobza* in his address to the 'honourable Germans':

Дозвольте взяти й нам високі ваші тони ...
 Leave your high notes to us too ...

The ability to distinguish between words of high and low registers is a necessary and important skill for a translator. ...

As for the low style, with its characteristic use of jargon, i.e., the vernacular of a certain everyday environment, it was from this style that the new Ukrainian poetry was actually born. It was cultivated in fables, poems and humorous prose. Vynnychenko once wrote an entire multi-act drama in this way, but we do not always recognise its aesthetic function and do not always know how to use jargon to shade the transitions from one tone to another.⁵²

...

II. The second desideratum, which cannot be abandoned, is the translator's fullest attention to the so-called tropes and figures of the original (metaphors, metonymies, periphrases, antonomasia).

In his article, V. M. Derzhavyn puts special emphasis on this side of the matter. In his opinion, all tropes and semantic figures should be preserved, no matter how strange they look to the current reader. ...

Derzhavyn's position is characterised by extraordinary determination. But I do not know to what extent he would have maintained his determination, the categorical nature of his demand, if he had been a practising translator himself, interested in the understanding of his work and in its good reception by the reader.⁵³ Wouldn't he have limited his prescription; wouldn't he have allowed each case to be decided on its own merits? Let's imagine that we have to translate the passage in Lucretius' *De rerum natura* where the poet, addressing the ancestress of the Aeneans (i.e., the goddess Venus), invokes her to pacify the bloody wars: because she has power over the armed Mars himself, who, overcome by the wound of love, falls into her lap and *pascit amore avidas inhians in te, dea, visus*. The Latin word *pascere* means 'to shepherd'. Fearing the risky image, the Russian translator Rachinsky softened it:

Томно к тебе он подьѣмлет любовные жадные взоры.
He languidly looks up to thee with love's greedy eyes.

But the Ukrainian translators have an expression at their disposal: to shepherd (graze) with one's eyes; nothing prevents them from translating: 'Очі неситі свої на тобі *вунасає*, богине' ('He *grazes* with his eyes on you, Goddess'). Readers will undoubtedly be cautious, perhaps even protest in their hearts, because the expression may seem rude and unpoetic – let them get used to it on the second or third reading. But it is difficult for a translator to be so decisive when a short text contains several images that are unusual for our perception (for example, an anchor thrown from a ship will *bite* the bottom), and the unusual images are joined by cunning periphrases and renamings based on mythological data – cases of 'antonomasia' (and not ordinary ones, like *mater saeva cupidinum* or Cypress instead of Venus, but really sophisticated, refined ones). In such cases, I think it is sometimes advisable to give something up, to keep some details while sacrificing others. The middle course here is dictated, on the one hand, by the need to educate and accustom the reader, to broaden the range of his (her) perceptions and, on the other hand, by the danger of overloading him (her) with material that is difficult to digest, of instilling in him (her) an aversion to the work of art.

In any case, the simplification of the figurative element, the 'replacement of the image by clichéd vulgarity', is a great sin against the original. In this sense, school commentaries on Latin poets have sometimes been very wrong, consistently translating, for example, *tecta* as a *house*, without giving 'cover' or 'roof' anywhere.

Тисячну хату вони обійшли із благанням спочинку,
Тисяча й вигнала їх. Прийняла ж то одна їх хатина
They passed through a thousand houses, begging for rest,
And a thousand threw them out. Only one house hosted them (*The Metamorphoses of Ovid Nazon*, Ukrainian-Rus'ky translation by Ivan Serdeshnyi [I. M. Steshenko], Lviv, 1893).

The word 'house' (Ukr. 'хата') is given twice, although in Ovid's case, for reasons of synonymic diversity, *domus* is used in the first case and *tecta* in the second ('Тисячу *домів* обійшли вони ... прийнято їх під один *дах*' – 'They passed through a thousand *houses* ... they were hosted under one *roof*').

III. The third wish relates to preserving the metrical features of the original work.

We believe that no one will defend today the total arbitrariness of the translator's choice of meter, just as no one will attempt to justify the deafness to rhythm displayed, for example, by the editors of anthologies of translations in the 1890s and 1900s (Novich, for instance), who included in their collections such pieces as Leconte De Lisle's 'The heart of Hialmar' (*Le cœur de Hialmar*), translated in trochaic tetrameter! [In the original, we have a syllabic verse of 12 syllables.]

Many questions arise, for example, when translating German tonic verse, which is based on the same principle as Ukrainian [A. Fedorov, 'The sound side of translation', *Poetika*, 2: 49–50], and even more questions will arise if we consider verse based on the syllabic principle (number of syllables and caesura) or on the basis of syllable length and shortness, as in Greek or Latin verse. Let us recall how slowly Russian translators, not to mention our own, learned to translate German leimic, paused verse. Even Zhukovsky, in translating 'The forest Tsar' ('The Erlking'), with its strong rhythmic breaks, used the regular amphibrachs: 'Кто скачет, кто мчится под хладною мглой?' ('Who is it galloping and rushing beneath the cold mist?'). He was followed by such Ukrainian translators as Kulish or Hrinchenko,⁵⁴ and only Dmytro Zahul internalised the leimic nature of the original work. ...

We no longer have the space and time to discuss in detail the ways of rendering metrical Greco-Roman verse and syllabic poetry, the conventionality of such renderings [Gumilev wrote about this in his article 'Verse translations'], as well as the historical basis of certain methods of verse reproduction [A. Fedorov, 'The problem of verse translation', *Poetika*, 2: 109–18]. Therefore, let us reiterate this wish: the choice of the verse meter should not be arbitrary and random, it should reckon with our rhythmic sense and at the same time try to expand its limits; and now let us move on to our fourth desideratum.

iv. The translator should not neglect the euphony of the original work. This applies both to the so-called sound pattern (alliterations, assonances) and to rhyme, which in this case – we fully agree with V. Derzhavyn's article – plays the most important role.

The situation with the rhymes in the Ukrainian poetry is not so good at all. Kotliarevsky did much in this way,⁵⁵ although his understanding of rhyme dates back to the eighteenth century, as Jeremiah Eisenstock rightly pointed out in his recent article on Kotliarevsky the poet.⁵⁶ But after the *Aeneid*, our romantics of the 1830s and 1840s came along and called the versification of the *Aeneid* alien to the spirit of the Ukrainian language and, taking the folk duma and historical song as examples, devalued rhyme, replacing it with various types of rhymeoids and

end-of-line assonances. Kulish's rhymes, for example, in his *The Borrowed Kobza*, leave much to be desired, as do the rhymes of many later poets. The existing repertoire of rhymes is still unclear, the norms of rhyming (given our linguistic capabilities) have not yet been studied, and a conscientious translator often feels that he (she) is still in the position of the Kotliarevsky of the old days, who was sometimes willing to do this:

Купити музи на охвоту,
Щоб кончить помогла роботу,
Бо нігде рифм уже достать.
Buy a muse [good cloth for] a cloak,
That she may help me to finish my work,
For there are no more rhymes to be found.

The question of the sound pattern and the reproduction of the original sound play is very important, but as V. M. Derzhavyn has shown, in practice it is very difficult to determine 'where the sound pattern begins and where a random accumulation of certain sounds, which can often be found in a given language, ends'.

In any case, from our point of view, it would be unfortunate to follow the example of Brusov, who in his translation of the *Aeneid*, which he began in *Hermes*,⁵⁷ meticulously chased the sound of the text, making his work almost unpronounceable from the point of view of the naturalness of Russian verse, though perhaps interesting as an experiment for an amateur of Virgil and an expert of the Latin text of the poem. But a translation can hardly be called ideal if the translator is only an eccentric, immersed in the sounds, standing with his face turned towards the author and the original text, while the reader looks at his back.

v. And here we come to the fifth and final of our desiderata, which also appears as a conclusion in the oft-quoted critic I. Annensky; namely, that the beauty (and thus the naturalness, the ease) of the mother tongue should not be sacrificed for anything, because only under this condition will verse translation become a ladder to the higher stages of our literary and linguistic development.

This is the extent of our remarks for the time being. The demands we make regarding the translation of verse are already considerable. In light of this, our attitude toward many authors who have been considered exemplary (Kulish, Hrinchenko) undergoes a significant change; elements of a thorough reassessment are introduced into the accounting and characterisation of our previous achievements. It must be acknowledged that the translations of Hafiz by Krymsky are not to my liking.⁵⁸ They

contain lines reminiscent of the folk-poetic style and some old-fashioned forms, for instance, *‘Ti lyuboi-nytsi. Vtiśnaia molod’* (*‘Those playful deeds of love. The joyful youth’*) is not as polished as it could be. It would be preferable to see more rigour in the forms, brevity in the expression and a clearer distinction between high- and low-style words. Meanwhile, in the context of the 1890s and 1900s, Krymsky’s translations represented the pinnacle of translation technique, and it was the excess of Persian and Arabic influence in them that greatly displeased Hnat Khotkevych.⁵⁹ Today, the growing interest in poetry translation promises new achievements and higher standards of versification. The time has come to go beyond amateurism in both original and translated poetry.

Notes

1. Lada Kolomiyets’s contribution to this chapter was supported by the Foundation for Baltic and East European Studies (Sweden) under Project No. 24-PR2-0020. Oleksandr Kalnychenko’s contribution was supported by the EU NextGenerationEU through the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Slovak Republic under Project No. 09I03-03-V01-00148.
2. See the translation of fragments of Zerov’s response below.
3. The school of French poets of the late nineteenth century who wrote verse that emphasised metrical form.
4. Oswald Burghardt (pseudonym Yuri Klen; 1891–1947), Ukrainian writer, poet and literary scholar of German origin. In 1931 Klen managed to emigrate to Germany. Pavlo Fylypovych (1891–1937), Maksym Rylsky (1895–1964) and Mykhailo Drai-Khmara (1889–1939), Ukrainian poets, translators and literary scholars.
5. Oleksandr Ivanovych Biletsky (*Bilets’kyi*) (1884–1961), Ukrainian literary scholar.
6. *Chervonyi Shliakh*, 1924, no. 6, 272. Cited in [Bilokin n.d.](#)
7. Cited in [Shkandrij 1992](#), 72.
8. Innokenty Annensky (1855–1909), Russian poet, literary scholar and translator, whose works influenced a number of later Russian poets. Much quoted by Zerov, Annensky’s article ‘Razbor stikhotvornogo perevoda “Liricheskikh stikhotvorenii Goratsiia” P. F. Porfirova’ (Analysis of the verse translation by P. F. Porfirov of the ‘Lyric Poems of Horace’) was published in 1904 (St Petersburg).
9. Nikolai Gumilev’s article ‘Translating poetry’ from the collection *Principles of Artistic Translation*, second edition, State Publishing House ‘Petersburg’, 1920.
10. See the syllabus of Zerov’s course published and commented in [Kolomiyets 2021](#).
11. The syllabus of Kalynovych’s course was published and commented in [Dzhuhastrianska and Strikha 2015](#).
12. The idea was put forward in the first chapter of [Finkel 1929](#).
13. Zerov approached his own work on the first full-length non-travesty translation of Virgil’s poem with a particular sense of responsibility. He was fond of Kotliarevsky’s 1798 mocking translation of *The Aeneid*, and even joked that with this translation his name would forever be remembered in history, at least as a small comment in the footnotes of future books about ‘the immortal Ivan Kotliarevsky’, that the first non-travesty Ukrainian translation of Virgil’s *Aeneid* belonged to him, Zerov.
14. As M. T. Ulezko had done in his translation of Faust (see the 1926 review by Tykhovsky, *Chervonyi Shliakh*, 9: 268) (all notes except those specifically designated belong to Derzhavyn).
15. Compare in contemporary Russian literature the collection *Printsyipy khudozhestvennogo perevoda* (Artistic Translation Principles), second edition, Petersburg, 1920, with the

- basically correct essay 'Perevody stikhotvornye' (Verse translations) by N. Gumilev; see also an essay 'Problemy stikhotvornogo perevoda' (Problems of verse translation) by Fedorov in the collection *Poetica II*, Leningrad, 1927, p. 104, which, though, says nothing about verse translation.
16. For example, the so-called Geneva School (de Saussure, Bally and others).
 17. Of course, this does not refer to the terms in everyday usage, which, therefore, lost their scientific and cognitive meaning.
 18. See Potebnia, *Mysl' i iazyk* (Thought and Language), third edition, Kharkov, 1913, p. 135.
 19. Consequently, any adaptation of proper names to the translator's mother tongue is definitely unacceptable, as, for example, in O. O. Potebnia's translations from Homer: *Agamemnon Atreievych* instead of the *Atrid*, *Iz zapisok po teorii slovesnosti* (From Notes on the Theory of Literature), Kharkov, 1905, p. 547.
 20. The external form is the sound form of a sign. The internal form is a fragment of meaning immediately represented in the external form (Potebnia 1895/1993). The difference in the spelling of the Ukrainian scientist's last name is explained by the fact that Derzhavyn's article contains its transcription from Ukrainian, and in the reference to the book its rendition from Russian, because in tsarist Russia scientific publications in Ukrainian were prohibited by the 1876 Ems decree of Alexander II (translators' note).
 21. Most of Borys Yakubskyi's translations in *An Anthology of Russian Poetry*, ДБВ, 1925, can serve as examples of this.
 22. Hence, the principle put forward and ardently advocated by Valery Bryusov, 'A translation in literature is comparable to a copy in painting', seems erroneous.
 23. Incidentally, a similar view is expressed by Fedorov in the above-mentioned essay: 'The translator is left either to use *analogues on his own linguistic ground* or to create an *alien, unusual verbal form* – such are the two devices possible to the translator ... Translation as a certain kind of literary work, which has an idiom of its own, can justify all sorts of oddities concomitant to the original, and not only justify but legalise them by virtue of the fact that it is a translation' (p. 117).
 24. Content rendering (translators' note).
 25. In his later works of the period, Derzhavyn called 'foreignness'-oriented translations as homologous or stylising translations and 'nativeness'-oriented translations as analogous ones (translators' note).
 26. In *Hermes* 1914, 14 (1), p. 261.
 27. Fedorov (pp. 116–17) takes the opposite view.
 28. Use of participles, unstretched forms of adjectives etc.
 29. 'In the midst of today's much more developed "Kurylized" language, Ulezko's translation will make a somewhat motley impression. Only a very experienced connoisseur could learn literary language from it', writes M. Johansen in the preface to this exemplary translation of *Faust* (Part I, DVU, 1926, p. 6).
 30. See O. Brik, 1917, 'Rytym i sintaksis' (Rhythm and syntax), *Novyi Lef*, 3–4.
 31. See a detailed study of the issue in Fedorov (p. 111).
 32. Mykola Tereshchenko (1898–1966), poet and translator.
 33. Dmytro Zahul (1890–1944), Ukrainian symbolist poet, literary critic, translator.
 34. Mykola Voronyi (1871–1938), writer, poet, actor and political activist; executed by the NKVD troika on concocted accusations of belonging to the Ukrainian nationalist organisation.
 35. Mike or Maik (Mykhailo) Yohansen (1895–1937), poet, prose writer, dramatist, translator and critic.
 36. Translator of mainly French prose; together with M. Johansen, they translated Shakespeare's plays, in particular, the tragedy *Othello* (1927).
 37. Ivan Yulianovych Kulyk (1897–1937), Jewish-origin Ukrainian poet, writer, translator, diplomat and Communist Party activist; one of the leaders of the All-Ukrainian Association of the Proletarian Writers (VSPP), and after 1934 the leader of the Ukrainian Association of Soviet Writers.
 38. Mykola Ulezko's translation of *Faust* from German into Ukrainian (Part 1, published in Kharkiv, 1926) has long been considered the best.
 39. Mykola Antonovych Plevako (1890–1941), literary critic and bibliographer; the author of the two-volume *Textbook of New Ukrainian Literature*.

40. Zerov points to an ambitious translation project launched by Oleksandr Biletsky and Mykola Plevako in Kharkiv, the five-volume *Khrestomatiia z Istorii Zakhidnykh literatur* (A Textbook of Western European Literature from Antiquity to Modernity), that testifies to the high profile of Ukrainian translations of Western poetry at that time.
41. See about Volodymyr Derzhavyn in detail in the essay by Oleksandr Kalnychenko.
42. Yurii Savchenko (1908–?), literary scholar and critic, researcher at the Shevchenko Institute in Kharkiv; arrested and exiled in 1934.
43. Hryhorii Maifet (1903–75), writer, literary critic, translator and researcher into the problems of translation theory.
44. Pavlo Ivanovych Tykhovskiy (1866–1938), literary scholar and linguist; in the 1930s headed the library of the Taras Shevchenko Institute of Literature.
45. Panteleimon Kulish (1819–1897), Ukrainian writer, public activist, critic, poet, folklorist, and translator. *Pozychena kobza* (The Borrowed Kobza) was Kulish's second collection of poetry, and was published in Geneva in 1897.
46. All the references in the article belonging to Mykola Zerov are given in square brackets. The abbreviations in Zerov's bibliographical notes are not preserved; all words are translated in full.
47. Alexander Blok (1880–1921), Russian lyrical poet. Blok's poem 'Devushka pela v tserkovnom khore' (The girl singing in the church choir) was published in 1905.
48. Here and elsewhere, when quoting Derzhavyn, Zerov refers to Derzhavyn's article 'A problem of verse translation'.
49. Yakiv Savchenko (1890–1937), Ukrainian symbolist poet and literary critic.
50. Kostiantyn Dumytrashko (1814–86), the author of a burlesque humorous poem-remake of the ancient Greek *Batrahomiomakhia*: 'Zhabomyshodrakivka from the Greek language to Cossack inside-out with a fast thread re-stitched' (St Petersburg, 1859).
51. Stepan Rudanskyi (1834–73), translator and poet.
52. Volodymyr Vynnychenko (1880–1951), Ukrainian writer, playwright political activist, and statesman, who served as the first prime minister of the Ukrainian People's Republic.
53. Derzhavyn was a well-known literary critic but unknown as a translator at that time. His translations began to appear in the mid-1930s and received little attention.
54. Borys Hrinchenko (1863–1910), prose writer, political activist, historian and ethnographer who played a pivotal role in the Ukrainian cultural revival of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
55. Ivan Kotliarevsky (1769–1838), the pioneer of modern Ukrainian literature. His 1798 mock-heroic poem *Eneida* (Енеїда), a loose Ukrainian travesty of Virgil's *Aeneid*, is considered the first literary work published entirely in modern Ukrainian.
56. Jeremiah Eisenstock (1900–80), Soviet literary critic.
57. Valery Bryusov (1873–1924), a leading Russian Symbolist poet. His self-revisionist and literalist retranslation of Virgil's poem *The Aeneid* evolved from initial free, fragmented renderings of the poem to more and more literalist later versions.
58. Ahatanhel Krymsky (1871–1942), linguist-polyglot, Orientalist, folklorist, writer and translator.
59. Hnat Khotkevych (1877–1938), theatre and public figure, playwright, screenwriter and composer.

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14 The Netherlands, 1936–1938

Searching, guessing and experimenting: Johan W. Schotman and ‘The intricate craft of translation’

Gaëtan C. Regniers

‘The intricate craft of translation’ (*De moeilijke vertaalkunst*) is an essay penned by Johan W. Schotman, who served as the president of the Vereniging Nederlandsche Vertalingen (VNV; Association of Dutch Translations). This essay saw publication across five instalments (1936, 1937 and 1938) in issues of *Vertalen* (Translating), the periodical of the association.¹ The essay is intricately embedded within the translation discourse that evolved in the Netherlands during the 1930s and 1940s. It represents a pioneering effort to establish key foundational principles for developing a systematic approach to translation-related challenges.

First, I will discuss the origins of the VNV and its magazine *Vertalen*, which served as the association’s flagship publication. Next, I will focus on the essay’s author, Johan W. Schotman, and examine the essay itself. Finally, I will conclude with a brief epilogue on the later years of the VNV and its connection to translation scholarship as it developed in the Netherlands beginning in the 1960s.

The formation and mission of the VNV

In 1931, poet, critic and translator Martin J. Premsele (1896–60) published a treatise on literary translation filled with ‘grievances and desiderata’ (Premsele 1931). The treatise sparked significant debate, leading to the formation of a committee of translators, writers, publishers and critics. The committee moved swiftly to officially establish the VNV in January 1932.² The term *Vertalingen*, ‘translations’, was deliberately chosen over ‘translators’ to emphasise the focus on the quality and accuracy of translations.

The great misery of literary translations

The creation of the VNV was driven by a desire to combat poor-quality translations. In its founding statements, the VNV outlined this as its primary goal, and promised that it would address issues such as the omission of challenging content from translations due to ignorance or superficiality, and the irresponsible practices of publishers who assigned translations to unqualified translators (*Vertalen* 1934/1, 6).

This mission aligned with similar initiatives in other countries. For instance, in 1928, Léon Paschal published a pamphlet titled *La grande misère des traductions littéraires* (The Great Misery of Literary Translations). During the late 1920s and early 1930s, both the League of Nations and PEN (Poets, Essayists, and Novelists, an international writers' association founded in 1921) focused on what was perceived as the 'translation problem'. One significant undertaking was the Index Translationum, a global bibliographic database that tracks the translation of books from various languages into others, offering comprehensive data on translated works worldwide since 1932 (see Roig-Sanz 2021, 453).

The VNV's founding manifesto addressed not only the quality of translations but also the widespread lack of professionalism among translators, publishers and critics. The initial scrutiny was of translators, with the VNV's founding statements raising concerns about the competence of certain types of individuals. For example, the manifesto criticised people who engaged in translation activities for financial gain during their leisure time. The critique frequently targeted women, revealing a strong undercurrent of misogyny.

Vertalen: 'not a trade journal'

The decision to initiate the *Vertalen* journal materialised in 1933 when the VNV's financial standing made such an undertaking feasible. Inaugurated in 1934, *Vertalen* assumed a paramount role as the primary communication conduit for the VNV. Its characterisation as a 'propagandageschrift' (campaign publication) (*Het Volk*, 24 July 1933, 11) underscored its strategic position in disseminating the organisation's messages. Initially, the organisational bylaws mandated the establishment of a journal 'in the service of the action taken by the Association', deliberately distinguishing it from a conventional trade journal for translators (*Vertalen* 1934/4, 61).

Print run

Vertalen was published quarterly from 1934 to 1941. During the German occupation of the Netherlands, publication was suspended. According to the VNV's published meeting minutes, the journal had around a hundred subscribers in 1935 (*Vertalen* 1935/2, 29). For subsequent years, subscription information is lacking.

In 1945, during the postwar reorganisation of the cultural sector, the VNV became a member of the newly established Federation of Professional Associations of Artists (Federatie van Kunstenaarsverenigingen), which functioned as an umbrella organisation. The VNV joined as a subdivision under the Society for Literature run by Nico Donkersloot (1902–65), an experienced translator renowned for his translations of Coleridge and Goethe. Donkersloot assumed the role of the Federation's inaugural president, with Schotman serving as a board member. Amid these circumstances, the financial burden exceeded the means of the VNV and the board members became increasingly preoccupied, leading to the swift extinguishing of the VNV's operations. Just two further issues were published after the war, both in 1946. Post-1946, substantive activities appear to have ceased, culminating in the complete dissolution of the VNV in the early 1950s (Schotman 1954, 6; Premssela 1955, 27).

Johan W. Schotman

Throughout the entire period of its activity, the VNV was presided over by Johan W. Schotman (1892–1976). Schotman was trained as a psychiatrist and worked in mental healthcare. From 1912 onwards, he published poems, stories and reviews (Huussen 2015, 31). Owing to a chronic lack of income, he supplemented his earnings by working as a translator in addition to his medical practice. Schotman translated a total of 63 titles from Chinese, German, Latin, French and especially English. These works were predominantly non-fiction, but he also translated literary works by authors such as Pearl Buck, Agatha Christie and Elia Kazan (Huussen 2015, 171, 180–1, 188–9).³

Schotman and the VNV

As chairman, Schotman led the board, which consisted of a homogeneous group of mostly upper-class men born in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Most of these members, such as Donkersloot,

held doctoral degrees and taught at universities.⁴ The VNV board members were actively involved in various literary spheres within the Dutch literary landscape for several decades. One notable nexus was the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* newspaper, which initially served as a focal point (Premsele 1955, 24; Van Vriesland 1969, 79–81).

The core of the VNV's governing body comprised individuals who were authors, predominantly poets, critics and, notably, translators. Their multifaceted involvement extended to their roles as active members of the Vereeniging van Letterkundigen (Literary Society), an institution dedicated to safeguarding the material interests of authors and functioning as a writers' union. The board of the VNV was formed by like-minded friends, exemplified by Johan W. Schotman's hospitality, where a housewarming event included a meal that seamlessly transitioned into a board meeting 'for dessert' (Literary Museum, Letter from the VNV to Nico Donkersloot, 7-12-1936).

Schotman and Vertalen

Vertalen featured a total of 40 contributing authors.⁵ Martin J. Premsele (41 articles) and Johan W. Schotman (21 articles) emerged as primary contributors. Premsele predominantly authored concise reviews, while Schotman specialised in more extensive reflective articles that typically opened each edition of the journal. The essay translated in this chapter falls into the latter category and is aimed at the readership of *Vertalen*: translators, critics, publishers and others interested in literary translation.

Schotman's essay

'The intricate craft of translation' is divided into five parts, each addressing a different theme. Following the introduction, it discusses the professional role of the translator, the linguistic challenges of translation, the stylistic difficulties of literary translation and the relationship between translator and publisher. The essay primarily relies on Schotman's own observations and makes minimal reference to other authors, avoiding scholarly work or international sources. In my analysis, I highlight the connections between Schotman's arguments and the VNV and its workings whenever possible.

Introduction

Schotman, a skilled writer, underscores from the outset that translation is a distinct discipline, closely linked to existing art forms and scientific fields. At the same time he stresses its interdisciplinary nature – very topical in today's debates in translation studies – using four different metaphors to illustrate this point.

Firstly, Schotman describes translation as a stepchild among the fine arts, caught between two worlds and feeling at home in neither. The second metaphor presents translation as a gypsy girl, embodying the opposite of the stepchild: independent, self-reliant, yet unpredictable. The third metaphor likens translation to an 'outcast' or 'refugee', finding no acceptance within academic institutions. Finally, Schotman presents translation as a 'child of nature', raising the question of whether translation faces universal challenges and adheres to guiding principles across different languages.

Schotman refrains from answering these questions, stating that 'the field is still undeveloped'. He notes that 'clear guidelines are lacking, and much of the work involves groping in the dark, guided by practical experience. Every science began with searching, guessing, and experimenting.' Rather than seeking to develop guidelines, Schotman himself focuses on delineating what he terms the 'translation problem'. He identifies eight themes, of which four are explicitly characterised as *problemen* (issues), a telling choice of words. Schotman focuses primarily on what the later Holmes/Toury map (Toury 1995, 3–8) would designate applied areas, particularly translation criticism, though he also discusses theoretical aspects such as text type and problem-restricted areas.

Who qualifies as a translator?

In his polemical style, Schotman initially focuses on delineating the profession by identifying who he believes does not qualify as a translator. This approach is consistent with the tone of *Vertalen*. Prewar editions of the journal primarily critiqued recently published translations, often adopting a harsh tone (Van Kalmthout 2010, 65–7). The primary aim of these reviews targeting 'subpar' translators was to hinder the commercial success of the criticised books, summarised by one reviewer in military terms: 'The strongest weapon is the mobilisation of critics and press, resulting in poor circulation of unfavourably reviewed inferior translations' (*Vertalen* 1936/3, 43).

In its first year, *Vertalen* faced minimal opposition. However, from 1935, criticised translators began to respond, and the journal published some of these rebuttals. Some members also objected to the harsh tone of the critiques. For instance, J. W. Kuiper criticised the publication of sharp reviews without prior notification to the translator, describing some critiques as ‘very unkind’ (*Vertalen* 1935/4, 68). Despite these objections, Schotman remained steadfast, asserting that the journal’s purpose was not merely to entertain but to rigorously combat substandard translations. He emphasised the need for a strict and unyielding exposition of errors and shortcomings.

In line with its activist stance, *Vertalen* appealed to librarians and reading rooms to withdraw subpar translations from circulation or, preferably, return them to the publisher (*Vertalen* 1938/1, 2). Additionally, the journal advocated for the inclusion of the translator’s name in reviews to establish accountability for their work.

In his essay, Schotman argues that translators should be deeply immersed in the author’s work. He somewhat naïvely assumes that this immersion is the means by which the ‘original emotion’ and ‘essence’ of the work can be ‘brought back to life’. This emphasis on recreation suggests a contradiction: while he believes only a true artist can create, Schotman expects the translator, typically viewed as a ‘passive’ actor, to possess artistic talents, but only to the extent of recreating.

Translators: naïve, complacent and self-proclaimed geniuses

In this section, Schotman criticises translators who fail to address the linguistic challenges posed by translation, even going so far as to categorise them. In his view, the worst translators are those who ‘have never properly learnt the language’. Then there are the naïve translators who resemble what Nabokov (1981, 319) would later refer to as the ‘well-meaning hack’. Additionally, there are complacent translators who, when faced with an unfamiliar word, simply ‘come up with something that fits’. The most problematic are the ‘self-proclaimed geniuses’ who unscrupulously alter the text. Schotman’s classification highlights errors, and, along with the tone of this and previous sections, presents a particularly bleak picture. In the opinion of Schotman and the VNV, most translators are bunglers (the Dutch term *beunhazen* is a favourite expression in *Vertalen*).

Stylistic difficulties

In this section, Schotman highlights the importance of style, considering it as crucial as content: 'What is said is important, but what is even more important is how it is said.' He discusses the significance of rhythm, atmosphere and sound in a literary text, citing examples from his own translations. He concludes with the assertion that 'Translation is art', and adds a strong remark: 'There is widespread tampering in our country.'

Relation of translator and publisher

Initially, Schotman considered the 'bad translator' (for whom he and others in the VNV coined numerous derogatory names) to be primarily to blame for the poor state of literary translation. The VNV established an Advisory Committee and Archive (*Adviesbureau met Archief*) offering translation evaluations for translators who paid 10 per cent of their fee to the committee. Two experts, with linguistic and artistic expertise, conducted these assessments (*Vertalen* 1935/4, 51). Approved translators were listed in a registry of authorised translators, a concept that originated from PEN meetings (*Vertalen* 1936/1, 1–4; [Van Kalmthout 2011](#), 189). The VNV aspired to monopolise the translation market through the committee, aiming for no publisher or bookseller to distribute translations without VNV approval (*Vertalen* 1936/4, 61). However, the consultancy's impact proved to be limited.⁶

Over time, the VNV showed signs of evolving insight. Initially focused on blaming individual translators, they later shifted to holding publishers accountable. Schotman eventually acknowledged that translators were just part of the process, with publishers responsible for commissioning translations. Debates within the VNV likely prompted this shift, leading Schotman to explore the relationship between publishers and translators in his essay. He used this opportunity to present the VNV's solution, advocating for a minimum fee and introducing the concept of a *Vertaalbeurs* (translation exchange market), inspired by the British Translators Guild. Schotman urged translators to form a strong association that could demand competence from members and accountability from booksellers and publishers (*Vertalen* 1936/3, 35).

Conclusions

Schotman's essay style is polemical: at times humorous, often snappy. His argument is rife with internal contradictions. He insists on standards and a scientific basis for the discipline, yet simultaneously believes that translation is an art. He frequently accuses translators of inadequate training, but never advocates for translation training, adhering instead to the notion that 'a translator is born' ('*translator nascitur*'). The VNV itself is also marked by contradictions. The activist streak and strong emphasis on 'problems' caused the VNV to alienate many natural allies: initially the translators, who bore the brunt of it, and subsequently the publishers. The VNV had little connection to the wider field. This is exemplified by translator Henri Methorst's (1996, 156) remarks referring to 'Schotman's elitist club'. Consequently, the VNV's influence on translation practices in the 1930s and 1940s was minimal. If the association did exert any influence, it was likely indirect and long term. In 1949, in the final days of the VNV, James Stratton Holmes, a 25-year-old American, arrived in the Netherlands as an English exchange teacher. From 1950 to 1952, Holmes studied the Dutch language under Donkersloot (Van Voorst 2017, 65), a pivotal figure in the VNV since its inception. As noted, Donkersloot also served as president of the Society of Literature and was a significant presence in the Dutch literary scene as a professor, critic and poet over many decades. Holmes began his career as Donkersloot's protégé, working on a research project at Amsterdam University (McMartin 2020, 24–30). Moreover, their close partnership led to the creation of a formal translation training programme at Amsterdam University in 1965 (see Regniers 2025 for an account of the ties between the VNV, Donkersloot and Holmes). Schotman's 'stepchild' or 'gypsy girl' had finally found a home.

'The intricate craft of translation'

By Johan W. Schotman

Translated from Dutch by Gaëtan C. Regniers⁷

Source text: Johan W. Schotman 'De moeilijke vertaalkunst', Vertalen 1936–8. Translation published with the kind permission of Sylvia Schotman. Available in the original language via the digital database delpher.nl

The excerpt is significantly longer in Dutch. I have taken care to preserve the integrity of the original text during the abridgement process, primarily omitting digressions and examples. Additionally, the prewar Dutch and its corresponding spelling have been adapted to contemporary English, prioritising a smoothly readable text.

Introduction

Translation is often treated as the stepchild among the fine arts. It exists on the border between two worlds, dipping into both without fully belonging to either, and without completely adhering to their laws. Translation is like a gypsy girl, independent and homeless, relying on what it can gather from grammar and linguistics, borrowing what it needs from literature across different cultures. It travels the world as a mediator, sometimes proud and dignified, other times quiet and modest. It can be meticulous like a devoted disciple or unpredictable like a gypsy, appearing insincere and unreliable.

Everywhere it goes, it encounters academic institutions, but no faculty claims it. Dutch literary scholars dismiss it, saying, 'What is she doing here? She mingles with foreigners; let them take care of her. Her problems are not our concern; she should go to the French, British, Spanish or Germans.' But none of these nations show interest either, as she always returns with foreign ideas that infiltrate Dutch territory. Thus, translation

remains an outcast, a refugee. Is this neglect due to its indifferent and nonchalant nature, performing for undergraduates for little pay? Is it because of its gypsy nature that no academic body has ever addressed its challenges or considered its potential? Who has ever taken the time to understand it? Where can we find a comprehensive study on the science of translation? What are the characteristics and principles that guide its art in any language? Who has established the standards for this craft? Do we think that this 'child of nature' must remain untouched by civilisation? Or do we believe that translation has no challenges or principles that must be universally addressed by every translator, in every country, for every piece of literature, and in every language?

We no longer need to question the importance of translation. In today's world of international interactions and cultural connections, questioning its importance is absurd. Translation plays an increasingly significant role in humanity's cultural life. Without it, there can be no contact, understanding, cooperation or growth.

While the harm caused by bad translations is widely criticised, the crucial issues of how and why remain unaddressed. This field is still undeveloped, not yet fully explored or cultivated. Clear guidelines are lacking, and much of the work involves groping in the dark, guided by practical experience. Every science began with searching, guessing and experimenting.

Despite the current uncertainties and speculative nature of the field, it is better to become knowledgeable about translation than to let translators struggle through the many pitfalls and challenges on their own. This is crucial for our European culture.

Examining the difficulties of translation is just one aspect of the broader translation problem, which can be divided into several key areas:

- 1 The requirements a translator must meet.
- 2 The nature of the work to be translated, affecting its translatability and potential objections.
- 3 The issue of correct translation and its linguistic challenges.
- 4 The issue of literary translation and its stylistic challenges.
- 5 Issues of sound and atmosphere in artistic translation.
- 6 The relationship between the translator and the publisher.
- 7 The relationship between the translator and the author.
- 8 The question of translation as an international problem.

This layout serves as a preliminary guide. Our goal is to address these points over a series of articles. Rather than conducting an in-depth study,

which would require years of work and extensive preparation, we will offer a series of brief reflections. These reflections are intended to be preliminary, encouraging Dutch Literature to eventually conquer this uncharted territory through precise scientific methods.

Who is a translator?

Many translators are women with ample free time. They often have supportive circumstances, such as an easy-going husband, no children or help from a self-employed maid, giving them the opportunity to earn extra money. These women often have literary aspirations. Additionally, translators can include free-spirited young individuals, unemployed men, writers lacking inspiration and laid-off typists. Those who lack other skills often turn to translation work.

Of course, I know that each of the types of people mentioned above can produce excellent translators. It doesn't matter which other professions they practise alongside translating. Great writers and musicians are found in all social classes, professions, and even among loafers and sunbathers. Just as one is born a writer or a musician, one is also born a translator. Despite their varied backgrounds, translators are typically not held to high standards by publishers, critics or the public. It is almost embarrassing that we still need to discuss the qualities required of a good translator.

What is demanded of a good translator?

- 1 Mastery of one's own language: A good translator must have excellent command of their native language.
- 2 Proficiency in the foreign language: They must also be highly skilled in the language they are translating from.
- 3 Cultural understanding: A sense of the country and its people is crucial.
- 4 Environmental knowledge and technical skills: They must understand the context and possess the necessary technical skills.
- 5 Artistic skill: Above all, a good translator must possess artistic skill.

A good translator must forget their own identity, immersing themselves completely in the work to be translated. They must step into the original author's shoes and understand the purpose and placement of each word. Only then can they convey the original emotion in their own language,

striving to revive the essence of the original work. While the translator passively recreates, the artist actively creates.

The purity of translation and its linguistic challenges

It is a truism that a translator must translate with linguistic purity and that it is their duty to do so. However, you cannot imagine how meticulous and pedantic a translator can be! In fact, it can become an obsession, a particular form of folly. It's quite pathetic.

The worst translators are those who are aware that they have never properly learnt the language they are translating. They rely heavily on a bulky dictionary and possess a boldness that enables them to deceive publishers easily. Next, we have the naïve translators, who make up the majority of poor translators. These are well-meaning, sweet and sometimes endearing individuals who consider themselves capable of translating because they learned a language in school, have travelled extensively, have read to some extent in a foreign language and are fluent in it. This group struggles immensely with idiomatic expressions and fails to grasp the finer nuances of the language.

The mistakes they make can be categorised as follows:

- a Mistranslating words: Incorrect dictionary choices due to insufficient reading and vocabulary knowledge, often from lack of exposure to the language.
- b Erroneous translation of words: Failure to verify word meanings.
- c Incorrect translation of expressions: Insufficient knowledge of idioms, which is inadequately taught in schools.
- d Misunderstanding the text's meaning: Superficial reading or lack of general knowledge.
- e Technical skill deficiencies: For example, translating a book on horse racing without understanding jockey terminology.
- f Awkward sentence structure: Poorly constructed sentences in the target language.
- g Rushed translations: Errors due to haste.
- h Untranslatable terms: Successfully translating these requires patience and the willingness to ponder the best equivalent for days.

The next category is the complacent translators. They do not care about literal correctness or accuracy and dismiss the importance of using a dictionary. They believe that if they do not know a word, they can simply

come up with something that fits. This group often fails to capture the original meaning and spirit of the text. Among all these types, the most problematic are the self-proclaimed geniuses. They disregard the foreign author's work to such an extent that only the author's name remains on the cover, while the content is completely transformed.

Literary translation and its stylistic difficulties

A common misunderstanding is that translation merely involves accurately transferring content from one language to another, achievable with language knowledge, dictionaries and skill. However, the real work of a skilled translator begins after achieving linguistic accuracy.

Prose is not just an argument or a story; it is also an art form. This means that how something is expressed is often more important than the content itself. Literary prose presents challenges that a superficial linguist might overlook, such as the sound, colour and atmosphere of the original text. In their eagerness for accuracy, they may fail to realise that language is more than the crystallisation of thoughts; it is also an artistic medium. The art of words contains numerous subtle elements that one must learn to feel, discern and appreciate. These subtleties are crucial in literary translation.

Translation is an art, requiring literary skill alongside linguistic competence in both languages. In our country, there is widespread tampering with translations, as confirmed by reviewers and expressed with frustration by connoisseurs. This issue is not merely due to insufficient language knowledge or linguistic inadequacy. A significant factor is that many translators, despite their expertise and reputation, often overlook the crucial nuances that determine a translation's true value. While dictionaries and thesauruses offer some assistance, it is the translator's artistic aptitude and stylistic ability that truly preserve the essence and beauty of the original prose.

The relationship between translator and publisher

The initiative to publish a translation typically comes from the publisher. There is a diverse range of publishers who are generally business-minded, often frugal and sometimes even greedy. There is also a similarly diverse group of translators who, unfortunately, often do not meet the necessary standards. Over 70 per cent of these translators possess only

basic school-level knowledge of foreign languages, an overestimation of their abilities and a significant lack of understanding of the complexities involved in translation.

With reasonable cooperation between publishers and translators, it should be possible to establish a classification system alongside a corresponding fee scale.

Such a system could include categories like:

- 1 Poetry (lyrical)
- 2 Poetry (epics)
- 3 Difficult belletrist prose (novels, essays)
- 4 Easier belletrist work
- 5 Philosophical or psychological work
- 6 Scientific professional work
- 7 Children's literature
- 8 Light entertainment literature (romance and detective novels).

A 'Translation Market' could play a crucial role by:

- Evaluating the quality of translations through expert reviews.
- Negotiating with translators and publishers regarding translation commissions and fees.
- Compiling a list of competent translators.

When we began this initiative a few years ago, our aim was not merely to blame the publishers but to identify mistakes and find ways to rectify them. Although translators were often at fault, it is important to remember they are only commissioned workers. The ultimate responsibility lies with the publishers, who frequently exhibit a shameful laxity and excessiveness, even when confronted with undeniable facts. By holding publishers accountable, we can work towards improving translation standards and ensuring fair practices in the industry.

Notes

1. *Vertalen* 1936, 1: 51; 1937, 3: 3–8; 1938, 1: 3–6; 1938, 2: 25–31; 1938, 3–4: 45–52. In 1954, he published a book with the same title, but its content differs greatly from the essay.
2. The VNV has not yet been studied in detail, but both [Naaijken \(2020, 468–70\)](#) and [Van Kalmthout \(2010\)](#) offer some insight into the association.
3. See [Huussen 2015 \(367–74\)](#) for a complete bibliography of translations by Johan W. Schotman.

4. Board members M. J. Premsele and G. A. L. Vreeken, both of whom held doctorates in literature. J. F. Otten and J. F. E. M. Aghina also obtained doctoral degrees. Notably, J. Tielrooy held the position of professor of French language and literature at the University of Amsterdam from 1938, while N. Donkersloot assumed the role of professor of Dutch language and literature at the same institution in 1936. S. Ferwerda, who received her doctorate under Donkersloot's guidance, later became a lecturer in Scandinavian language and literature, and G. Sötemann, another postgraduate student of Donkersloot, eventually attained the position of professor of Dutch literature in Utrecht.
5. Virtually every article was signed, in some cases with initials. J. W. S. and S. refer to Schotman.
6. In 1938, the committee reviewed five manuscripts (*Vertalen*, 1938/4, 65–6). There was only one submission in 1939 and no expertise evaluations in 1940 (*Vertalen*, 1940/1, 28; 1941/1, 14).
7. I would like to extend my gratitude to Sylvia Schotman, the daughter of Johan W. Schotman. As the trustee of his estate, she graciously granted permission for her father's work to be made available here in English translation. I also wish to express my thanks to A. H. Huussen Jr, Schotman's biographer.

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15 Slovakia, 1940s–1950s

The beginnings of translation studies in Slovakia: the case of Zora Jesenská

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Translated by Eva Spišiaková

Slovak literary discourse in the first half of the twentieth century developed with undercurrents of some significant thinking about translation,² pre-dating the formation of the so-called Slovak School of Translation led by Anton Popovič in the 1960s (see Biloveský 2023, 129–34, and Vajdová 2015). These substantial contemplations on translation were formulated by writers and poets (who were also translators) and philologists. Among the most prominent personalities who developed this so-called pre-theoretical translation discourse in the 1930s–50s were Štefan Krčméry, Peter Karvaš, Michal Chorváth, Jozef Felix and Zora Jesenská.³

Following Katarína Bednárová's (2015, 27) typology, we can group these early contemplations into three types: firstly, literary reviews evaluating translations; secondly, summarising and contrasting studies, usually dedicated to translations of a single author's works or done by one translator. This avenue of research included consideration of translation methods and procedures. The third type consisted of synthesising articles focusing on the relationship between translation and culture, which can be seen as the first precursors to translation theories. All three types posited to a greater or a lesser degree the requirement to translate with respect to the integrity of the original, and to keep the text's poetic and aesthetic characteristics. The choice of the text itself and its acceptance in the target literature were likewise emphasised (the axiological aspect).

In general, works from this period focused on the linguistic aspects of a translation. There were frequent calls to stop indirect translations (*preklady z druhej ruky* [second-hand translations]), which were a common occurrence and came primarily through Czech. This was due to the specific dynamics that existed between Slovak and Czech, two

languages that remain mutually intelligible to this day thanks to the linguistic and cultural closeness of the two nations. When Czechoslovakia was founded in 1918, the official language was Czechoslovak, which in reality consisted of a continued separate use of the Czech and the Slovak language. However, these two were not of equal standing, with Czech in the dominant position and Slovak playing a minor role. Thus, while primary education in the Slovak part of the state was in Slovak, Czech was mandatory in secondary education. Efforts to codify Slovak as a written language were inconsistent and hampered by centralising language interventions from the government. For example, *Pravidlá slovenského pravopisu* (The rules of Slovak orthography) from the year 1931 became the focus of linguistic controversy and criticism because of an inclusion of Czech words with just minimal orthographic corrections, and the removal of regularly used words with German or Hungarian origin that were already well established in the Slovak language but were replaced with far less successful lexical units. This lingua-political context had an impact on the linguistic culture of translations and the number of translations into Slovak: often, texts were either not translated into Slovak at all because Czech translations were comprehensible to Slovaks, or else the Czech translations were merely slovakised (transcribed in a way that resembled Slovak). The calls for direct translations into Slovak were thus aimed at strengthening its position in the shared country during the two Czechoslovak Republics, so that Slovak would no longer be considered a dialect of the Czech language, but a separate and distinct language of the Slovak nation.

Most scholarly reflections on translation in this period centred on translation from Russian and Romance languages. Of all the theorists named above, it was the reflections by Zora Jesenská that were among the most detailed, comprehensive and systematic; they were further developed, both systematically and terminologically, by Anton Popovič,⁴ a translation theorist who would become well known for his work on translation shifts (*výrazové posuny*) and stylistic (expressive) changes (*štylistické/výrazové zmeny*) in translation.⁵

Zora Jesenská (1909–72) was a writer, a translator from Russian and French, in collaboration also from English and German, and a translation theorist. She became interested in the theoretical aspects of translation first as a reader and later as a translator in her own right. During the 1940s and 1950s, she published several theoretical and praxeological essays on translation; many of her older ideas were stylistically reformulated in her later works, but her theoretical frameworks remained fundamentally unchanged. These include densely informative articles

from the 1940s, such as 'Písanie ruských krstných mien v slovenskom preklade' (Writing Russian first names in Slovak translations) (1941/2, 134–41), 'Z prekladateľských problémov (Na margo prekladu Bratov Karamazovcov)' (Some translation problems [a few notes on the Slovak translation of *The Brothers Karamazov*]) (1942/3, 8–17); and an article titled 'O prekladaní básnického diela' (On poetry translation) (1946, 4–8). The 1950s saw the publication of her articles 'Ako som prekladala *Vojnu a mier* a *Tichý Don*' (How I translated *War and Peace* and *And Quiet Flows the Don*) (1950, 736–56) and 'Po školení prekladateľov' (After translator training) (1951, 356–61). She also presented two papers: 'Naši básnici a naše preklady' (Our poets and our translations) (1955) at a conference on poetry in Bratislava, published in the same year in the journal *Kultúrny život* (Cultural Life); and 'Stav a problémy v prekladateľskej oblasti' (Translation: conditions and problems) (1956), first presented at the second congress of writers with the title 'O vyššie majstrovstvo umeleckého prekladu' (For the higher mastery of literary translation). In this chapter, we cite the later title as published in *Vyznania a šarvátky* (Confessions and Skirmishes) (1963), which also included edited versions of the aforementioned articles 'Ako som prekladala *Vojnu a mier* a *Tichý Don*' and 'Naši básnici a naše preklady'.

Jesenská's translation thinking is in this volume represented by excerpts from four of her works, chosen for their thought-provoking content and wide range of focus on both theoretical and practical aspects of translation. These four texts are: 'O prekladaní básnického diela' (On poetry translation) (1946), 'Ako som prekladala *Vojnu a mier* a *Tichý Don*' (How I translated *War and Peace* and *And Quiet Flows the Don*) ([1950] 1963) and 'Stav a problémy v prekladateľskej oblasti' (Translation: conditions and problems) (1956). In this essay, we highlight the confluences between Jesenská's reflections and terminology that would be developed by Popovič in the 1960s and 1970s, showing that Slovak translation studies began with Jesenská and other scholars of her generation.

In her article 'Písanie ruských krstných mien v slovenskom preklade' (Writing Russian first names in Slovak translations), Jesenská (1941/2) criticises the inconsistencies in translating proper names from Russian, including the work of some high-profile translators, and suggests transcriptions that accentuate functionality and original pronunciation. In the article 'Z prekladateľských problémov (Na margo prekladu *Bratov Karamazovcov*)' (Some translation problems [On the translation of *The Brothers Karamazov*]), Jesenská (1942/3) expresses the need to set basic methods for translation criticism: she complains that critics rely only on intuition and base their readings on the translated text alone, rather than

comparing the original and the translation. Judgements are presented without arguments or concrete examples, and the conclusions are overly brief. Her comments on the usefulness and educational qualities of translation analysis also emphasise the didactic aspect of translation criticism.

Jesenská (1942/3, 1946, [1950] 1963) compares languages from a grammatical standpoint, arguing that some changes in translation are unavoidable: her description of these as ‘inevitable [grammar] deviations from the original’ (Jesenská [1950] 1963, 177) corresponds with the ‘constitutive shift’ (*konštitučný posun*) described by Popovič. Although ideas about these shifts are apparent in Popovič’s work already in 1968, the term itself is first used in 1971, perceived as ‘an inevitable shift that takes place in the translation as a consequence of differences between the two languages, the two poetics and the two styles of original and translation’ (Popovič 1971, 157). For example, Jesenská argues that the frequent Russian use of transgressive words sounds unnatural in Slovak, and recommends adjusting the syntax instead of creating unnecessary calques.

Similarly, she opposes self-serving ornamentation from a stylistic standpoint, labelling this a ‘[stylistic] deviation’ from the original (Jesenská 1942, 10) and ‘[stylistic] erasure of the work’s character’ as well as a ‘tampering with the author’s style’ (Jesenská [1950] 1963, 177, 182). This idea anticipates some of the concepts used by Popovič in determining the measure of the stylistic (expressive) interpretation in translation. In his book *Preklad a výraz* (Translation and Expression), Popovič (1968) works with the following concepts in relation to deviation from the original: stylistic (expressive) levelling (*štylistická výrazová nivelizácia*, a simplification of the original expressive elements leading to a diluted style, which is understood as the contemporary configuration of expressive characteristics), stylistic emphasis (*štylistické zosilňovanie*, the exaggeration of expressive elements of the original) and stylistic modification (*štylistická premena*, a modification in the expressive element of the original in translation). All these concepts were revised and finalised in his 1975 key publication *Teória umeleckého prekladu* (Theory of Artistic Translation). A summary of the concepts as they operate at the microstylistic level is presented in Figure 15.1, in bilingual format.

A significant portion of Jesenská’s writing focuses on linguistic and stylistic problems. Along with Jozef Felix (1939, 1949), Jesenská highlights the need to understand the author’s style and to capture the character of the original. She pays special attention to emotionally charged words and expressions, where the translator needs to understand their expressivity and impact. For example, she argues that diminutives in Dostoevsky

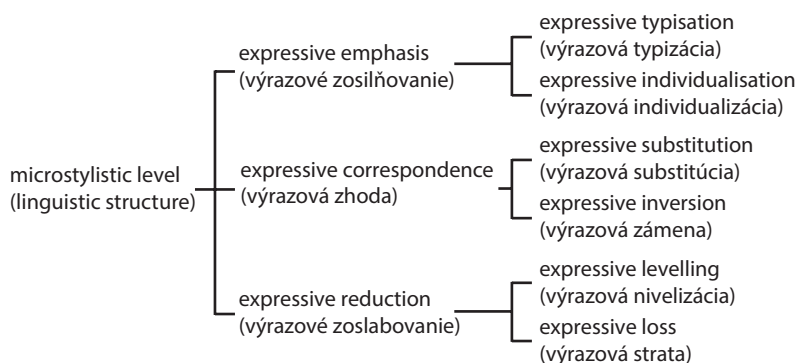


Figure 15.1 A diagrammatic representation of Anton Popovič's conceptualisation of expressive changes at the microstylistic level (Šavelová based on Popovič 1974, 130 and Popovič n.d., 24).

serve specific functions: in some cases, they offer emotional emphasis and express a particular kind of relationship (similar to Italian nouns *vezzeggiativi*); in others, they represent a linguistic peculiarity of a character, the so-called idiolect (Jesenská 1942, 11–13). Jesenská stresses the importance of maintaining these nuances in translation, particularly when the author uses an artificially constructed diminutive not used in everyday language that already sounds unnatural in the original. Once again, her arguments can be seen as a precursor to Popovič, and specifically to his discussions of lessening/weakening of expression (*ochudobňovanie štýlu*; Popovič 1968, 183), later called 'expressive reduction' (*výrazové zoslabenie*; Popovič 1975), which occurs via levelling or loss.

In Jesenská's view, deviations from the codified language are appropriate, if they are also functional. Every translation decision must, however, be justifiable through the original. Like Felix (1939), Jesenská (1942) recommends utilising the full range of Slovak vocabulary, including its lesser-known resources. In cases where the Slovak language 'has no perfectly overlapping expression', or where the original refers to 'an element that is not found in our culture', Jesenská ([1950] 1963, 186) suggests that translators use 'original wording in the translation'. In Popovič's terms (1975, 275), this is an 'exoticism in translation' (*exotizácia v preklade*) – 'a choice of elements that are typical of the culture of the original while being atypical of the style (topic and language) of the translation', thus an unusual and non-traditional choice of expressive elements from the original work.

Jesenská ([1950] 1963, 189) also suggests that stylistically untranslatable expressions be replaced by stylistic innovations elsewhere in the text – once again anticipating Popovič (1968, 42), who argues in favour of ‘stylistic compensation’ (*štylistická kompenzácia*). In 1975, this type is categorised as ‘expressive correspondence’ (*výrazová zhoda*) with two subtypes: ‘expressive substitution’ (*výrazová substitúcia*) as a replacement of untranslatable expressive elements with elements that approximate them in expressive (stylistic) value, and ‘expressive inversion’ (*výrazová zámena*) that is a transfer of some elements of the original to a different position in the translation text.

Translators, according to Jesenská, need to read between the lines. Since a character’s personality, their mental state, their culture, level of education, national background and social standing (occupation, degree) are often conveyed indirectly, translators need to be mindful in their choice of style and lexis. Jesenská ([1956] 1963, 210–11) further develops the question of dialectic unity of form and content arguing that ideas must be the translator’s key guiding principle, because ‘in a realistic translation, the central idea remains identical, while the form corresponds’, likening this to debates about faithfulness to the spirit versus the letter of a work.

Jesenská (1946, 1950) is also alert to inter-temporal and intercultural differences between the audiences of the original and the translation, arguing that both modernising approaches and those that attempt to render ‘the patina of old age’ are ‘equally justified’ if the translation succeeds (1946, 7). Similar arguments would later be made by Popovič (based on Holmes and Lotman) in the book chapter ‘Problémy semiotiky prekladu’ (Problems of translation semiotics) (1971, 99–115).

Jesenská’s ([1950] 1963, 178) discussion of literary translation extends to the translation of drama, and here she emphasises the functional role of the text on the stage, suggesting that the translator should read his work aloud, adjusting the translation to the gestures and movements of the body – since the way we speak is different when, for example, sitting down, or walking or on the verge of tears.

Furthermore, Jesenská ([1950] 1963, 170–4) outlines the qualities that are needed in a literary translator, anticipating what the Slovak School of Translation would later call the ‘experiential complex of a translator’ (*skúsenostný komplex prekladateľa*; Popovič 1975, 287): intelligence, taste, education, linguistic abilities (and talent when translating poetry), intuition, a perfect command of their mother tongue, including the smallest nuances of meaning (the literal meaning of the word but also its emotional impact and possible connotations), a broad vocabulary, the

ability to imitate the speech of various social groups and character types, and a will to constantly improve their use of language and style.

In her 1956 article 'Stav a problémy v prekladateľskej oblasti' (Translation: conditions and problems), Jesenská highlights the need to go beyond the narrow confines of linguistic or stylistic education of a translator, as it leads to 'dry academism' and therefore to the death of the literary work. A translator needs to have historical knowledge of the facts referenced by the author and to be familiar with the wider context of the work and its author, as well as with the author's previous works in order to understand their personal development, the evolution of their thoughts and idiolect. In this, her ideas align with those of her contemporaries, notably Felix, who drew up similar sets of requirements in his various paratexts, reviews and research articles.

Jesenská ([1956] 1963, 218) also reflects on different rhyming functions and conventions and their use in the works of individual authors, anticipating Popovič's thinking on 'rhythmic shifts' (*rytmický posun*) from Popovič 1968 and later works. According to Popovič (1968, 10–11), the issue of meter substitution was already known to Slovak scholars in the 1930s from the history of Czech translation, and he refers to Jesenská ([1956] 1963) among others. The 'rhythmic shifts' are 'shifts in rhythm [that] affect verse extent, metrical arrangement, rhyme ending, euphonic construction, intonation, the strophic structure of the verse, prosodic systems, etc.' (Popovič 1968, 168).

Like other theorists, Jesenská has high standards for the quality of both the original and the translation, and elaborates on what Popovič would later call 'negative shifts' (*negatívny posun*; first conception 1968, 183; as a term 1975, 282): she gives concrete examples of translations with elements missing or with the wrong word choice, of bad translations, average translations or of wrong interpretations caused by a lack of understanding of the original, deeming such translations 'harmful'. She is critical of 'conceptual indifference' that leads to a distortion of the original and the weakening of its impact – a phenomenon that Jesenská ([1956] 1963, 224) calls 'stylistic levelling' (*štylistické skreslenie*). She is equally critical of what Popovič would later term 'overinterpretation',⁶ criticising translations that engage in wilful 'enhancing' or 'embellishing' of the work.

As we have shown by comparing Jesenská's ideas to those from Popovič's later well-known terminology, some of his thought models were already circulating in the 1940s and 1950s. Although Popovič gave these ideas a terminological form, they were already in existence in our milieu, and their importance in the formation of Slovak translation studies is

undeniable. Jesenská in particular was advancing extensive translation reflections throughout the 1940s and 1950s, and even though they are, paradoxically, the closest in content to Popovič's terminology, her name has not been mentioned in any publication since 1968. While Popovič's earlier work *Preklad a výraz* (Translation and Expression) (1968) still lists Jesenská's name and essays in an overview of important works in the field of Slovak translation theory and history, his later works such as *Poetika umeleckého prekladu* (Poetics of Artistic Translation) (1971) and *Umelecký preklad v ČSSR* (Literary Translation in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic) (1974) completely and deliberately omit Jesenská's name from a bibliographical list of Slovak translation theorists. His 1974 book mentions her translation of Sholokhov's *And Quiet Flows the Don*, which provoked considerable controversy and highlighted the importance of translation criticism in Slovakia, but Jesenská's name is missing.

The reasons for this erasure were political: in the aftermath of the violent suppression of the Prague Spring, Jesenská and many other literati of her era categorically refused to obey the Party doctrine. Following her participation in the celebrations of the Czechoslovak hockey victory over the Soviet Union in March 1968 where she was beaten with a truncheon by a member of the state police, she published an article titled 'První rázní vystoupení policie Slovenské socialistické republiky' (The first forceful display of the police forces of the Slovak Socialist Republic). This public statement voiced hitherto silent criticism of the practices of the police forces, the first of its kind among Slovak intellectuals. In the subsequent Normalisation period of cultural purges led by the pro-Soviet president Gustav Husák, Jesenská was banned from translating and writing, and her translations were removed from libraries as a direct result of her actions.

She was not politically rehabilitated until the beginning of the 1990s. Even now, her contributions remain largely overlooked, her theoretical works have not been republished and only a few of her translations have been returned to libraries. However, since 1990, several shorter journal articles have been published in Slovakia on her translations and her thinking about translation. The most significant was the work by Eva Maliti-Fraňová (see also the work by František Štraus, Dušan Tellinger, Anna Valcerová or Anita Hut'ková). The most important effort to incorporate her into Slovak translation studies is the entry devoted to Jesenská in the *Slovník slovenských prekladateľov umeleckej literatúry. 20. storočie* (Dictionary of Slovak Translators of Fiction of the Twentieth Century), edited by Oľga Kovačičová and Mária Kusá. As for academic works in English, Jesenská's name is mentioned in *Present State of Translation*

Studies in Slovakia (2013), edited by Libuša Vajdová and published in Slovakia, but this is one of the very few mentions of her name in academic publications accessible to international audiences. Her professional work and her rich legacy that inspired many of the foundational theories of translation remain largely unknown in the English-speaking world.

'How I translated *War and Peace* and *And Quiet Flows the Don*' and other excerpts

By Zora Jesenská

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Translated from Slovak by Eva Spišiaková

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Source texts:

Jesenská, Zora. 'Ako som prekladala Vojnu a mier a Tichý Don'. In Šarvátky a vyznania, 169–96. Bratislava: Slovenský spisovateľ, [1950] 1963.

Jesenská, Zora. 'O prekladaní básnického diela.' Živena 1–2 (1946): 4–8.

Jesenská, Zora. 'Stav a problémy v prekladateľskej oblasti'. In Šarvátky a vyznania, 203–32. Bratislava: Slovenský spisovateľ, [1956] 1963.

Intelligence, taste, education and linguistic abilities are all needed for a good translation of even a mediocre literary text from those we merely call writers; they are not enough for the works of poets, whether writing in prose or verse, and wholly insufficient for the work of a genius. For those, the translator needs to be poetically gifted himself (1946, 4; [1950] 1963, 170).

Foreign language skills are not even the main prerequisite. Complete proficiency might be impossible (if only we could be wholly proficient in our mother tongue!), but there are always dictionaries and native speakers to help us. What matters is the translator's mastery of their own language, which they need to command with virtuosity and bravura, recognise the subtlest nuance in meaning and form, improve in its use constantly and passionately, take deep pleasure in its exploration and love it even more than the author himself – for the translator uses their mother tongue to express the personalities of authors of all kinds

while infusing it with the spirit of worlds remote in both time and space. A translator needs a limitless well of words and phrases at his disposal, but also an excellent command of style to capture the author's writing without wiping out its character (1946, 4; [1950] 1963, 172).

Above all, stay away from templates – they are the death of artistic expression! Never settle for the first word, the first solution that comes to mind! Rewrite and rewrite again, seek advice, listen to the writing so that it 'sounds' right ... And never hurry – that is the worst sin of all! ([1950] 1963, 174).

What matters is not the actual number of technical difficulties that had to be overcome, but the artistic value imparted into the work. A translator without poetic talents founders even when translating prose, because they destroy the work's aesthetic beauty. What the translator needs, apart from intelligence, is intuition to capture not only the so-called contents, but also the main thing – the work's aesthetic potential. A work of art does not persuade with arguments – it imparts ideas, wherein lies its power. These ideas of the original are what the translator strives to capture. Capturing is the verb we were looking for, the be all and end all of translation ... A truly literal translation, with words simply placed in their grammatical order as is the process naïvely imagined by readers, frequently ends up incomprehensible, at other times cumbersome and unkempt, and always without its true expression and therefore, wrong. The expression is what matters in art ... [It is] the capture of the subtlest, of the barely there, of what remains unsaid and trembles between the lines. The translator has to fully understand the aesthetic aim of the author in order to capture and recreate it in translation. That means to penetrate the style of the work, to live through the author's vocabulary, to understand its smallest vibration, to temporarily live through author's emotions, their life, their thinking. ... the translator is frequently enamoured with the author, or identifies with them as a person. A translator's role towards the poet resembles that of an actor to the dramatic role, of a musician towards a composer. Only those who love can understand, and a translator must also be loyal to the author and submit to him instead of foisting on him his own taste (1946, 6; [1950] 1963, 175). Perhaps that is why so many good translators are women (1946, 6).

Traduttore-tradittore [sic]: translators are traitors, as the Italians say. It is also said that translation is like a woman: either she is beautiful but unfaithful, or faithful but ugly. The first part is, unfortunately, true. A poetic work in a different language is by necessity different, simply because what we call the spirit of the language differs. A different language is like a different material: the same sculptor creates a different

statue out of wood and marble, and yet another cast from bronze ... Consider also works from completely different cultures and time periods, Homer or old religious texts from India: the translator encounters the nearly untranslatable.

I will be so bold as to express a seeming paradox: there are times when the translator must depart from the original in order to convey it well. That thing about fidelity and beauty will not hold water in the eyes of an artist; a translation is faithful only if it is as beautiful as the original – it is, after all, the beauty that we appreciate in a work of art. The question is only which of its thousand possible faces is mirrored in this particular translation: is it soft or rough? Plain or sophisticated? Majestic or delicate? Vibrant or subtle? Tragic or grotesque? Beauty is what the translator must be faithful to while considering all other differences, otherwise they betray the spirit of the original.

Modifications are unavoidable even in prose writing. Take basic grammar – Russian and French both use an abundance of transgressive forms, especially in older works; but to sprinkle one transgressive verb after another in Slovak is a sin against beauty ... A change of word order is needed. Show no mercy: chop away anything that stinks of foreign syntax! (1946, 6; [1950] 1963, 176–7). Furthermore, a translator needs not only the literal meaning of the words, but also their emotional significance. There is a difference between someone looking into a room and someone staring into it; between gossiping and insinuating, prattling or flapping one's tongue (1946, 6; [1950] 1963, 173) ... These nuances too need to be captured by the translator. And because they cannot always be replicated in another language, the losses need to be replaced elsewhere, so that none of the work's expressivity gets lost. The source is not individual words, but the character of the whole to which individual words are subordinated, as they were subordinated by the author (1946, 6–7).

Apart from the various untranslatable terms (and good luck preventing the vibrant and sparkling original from becoming bland and sluggish!), the author has plenty of other forms of torture up his sleeve. There are archaic words (and where to find them with the Slovak language barely a century old?) and neologisms. There is the question of older literary works that used to sound modern, but that are now stained with the patina of old age that offers its own aesthetic pleasure; to translate that patina, or to make it sound modern as the work was at its inception? Both are equally justified ... if the translation succeeds! Even such a simple thing as character names can torment the translator. These are not chosen randomly; they may be symbolic or carry their own aesthetic impact ... So many components influence the translator's final decisions,

exactly because the process is not just a mechanical transfer of words, but also of purpose, and because words with multiple meanings frequently cause dilemmas (1946, 7; [1950] 1963, 177–8).

Another element emerges in (good) translations of dramatic works: the so-called stage properties of the language. Simply said, a text that was made to be listened to needs to sound well, with a certain acoustic boldness and dramatic flair, but also needs to be easy to pronounce, so that actors are not left tongue-tied in the middle of a convoluted sentence. A work of drama needs to be read aloud by the translator (and perhaps the author as well), including the non-verbal gestures. The way we speak changes while walking and while sitting comfortably in a chair, when we are excited and when we are on the verge of tears – all those things matter when translating dramatic works ([1950] 1963, 178).

If prose cannot be translated literally, poetry in formal verse is a doubly impossible task. Even laymen understand that a literal translation of a poem destroys its rhyme and rhythm as well as the most important part – its musicality. A hauntingly beautiful lyrical poem turns into a handful of sentences without grace, melody or even sense – sloppy, ungainly and banal. Such a translation is a true betrayal as well as an unfaithful rendition of the original, as it fails to capture the beauty at the poem's heart ... Poets cannot be approached with just one method. What can or even must be used when translating one poet would be a mistake in others. Poems cannot be translated literally as we inevitably remove and add parts, becoming one with the author. Never add 'things that the author couldn't have said or in a way he couldn't have said it' (1946, 7; [1950] 1963, 178–9), but also: things a certain character wouldn't have said in a given situation ([1950] 1963, 191).

But beware! Although a good translation unites the author's and the translator's spirits, the author remains its ultimate master; the translator cannot enforce his own taste. I remember a poem breathtaking in its simplicity, where the translation glitters with ornate and fanciful words, all dressed up in alliterations and wordplay concocted behind the writing desk; the results are catastrophic (1946, 7–8; [1950] 1963, 180).

[The translator] has to be able to capture all possible classes and personalities. He has to speak as a peasant and a labourer, as a professor and a journalist, as a merchant and a revolutionary, as a crone, a soldier, a seer, a rogue and a charlatan ... Fashion dictated that the Russian aristocracy spoke in their salons exclusively in French, and Tolstoy [in *War and Peace*] opted for historical accuracy ... Sometimes five or six pages of this Russian novel pass by without a single word spoken in Russian ... But we now try to make great classics accessible to the ordinary man with our

translations ... What then should one do with whole dialogues and chapters in French? Leave them as they are and add translations in footnotes? They slow the reader down and annoy him to boot, and are to be used but sparsely. All I could do was to render the French into Slovak – after all, there are Russian editions that translate these passages into Russian. But by doing so, the novel loses the sense of time and place achieved through Tolstoy's use of French. I tried to capture at least some of that atmosphere by adding a French word or two, the occasional 'mon cher' or 'mon ami', and the aristocracy's speech patterns are intentionally distorted by the occasional Gallicism in order to better express the gap between them and the peasants ([1950] 1963, 172–82).

The central idea is the key to solving all translation problems, but the translator will never grasp it without sufficient historical knowledge, lived experiences and the ability to recognise true reality in its original context ... Those led by the central idea of the literary work and reined in by the expectations of the reader will not lose their way. The artistic idea of a literary work is the central link, and the understanding of this link is the key to finding the right approach and the correct linguistic and stylistic tools ... Although a translation should resemble the form of the original as much as possible, the ultimate priority remains the central idea as its guiding principle. In a realistic translation, the central idea remains identical while the form corresponds. Faithfulness is the goal, but the translator needs freedom to achieve it. Hence, the famous translation paradox: exactness is the enemy of faithfulness. On a closer look, the paradox only appears as one, as the translator is really deciding between faithfulness to the words and faithfulness to the spirit (1956 [1963], 210–14).

What to do when translating from distant languages with metric forms that are impossible to replicate without sounding awkward? The translator needs to find rules that fit their mother tongue, rules that will restrict the translator in the same way as the author was bound, but that also give them the same freedom ... Both the translator and the reader are children of their age, and every age has its own patterns of perception and expression. The older the literary work, the more remote its culture, and the more difficult it is to retain its spatial and temporal qualities while bringing it closer to a modern reader (218–20).

Paraphrases and experiments, domestic poetic forms, and the translator's creative input are not signs of wilfulness; respecting the reader's perception is an obligation. What can however be considered wilfulness is going against the aim or the aesthetics of the author; the translator stealing the spotlight with flashy effects like the scales of a

snake. A translation made without talent or lazily is just as wilful ... So is a conscious stylistic distortion of the original, [that is] when the wrong tonal choice results in an incorrect interpretation ... With all due respect to the sanctity of national languages and moral obligations of norms, this remains true: I take what I need, wherever I find it (221–7).

Paltry, dull language weakens the translated work and can lead to its death, be it ever so factually intact. A prominent example – one of many – is the Slovak translation of Jaroslav Hašek's *The Good Soldier Švejk*. The translator did not even try to replicate Švejk's speech patterns ... [T]he translation renders his wit and stylistic capers into a tonelessly sterile language, making him sound like an insipid high school teacher. ... if the translator lacks in both linguistic sensitivity and courage, the work is depleted of vibrancy and personality, depriving the author of his specificity, his 'incomparable essence', which is exactly what the translator is supposed to capture (229–30).

Notes

1. This work was supported by the Slovak Research and Development Agency under the Contract no. APVV-23-0586.
2. Throughout this work, we use the term Slovak to denote the area of the present-day Slovak Republic. During the examined period, this region was part of the first Czechoslovak Republic (1918–39), of the wartime Slovak Republic (1939–45) and again part of the Czechoslovak Republic (1945–60) and Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (1960–92).
3. Although this chapter will not discuss Felix, he was an important personality in the field of translation criticism and theory who highlighted the importance of transferring all stylistic elements of the original (Felix 1939, 303–5). His (para)texts clarify the need to penetrate deeply into the building principles of poetry to encompass its entire spirit, and to keep everything relevant to the author's style, including musicality, the effect of iambic verse, euphonic particularities, wordplay etc. (Felix 1949, 39). A clear tendency to translate as adequately and exactly as possible is likewise apparent, but not at the cost of its aesthetic or emotional impact. Some of his paratexts and translations are cited in the theoretical works of Anton Popovič (1968, 39; 1975, 77–82, 176–9, 243), which will be examined in more detail in this chapter.
4. Popovič systematically builds on the analytically interpretative approach developed by Felix and Čepan (adding semiotically communicative concepts), and on the stylistic concepts of František Miko. Popovič's final concepts were published in *Teória umeleckého prekladu* (Theory of Artistic Translation) (1975), demonstrating close ties with translation theories from Czechia (Levý, Vodička, Hausenblas), Poland (Sławiński), the Soviet Union (Fiodorov, Lotman) and scholars from Western Europe (Catford, Nida, Holmes, Reiss). See also Levý, *The Art of Translation*, translated by Patrick Corness, edited with a critical foreword by Zuzana Jettmarová, 2011.
5. Popovič's concept of translation shift differs from Catford's, which has a linguistic nature. Popovič (1971, 79–85) understands it as the result of linguistic, but also textual, literary and cultural differences that have occurred in the production of the translation in confrontation to the original and that can be identified by the 'stylistic system' (inspired by Miko). See Popovič (n.d.), *Dictionary for the Analysis of Literary Translation*, and Špírk 2009 for further discussion.

6. Popovič's (1968, 214) terms *preinterpretovanie* ('overinterpretation') and *podinterpretovanie* ('subinterpretation') were taken from a lecture given by Josef Čermák in 1967. The English terms were coined by Popovič (n.d.) for the purposes of a seminar at the University of Alberta in 1975/6.

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16 Brazil, 1948

A pioneer of translation theory in Brazil

Dirce Waltrick do Amarante

Often considered a peripheral nation despite its vast population and territory, Brazil exemplifies the critical role of translation in amplifying the voices of non-hegemonic languages. As the sole Portuguese-speaking country in Latin America, a region dominated by Spanish, Brazil would remain isolated, even within Latin America, without the vital function of translation. The importance of translation is further underscored by the presence within Brazil of indigenous communities of different ethnicities or mixed ethnicities who speak different languages; translation thus plays an important everyday role, and is also relevant to efforts to preserve indigenous cultures and languages.

While Brazil invests in translating productions from other languages into Portuguese, it seems to accord less importance to giving visibility to what is produced in Brazil itself. Or perhaps this issue is more complex; giving the periphery a voice in the centre is not always easy. Nevertheless, in translation studies as in many other areas, the innovations of Brazilian scholars have been significant but overlooked. Introducing the voice of the Hungarian-Brazilian Paulo Rónai, a scholar who wrote his reflections in Brazilian Portuguese, offers a valuable opportunity for dialogue and an important challenge to dominant Eurocentric narratives of the history of translation studies. In a sense, it even constitutes a political act, driving us to acknowledge an influential figure whose contributions to the field remain relatively obscure beyond Brazilian culture. The excerpt serves as an introduction to Rónai's insightful and innovative reflections on translation, some ahead of his time. Rónai's writings about translation were wide-ranging, underscoring the integral role that translation plays in the development of Brazilian culture and often highlighting the

ongoing tensions and complexities inherent in the act of translation and the profession of the translator.

Who was Paulo Rónai?

Born in 1907 into a Jewish family in Budapest, Paulo Rónai was forced to flee Hungary at the onset of the Second World War. Arriving in Brazil in 1941, he settled in Rio de Janeiro in 1945 and became a naturalised Brazilian. Rónai forged connections with prominent intellectuals, including the renowned Brazilian lexicographer, professor and translator Aurélio Buarque de Holanda, author of the most widely used Portuguese-language dictionary in Brazil. Together, Rónai and Buarque de Holanda embarked on a monumental project, co-translating 10 volumes of *Mar de histórias: Antologia do conto mundial* (Sea of History: Anthology of the world's short stories). The first volume of this collection was published in 1945. Rónai contributed translations from Latin, Greek, Italian, German, English, Russian and Hungarian, while Buarque de Holanda translated from French and Spanish and conducted the final revision of the Portuguese text for the entire collection. This ambitious endeavour happened over approximately 40 years, culminating in a collection of 239 short stories by 192 writers from diverse countries.

In addition to this monumental collection, Rónai translated approximately one hundred books into Portuguese. One of his most important works was the translation of the 17 volumes of *La comédie humaine* (*A comédia humana*, The Human Comedy), by the French writer Honoré de Balzac. The translation took 15 years. Rónai also translated Brazilian literature such as Manuel Antonio de Almeida's novel *Memórias de um sargento de milícias* (*Mémoires d'un sergent de la milice*, Memoirs of a Militia Sergeant) into other languages, especially into French.

Drawing on this extensive experience, Rónai also became a well-known translation theorist, frequently publishing articles about translation in Brazilian newspapers and in 1952 authoring the book *Escola de tradutores* (School of Translators). This book would go to multiple editions and have a significant influence on translation studies in Brazil. The article selected for translation into English for this volume, 'Traduções indiretas' (Indirect translations), was first published in the newspaper *Correio da manhã*, in Rio de Janeiro, on 18 January 1948, and subsequently republished in *Escola de tradutores* (School of Translators) in 1952.

‘Traduções indiretas’ (Indirect translations)

In ‘Traduções indiretas’ (Indirect translations), Rónai discusses the prevalence of indirect translations in Brazil during the period in which he was active as a translator. At the time, it was common for many of the translations into Portuguese to be translated from other language versions, particularly French, rather than directly from the original languages, owing to a lack of translators with relevant expertise. Rónai draws on his knowledge of multiple languages and his exposure to diverse cultures and literatures to explore the significant challenges posed by indirect translations, particularly when French is used as the language of mediation. As Rónai argues, French translators often used a relatively free translation approach, adapting books to their own culture.

Many of the solutions suggested by Rónai represent a pragmatic response to the situation: translators should think carefully about which intermediate language they choose, preferring a translation into a language that is linguistically as close as possible to the original language; they should use newer translations rather than older ones, on the basis that translation practices have become more professionalised in many countries; they should be alert to possibilities of censorship and thus the incompleteness of the translation on which they are basing their version; and they should exert particular caution around French translations for the reason given above. Ultimately, however, Rónai’s desire is for translators in Brazil to have competence in more of the relevant source languages: ‘the ideal solution’, he concludes, ‘would be to train competent specialists in each language’. This conclusion ties in with Rónai’s life-long efforts to professionalise translation and improve translator training. In 1970, Rónai founded the Associação Brasileira de Tradutores e Intérpretes (ABRATES), an organisation that sought to elevate the status of the translation profession from an amateur pursuit to a respected one and that is still active today.

***Escola de tradutores* (School of Translators)**

As noted above, Rónai republished ‘Traduções indiretas’ in his book, *Escola de tradutores* (School of Translators), in 1952. In its first edition, this book featured six further chapters: ‘Traduzir o intraduzível’ (Translating the untranslatable), ‘Tradução literal e efeitos de estilo’

(Literal translation and stylistic effects), ‘A escola dos tradutores’ (The school of translators), ‘Confidências de tradutores’ (Confidences of translators), ‘O tradutor traduzido’ (The translator translated) and ‘Andanças e experiências de um tradutor técnico’ (Wanderings and experiences of a technical translator). As these chapter titles indicate, Rónai addressed topics that have been widely discussed in translation studies, such as the question of fidelity in literary translation, the untranslatability of literary texts and the significance of footnotes and paratexts in aiding readers of translations. In the chapter ‘Translate the untranslatable’,¹ for example, Rónai (2012a, 14) explores the nature of literary translation as art and the connections between language and thought, asking rhetorically, ‘Isn’t the objective of all art something impossible? The poet expresses (or wants to express) the ineffable, the painter reproduces the irreproducible, the statuary fixes the unfixable. It is not surprising, therefore, that the translator strives to translate the untranslatable.’

Other chapters are less philosophical and more pragmatic, but in fact all of Rónai’s theoretical texts are grounded in his extensive experience as a translator. This anchoring of the philosophical in practical experience can be usefully illustrated with reference to a later book published by Rónai, *Como aprendi o português e outras aventuras* (How I Learned Portuguese and Other Adventures). Here Rónai argues that literary works, and even thinking itself, are shaped by the language in which they are written, suggesting that in a literary text it is not just the idea that chooses the words, but often the words that give rise to ideas and that there are certain ideas that can only be born in the consciousness of people who speak a certain language, or even that are born solely because a certain person speaks a certain language. Rónai (1992, 33) illustrates this from his own practical experience as a translator, explaining that the word ‘December’, while in one sense easy to translate, would have very different connotational meanings for different cultures: ‘etymologically identical but evoking notions of ice, snow and misery, [December] could not suggest to any Hungarian reader the image of a torrid and stuffy Christmas in Rio’.

Rónai’s lasting influence

Escola de tradutores was republished in 1956, 1967, 1976, 1987 and 2012; by the time of the final edition, the book had been expanded from seven chapters to 21. Its sustained republication and expansion is indicative of Rónai’s profound influence on translation studies in Brazil. In 1976,

Rónai published a second collection of essays, this time based on a series of lectures given at the Alliances Françaises in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Porto Alegre. Tellingly titled *A tradução vivida* (Translation Experienced), the essays were once again anchored in Rónai's own translation experience and his extensive knowledge of translated works. For example, in the chapter 'Definições da tradução e do tradutor' (Definitions of translation and the translator), Rónai (2012b, 20) recalls that 'the most obvious comparison' of translation to another activity 'is provided by etymology in Latin: "traducere" is to take someone by the hand and lead them to another side, to another place', and presents specific examples of translations that take different approaches to this kind of movement:

Conveying a foreign work to another linguistic environment means wanting to adapt it as much as possible to the customs of the new environment, removing its exotic characteristics, making it forget that it reflects a distant, essentially different reality. Taking the reader to the country of the work they are reading means, on the contrary, carefully maintaining what is strange and genuine about it, and emphasising its alien origin at every moment. Thus, the two interpretations of the word 'translation' cover even the two extreme variants to which it can be applied: the naturalising translation, an example of which would be the Portuguese version of *Don Quixote* by Aquilino Ribeiro, and the identifying translation, exemplified by the translations of Virgílio by Odorico Mendes or, more recently, by the French version of the *Aeneid* by Pierre Klossowski (Rónai 2012b, 24).

It was not only his extensive knowledge of translations that Rónai brought to his discussions, but also his awareness of translation theories and debates as developed in many other countries. In the 1970s, for example, his elaboration of technical translation was developed in dialogue with Jean Maillot's book *La traduction scientifique et technique* (Scientific and Technical Translation), while his writings on machine translation in the same decade made reference to news reports from France and the United States. Rónai's (2012b, 153) concluding remarks, in one of these latter articles, have uncanny prescience for today:

Could it be that, after so many other professions, the modest caste of translators will also find themselves having to face the terrible competition from the Machine? ... Yes, gentlemen: the translating

machine is leaving the list of humorous inventions to become reality; its improvement will constitute one of the permanent concerns of cybernetics, a science whose name is not yet in our dictionary, but already committed to the creation of the electronic brain (Rónai 2012b, 153).

This new era has arrived, but we still have the same hope as Rónai, that is, that truly literary translations, with ‘polished refinements of poetic expression’, will continue to be ‘handed over to human translators’.

Conclusions

Rónai’s ideas on translation remain highly relevant and influential in Brazil. They serve as a valuable reference for both academics and practising translators. Alongside Haroldo de Campos’s theory of translation as transcription, Rónai’s theories are undoubtedly among the most significant contributions to translation studies in Brazil. Rónai is not only part of the history of translation studies in Brazil but also an obligatory reference for those engaged in translation inside and outside the academy.

‘Indirect translations’

By Paulo Rónai

Translated from Portuguese by Dirce Waltrick do Amarante

Source text: Paulo Rónai, ‘Traduções indiretas’, Correio da Manhã 18 January 1948, Rio de Janeiro. Translation published with the kind permission of Cora Tausz Rónai. available in the original language via the digital database kupdf.net

Indirect translations, which are very common among us, are made using a third language. This phenomenon is due to the almost non-existence of a class of translators. The masterpieces of world literature are translated generally not by professional translators, but by renowned writers, who, although they often have extensive knowledge of French, English and Spanish, do not have the time and interest necessary to dedicate themselves to the study of other languages of great cultural expression, such as Russian, German, Scandinavian languages etc. This is why the books of Tolstoy, Goethe, Ibsen etc. come to us, in general, through the translation of translations.

An editor and friend of mine told me that he would rather entrust the translation of Dostoevsky to an outstanding writer, even if he translated from Spanish and French, rather than hand it over to a Russian scholar or a Russian living in Brazil who would write a twisted Portuguese. Having no other choice, he is right.

(Between these two extremes there would be a conciliatory solution: having two collaborators to carry out the task, one of whom belonged to the category of good writers, the other to that of good knowledge of the foreign language. But such collaboration can never be imposed by the editor himself: it must be born from a spontaneous decision of two literati whose skills and knowledge complement each other. This means that it is an exceptional solution, which cannot be generalised.)

If we examine the book industry abroad, we will find, however, that the system of indirect translations is being entirely eliminated not only in France, England, Italy, the German-speaking countries, but also in much smaller linguistic areas, Hungary for example.

Thus, in France, there are excellent translators who restrict their activity to a particular language – Vladimir Posner to Russian, Frank L. Schoell to Polish, Maurice-Edgar Coindreau to American English, Jean-Louis Perret to Finnish – or even, sometimes, to a single writer: Louis Fabulet translates exclusively Rudyard Kipling.

Of course, by dint of practising, they become true experts in the field, eventually knowing the subtleties of the foreign languages they translate and their equivalents in French. As for quality of style, the high demands of the French reader constitute sufficient supervision.

While in Brazil, due to the lack of qualified specialists, the system of ‘retranslation’ persists, its drawbacks could at least be decreased. Much depends on the choice of intermediate translation. In order to translate a book into Swedish, Norwegian, Danish or Dutch, the publisher who does not have a translator for these languages should ideally turn to a translator from German or at least from English. To turn an Italian author into a Brazilian one, he will better use a Spanish version.

Nowadays our retranslators almost always use French as an intermediate language. Yet it is certainly not the most appropriate language for translations.² The fact that it has reached a stage of complete crystallisation, with a fixed and fully defined vocabulary, prevents it from adapting itself to the sinuosities of thought conceived in any other language. The French language does not admit neologisms, it avoids constructions without tradition in its own literature. There are, of course, daring innovators like a Ramuz or a Giono, but their boldness is seen as insubordination or rebellion; the translator never revolutionises the language into which he translates, he sticks more than an original author to the existing formulae and even clichés, leaving pioneering work to the great writers of the language.

In languages other than French, it is a different matter: since they have a less rigid structure and vocabulary, they admit the new forms as natural ways that reach anyone; the translator who handles them has a greater scale of possibilities.

A good French translator, thanks to the faculty of analysis developed with such care by the teaching of his country (in particular by the excellent method of ‘text explanations’) will faithfully reproduce the logical message of a foreign text down to its finest details, but the resistance

of his instrument will necessarily prevent him from conveying a large part of the formal values of this text.

Translating, for example, an Italian or Russian author with a somewhat popular appeal – and most of them are – one will find it impossible to translate the numerous diminutives of such strong affective resonance. In this case, the Brazilian ‘translator’, although he has the same resource in his language, will only rarely be able to use it, since the indirect translation will rarely allow him to glimpse the existence of one of these diminutives in the true ‘original’.

No care can be too excessive to verify the value of the intermediate translation. Until the end of the last century, especially in France, translations were not only too free, but also carried out, more than once, in an arbitrary way. Many translators, alleging the exigencies of French taste, made substantial modifications, especially major cuts. The Viscount of Vogüé, in his famous *Le roman russe*, writes very critically about the versions of the Russian classics made in his country. I have had occasion to see how well his criticisms are founded.

In trying to solve doubts that had arisen in the course of attempts to translate Gogol and Turgenev, I realised that French translators systematically suppressed all passages in which there were difficulties not solved by the dictionary; a curious phenomenon, curious especially because Turgenev’s version had been made during the author’s stay in France and authorised by him, so that his interpreter, Xavier Marmier, could easily consult him. But at that time the translator was only asked to adapt.

Aurélio Buarque de Holanda and I, when we turned to a French translation by Cervantes from the same period, to see how the translator got out of a beautiful and complicated Castilian blasphemy of a few lines, observed with surprise that, embarrassed, he restricts himself to these few words: ‘Then Cortadillo unleashed a very ugly curse.’

In recent decades, in France, too, more and more rigour has prevailed in translations. Thus, whoever translates a great writer prior to our century should, in principle, choose a new translation in preference to those made at the time of the original.

The worst cases are those in which the person responsible for the indirect translation distorts the original not for ‘aesthetic’ reasons, but for partisan reasons. While translating an old Italian tale, it occurred to me to examine the existing Brazilian translation. I found that it omitted all the passages in which the author, like almost all Renaissance writers, criticises the traditions of the clergy of the time. The translator, however, was an intellectual totally free from sectarianism; only, instead of

a translation from Italian, he used a Spanish version, which had already been expunged by some inquisition.

Such incidents constitute the greatest inconvenience of indirect translation. Editors and translators who, in the absence of a better solution, have recourse to one, should perhaps indicate the intermediate text on the frontispiece of the translation, with at least a partial caveat.

The ideal solution, of course, would be to train competent specialists in each language. But this problem is linked to the professionalisation of the translator's profession.

Notes

1. This chapter was first published as an article in the newspaper *Correio da manhã* on 21 December 1947.
2. The original has 'Pois ele nao é, certamente, o idioma mais apropriado para traduções', or in other words 'For', rather than 'But'. This is presumably an error, as it contradicts the logic of the argument.

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17 Poland, 1952

Adaptation, not translation: a 1950s manifesto for translating for children

Aleksandra Wieczorkiewicz¹

The Pooh Lady and adaptation for children

Irena Tuwim, a Polish poet and translator of Jewish descent born in Łódź in 1898, sister to Julian Tuwim, one of the most celebrated poets (also for children) of the interwar period, is among the few translators recognised and remembered in Poland by the general public (Woźniak 2012, 116). The reason for this is her much-loved and still highly appreciated versions of *Winnie-the-Pooh* (*Kubuś Puchatek*, 1938) and *The House at Pooh Corner* (*Chatka Puchatka*, 1938), sometimes described as better than the originals.

Tuwim's first translation for children is considered to be the Russian adaptation of *Pinocchio* by Alexsey Tolstoy, *The Golden Key or The Adventures of Buratino* (*Złoty kluczyczek czyli niezwykle przygody Buratina*, 1937; the translation, although signed by Julian Tuwim, was prepared by his sister). In 1938 and 1939, the Przeworski Publishing House released book adaptations of Disney's animated films about Mickey Mouse and Snow White (Borodo 2009, 207–8) written by Tuwim 'according to Disney's text', an adaptation of the Brothers Grimm fairytales and a Polish version of *The Story of Ferdinand* by Munro Leaf (*Fernando*, 1939 – again, written by Tuwim 'according to Leaf'). In 1938 the first part of the Mary Poppins series by P. L. Travers was also published, translated by Tuwim as *Agnieszka*. During the Second World War, Tuwim lived in Paris and then in London, finally moving to Washington. In 1947, she returned to Poland, by then already in the grip of Stalinism; in the early 1950s, in line with the prevailing Soviet ideology, Tuwim translated for children from Russian (including Samuil Marshak, Boris Zhitkov and Vladimir Korolenko), but after the so-called 'Thaw' of 1956 (the relaxation of the communist regime and liberalisation in culture; Czernow and Michułka 2017), she again resumed translating from English, and her versions of

the novels by, among others, George MacDonald, Edith Nesbit and Mary Norton were published then. Tuwim published several of her own children's books in the 1950s and 1960s; her main domain, however, continued to be translation.

When in 1937 Przeworski approached Tuwim with an offer to translate *Winnie-the-Pooh*, at first she declined, finding the text untranslatable into Polish due to Milne's peculiar humour. Persuaded by her family, she translated the first chapter, and the delight of the work led her to accept the commission. As she commented later, she 'sensed that this book could not be translated literally, so [she] began to make a kind of adaptation, capturing the content and sense of the original, but always proposing variations on it' (Augustyniak 2016, 178–9). *Winnie-the-Pooh* was only the second translation for children in Tuwim's career, the work of a translator who was still inexperienced and, by her admission, not well versed in English (she became more proficient only while emigrating during and after the war); however, the book was an instant success, winning immense popularity not only among children but also among adults, as evidenced by its reception by writers and literary critics (Woźniak 2013, 199). Tuwim's fame as Milne's translator had reached England, where she resided during the war, and she soon became known as The Pooh Lady.

Tuwim, while adapting Milne's story for Polish child readers, changed the name of its bear protagonist from Winnie-the-Pooh (related to Christopher Robin Milne's childhood friends: the she-bear Winnipeg from the London Zoo, and Pooh the swan mentioned in the preface) to Kubuś Puchatek ('Jimmy-the-Fluffy'), removed some passages (such as the one mentioning Pooh's female name) and puns that she found too confusing, simplified the language and changed the style of the story. Thus, she applied 'the rule of adaptation, not translation', which she expressed explicitly in her manifesto 'The question of adaptation', published 14 years after the publication of *Kubuś Puchatek*. The extent to which her version of Milne's story took root in the consciousness of generations of Polish readers (Rajewska 2022) was evidenced by the reaction to the polemical translation of *Winnie-the-Pooh* proposed in 1986 by Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska, a translation scholar who undertook a pioneering analysis of Polish translations of English children's literature, including Tuwim's adaptation (Adamczyk-Garbowska 1988). Her version – titled *Fredzia Phi-Phi*, in keeping with Milne's title idea – provoked heated discussion in the Polish press, and prompted hostile comments from more than one enraged critic (Misior-Mroczkowska 2016, 29). The emotional nature of this debate and criticism – despite Adamczyk-Garbowska's

intentions stated in her preface, to propose an alternative perspective on Milne's classic, not to deprecate Tuwim's version – demonstrated the power of adaptation: the new translation was compared not with the source text, but with the first version, which gained the status of the original and became established in the Polish canon.

Adapting and translating for children in Poland

Tuwim's attitude to adaptation was in step with the then-current translation practices in Poland: the adaptative approach was on the march long before the first decades of the twentieth century. The reduction of foreign features or their Polonisation was already in force in the Renaissance, a good example being the adaptation of Baltazar Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* by Łukasz Górnicki as *Dworzanin polski* (The Polish Courtier) published as early as 1566 (Rajewska 2000, 52). The Polonisation of proper names was a prevailing convention, particularly strong in books for young audiences. In the first translation of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Adela S. (*Przygody Alinki w Krainie Cudów*, 1910) the heroine was given the Polish name Alinka, but also the author's name was Polonised as Ludwik Karrol. Zofia Rogoszówna, the translator of the first Polish version of J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (*Przygody Piotrusia Pana*, 1913), Polonised the names of all the characters and imbued the text with diminutive forms common in Polish children's literature of the time, but also – with an eye to the readers' sensibilities – removed the ending paragraphs concerning children's death (Wieczorkiewicz 2020, 97). Translating L. M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* (*Ania z Zielonego Wzgórza*, 1911), R. Bernsteinowa adapted the Canadian realities to Polish contexts, substituting culturally specific elements such as flora or food. There are many examples of similar (more or less) subtle transformations – domestication, omissions, additions, rewritings – not only among the classics. In the late 1920s, for instance, Jan Plichta published a novel *Dwaj malcy*, an 'elaboration from the original by permission of the author' – a localising adaptation of Florence Montgomery's Victorian novel *Wild Mike and His Victim*, in which the action, instead of in London, is set in Warsaw.

Insight into the various degrees of adaptability is provided by the title pages of the translations, profiling the source–target text relationship in a variety of ways. These include such labels as 'przetłumaczył/a, przełożył/a' (translated by), 'opracował/a' (elaborated/prepared by), 'dla dzieci opowiedział/a' (told for children by), 'na tle napisał/a'

(written against the background of), 'podług/według napisał/a' (written according to), 'naśladował/a' (imitated/reproduced by), 'spolszczył/a' (Polonised by), 'skrócił/a' (shortened by), 'streścił/a' (summarised by), 'wolny przekład' (free translation) and 'przeróbka' (rewriting). It is also notable that some classics – novels by Swift, Scott or Dickens – were published in Poland under the names of their adaptors for the young, such as Elwira Korotyńska, Janina Colonna-Walewska and Maria Buyno-Arctowa.

Polarised positions on translation and adaptation can be found in two Polish editions of Andersen's fairytales. *Powiastrki fantastyczno-moralne* (1859) 'imitated according to Danish by Fryderyk Henryk Lewestam', a Polish writer and scholar of Danish descent, were preceded by a *Przedmówka* (Foreword) in which the translator states:

By imitating the following Fantastic-Moral Tales from the Danish original – by giving them a purely Polish background, substituting the reminiscences from Danish history with references to the National History, replacing Scandinavian legends with the fantastic Slavonic world – in short, by assimilating to our literature these wonderful flowers of the rich and poetic imagination of perhaps the most charming of contemporary writers, I believe that I have done fair service, if not to others, then at least to the young Readers (Andersen 1859, 1).

Lewestam regards translation as an imitation of the original that turns into its assimilation and absorption; a translation of culture into culture, up to substituting historical events and folklore (in his version, for instance, Little Mermaid is translated as the Nymph of Lake Świtez, alluding to the famous ballad by Poland's prominent Romantic poet, Adam Mickiewicz). Forty years later, in another edition of Andersen's tales Polonised by Maria Glotz (*Czarodziejskie powieści Andersena*, 1900), there appeared, in turn, the Editors' Preface describing earlier adaptations of Andersen's fairytales as a 'literary bribery that damages the author by presenting him in a different light' and 'obscures the proper qualities to the great detriment of the work itself' (Andersen 1900, x).

It is interesting to note here that these standpoints presented by the translator and editors of the Polish versions of Andersen reverberated in a discussion a century later in children's literature translation studies almost as soon as the discipline was established. In a volume that resulted from the IRSCL Children's Books in Translation conference in 1976, Göte Klingberg (1978, 86) referred to adaptation as a central

problem in the field, while speaking in favour of keeping the ‘degree of adaptation’ at the same level as in the original. He later argued that cultural context adaptation should be reduced to a minimum, thus establishing one side of the dispute over adaptation and translation still ongoing in the discipline (Klingberg 1986). Zohar Shavit (1981, 171–2) also criticised adaptation, pointing out that such an approach is accepted due to the peripheral position of children’s literature in the literary poly-system. The opposite side of the dispute is represented by Riitta Oittinen, who calls for a revaluation of adaptation and equivalence as vague concepts and sees both translation and adaptation as a form of rewriting. Oittinen incorporates adaptation into translation, emphasising its dialogic nature, the interaction between the target text and its audience, and adaptation’s particular focus on and loyalty to child readers’ needs (Oittinen 2000, 76).

The question of adaptation

Long before theoretical discussions about translation and adaptation within institutionalised translation studies, translators were also tackling this problem in their translation reflections, commenting, defending or criticising various translation choices, including their own (Van Doorslaer and Raw 2016, 189). Gillian Lathey (2014, 5–8), for instance, discussed how Mary Wollstonecraft in the preface to her translation of Christian Gotthilf Salzmann’s *Elements of Morality for the Use of Children* (1790) preceded theorists of children’s literature translation by two hundred years, engaging in an in-depth reflection on translation problems, especially adaptation and naturalisation. As such, adaptive translation often prompts its authors to include various types of commentary (prefaces, afterwords, footnotes), which, as translator’s paratexts, are consciously crafted thresholds of interpretation designed to steer the reception of the work (Batchelor 2018, 142). Adaptation thus improves the translator’s visibility; in extreme cases, it can shift the authorship rendering the translator in the place of the author and the translation of the original.

Tuwim’s *Sprawa adaptacji* (The Question of Adaptation) may also be regarded as a translator’s paratext of its kind. Although it does not precede any specific translation, it nevertheless provides a commentary and a ‘threshold of interpretation’ for her entire children’s translation oeuvre. It outlines Tuwim’s approach to translation for young audiences: the far-reaching freedom in rendering the original, purposeful adjustments

for the benefit of the young audience and the premise of the translator's agency. Emphasis is often on the idea that the translator should not look for an excuse in a poor quality of the original, but rather endeavour to improve the text to fulfil the duty of 'providing the child with a good book'.

Tuwim draws attention to the challenges of translating for children. Although she could not have been familiar with Shavit's above-cited standpoint (adaptation as a more liberal approach to the text due to the peripheral position of children's literature), her view seems to be to the contrary. Tuwim advocates adaptation as the only appropriate method of translation for children not because one can 'take liberties' in translations for children, but precisely because she considers this literature to be exceptionally difficult and its readership exceptionally demanding. Tuwim's approach could therefore also be considered in the context of functionalism (Vandal-Sirois and Bastin 2012, 25–6) and loyalty to the reader postulated by Oittinen, based, however, on different premises. From this perspective, rather than on accuracy, adaptation is focused on relevance and effect. It always prioritises the target readership and aims to provide them with 'optimal reception experience' by using, among others, updating, summarising, paraphrasing, omissions and, most especially, domestication. Domestication – in this case, Polonisation – also finds its place in Tuwim's reflections. She applied this rule in her work, not only in *Winnie-the-Pooh* but also, for example, in the P. L. Travers series: generations of Polish readers knew Mary Poppins as Agnieszka (this was, *nota bene*, Tuwim's own middle name); only in the 1960s, at Travers's request, was the original name restored.

'The question of adaptation' was published in 1952 – already during the height of Stalinism in Poland – in the weekly *Nowa Kultura* (The New Culture) established in 1950. Considered one of the most important instruments of cultural policy of the 1950s and early 1960s (Przeperski 2017, 363), *Nowa Kultura* for the first two years was the only sociocultural periodical with nationwide coverage, in 1952–6 acting as the organ of the Polish Writers' Union. At the time when Tuwim published her article, it set a course of cultural development in line with the social realist guidelines of the regime. The local context for Tuwim's reflections is the block *On Translations of Books for Children and Young People*, which presented articles by the other four members of the panel (Janina Osińska, Maria Kann, Maria Kowalewska and Andrzej Miłosz), whose task was to evaluate the state of translation for the young, particularly from Soviet literature. This Soviet inclination is evident in 'The question of adaptation', especially when Tuwim argues for the enhancement of this transfer. Significantly, even among these five articles presenting different aspects

of the same topic, a clear difference of opinion on the ‘translation versus adaptation’ subject emerges. Maria Kann, a recognised prewar children’s writer, while allowing for adaptation of the text to the child’s perceptive abilities, supports the position that translation should not neutralise the foreign elements of the original, as it results in ‘falsification’ and homogenisation. Tuwim, on the other hand, advocates the widest possible use of adaptation and the full freedom of the translator, up to assuming the position of the original author.

Conclusion: translation versus/as/and adaptation

Adaptation and translation appear inseparable and are often treated as synonyms, two sides of the same coin (Krebs 2012). Yet the relationship between them – as concepts, practices and products – is strikingly paradoxical. While adaptation is sometimes referred to as abusive translation, betrayal, falsification and distortion, it is also regarded as a translation solution that is indispensable for creating ‘an efficient and accurate multilingual communication’ (Vandal-Sirois and Bastin 2012, 21), a recipe for the successful transfer from culture to culture. Understood as a creative process (Hutcheon 2006, 8), adaptation is always concerned with reinterpretation and transformation: it can amount to appropriation when the product eclipses its source and eventually relegates it to oblivion, but it also ensures salvage and survival, offering the text a second (or next and yet another) life. This is particularly true for children’s literature, no stranger to adaptation since its history was launched by adapting novels from general literature (Nikolajeva 2016, 16–18).

When Tuwim published ‘The question of adaptation’, she was already an established, even famous children’s translator, enjoying considerable prestige in this field. In this sense, her manifesto consolidated the position of adaptative translation for children in Poland and at the same time reinforced the position of Tuwim herself: ‘The question of adaptation’ was included in the Polish translation history anthology (Tuwim 1977), and whenever a debate on translation versus/as/and adaptation is taken up, Tuwim’s standpoint is certain to be mentioned. ‘The question of adaptation’, therefore, remains not only an important manifesto of an individual translator whose work had an invaluable impact on the Polish reception of English classics but also, in a way, a summary and synthesis of the most prevalent strategy in translating children’s books in Poland up to the 1950s.

'The question of adaptation'

By Irena Tuwim

*Translated from Polish by Aleksandra
Wieczorkiewicz*

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Source text: Irena Tuwim, 'Sprawa adaptacji', Nowa Kultura, 26 (1952): 10

A child is, despite appearances, by no means an easy reader. They are critical, observant and often relentless. As a recipient of literature, they resemble theatregoers, who must be kept in suspense throughout the whole performance. Heaven forbid a yawn! Before you could say Jack Robinson, you have lost not only a reader but also a friend.

This is the danger lurking for every translator who even for a moment forgets about the future readers. The translator should be constantly checking themselves, occasionally even turning into the author, to adapt the text to the level of knowledge, range of concepts, sense of reality and language of the children for whom the book is intended. The translator must not hide behind an excuse of a poorly written or difficult text. It is our duty to provide the child with a good book that he or she will be satisfied with – or else not to venture into translation at all.

Soviet literature for children should serve us as a model in every respect: a model of ideology, the formation of the new man, of the educational system. Indeed, it is only right that the vast majority of translations should be from Russian. However, a substantial share of these translations, especially of literature for older children, are unfortunately sloppy ones; an injustice is being done to their authors. And yet no literature in the world can boast such great names as Aleksey Tolstoy, [Arkady] Gaidar, [Samuil] Marshak, [Boris] Zhitkov, [Vitaly] Bianki, Vera Inber and others. All books by these authors should *necessarily*² be translated and can be translated 'purely', almost without changes. Yet this does not

mean that all the books we translate should be rendered faithfully to the smallest detail, without any alterations.

There are many books – mainly in literature for the youngest – that in translation should undergo significant changes. Such literature prepares the child for a good cognitive process; even when it only amuses, it presents them with certain elements of the world around them. In books where the element of pre-cognition is predominant (room, furniture, street, garden, forest, animals), *the translation should use realities that are within the child's immediate reach, descriptions that he or she can confront with reality*. The child must first come to grips with the world around them, and only then should they be introduced to what they cannot see, to what they must imagine. The child already has a certain sense of language: it ought to be developed, not distorted. In translations for young children, we should pay particular attention to the use of proper names. As far as the nature of the text allows, the characters should be given Polish names. In any case, odd names should be avoided, so as not to create difficulties for the child in reading that would divert their attention from important things and instead focus it on unimportant aspects.

If I advocate far-reaching freedom in translations of children's literature in general, I would insist on it even more in poetry. Children enjoy poems as they enjoy music, singing and rhythm; they have a natural sense of rhythm. To see this, we only need to listen to children at play, how they chant all those 'Jaworowe ludzie', how they do their counting-out games such as 'Ene-due-rabe' or 'Entliczek-pętliczek'.³

The child likes such things, and thus the poems we give them should be rhythmic and catchy, not rambling, sprawling, unmusical and with some kind of fractured syntax. In a poetic piece, we should not stick to the same rhythmic pattern throughout, not least to avoid monotony. However, while the use of variable rhythmicity is expedient between stanzas, any disruptions of rhythm within a single stanza are undesirable, especially in books for young children. The use of assonance is, unfortunately, unavoidable, but it should be done with caution since it can sometimes create disharmony that is unpleasant for the child's ear.

The language of a text for children – I mean the language of translation – must be simple and substantive, impeccable and clear. This is seemingly a truism, and yet when we turn to many translations, we find children talking in a language that no child would speak or have ever spoken. We find bad rhymes. We find or rather do not find images – so

clumsy is the imagery, the epithets and similes awkward. And the translator must not hide behind the fact that the same occurs in the original. The child's vocabulary is limited; it can and should be enriched, but in moderation and with skill. The need to navigate within such a narrow framework and yet produce a text that is fresh and at a sufficiently high level is what makes translating children's literature so difficult. Publishers are at times seriously at fault here, demanding that translations be stiffly literal, that all, even secondary realities, be kept unaltered, and names preserved, sometimes in a form completely at odds with the rules of the Polish language.

What conclusion can we draw from this?

For a translator to produce linguistic works of the highest quality, a considerable degree of freedom is required in all translations, and in many cases – which can only be determined on a case-by-case basis, although these will generally be works for the youngest – adaptation, not translation should be the rule.

This last thesis leads to a suggestion that I would like to propose for consideration: whether it would not be advisable – if at all possible – for our publishing houses to enter into an agreement with the publishing headquarters in the Soviet Union and in other countries of People's Democracy, an agreement that, subject to the necessary control, would allow the use of adaptation in the field of children's literature to a much greater extent than is being done so far.

Notes

1. The chapter was written as a part of the OPUS 21 grant of the National Science Centre, Poland, project no. 2021/41/B/HS2/00876: *Half a Century of Children's Literature in Poland. Texts for a young audience in the context of cultural production and power: the recipient of literature – literature as a recipient.*
2. All emphasis is original; all footnotes are by the translator.
3. Tuwim mentions here traditional counting rhymes popular among Polish children. *Jaworowe ludzie* (or *Jaworowi ludzie*) is a counting rhyme with many variants, dating back to the seventeenth century; its shortened version could be rendered in English as 'Jawor, Jawor, Jawor people, what are you doing here? / We're building bridges, for the Lord Starost; a thousand horses we're letting through, / And one we'll hold back!'; *jawor* is a Polish word for sycamore, but rather than to the tree, it refers to the city of Jaworów in present-day Ukraine (Yavoriv), of which Jan III Sobieski was a starost in 1644–64, before he became king of Poland. *Ene-due-rabe* and *Entliczek-pętliczek* are counting rhymes probably rooted in Jewish culture, from which they made their way into Polish children's folklore.

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18 USSR, 1958–1964

The birth of the linguistic approach to translation in the USSR

Suzanne Eade Roberts¹

Since translation scholars are currently reconsidering the assumption that translation studies as a discipline only began in 1972, when James Holmes's paper 'The name and nature of translation' was presented,² it is timely to assess the much earlier work of Soviet translation researchers.³ They addressed the subject's scope in differing ways, particularly during the 1950s and 1960s, a period that witnessed great change in intellectual life in the Soviet Union. Change was prompted, on the one hand, by de-Stalinisation from 1956 onwards and the related partial, fluctuating cultural liberalisation of the Khrushchev Thaw from the mid 1950s to 1964; de-Stalinisation and the Thaw offered opportunities for some, or risks in the case of the erstwhile beneficiaries of Stalin's patronage.⁴ On the other hand, change was bound up in the imperatives of the deepening Cold War with the USA. Soviet translation thought developed and diversified within this political and cultural context.

By the mid 1950s, the field of literary translation theory was well established. Discussion of literary translation was newly prominent at the Second All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers (1954), and articles on literary translation were anthologised at frequent intervals from 1955 onwards.⁵ The first Soviet curriculum was developed for teaching literary translation theory in higher education.⁶ In this more scholarly and professionalised translation milieu, translation thinkers moved away from or reformulated 'realist translation' as it had been conceived by Ivan Kashkin (1899–1963). Kashkin's translation theory, which had been dominant in literary translation since the 1930s, was heavily influenced by the doctrine of Socialist Realism.⁷ Foreign fiction was to be translated into Russian – indeed, into 'Soviet'⁸ – to make it edifying for Soviet readers. Realist translation, as the antithesis of slavish accuracy to formal elements of the original, essentially encouraged adaptation. Kashkin, whose

writings were propagandistic in style, found himself increasingly sidelined during the Thaw, a time in which sincerity – and therefore greater fidelity – were prized.⁹

There was a turning away from Stalin-era dogmatism during the decade from the mid 1950s onwards. Both Efim Etkind (1918–99), whose monograph *Poeziia i perevod* (Poetry and Translation) was published in 1964, and, to a lesser extent, veteran translation commentator Kornei Chukovskii (1882–1969), who issued revised editions of his long-standing classic *Iskusstvo perevoda* (The Art of Translation) in the 1960s, took advantage of the Thaw's relative loosening of Soviet censorship. For theorists who chose to remain within the realist translation paradigm, such as Givi Gachechiladze (1914–74), emphasis shifted from ideology to a philosophical appreciation of the art of literary translation, theorised in a Soviet framework. Gachechiladze applied Leninist dialectics to describe how a translator reflects the reality of the original text, as the author had reflected artistic reality. In a scholarly way, he formulated the translator's role in the socio-political struggle.¹⁰

Crucially, however, translation theory now expanded outside the borders of literary translation. Andrei Fedorov (1906–97), in his 1953 monograph *Vvedenie v teoriu perevoda* (Introduction to Translation Theory), proposed a comprehensive theory of translation that went beyond strictly literary texts. Although in the 1930s Dmitrii Usov (1896–1943), Iakov Retsker (1897–1984) and Fedorov himself had produced a whole series of *practical* manuals on technical translation for translator training, Fedorov was the first to incorporate technical translation within a *theoretical* framework.

Fedorov claimed to take a linguistic approach to translation, although we might define it more precisely as a theory based on contrastive linguistics rather than linguistics per se. He benefitted from the new currents in linguistics more generally that began before Stalin's death in 1953, the same year that his *Introduction to Translation Theory* appeared. Stalin's 1950 newspaper articles on linguistics (seemingly initiated but not written by him) had had the effect of rehabilitating linguistics as a serious field of study, quashing the pseudoscientific, posthumous influence of linguist Nikolai Marr (1865–1934). Fedorov was thus able to apply linguistics to translation theory. At the same time, thanks to the Thaw, Fedorov could participate in tacitly reviving the literary and linguistic scholarship, particularly of 1920s Leningrad,¹¹ of the Russian Formalists, who had been condemned under Stalin. In line with the push for de-Stalinisation, Fedorov removed his chapter about Stalin's thoughts on linguistics when he revised his *Introduction to Translation Theory* for

the 1958 second edition. However, he retained his chapters on Lenin, Marx and Engels (merely reorganising the contents). Fedorov's references to the Communist scriptural texts contributed to his framing of his theory as the pinnacle of Soviet translation thought.

Scholars, notably Baer (2021), Vasserman (2021), Dmitrienko (2021) and Shakhova (2021), have analysed Fedorov's contribution to text typology and the extent to which it presaged Skopos theory. Consequently, I will not discuss this here, and have chosen instead to highlight aspects of Fedorov's translation thought that have hitherto drawn little attention and that Fedorov included only in his 1958 second edition.

The first excerpt shows that Fedorov – well in advance of Holmes – sketched a basic map of 'izuchenie perevoda' (translation study) as a discipline, something he had not attempted in the 1953 first edition of *Introduction to Translation Theory*. Fedorov imagines how the field of translation study could develop and come to encompass different subdisciplines such as literary studies, linguistics, psychological and cultural-historical research. Fedorov goes on to assert that his own approach is part of the linguistic subdiscipline of translation and that any type of text can be examined through this lens.

In the second excerpt, Fedorov considers whether there is an appropriate place for machine translation within the new discipline of translation study. He demonstrates a knowledge of the progress in machine translation research since 1953, in the interval between his first and second editions. However, Fedorov concludes that the central problem of 'perevodimost' (translatability) relates mainly to translation of 'khu-dozhestvennaia literatura' (lit. artistic literature, implying what we would call 'literary translation' in English) and 'obshchestvenno-politicheskaia literatura' (socio-political literature) (similar to what we now call 'academic translation', as Baer 2020 has noted). In contrast, 'teksty delovye i nauchno-tekhnicheskie' (practical and scientific-technical texts), though part of his text typology, are stylistically neutral and involve less complexity, so hold relatively less interest for him as a translation scholar. Fedorov thus delineates the realm of machine translation from the realm of translation study: machine translation 'does not have any direct link with the problem of translatability, which appears to its full extent with translation material of artistic or socio-political literature' (Fedorov 1958, 41). While Fedorov (1958, 40) appreciates the 'intensivnoe issledovanie spetsial'nykh voprosov' (intensive research into specialised questions) dedicated to machine translation, he excludes this research from the new discipline he is mapping around the issue of translatability; for him, it is a separate domain.

Machine translation theorists took a different position. In the first textbook of machine translation, based on lectures they had given in 1960–1 at the Moscow Pedagogical Institute of Foreign Languages, Isaak Revzin (1923–74) and Viktor Rozentsveig (1911–98) argued that machine translation and human translation could be brought together under one umbrella and explained by the same set of principles. Their *Osnovy obshchego i mashinnogo perevoda* (Foundations of General and Machine Translation), published in 1964, synthesises existing Soviet and Western research on machine translation and posits a novel unified theory of translation.¹² Although the history of Soviet machine translation practice and theory has been well researched (Hutchins 2000, 2013; Gerovitch 2002; Gordin 2017 [2015], 2020), Revzin and Rozentsveig's contribution has not yet been incorporated within the history of Soviet translation thought, let alone into translation studies more widely.

The Cold War led to political pressure in both the USSR and the USA to develop machine translation in order to translate technical material usually obtained by espionage. Soviet scholars had surprisingly thorough access to Western machine translation journals and publications; similarly, the American defence agency procured and translated Soviet research in the field.¹³ Soviet and Western machine translation theorists were thus working in step with each other to a considerable extent, with differences of emphasis depending on the particular source and target languages. Rozentsveig, who had himself once worked for the Soviet security services in Paris and whose sister had been a spy at Los Alamos, was well placed to drive a new focus on machine translation within university departments of translation; Revzin was the scholar of the short-lived writing duo.

Foundations of General and Machine Translation presents a chronology of the development of linguistic theories of translation. In the third excerpt, Revzin and Rozentsveig acknowledge the seminal attempt at systematisation of degrees of lexical correspondence in an article published by Retsker (1950). They are appreciative of Fedorov's contribution to a linguistic description of translation across his 1953 and 1958 editions. However, Revzin and Rozentsveig criticise Fedorov for staying half in the camp of literary study and being muddled about what did or did not constitute linguistic phenomena. In their view, Fedorov rightly claimed as 'linguistic' his research into gender transfer and text type, but was wrong to include such aspects as stylistics and imagery recreation as part of a purely *linguistic* approach to translation. Revzin and Rozentsveig's implication is that only their own translation theory is truly linguistic and comprehensive.

Much of Revzin and Rozentsveig's disagreement with Fedorov over the meaning of 'lingvistika' (linguistics) is due to the differing branches and genealogies of their theories. Fedorov's branch, which would come to be called 'contrastive linguistics' or 'comparative stylistics',¹⁴ analysed the linguistic – meaning, for him, the lexical and grammatical – resources of a given pair of languages; Revzin and Rozentsveig, too, incorporated insights from contemporary Western contrastive linguists.¹⁵ However, Revzin and Rozentsveig drew principally on *structural* linguistics to parse a text,¹⁶ and *mathematical* and *computational* linguistics to simplify it using formulae based on regular correspondences and recreate it symbolically.¹⁷ In the world of rule-based machine translation, this process represented the indispensable theoretical stage before practical programming of mainframe computers could occur. Indeed, to a very large extent, machine translation of this period was only theoretical, on both sides of the Cold War.

The fourth excerpt and [Figure 18.1](#) give an example of how Revzin and Rozentsveig applied the then-modern science of cybernetics,¹⁸ such as the use of flow diagrams and systems thinking, to language and translation. They argue that analysis and synthesis must be separated when modelling the translation process, and that use of an intermediary language – they use the compound noun 'iazyk-posrednik' (language-intermediary) – is most efficient at scale. The 'soobshchenie na iskhodnom iazyke' (message in the initial language, or IL) is first analysed within the 'sistema iskhodnogo iazyka' (the system of the initial language),¹⁹ and then the message passes through the intermediary language. According to Revzin and Rozentsveig, this model applies as much to a human receiving a message and processing it mentally for understanding as it does to a computer analysing a sentence according to pre-programmed rules and processing it using a universal system. Indeed, Revzin and Rozentsveig refer frequently to the grammatical analysis in *Syntactic Structures* by Noam Chomsky (1928–).²⁰ They also draw on the notion of intersemiotic translation by Roman Jakobson (1959), illustrating again the influence of Western linguistics scholars on their Soviet peers in this period. According to Revzin and Rozentsveig's model, in both human translators and in machine translation, the message is then synthesised into the 'perevodiashchii iazyk' (translating language, or TL) via the 'sistema perevodiashchego iazyka' (translating-language system). For Revzin and Rozentsveig, the intermediary language could be an invented auxiliary language such as Esperanto or Interlingua, or most likely a symbolic language on the lines of algebra. Notably, Revzin, along with fellow scholar V. V. Ivanov, did not continue with machine translation theory

but became involved instead with the Tartu-Moscow school of semiotics around Iurii Lotman.²¹ The 'School' was an informal grouping of scholars from 1964 onwards who were interested in wider applications of symbolic representation, moving on from machine translation.

In conclusion, neither Fedorov's projected map of the discipline nor Revzin and Rozentsveig's general theory of translation for both human and machine translation had any equivalent in the West at the time when they were published.²² While Revzin and Rozentsveig were clearly influenced by Fedorov's linguistic approach, they claimed their theory had greater applicability. Nonetheless, the field of machine translation remained substantially separate from the Soviet literary translation milieu. Only now can the history of Soviet machine translation be incorporated as part of Soviet translation history. More broadly, an examination of these two theories raises three fundamental questions: what constitutes translation, the limits of translation as a discipline, and the emergence of its interdisciplinary nature.

An Introduction to Translation Theory (excerpts)

By Andrei Fedorov

*Translated from Russian by Suzanne Eade
Roberts*

*Source text: Andrei Fedorov, Vvedenie v teoriiu perevoda, second edition.
Moscow: Vysshaya shkola, 1958, pp. 15–16, 40–1*

Excerpt 1

Translation is a multifaceted object of study – as, incidentally, is also the case for the majority of phenomena in nature, in life, and in societal activity. Translation questions can be considered from various points of view: whether historical-cultural; in terms of literary studies (in the case of artistic literature); linguistic; or psychological (in as far as a translator's work involves certain processes that occur in the field of mental activity and is connected with the problem of the psychology of creativity). Given that the various levels of study are all interconnected, due to the very unity of the object of translation, we always need to turn our attention fundamentally to a specific aspect of the object of study, with greater or lesser detachment from the remaining aspects (as is always the case in scholarship).

In the present book, the linguistic aspect of the question of translation (in the broad sense of the term)²³ is taken as fundamental. This aspect of the question applies generally for research into different types of translated material, even when taking specific differences between artistic literature and other types of text into account.

...

The study of translation, even at the level of literary studies, constantly comes up against the necessity of considering linguistic

phenomena, [and] analysing and evaluating the linguistic resources that translators use.

Excerpt 2

The work on machine translation that has been carried out over the course of the last four years, based on applying mathematical methods to the field of language, has demanded – and continues to demand – intensive research into specific questions, clarifying whichever rules that lend themselves to mathematical expression. A specialised journal, published in New York under the title *Machine Translation*, and a series of publications (in particular, the anthology of articles titled ‘Machine translation of languages’, New York/London, 1955)²⁴ are dedicated to this range of questions, which far exceeds the limits of linguistics.

Since machine translation is designed primarily for material involving a more or less limited number of correspondences with another language and which is stylistically neutral (i.e., for practical and scientific-technical texts), it does not have any direct link with the problem of translatability, which appears to its full extent with translation material of artistic or socio-political literature.

Foundations of General and Machine Translation (excerpts)

By Isaak Revzin and Viktor Rozentsveig

Translated by Suzanne Eade Roberts

Source text: Isaak Revzin and Viktor Rozentsveig, Osnovy obshchego i mashinnogo perevoda, Moscow: Vysshaia shkola, 1964, pp. 19–20, 220–2, 82

The subject and method of the theory of translation

The change in translation's place in the contemporary world, as well as the internal demands of linguistics itself, have led to theorists beginning to take more and more interest in the concrete problems of language correspondences and other purely linguistic aspects of translation.

This is no accident, because even before the appearance of the challenge of machine translation, some linguists had already come forward with attempts both at the fundamental principles of a general theory of translation constructed on linguistic principles, and also with specific commentaries on putting these principles into practice.

Iakov Retsker's work 'On regular correspondences when translating into the native language' (Retsker 1950) was an interesting attempt at giving a systematic account of the linguistic approach to translation. Andrei Fedorov's book *Introduction to the Theory of Translation* (first edition 1953, second edition 1958) was an even more significant event in the development of a linguistic theory of translation ...

Unfortunately, at the same time as asserting the necessity of constructing an exclusively linguistic theory, Fedorov relies on concepts from literary studies and treats translation as the result of a creative process. He talks about the indivisible unity of content and form, about conveying the national and artistic-stylistic distinctiveness of the original, about recreating imagery, etc. He considers such exclusively linguistic phenomena

as conveying gender, [text] type, etc., in the same way as these categories. It is hard to achieve a theoretical whole given such ambivalence, but there is no need to demand that from the first attempt at a linguistic basis of a theory of translation. The author's main service is that he turned his attention to precisely the linguistic aspect of the problem of translation.

Regarding the directly theoretical concept of translation set forth in Fedorov's book, we do not intend at all to claim that phenomena in literary translation cannot be considered within the limits of a linguistic description of translation. Moreover, it is important to admit that the challenge of translation is brought into sharper relief when we study translations of artistic literature.

The independence of analysis and synthesis

The examples used in the previous paragraphs [might have given] the impression that a translation depends on the IL [initial language],²⁵ or rather, that the stage of synthesis depends on the analysis. Generally speaking, this is often what happens during the translation process. Indeed, this was what happened when the so-called **binary**²⁶ algorithms for translation were constructed: Russian–English, English–Russian, French–Russian etc. In these cases, the system of correspondences between any two given languages was the language-intermediary, and it was the particular pair of languages that essentially determined the language-intermediary's properties.

Moreover, it seems convenient, in some respects, to construct such binary language-intermediaries, in which the rules of translating from language L_1 towards language L_2 seem essentially distinct, in many cases, from the rules of translation from L_2 to L_1 . Indeed, it was clarified in machine translation that the relationships between the Russian and English languages are such that the rules for translating from Russian to English can be very simple in the easiest of situations, at the same time as the rules for translating the corresponding English phrases into Russian are thoroughly complex ...

On the other hand, publications on machine translation recognised quite quickly the benefit of constructing rules in which the analysis of the IL text would not be dependent on the resources of the TL [translating language],²⁷ and vice versa. The benefit here is mainly quantitative. Let us imagine that there are a hundred languages, and we want to translate to and from each. This means we need 9,900 different sets of rules, as that is the number of language-pair combinations. If we use independent

analysis and synthesis, i.e., if there is a separate set of rules for analysis and rules for synthesis for each language, then it will obviously be enough to do 100 analyses and 100 syntheses (Uspenskii 1959, 41).

The independent analysis, i.e., the translation from the IL text to the language-intermediary, corresponds to ‘the understanding of the text’, i.e., to a general understanding that is the essential prerequisite for translation, in the unanimous opinion of all theorists.

This understanding (analysis) is reflected by translating the lexis and syntactic relations of a given text into certain universal lexis and universal syntactic relations during the [machine translation] formalisation process (Mel’chuk 1960). The language-intermediary is the system for recording this universal lexis and universal syntactic relations. Knowing the ways to express general concepts and relations using the resources of the TL, or, in other words, knowing the system of correspondences between the language-intermediary and a given concrete language, we can easily synthesise a text in this language.

Independent synthesis, i.e., translating from the language-intermediary to a TL text, corresponds, in fact, to the creative moment in translation – namely, to the ‘expression of thought’.

The independence of the analysis from the synthesis is also important from the point of view of modelling a similar approach to translation.

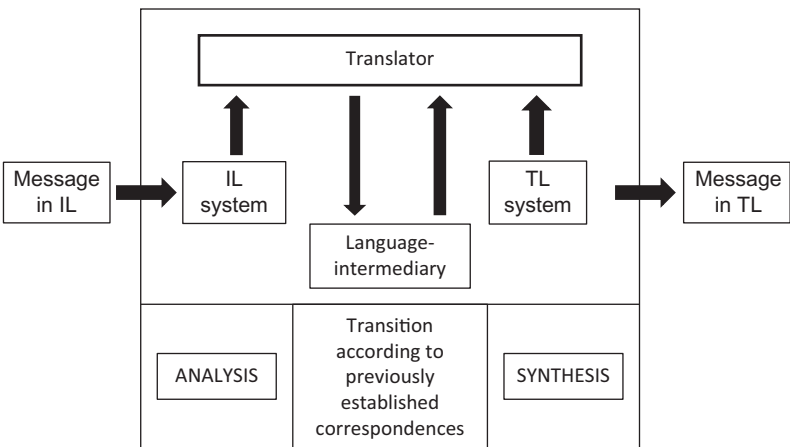


Figure 18.1 Description of the process of translation by Revzin and Rozentsveig. IL = initial language, TL = translating language (Revzin and Rozentsveig 1964, 82).

Notes

1. Many thanks to the South, West, and Wales Doctoral Training Partnership.
2. Presentation to the Translation Section of the Third International Congress of Applied Linguistics, held in Copenhagen, 21–26 August 1972.
3. For background reading, see [Friedberg 1997](#) and [Salmon 2014](#).
4. For more on de-Stalinisation, see [Jones 2006](#).
5. The 1955 anthology *Voprosy khudozhestvennogo perevoda* (Questions of Literary Translation) turned out to be the precursor of the *Masterstvo perevoda* (The Craft of Translation) journal series on literary translation, which ran from 1959 to the collapse of the Soviet Union, with the 1985 issue appearing in 1990.
6. A department of literary translation was created at Moscow's Gorky Literary Institute in summer 1956 ([Rossel 1959](#), 231). See too articles on curricula in *Masterstvo perevoda* by Gachechiladze and A. Leites ([1964 \[1965\]](#)), with an editorial by K. Chukovskii.
7. Socialist Realism in literature and art represented life under socialism in an optimistic and idealised way. It was designed to appeal to and inspire workers. The overarching purpose of Socialist Realism means it differs from other kinds of literary realism that claim to represent ordinary life accurately.
8. To paraphrase Stephen [Kotkin's](#) (1995) phrase 'speaking Bolshevik'.
9. Indeed, 'Ob iskrennosti v literature' (On sincerity in literature), Viktor [Pomerantsev's](#) (1953) essay in the journal *Novyi Mir*, had become a call to action for Thaw-era writers (*Novyi Mir* 12, 218–245).
10. See [Gachechiladze's](#) (1964 [1965]) introductory lecture on literary translation theory in *Masterstvo perevoda* and Pavel [Toper's](#) (1962 [1963]) account of Gachechiladze's viva for his higher doctorate in *Masterstvo perevoda*.
11. Modern-day St Petersburg.
12. Revzin and Rozentsveig refer both to the work of Soviet computational linguistics scholars, including A. A. Liapunov, T. N. Moloshnaia, V. V. Ivanov, Igor Mel'chuk and O. S. Kulagina, and to contemporary Western machine translation theory by American and British researchers, especially V. Yngve, Y. Bar-Hillel, W. H. Locke and A. D. Booth.
13. See, for example, [I. Revzin and V. Rozenzweyg](#) [*sic*] 1966.
14. The term 'sopostavitel'naia lingvistika' (contrastive linguistics) or (more often) 'sopostavitel'naia stilistika' (comparative stylistics) was not used by Fedorov in either the 1953 or 1958 editions of *Introduction to Translation Theory* or more generally at that time. Efim [Etkind](#) (1959) first used the term 'comparative stylistics' from 1959, titling an article 'Perevod i sopostavitel'naia stilistika' (Translation and comparative stylistics). The term must have been brought into Russian, perhaps by Etkind himself, after the publication of [Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet's](#) (1958) *Stylistique comparée du français et de l'anglais*, which would be followed by Alfred [Malblanc's](#) (1961) *Stylistique comparée du français et de l'allemand*. Fedorov, too, later used the term and consciously worked in the field, titling a 1971 monograph 'Ocherki obshchei i sopostavitel'noi stilistiki' (Essays on general and comparative stylistics).
15. Revzin and Rozentsveig refer repeatedly to Vinay and Darbelnet's and Malblanc's work, in subsections four and five respectively.
16. Soviet structural linguistics was based much less on work by Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913) than on research by Soviet linguist Lev Shcherba (1880–1944) and, to a much lesser extent, the French linguist Lucien Tesnière (1893–1954). For comparison, [Revzin and Rozentsveig](#) (1964) refer to Saussure and Tesnière in two subsections each, but to Shcherba in eight subsections (numbered continuously in the book).
17. See [note 12](#) for the names of notable computational linguistics pioneers in the USSR and the West.
18. For a history of Soviet cybernetics, see [Gerovitch 2002](#).
19. [Revzin and Rozentsveig](#) (1964, 57) note that their Russian terms correspond directly to 'source language' and 'target language', giving the English and French terms alongside them.
20. Revzin and Rozentsveig refer to the 1962 publication of *Syntactic Structures* in the Soviet linguistics journal *Novoe v lingvistike* (News in Linguistics). Chomsky's original text had appeared in 1957 in the USA.

21. Jakobson himself attended a gathering of the Tartu-Moscow school in 1966 (Sütiste and Salupere 2021).
22. Cf., for example, Pym 2016 and Ayvazyan and Pym 2017.
23. That is, including questions of the stylistics of artistic speech [translator's note: implying 'literary' speech].
24. The reference here is to Locke and Booth 1955.
25. 'Initial language' corresponds to 'source language' in English.
26. Bold type in original.
27. 'Translating language' corresponds to 'target language' in English.

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19 Poland, 1968

'Noble plagiarism' and other paradoxes

Ewa Rajewska

Edward Balcerzan's early concept of a 'latent translation' (*tłumaczenie utajone*) as a case of paradoxical 'noble plagiarism' characterises well both the Polish reflection on the art of literary translation in the 1960s and the core of Balcerzan's own translation concepts.

The Poznań school and literary translation studies

Balcerzan (b. 1937) is a lifelong affiliate of the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań (a student, assistant, adjunct, associate professor and professor), a co-founder of Polish structural-semiotic literary studies – the dominant paradigm of literary research in Poland from the 1960s to the late 1980s, influential well into the 2000s – and, with Jerzy Ziomek, a founder of what is known as the Poznań school of translation research ([Szymańska 2014, 2016](#); [Costantino 2015](#)), still in bloom. He is a literary theorist and historian of twentieth-century literature, as well as an essayist, poet and literary translator, particularly of Russian poetry, who has underlined the role of artistic translation in national culture, especially literature, from his earliest scholarly texts on.

Literary translations should be read and studied as independent literary works of art, claims Balcerzan. Already in his widely resonant – and translated – early article 'Poetyka przekładu artystycznego' (The poetics of artistic translation) (1968), he postulated that the poetics of artistic translation should become a subject of in-depth literary studies as a separate humanistic subdiscipline ([Balcerzan 2020a](#): 24). Balcerzan's paper 'La traduction, art d'interpréter', prepared for a 1968 Bratislava conference, which, under the headline "Translation as an art", was intended to create a platform for a pan-European discussion on emerging

translation studies, opened the post-conference publication edited by James S. Holmes with Frans de Haan and Anton Popovič (1970). 'All artistic communication, whether poetry, short story or novel, is always formulated in two languages: in the natural language and in the language of the literary tradition of the given culture', wrote Balcerzan (1970, 6). His conclusion may sound quite revolutionary:

The translation of artistic communications is, therefore, a change of the two systems. In translating a poem, a drama or a novel, it is thus necessary not only to cross the border between the natural languages L_1 and L_2 , but also to make a simultaneous passage through the border between the two literary traditions: T_1 and T_2 (Balcerzan 1970: 7, translation mine – E. R.).

True, this is not yet a suggestion that the underlying mechanism amounts to translating a literary tradition into another literary tradition, but it is considerably close.

The concept of 'artistic translation' in Balcerzan's writing stemmed from his Russian-language readings, especially of Korney Chukovsky, Efim Etkind and Victor Koptilov (Szczerbowski 2011, 11, 74). Balcerzan and the Poznań school – or the Poznań tradition perhaps, as the group has not developed any consistent innovative methodology to study translation (Kraskowska 2015) – have been literary-oriented. Poznań scholars, led by their mentors, excelled in comparative microanalysis of literary texts. They emphasised the interpretative nature of literary translation, were interested especially in reception and the historical (diachronic) aspect of the workings of translations in the receiving literature (Costantino 2015: 24) and sought traces of the translator's creative presence at every level of the text organisation (de Bończa Bukowski and Heydel 2019, 33). The theoretical framework of their research was structuralism, allied with semiotics and literary communication theory. Structuralism – allowing literary scholars to perceive their research as free from ideological taint, objective and, consequently, reliable – was seen at the time as an alternative to Marxism, which had dominated the academic world in the Soviet Block after the Second World War in its vulgarised and doctrinal version. Associating oneself with structuralism implied the scholar's resistance to the dominant system; thus, adherence to the structuralist approach in Poland in the 1960s and 1970s was a political gesture to an extent (Kraskowska 2015, 119).

Latent translation: Jasiński and Mayakovsky

Balcerzan's concept of a 'latent translation', formulated in his doctoral dissertation (1968) and slightly honed in his later collection of translational essays (1998), resonates well with the aforementioned notions. Balcerzan devoted a subchapter of his doctoral monograph to an artful, elaborate analysis of a poem 'Pieśń o głodzie' (A song of hunger) (1922) by Polish author Bruno Jasiński (1901–38). Jasiński was a Futurist poet affiliated with the communist left. He worked as a press correspondent in Paris for several years, but after publishing a controversial novel *Je brûle Paris* (I Burn Paris) (1929) was expelled from France, emigrated to the USSR, acquired Soviet citizenship and, finally accused of 'ideological alienation', was sentenced to death and executed (Jaworski 2009). Balcerzan analysed and interpreted Jasiński's 1922 poem both as an original work – a revolutionary poem with an agitational function – and as a 'latent paraphrasis' of 'Облако в штанах' (A cloud in trousers) (1915) by Vladimir Mayakovsky. Balcerzan argued that the paraphrasis was not plagiarism, but rather a deliberately designed communication strategy, a latent artistic polemics between Jasiński and the Russian poet. Vladimir Mayakovsky (1893–1930) was also a Futurist, the leading poet of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and of the early Soviet period, spokesman for the Communist Party. He became increasingly alienated from Soviet reality and finally committed suicide.

In 1998, when he reworked his doctoral chapter for publication in the collection of translational essays, Balcerzan described latent translation as a form of 'noble plagiarism' (1998: 55–80): noble because by means of an intelligible intertextual allusion nobly enriching the target literature. The concept of 'noble plagiarism' is Balcerzan's flamboyant and very skilful defence of a certain type of cryptotranslation (*kryptoprzekład*), a text that is a translation of a foreign-language original, but that hides this fact and tries to pass itself off as an original work, signed only with the name of the translator as the actual author. In that sense, cryptotranslation could be perceived as the exact opposite of pseudotranslation, defined as 'a textual practice aimed at highlighting the direct descendancy of a text from a class of other texts belonging to a different language and culture, where a specific source text does not exist' (Rambelli 2019: 441–2), or more simply as a 'translation that is not a translation' (Bassnett 1998). Balcerzan's 'latent translation' differs from cryptotranslation in that it assumes that its translational origins could

be easily discovered; 'latent translation' may be regarded as a palimpsest, from under which the original text shines through. Importantly, Balcerzan does not actually use the term 'original text' (*oryginał*); instead he consistently refers to the 'prototype' (*pierwowzór*).

Jasieński's intentional translational latency is a device (*chwył*), wrote Balcerzan, alluding to a famous essay 'Art as device' (1917) by Viktor Shklovsky. In 1968, Balcerzan described the latency as 'a particular kind of literary allusion' (Balcerzan 1968: 219); in 1998, after Polish literary theory had assimilated Julia Kristeva and Gerard Genette, he would go on to describe it as 'a particular kind of intertextual play, a certain variation of work within the poetics of reminiscence' (Balcerzan 1998: 55). In his Polish poem, Jasieński uses metaphors similar to Mayakovsky's tropes, transforming the elements of the world depicted in Mayakovsky's work, and to some extent even borrowing the storyline. A significant shift concerns the subject matter of the work itself: Mayakovsky's poem could be called 'a song about the hunger for love', while Jasieński's work is 'a song about the hunger for bread' (Balcerzan 1968: 224). Yet Jasieński's obvious references to 'A cloud in trousers' do not by any means imply that he complacently joins Mayakovsky in his incitements for a social upheaval (and, after all, Mayakovsky's attitude here is also ambiguous). No: these are manifestations of Jasieński's latent polemics against Mayakovsky's perception of the poet's task, against his poetic individualism, even egotism, argues Balcerzan (1968: 254). It is not just a simple cryptotranslation, passing off a poem derived from Mayakovsky's work as Jasieński's own; it is a *latent* translation and, what is more, one with a polemic bent.

Paradoxes of latency

However, one might question how an act of plagiarism could be considered noble. According to Balcerzan, this paradox is perfectly explainable. As we read in his essay, 'latent translation' constitutes an enrichment of the semantics of the translated work, which lives a double life – that of the original poem and that of the latent paraphrasis – and therein lies its 'nobility'. 'Nobility' here is evidently synonymous with generosity, effective only on condition that the latency is recognised by the recipients, otherwise there can be no question of enriching the target literature.

Another paradox: how is this enrichment of literature possible when Jasieński's poem is, as Balcerzan clearly states, artistically inferior? Much of the burden of this task apparently rests on the artistic richness of the foreign-language prototype, which, again, must be recognised.

And the last one: is a translator – within the frame concept of ‘artistic translation’ – a true artist? Throughout his career as both a scholar and literary translator, Balcerzan has maintained a very clearly formulated, firm, even tenacious conviction of what a ‘translation proper’ is (and what a literary translator is allowed to do). Already in this early text we are given a definition: it ‘consists in metaphorical substitution (substitution of Mayakovsky’s metaphors with the translator’s own tropes, performed in accordance with the directives of the poetics of the original). In addition, it uses other laws of transformation, but always strives for stylistic equivalence’ (1968: 235). Examples of such translations are the ‘A cloud in trousers’ translations by Anatol Stern and Julian Tuwim, mentioned in his text (as flawed, anyway) and *not* Jasiński’s ‘A song of hunger’.

In Balcerzan’s view, a translator is not an artist but rather a craftsman, as literary translation approximates artistic creativity only on the lowest level of text construction (i.e., in the lexical and phraseological layer), and this ‘does not yet amount to creativity’ (2020b, 36). What really counts is the original creative impulse, the inspiration to write, to create a work of art, and in this field the translator’s creative power is limited by the inspiration of the original author, embedded in the text. This is exactly why the creative possibilities of a ‘latent translation’, which, noble or not, is ‘translation *improper*’, may seem so tempting for researchers, translators, poets and, potentially, also readers.

“‘Noble plagiarism”, or latent translation’

By Edward Balcerzan

Translated from Polish by Ewa Rajewska

Translation published with the kind permission of Edward Balcerzan. The translation is based on excerpts from chapter V ‘Włodzimierz Majakowski i Bruno Jasiński’, Edward Balcerzan’s doctoral dissertation, but the title used here is taken from his 1998 reworking of the text.

Source text: Edward Balcerzan, ‘*Tłumaczenia utajone. “Pieśń o głodzie” a “Obłok w spodniach”*’ (Latent translations. ‘A song of hunger’ and ‘A cloud in trousers’), from the doctoral thesis *Styl i poetyka twórczości dwujęzycznej Brunona Jasińskiego. Z zagadnień teorii przekładu (Style and Poetics of the Bilingual Works of Bruno Jasiński. Some problems of translation theory)*, 1968. Available online in the original language at <https://polona.pl/item-view/8611d6a8-fac4-47d1-a426-51c75a912374?page=8>

The latency of the translational genesis of a work lies in the fact that a given text – presented to the audience as an original work – contains many structural elements of a foreign-language work, written *earlier* by a different author, but the author of the given text does not inform the readers of the aforementioned dependence, although he assumes in advance that the truth will quickly come to light: it will be easily discovered by a researcher, a critic, a reader.

The latency is thus the *lack* of explicit authorial *instruction* to treat the work – in its entirety or in the indicated fragments – as a translation and (or) a paraphrase of a different foreign-language work.

The absence of instructions such as ‘paraphrase’, ‘reworking’, ‘imitation’, ‘modelled on ...’, ‘based on ...’, ‘on the motif of ...’, ‘according to ...’, ‘from ...’ etc. by no means implies an attempt to falsify the genetic relationship between the two works in different languages. The latency of the translation is not a common appropriation, it does not fall within

the circle of offences against the authorial privilege of ownership. It is a particular kind of literary allusion. ...

The latency – the lack of instruction – is designed to guarantee the cryptotranslation [*kryptoprzekład*] a ‘double life’, as it were. A latent translation belongs to a group of works that not only do not defy ambiguity in reading, but, on the contrary, heighten the multiplicity of recipients’ concretisations. A translation without instruction (or, better, a translation with the lack of instruction) is an attempt to ‘publish’ the work in two versions, in two semantic variants. Variant one – let’s label it M_1 – is for those readers who know nothing about the relationship between the two texts, and may not even know of the existence of a foreign-language source. They accept the latent translation as if it were a fully original work. Its designed system of ‘cross-references’ to the foreign author’s work is not activated. ...

The second variant – let’s label it M_2 – is a work for readers who recognise the latency. The more thorough their knowledge of the foreign-language prototype, the more fully the sense of the latency (polemical, apologetic, or whatever) is actualised. The ideal situation means comparative, analytical reading, when the reader not only remembers the foreign text well, but has it at hand. ...

It is noteworthy that the author who decides to make his translation latent relieves his work of its obligations to the code of the norms and evaluations of the art of translation. He does not have to be ‘faithful’ to the original, and a list of deviations cannot be evidence of his – badly noted – ‘arbitrariness’.

* * *

To all appearances, Bruno Jasiński had enough reasons to reckon with the double reception of his poem ‘Pieśń o głodzie’ (A song of hunger) – as an original work and a ‘latent paraphrasis’ of ‘Облако в штанах’ (A cloud in trousers) by Vladimir Mayakovsky.

‘A song of hunger’ was published in 1922.

‘A cloud in trousers’, Part I – translated by Anatol Stern – had been released a year earlier in the *Nowa Sztuka* (New Art) magazine; Mayakovsky’s entire poem was published a year later in Julian Tuwim’s translation as a separate book.¹ Despite all the distortions from the original, especially in Stern’s pioneering translation, the prototype of ‘A song of hunger’ was somehow present in the consciousness of a certain group of readers. ...

Jasiński could reckon that his translational latency would come to light very soon. All the more so because in the same year, 1922, his

other latencies became apparent: cryptotranslations from the Russian futurists in his volume *But w Butonierce* (A Shoe in a Buttonhole). Karol Irzykowski explicitly accused the young author of plagiarism. To Jasieński's attempted defence the caustic critic responded with an ironic 'Rehabilitation of the shoe', in which, accepting minor corrections, he further sharpened his charges.² ...

One thing seems certain. Jasieński must have reckoned with an addressee who, aware of the preceding latencies, would want to look for a prototype of 'A song of hunger' in the latest Russian lyric – and even that he would do so first. This attitude of the addressee was, as it were, 'calculated' into Jasieński's poem in advance. The author's friends read the 'Song's' references to the 'Cloud' as a device [*chwył*], a carefully conceived demonstration.

Anatol Stern wrote years later: 'in a few fragments of "A song of hunger" (Jasieński) almost *demonstratively* [emphasis mine – E. B.] tries out metaphors created previously by the author of "A cloud in trousers"'.³ On the other hand, Jasieński's demonstration may have reached a relatively small group of readers. His friends precisely. ...

Jasieński further secured 'A song of hunger' as an M₁ variant, namely by annotating his poem with a motto not from Mayakovsky but from Apollinaire. And the power of the motto's *instruction*, like that of the title or the genre term, he knew perfectly well. ...

For a certain group of readers, Jasieński did not envisage a game of deciphering utterances – it was redundant. Conceived as the next stage of the futuristic *Sturm und Drang*, 'A song of hunger' was at the same time intended to pave the way for other revolutionary circles. ... As a revolutionary poem, it did not need to invoke all extra-textual structures; it should have paid attention not so much to literary paradigms as to reality. It fulfilled a function that was not so much metalinguistic as conative or agitative. ...

It should be noted that variants M₁ and M₂ are, as it were, two poles of the meaning structure of 'A song of hunger', between which a whole archipelago of intermediate situations extends. I do not, therefore, rule out such decisions by the addressee that, regardless of the game of deciphering latents undertaken, will lead him to the basic layer of the poem's revolutionary meanings, and such situations of reception in which, although the prototype will be recognised, the 'references' to Mayakovsky will be read only as an act of solidarity with the poetry of the 'dawn that lit up in the East'. This would be, as we shall see, a very simplistic reading.

* * *

Mayakovsky, a poet distinguished by his extraordinary accuracy of self-commentary, in his poem, which he called 'the catechism of contemporary art', saw four chief ideas, 'four cries of four parts':

- I 'Down with your love',
- II 'Down with your art',
- III 'Down with your regime',
- IV 'Down with your religion'.⁴

It is noteworthy that the individual elements of this scheme – the particular 'down withs' – are not limited to the parts indicated in CiT.⁵ The idea of the negation of bourgeois art, expressed in Part II, also permeates Part III; it is here that Mayakovsky's famous confrontation with Igor Severyanin takes place, the words: 'How dare you call yourself a poet / and gray, like a quail, twitter away your soul!' are uttered.⁶ The idea of the negation of 'their' love from Part I is repeated in Part IV etc.

Thus, if – following Mayakovsky – we locate a given idea in a given *one* part of the poem, we do so because of *the place* of the basic *semantic concentration* of that idea.

With an analogous caveat, the following scheme for the construction of Jasiński's work can now be proposed:

- I 'Down with your art' (*Prologue*),
- II 'Down with your religion' (Part I, Part II),
- III 'Down with your regime' ('A song of engine drivers', Part III).

The first thing that strikes the reader is the absence of one element in the SoH scheme: 'down with your love'. This is a very significant difference. While the CiT protagonist's struggle with the world begins with the drama of the scorned lover, in Jasiński's work there is no erotic theme at all. Mayakovsky's poem could be called 'a song about the hunger for love'. Jasiński's work is 'a song about the hunger for bread'.

CiT Part I is set in a hotel room, in Odessa. The poem's protagonist, a poet – the fact that he is a poet is made clear from later sections of the work – awaits the arrival of his beloved, Maria. They made an appointment for four o'clock in the afternoon; it's already past eight, nine, ten. Midnight. With his face at the window, the enormous, anxiety-ridden poet reflects on a love that is not yet here, that is yet to be. The poet cannot control his nerves, they seem to jump out of him and start circling the room in a mad dance. The theme of madness, of the split personality, broken into 'I' and 'not I', is repeated in different variations. Finally, Maria

appears. She came to inform him that she was getting married. To someone else, of course. The protagonist notes the successive phases of his own reaction to this news. First a complete, dead calm. Then a reminder of recent promises. Resentment. Argument. The telephone rings, it is the poet's mother. Her son tells her about his illness, which he calls 'a heart fire'. Further on, the story only moves to the level of demented visions. The image of the heart set alight evokes the image of a real fire with a firefighter's rescue operation. One cannot jump out of the burning building because it is one's own heart. One cannot continue to speak: it is as if words are being burned in the brain ...

SoH Part I is set in some dreadful city. It is nighttime. The protagonist, a poet, consumed by hunger fever, alone in a shabby room, experiences demented visions. The room reminds him of the inside of a giant mouth; it is moving, getting increasingly violent. Driven to the extreme, the poet jumps out of the window headfirst. But he cannot die, he cannot stop himself, he bounces off the cobbles like a ball. Some people surround him, launch a rescue operation. An ambulance arrives. It seems to the poet that Renia (the name of Jasieński's sister), whom he knows to be dead, has come to him. He thanks her for coming. Meanwhile, the crowd of rescuers transforms into a crowd of 'fierce people with dogs', menacing, cruel ...

The same plot pattern: 1) loneliness, struggling with madness, 2) catastrophe, rescue operation, 3) the thought of the closest person (mother, Renia) who can accept the protagonist's complaint but who cannot prevent the evil, is, in detail, activated in SoH differently than in CiT.

The dissimilarity of the plot motivations of the prototype and the latent translation is overlaid by an extraordinarily dense network of similarities between *metaphorical situations*. The 'source images' are subjected in Jasieński's work to transformations, characteristic of the art of translation in general: substitution, inversion, reduction and addition of new elements. ...

As we have stated, the 'hunger for love' Jasieński substitutes with the 'hunger for bread'. ...

There is no love and no negation of love in SoH, but there is a woman, Renia, a sister, a figure of memory, introduced into the work in the *sui generis* 'pre-action' of the poem – with a dedication:

TO RENIA
on the anniversary of her death
7 – V – 1922
INSTEAD OF FLOWERS

... While there is no parallel in SoH and CiT between *the absence* of Renia and the absence of Maria, there is a striking identity of the roles played by Renia in Jasieński's poem and by the poet's mother in Mayakovsky's poem.

They both appear when the protagonists are threatened by the crowd. The mother in CiT and Renia in SoH come when the crowd that was involved in the rescue – during the 'heart fire' and the jump from the window, respectively – suddenly becomes a hostile crowd:

In glittering helmets,
they carelessly start intruding.
Hey, somebody tell them:
No boots allowed!
with a sizzling heart one has to be prudent (CiT).
a snivelling whimper ...
clings to your dress, creeps towards your hands.
I have no strength to run away.
fierce little people with dogs are chasing me (SoH).

Both women are not directly involved in these incidents. They do not see what is happening: the mother from CiT is somewhere far away, on the other side of the telephone line. Renia appears in poet's thoughts, among the green palms 'swinging in the skull' – she is even further away. On the other side of life. It is noteworthy, however, how similarly both women have been included in poetic monologues:

Hello!
Who's speaking?
Mother?
Mother!
Your son has a wonderful sickness!
Mother!
His heart has been set alight! (CiT)

Renia!
is that you?
how good that you came.
you stroke my face with your velvety hands (SoH)

...

While there is a similarity of event *patterns* in the initial parts of both poems, in the later parts of his work Jasieński moves further and

further away from the plot of the Russian prototype. He distances himself especially in the sense that Mayakovsky's work shows a significant *decrease* in plot (the number of events decreases; the time and place of action become indeterminate, 'flickering'; the states of experiences and consciousness dominate over the so-called happening, one might say, essence subordinates existence to itself), while in SoH the plot is still maintained and even intensified. ...

What is evidenced by the increase in dissimilarity of the CiT and SoH storylines with the similarity of the two ideological plans?

It is, no doubt, like a further stage of the operation to latent the relationship between SoH and its Russian prototype. The confrontation of the two plots seems to show that Jasiński *took his cue* from Mayakovsky, one might say: he drew breath in CiT Part I, only to move further and further away from the model. He started the poem as an M_2 variant and decided to finish it as an M_1 variant. It must be stressed that this distancing does not have the character of a tiebreaking with CiT. On the contrary. The distancing here involves an intensification of the translator's activity, which is expressed in a change of *translation technique*.

While in Part I Jasiński mainly used the technique of the so-called 'translation proper' (*przekład właściwy*), the later parts of SoH were in many places given the character of 'translation-interpretation' (*przekład-interpretacja*). 'Translation proper' consists in metaphorical substitution (substitution of Mayakovsky's metaphors with the translator's own tropes – performed in accordance with the directives of the poetics of the original). In addition, it uses other laws of transformation, but always strives for *stylistic* equivalence. 'Translation-interpretation', on the other hand, leads to a change of style. Transformations do not occur in some single code, but – simultaneously – in several sign systems. SoH is not only the transfer of a work from the code of the Russian language into the code of the Polish language, but also the transfer of the same work from the code of the lyric into the code of the epic – obviously, of certain CiT sequences only. What Mayakovsky formulates directly in his protagonist's monologues, Jasiński often *illustrates* with a series of events. What CiT expresses through stylistic operations, SoH simply *narrates*. ...

The *interpretation* of Mayakovsky's work also encompasses the layer of the highest – fundamental – meanings of Jasiński's poem. It consists in *shifting the emphasis of the importance* of the individual elements of the ideological structure of CiT. Consequently, it has the character of a *dialogue* between Jasiński and Mayakovsky, moreover, of a dispute – and this *dispute* is legible only to the addressee of SoH in M_2 .

What is the subject of this polemic, what is at stake? The protagonists of both poems are poets. Moreover, through the autobiographical context evoked, to some extent they represent their *authors*.

The stake, then, is the poet's participation in the revolutionary transformations of the twentieth century, the question of who the creator is to be in relation to the mass of people – the mass, which, as is indisputable for both Russians and Poles, constitutes the basic driving force behind the changes in historical formations. On the one hand, the poet is someone special, who in a sense possesses the powers of a prophet (bard), a leader, and has *the right to be alone*, often wronged by the crowd, not understood, beaten. This is the model offered to both futurists by the Romantic-Modernist tradition. The strategy of scandal also fits into this model. But on the other hand, the poet is only one of many (the power to bring about change lies beyond him), he is also, as a Futurist, convinced of the primacy of *life*, of reality over art.

This is the supreme *antinomy* of the New Art. The artist-prophet or the artist-servant. The poet's 'I' in conflict with the universal 'you' or, conversely, the poet's 'I' reconciled with the universal 'we'. ...

According to Roman Jakobson (who expressed this judgement for the first time in 1930, immediately after Mayakovsky's death, and repeated it a couple of times in later publications from 1956 and 1959), the antinomy in question was not only dramatic, but in the full sense of the word *tragic*. Mayakovsky was unable (he did not have the strength; at any rate, he ran out of it in 1930) to reconcile lyricism with agitational aims. Individualism – with massification. The idea of poetry expressing personality – with the precepts of didacticism, 'slogans and incantations', 'agitations' and 'theses'. The antinomy of style and poetics must eventually have made itself known in the life of the poet himself. Suicidal death is no accident, claims Jakobson. Mayakovsky's suicidal death *took place repeatedly* in his work before it became a real, extra-literary fact. ...

The dialogue between Jasiński and Mayakovsky involves the fact that they both take up the very problem of the antinomy of the New Art, they both analyse it in several approaches, and it is precisely their positions – in their respective contexts – that do not agree. ... Jasiński's protagonist wants to be a new prophet and 'one of many'. The poet trampled by the crowd – is resurrected. ...

* * *

There is no denying the obvious: the poem by the Polish Futurist is – in artistic terms – considerably poorer than its Russian prototype. And it

is this scale that ultimately determines the work's place in the literary tradition.

This fact in no way diminishes the issue of SoH as an extremely characteristic case of translation latency; ultimately, to say that Mayakovsky surpassed Jasiński, and not only Jasiński, is no revelation. What is a revelation (of sorts), however, seems to be *the heroism* of the Polish poet, who dared to incorporate his text into one, and only one, set of interpretations. One could say: he condemned his 'Song' to the 'Cloud', he chained his poem to a foreign-language work. In this gesture we see both the adoration of the greatest Futurist and the – futuristic! – aspiration not to create *isolated* literary works, but certain *literary situations* that are more complex than 'just a book'.

The heroism of a literature that wants to be more than it really is. In this attempt lies the fundamental value of 'A song of hunger'.

Notes

1. See *Endnotes* in Majakowski 1959, 471–2.
2. Irzykowski 1922, 4.
3. Stern 1964, 110.
4. Mayakovsky called his poem 'a catechism of contemporary art' made up of 'four cries' in his Preface to the 1918 edition of 'A cloud in trousers'.
5. In his 1998 reworking of this text, Balcerzan added a footnote here: 'In the following sections of this essay, I abbreviate "A cloud in trousers" with CiT, and "A song of hunger" with SoH. (I retain a vestige of the old "belief" that abbreviations, symbols, diagrams, tables will promote greater precision of the argument, its objectification. This was, of course, an illusion – E. B., 1998).'
6. Mayakovsky (2008), *Backbone Flute*, translated by Andrey Kneller. All subsequent quotations from Mayakovsky's poem will come from this translation. *Backbone Flute* is an electronic book, without pagination.

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20 Ukraine, 1968–1972

Beyond ‘hearsay’: Viktor Koptilov and the disciplinary development of translation studies

Iryna Odrekhivska

Participating at the International Symposium on Achievements in a Theory of Translation, held in Moscow in October 1978 and organised by the Literary Translation Council of the Soviet Writers Union, James Holmes admitted in his keynote paper,

I have read only that small tip of the translation-theory iceberg that juts above the surface of Western thinking by having been translated. Far too little has been translated, far too much has not, and hence the work of a great many theorists, from Čukovskij via Revzin and Rozencvejk [sic] to *Koptilov* and Kommisarov (to mention but a few) *remains for me little more than hearsay* (Holmes 1988, 99; emphasis mine).

Whether this comment constituted a courteous gesture towards the organisers or a genuine acknowledgement of his unfamiliarity (‘hearsay’) with the developments in translation studies behind the Iron Curtain, it presently signifies the lack of interepistemic dialogue in knowledge production between these two geopolitical spaces in the second half of the twentieth century and reflects Holmes’s lack of detailed first-hand knowledge of the seminal publications by Viktor Koptilov (1930–2009), a leading Ukrainian translation scholar, literary translator and professor at Kyiv University.

Indeed, Western knowledge of Viktor Koptilov was sparse, limited largely to his 1979 French-language article, ‘La traduction en Ukraine’, published in *Babel*, or his earlier 1962 Russian-language article, ‘Transformatsiya khudozhestvennogo obraza v poeticheskom perevode’ (Verbal image transformation in poetry translation), based on a paper

delivered at the legendary First Conference on Literary Translation Theory and Criticism in Leningrad in June 1961. The latter article garnered greater attention in East-Central European scholarship (for instance, see [Balcerzan 2013](#)), often erroneously positioning Koptilov as a Russian scholar, despite the overwhelming majority of his output, including all his monographs, being in Ukrainian. In fact, Koptilov's work was instrumental in establishing translation studies as an autonomous discipline with its own distinct structure, terminology, methodology and research agenda in Ukraine during the 1960s and 1970s. To date, one of the most detailed explorations of Viktor Koptilov's theoretical framework, aimed at introducing his work to Western academia, can be found in the chapter 'In the realm of translation studies in Ukraine: Re-visiting Viktor Koptilov's translation concept' published in the volume *Going East: Discovering new and alternative traditions in translation studies* ([Odrekhivska 2016](#)).

The present chapter presents, for the first time in English, four excerpts from Koptilov's milestone publications – his articles 'Vid naukovoho analizu do poetychnoho syntezy: teoretychni aspekty perekladu' (From a scholarly analysis to poetic synthesis: Theoretical aspects of translation; [Koptilov 1966](#)), 'Syla okrylenoho slova' (The force of the transferred word; [Koptilov 1967](#)), 'Khudzhnii pereklad i strukturna typolohiya' (Literary translation and structural typology; [Koptilov 1969](#)) and 'Perekladoznavstvo yak okrema haluz philolohiyi' (Translation studies as a separate branch of philology; [Koptilov 1971b](#)), all written in Ukrainian and pre-dating Holmes's manifesto. These texts served as the cornerstone for Koptilov's subsequent landmark monographs, *Aktualni pytannia ukrainskoho khudozhnogo perekladu* (Topical issues of Ukrainian literary translation; [Koptilov 1971a](#)) and *Pershotvir i pereklad: Rozdymu i sposterezhennia* (Original and translation: Reflections and observations; [Koptilov 1972](#)). They also laid the ground for his textbook, *Teoriya i praktyka perekladu* (Theory and practice of translation; [Koptilov 1982](#)), which solidified translation studies as a subject and specialisation at Kyiv University. Yet to fully comprehend the significance of these early works, it is crucial to consider the broader context of Ukrainian translation scholarship, which was subject to significant constraints at the time. (For a more in-depth exploration of the history of translation studies in Ukraine, see [Odrekhivska 2021](#).)

In the Soviet Union, specialised translation was predominantly conducted into Russian. This linguistic hegemony was driven by several factors. Notably, the exclusive centralisation of specialised information in Russian enabled stringent control, ideological filtering and monitoring

of dissemination. Moreover, Russian's status as a language of power and science reinforced its position as the Soviet lingua franca. The ideological and political marginalisation of languages other than Russian, including Ukrainian, within specialised fields during the Soviet era resulted in a predominant focus on literary translation in the Ukrainian discourse of translation studies, consequently shaping Koptilov's conceptualisation of the discipline around artistic translation. Furthermore, Koptilov developed his research career in the times when Ukrainian literary translations were systematically compared to their Russian counterparts and deliberately relegated to an inferior status, often dismissed as irrelevant in the presence of the Russian version. These were also the years when many avant-garde and experimental Ukrainian translators were proscribed and prevented from publishing their translations. On top of that, Soviet-era humanities were constrained by a rigid methodological monism, specifically Marxist-Leninist ideology. This restrictive framework was incompatible with the plurality of perspectives necessary for robust translation studies. A scholar of erudition with a global modernist mindset, Koptilov had to navigate this constrictive environment to reveal the inherent complexity of translation. And he strategically built his career trajectory to elevate the status and enhance the capacities of Ukrainian discourse in translation studies.

First, Koptilov made a pioneering effort to systemically examine the history of Ukrainian literary translation, a field previously unexplored. He thus initiated a new vector of scholarly discussion in 1964 with the defence of his doctoral thesis, *Narys z istorii ukrainskoho poetychnoho perekladu: dozhovtnevyi period* (Historical Outline of Ukrainian Poetry Translation: Pre-October period), which presented Ukrainian literary translation history from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century. Koptilov conceptualised the history of translation as threefold: (1) a progressive history of approximating the original text through successive translations; (2) a history of the development of translation expertise; and (3) a history of translation's evolving role and status within culture (Koptilov 1971b). Koptilov's conceptual innovation for his time was the expansion of translation analysis through a historical lens. His analytical examples highlighted a commitment to historical dialogicality in the treatment of translation, recognising two distinct conceptualisations of 'translation': the modern (pertaining to the researcher or critic) and the historical (characteristic of the translator and their era). In view of this, Koptilov developed a detailed typology of six free translation types, emphasising the necessity of considering the conventions governing translation and the linguistic resources available within a particular

period. This laid the foundation for Koptilov's subsequent development of theoretical perspectives on the subject.

In 1966, Koptilov introduced a three-stage framework for the translation process in his article 'From a scholarly analysis to poetic synthesis: Theoretical aspects of translation' (the first excerpt). This framework – comprising analysis, the search for equivalent means and construction of the intermediate blueprint, and synthesis – was further developed in his 1972 monograph *Pershotvir i pereklad* (Original and Translation), which included a fourth stage: 'continuous translator's revision of their interpretation, even if it has been published' (Koptilov 1972, 80–1). This concept implied a cyclical process where the translator returns to the initial analytical stage but at a more advanced level, considering both the original and their own translation.

The following year, in 1967, Koptilov expanded his theoretical framework in the article 'The force of the transferred word' (the second excerpt). Here, he advocated for the principles of systematicity and contextuality in translation, considering the interplay of two epochs, two environments (national, cultural, geographic) and two stylistic systems – Koptilov's so-called 'triad of constraints'. This perspective of viewing translation as contextualisation was further developed by Koptilov in the 1972 paper 'Criteria for translation quality assessment', in which he states:

Certainly, we are not talking about rewriting 'Hamlet' from a contemporary perspective, but about the subtle strokes with which a translator – a child of their time and environment – often involuntarily shades the author's individual thoughts ... All this is natural, and it is simply impossible to imagine the art of translation without such nuances ... All these manifestations of the translator's individuality not only do not destroy the ideational-imagery structure of the original work but, on the contrary, give it new life, revealing the relevance of the original for its new readers (Koptilov 1972, 59).

In his 1969 article (the third excerpt), Koptilov articulated the complex task of moving from general translation principles to concrete typological applications, scrutinising the concept of the ideational-imagery structure as the primary focus of literary translation. Building on this, his 1971 work, 'Translation studies as a separate branch of philology' (the fourth excerpt), marked a culminating point in his research by defining translation 'as a process in which the translated work, as a literary work,

preserves the ideational-imagery structure of the original and acts as its semantic-stylistic parallel' (Koptilov 1971b, 54), developing the methodology of translation analysis and explicitly establishing translation studies as a distinct discipline in the framework of philological sciences in Ukraine. The same year, Koptilov consolidated all these papers and presented his habilitation thesis for the Doctor of Science degree, the highest academic qualification attainable in the Soviet system, followed by the publication of the aforementioned monographs in 1971 and 1972.

Between 1972 and 1975, Koptilov held a fellowship at the University of Paris VIII, where he taught Slavic Studies, made his first translations from French and had an opportunity to present a paper on 'The individuality of the author and the personality of the translator' at the International Congress of Slavists in Warsaw in 1973. Upon returning to Ukraine, Koptilov was awarded the title of Professor at Kyiv University in 1977 and joined the newly launched specialised council for the defence of dissertations in translation theory and practice. Between 1975 and 1982, he supervised six doctoral theses on the translation of poetry, drama, and translation theory and criticism. In 1982, Koptilov returned to Paris to work in the education sector of the UNESCO Secretariat, where he remained until 1990. Subsequently, he resumed his academic career by teaching East European culture at the National Institute for Oriental Languages and Civilizations in Paris. Collaborating with Professor K. de Greve, he developed a degree curriculum titled 'Ukraine, its History, and Culture' for French students. Thus, since the 1980s, while actively involved in translating from French and German, his career as a translation theorist (with its peak in the 1970s) gave way to a focus on cultural and sociolinguistic studies under Paris-based affiliations. However, his theoretical contributions were visionary for Ukrainian scholarship, and he is now widely recognised as a 'classic of translation studies in Ukraine' (Zorivchak 2006, 167) and the 'founder of the contemporary Ukrainian school of translation studies' (Ivasiuk 2010, 244).

'From a scholarly analysis to poetic synthesis: theoretical aspects of translation' (excerpt)

By Viktor Koptilov

Translated from Ukrainian by Iryna Odrekivska

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Source text: Viktor Koptilov, 'Vid naukovoho analizu do poetychnoho syntezu: teoretychni aspekty perekladu'. *Radianske literaturoznavstvo*, 5 (1966): 45–56

Arbitrarily, the entire translation process can be divided into three stages. Arbitrarily, because these stages are not separated from each other by a Great Wall of China, but are connected by subtle transitions.

The first stage of the work is a comprehensive analysis of the original, considering its content, semantics and style, that is, those formal means that the author uses to express the content. At this stage, one must be able to identify the defining features of its rhythmic, phonetic, syntactic, and other structures, to reveal the basic structural elements of its form. It goes without saying that this stage also includes determining the place of the translated work within the framework of the corresponding literature, literary trend and the creativity of this author.

The subsequent phase involves the search for equivalent means in the target language and its literary tradition to convey the most important features of the source text. The main thing at this stage is determining the path that the translator will take, choosing the means that they will use at the final stage of their work. Between the original text and the translated text, the translator's consciousness constructs an 'intermediate instance' that is the result of analysing the first text and simultaneously serves as a blueprint for constructing the second. This 'blueprint' takes the form of a certain abstract model that fixes the essential features

and ignores the insignificant features of the text. Thus, from observing the concreteness of the original, the translator moves to a certain generalised conclusion, and then, based on it, creates a new concreteness – the translation.

The final stage of the translator's work is the opposite of analysis. It is the synthesis of a new artistic whole from the features identified in the original and transformed according to the characteristics of the language into which the translation is being made. The greatest danger that lurks for the translator at the third stage of his work is the loss of poetic quality.

A translator reaches the highest peak when all the links of his creativity – analysis, selection of equivalents and synthesis – are in harmony, when the connection between them is strong and constant ... And the theory of literary translation will be able to successfully develop only when it encompasses the entire broad range of problems associated with the multifaceted nature of translation activity.

'The force of the transferred word' (excerpt)

By Viktor Koptilov

Translated from Ukrainian by Iryna Odrekivska

Translation published with the kind permission of Platon Koptilov

Source text: Viktor Koptilov, 'Syla okrylenoho slova'. *Movoznavstvo*, 4 (1967): 45–53

Those *translator-artists* (literal translation of *perekladachi-khudozhnyky*) who are fully aware of their task never limit themselves to the conscientious transfer of the content and form of the original work [*pershotvir* – literally 'primary/initial work'], but strive to reveal its fullest potential within the context of their native literature. A translator-artist always seeks to determine the place of their translation within the native literature, considering its historical path and envisioning its distant future. They understand that in translation, as in art, there are no definitive or absolute solutions to artistic challenges, and nor can there be. A translator always faces a choice. This choice is guided not only by the desire to capture the author's intent but also by the demands set by the development of their target literature and language ...

However, artistic translation is by no means a kingdom of arbitrariness where anything goes. Reality places quite strict constraints on the work of a translator.

Firstly, a translator must consider *two epochs* – the time when the original author lived and the time in which they themselves live. Correlating the ideological issues of these two eras is often a rather complex task, and the success of its resolution determines whether Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Homer's *Iliad* or Rustaveli's *The Knight in the Tiger's Skin* will continue to live in our time or remain museum exhibits burdened with scholarly commentaries and interpretations.

Secondly, a translator must be aware of *two different contexts* (national, cultural or geographic) – the one in which the original author lived, and the one in which they themselves grew up and work. Correlating the realities, customs and norms of behaviour of these two contexts is also a considerable translation challenge.

Thirdly, a translator must consider *two stylistic systems* – the established ways of expressing content, characteristic of the original language and the language of translation. Each literary translation is the result of two forces connected with both of the mentioned systems. The problem of unfamiliar genres or alien systems of versification, incompatible with a certain literary tradition – the translator works with all this to make a foreign work ‘their own’.

No translator can escape the enchanted circle of these three problems: it limits the translator’s freedom and ties the translator’s work closely to the reality behind the original text ... Before undertaking the translation of a particular work, the translator must feel its artistic atmosphere, understand what is in it, what could be, what is not and could not be. With this understanding, they will have an ‘operational space’ for the inevitable compensations in every translation, they will consciously sacrifice pawns to help the original author win the chess game – to triumphantly establish the translated work in the culture of another people.

'Literary translation and structural typology' (excerpt)

By Viktor Koptilov

Translated from Ukrainian by Iryna Odrekhivska

Translation published with the kind permission of Platon Koptilov

Source text: Viktor Koptilov, 'Khudozhniy pereklad i strukturna typolohiya'. *Movoznavstvo*, 5 (1969): 29–35

It is no surprise that typological studies have yet to encompass literary translation. The problem is complicated by the dual nature of literary translation, which requires a combination of two aspects – the scientific and the artistic. A careless and overly simplistic schematisation of the unique features of literary translation risks degenerating into a meaningless game of pseudoscientific concepts, detached from practice, from that 'evergreen tree of life', of which Goethe's Mephistopheles once spoke. However, it is now time to move beyond general considerations to the specific application of structural typology in the study of literary translation. Not because it is supposedly a sign of the times or a 'fashionable pursuit', but because in the very complex mechanism of translating a literary work, it is necessary to identify certain reference points that would help the scientific analysis of this important area and would encourage some practising translators to reconsider or refine their positions. ... It is precisely structural typology that can bring systematicity to the study of literary translation.

The most important distinguishing feature of analysing translation is that its structure is revealed through comparison with the structure of the original ... Given this, the true subject of literary translation is not individual words, phrases, or sentences, but the *ideational-imagery structure* of the original work. This structure is comprised of the most significant images interconnected by the author's central idea, and it is

the richness of these interrelationships that gives a particular work its unique character. The defining elements of this structure, embodied in language, can be found at various levels of linguistic hierarchy (from phonological to syntactic).

It is not only the specific forms in which the original is embodied in the new linguistic material that should be compared, but also the principles of this embodiment. These principles depend not on the peculiarities of one language or another, but on the depth of the translator's penetration into the ideational-imagery structure of the work being translated ...

The translator's personality is primarily revealed in those elements of the translation that have no direct equivalents in the original. Since no literary translation can entirely avoid such elements, the translator's personality is reflected to some degree in every translation. The task of translation criticism is not to eliminate the translator's personality from the translation (which is impossible), nor to demand a fuller expression of it (which would harm the objective representation of the original), but to find the optimal balance between the objective and the subjective in the translation.

The question arises: what exactly should be considered an inconsistency [in a translated text]? ... Inconsistencies or deviations in a translated text do not constitute a homogeneous group. They can be conditionally divided into three types: a) elements created taking into account the original author's ideology and poetics (sometimes the translator transfers them from other works by the author); b) neutral elements used to fill a rhythmic scheme, to preserve the sound of the rhyme, etc.; c) elements that contradict the ideational-imagery structure of the work being translated. It is clear that the ratio of these three groups of elements has a significant impact on the quality of the translation.

It should be emphasised that the totality of linguistic structures in a text at various levels, in their interaction, gives rise to a phenomenon of a new quality – the ideational-imagery structure of a literary work. It is precisely this interdependence of linguistic structures (as subordinate phenomena) and the ideational-imagery structure (as a governing phenomenon) that is the key to understanding the correlation of literary and linguistic concepts and methods in the analysis of literary translation.

'Translation studies as a separate branch of philology' (excerpt)

By Viktor Koptilov

Translated from Ukrainian by Iryna Odrekhivska

Translation published with the kind permission of Platon Koptilov

Source text: Viktor Koptilov, 'Perekladoznavstro yak okrema haluz philolohiyi'. *Movoznavstvo*, 2 (1971): 50–7

One of the urgent tasks in translation studies is to develop a clear definition of literary translation that corresponds to the level of development of modern science. There are dozens, if not hundreds, of definitions of literary translation, but there is still no consensus among researchers regarding the definition of the object of their study. ...

Building on the noteworthy elements of various definitions of literary translation, and taking into account the achievements of structural methods of studying literary text, our attempt is to put forward a synthetic definition of the translation of a literary work *as a process in which the translated work, as a literary work, preserves the ideational-imagery structure of the original (foreign literary work) and acts as its semantic-stylistic parallel*.

... The word 'parallel' stands in contrast to terms like 'reflection' or 'mirror image' in other definitions of translation, which can evoke the idea that the translator's work is of a mechanical nature. The phrase 'semantic-stylistic parallel' emphasises the creative (not copyist) nature of translation.

The proposed approach to the analysis of translation and the definition of the goal of literary translation is neither purely literary nor purely linguistic. It cannot be considered a mechanical combination of both principles, because their interaction, subordinated to a new task, gives birth to a new quality – translational analysis.

In light of all that has been said, the following theoretical branches of translation studies can be distinguished:

- I *General theory of translation*. ... Its focus is on the study of general principles in literary translation – the examination of the particular characteristics of the processual stages in a translator's work, the development of the fundamentals of scholarly analysis of translation, the formation and substantiation of the philosophical foundations of literary translation, the understanding of universal techniques of literary translation, independent of the peculiarities of a given, specific language. Partial and genre theories of translation are subordinate to the general theory of translation.
- II *Partial theories of translation*. There should be as many of them as there are languages in the world that come into contact through literary translation. Thus, based on the contacts between the Ukrainian and Russian languages and literatures, a partial theory of literary translation from Ukrainian into Russian should develop, as well as a similar theory of Ukrainian translation from Russian. The first of these theories will proceed from the expressive features, level of development, stylistic differentiation, and other characteristics of the Russian language, while the second will proceed from the corresponding features of the Ukrainian language.

By generalising the best achievements in the art of translation, partial theories are designed to collect, study and explain effective techniques for rendering foreign works into the native language.

- III *Typological theories of translation*. Relying on translations from various languages into one, their goal will be to analyse and generalise the experience of translating literary works in a particular genre (type) – prose, poetry or drama. The starting points of these theories are both the specific characteristics of the corresponding genres of literary creativity and the traditions that have developed in the poetry, prose and drama of the literature into which the translation is being made. An important task of typological theory is to suggest, when possible, a certain analogy in the recipient literary tradition to a foreign original, or conversely, to justifiably refute an apparent analogy and formulate a requirement to use such language means in the translation that would contribute to the adequate reproduction of the style of the original work.

These basic tenets allow for a clearer understanding of the content of such translation studies areas as translation criticism and translation history, which are closely connected to the triad of theoretical branches of translation studies.

- iv *Translation criticism* involves the analysis of specific translations (based on the principles of general translation theory) and their evaluation in comparison with the originals.
- v *Translation history* is the history of a gradual, sometimes interrupted, progress towards a more comprehensive representation of the original through multiple translations. It is also the history of the evolution of translation expertise, the history of the ever-deepening unfolding of the possibilities of the art of translation in general. The history of translation not only provides material for theoretical generalisations but can itself only be understood through the lens of certain theoretical frameworks.

In addition to the specific problems of translation studies found in the last two branches, literary studies and linguistics also play a role in the criticism and history of translation.

Literary-oriented criticism of translation evaluates the selection of works for translation based on their significance and characteristic qualities within the *œuvre* of the author being translated. It also examines the relationship between the creative individualities of the author and the translator, among other things. Linguistics-oriented criticism of translation evaluates translated texts from the perspective of language culture.

Literary exploration of translation history entails investigating the historical influence of translated foreign works on national literature and social life, as well as the converse: how the philosophical, political and aesthetic perspectives of a period shaped the choice of texts for translation and the techniques employed to render them. The linguistic study of translation history traces the historical development of linguistic means used to represent the content and style of original works in translations, comparing them to the development of the means in the national literary language.

At first glance, such a division of undeniably interconnected translation problems among different branches might seem dogmatic and scholastic: would it not be easier to address all issues together? However, experience shows that in the absence of proper problem differentiation, representatives of different philological fields attempt to solve their entire complex from the standpoint of their own field alone. This creates the

illusion of a comprehensive coverage of the problems of literary translation by a single author.

It is high time for translation studies to specialise in the same way that the study of original literary works has long done. After all, nowadays no one expects a single study to solve all the problems associated with a literary work, from the history of its conception to the specifics of its vocabulary. And the problems of literary translation are no simpler than those of an original work. ... Therefore, a differentiated approach is needed to the various problems associated with the creation and existence of literary translation.

Translation analysis is evolving into the nucleus of a new, fully fledged branch of philological science – translation studies – with its own distinct subject matter. This field focuses on the investigation of translation as a structurally organised literary whole, subordinating its constituent parts in the dialectical interaction of content and form.

From this, it follows that the dispute between linguists and literary scholars about whose ‘territory’ the study of literary translation belongs to is pointless. The study of translation involves a multitude of research methods. It is only necessary to clearly distinguish between them and not try to accomplish with the methods of one branch of philology what requires the application of methods from another.

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Literature and Translation

Translation Studies before 'Translation Studies' challenges the established historical narratives of 'translation studies' by showcasing some of the rich traditions of debate, research and theorising that happened around the world in the centuries prior to the supposed beginnings of the discipline. The volume includes selected extracts by scholars and translators from the 'nothing happened' period. Beginning in Ancient Rome, the volume moves through Medieval China and India, Early Modern Europe, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe, Africa, the Arab World and South America, before concluding with twentieth-century extracts from China, Brazil, Russia, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Ukraine and Poland.

The extracts are accompanied by essays that explore the ideas in the context of their time and link to the concepts of post-1972 translation studies. All of the extracts were originally written in languages other than English and most make their debut here in English translation, amplifying the accessibility and significance of these previously overlooked contributions.

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