Translation, Humour and Literature

Continuum Advances in Translation Studies
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Translation and Humour

Volume 1

Edited by
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Series Preface

The aim of this new series is to provide an outlet for advanced research in the broad interdisciplinary field of translation studies. Consisting of monographs and edited themed collections of the latest work, it should be of particular interest to academics and postgraduate students researching in translation studies and related fields, but also to advanced students studying translation and interpreting modules.

Translation studies has enjoyed huge international growth over recent decades in tandem with the expansion in both the practice of translation globally and in related academic programmes. The understanding of the concept of translation itself has broadened to include not only interlingual but also various forms of intralingual translation. Specialized branches or sub-disciplines have developed for the study of interpreting, audiovisual translation and sign language, amongst others. Translation studies has also come to embrace a wide range of types of intercultural encounter and transfer, interfacing with disciplines as varied as applied linguistics, comparative literature, computational linguistics, creative writing, cultural studies, gender studies, philosophy, postcolonial studies, sociology, and so on. Each provides a different and valid perspective on translation, and each has its place in this series.

This is an exciting time for translation studies, and the new *Continuum Advances in Translation Studies* series promises to be an important new plank in the development of the discipline. As General Editor, I look forward to overseeing the publication of important new work that will provide insights into all aspects of the field.

Jeremy Munday
General Editor
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Notes on Contributors

Delia Chiaro is Professor of English Language and Translation at the Advanced School in Modern Languages for Interpreters and Translators, University of Bologna at Forlì, Italy, and Chair of the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies in Translation, Languages and Culture. Since publishing *The Language of Jokes: Analysing Verbal Play* in 1992 (London, Routledge) she has combined her interest in verbally expressed humour with her passion for cinema by examining what exactly occurs when verbal humour in English is transformed into dubbed or subtitled filmic products. As well as considering the transformations which cinematic dialogues undergo, she is a keen observer of audience perception of translated humour and applies methodologies taken from the social sciences to the field of Translation Studies to examine recipients' reactions. Her publications include *Humor in Interaction*, co-edited with Neal Norrick (2009 John Benjamins), a chapter dealing with humour and translation in the *Primer in Humor Studies* (2008 Mouton De Gruyter) and a chapter on audiovisual translation in *The Routledge Companion to Translation Studies* edited by Jeremy Munday (2009).

As well as being the author of numerous publications, she has been invited to lecture across Europe, in Asia and New Zealand.

Rosa Maria Bollettieri Bosinelli is professor of English at the Advanced School of Modern Languages for Interpreters and Translators of the University of Bologna at Forlì, Italy, that she headed from 1992 to 1996. She chaired the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies on Translation, Languages and Cultures since its foundation (1999) until October 2005. In June 2000 she was elected President of the International James Joyce Foundation for a four-year mandate.

She has published extensively on James Joyce, the language of advertising, screen translation, political language, and metaphor. Her publications include *Oltre l'occidente. Traduzione e alterità culturale* (co-edited with Elena Di Giovanni, Milano: Bompiani, 2009); *Joyce and/in Translation* (co-edited with Ira Torresi, 2007); *Translation Studies Revisited* (co-edited with Susan

Bassnet and M. Ulrych, 1999); *Anna Livia Plurabelle di James Joyce nella traduzione di Samuel Beckett e altri* (1996) in collaboration with Umberto Eco; *Multimedia translation: which translation for which text?* (co-edited with C. Heiss, M. Soffritti, and S. Bernardini, 1999), *Multimedia Translation for Film, Television and the Stage* (co-edited with C. Heiss, 1996).

Christie Davies held a chair at the University of Reading, UK, for 20 years, and is a graduate of Cambridge University (MA; PhD) where he was President of the Cambridge Union and a Cambridge Footlights actor. He has also taught in Australia and Poland and been a visiting scholar in India and the USA. He was President of the International Society for Humor Studies in 2008–2009. Thanks to a two-year Leverhulme Fellowship held in 2008–2010, he has just completed his latest book, *Jokes and Targets* for Indiana University Press. His previous books on humor were *Ethnic Humor around the World, a Comparative Analysis* (1990, 1997), *Jokes and their Relation to Society* (1998), *The Mirth of Nations* (2002) and *Esuniku Joku* (2003) with Goh Abe. He has published over 30 articles on humor. He has also published two books on social change and has co-authored books on criminology, censorship and techno-moral panics about food, health and the environment. In addition Christie Davies has written extensively on the sociology of morality and religion, political economy and art criticism. His collection of humorous 'magical science fiction' stories *Dewi the Dragon* came out in 2006 and he has written many humorous pieces for newspapers, magazines and the internet.

Nada Elzeer is Senior Lector in Arabic at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London (SOAS), UK. She has a BA in Modern Languages and Translation from the University of Balamand, Lebanon, an MPhil in European Literature from the University of Cambridge and a PhD in Arabic Terminology from the University of Durham. Her research involves the Arabic terminology of literary criticism and the dialects of Egypt and the Levant. She is currently working on the translation of the diaries of Wasif Jawhariyyeh into English.

Michael Ewans (MA Oxford, PhD Cambridge) is Professor of Drama and Music in the School of Drama, Fine Art and Music at the University of Newcastle, Australia. He specializes in directing plays and chamber operas, translating Greek tragedy and comedy, and writing books and articles which explore how operas and dramas work in the theatre. He is the author of *Janáček's Tragic Operas, Georg Büchner's Woyzeck, Wagner and Aeschylus*, and

a complete set of accurate and actable translations of Aeschylus and Sophocles in four volumes, with theatrical commentaries based on his own productions. His most recently published book is *Opera from the Greek: Studies in the Poetics of Appropriation*, containing eight case studies in the appropriation of material from Greek tragedy and epic by composers from Monteverdi to Mark-Antony Turnage.

He completed *Aristophanes: Acharnians, Knights* and *Peace* in 2009. *Aristophanes: Lysistrata, The Women's Festival* and *Frogs*, in his own new translation with theatrical commentaries, is scheduled for publication by Oklahoma University Press in 2010.

In recognition of his achievements, Michael Ewans was elected in 2005 to a Fellowship of the Australian Academy of the Humanities.

Charmaine Lee is currently Professor of Romance Philology and History of Italian at the University of Salerno, Italy. She has published books and articles mainly on Medieval Romance narrative genres: fabliaux, lais, the Italian novella, epic poetry; she has recently edited the Occitan Arthurian Romance *Jaufre* and at present is researching into the literature of the Angevin court in Naples.

Marta Mateo is a Lecturer in English at the University of Oviedo, Spain, where she teaches English phonetics and literary translation. She completed her PhD on the translation of English comedies into Spanish in 1992, and has since published articles and presented conference papers on the translation of humour, drama and musical texts. Her research interests also include translation theory and audiovisual translation (focussing on surtitling). Together with Brian Mott, she has recently published a translation dictionary-guide: *Diccionario-guía de traducción español-inglés, inglés-español*. And she has also done some translation work herself: she has translated Egil Törnqvist's *Transposing Drama* and a novel by the American writer Chester Himes into Spanish, and is now embarked on the translation of Tobias Smollett's *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*.

Walter Redfern, born in Liverpool in 1936, taught at Reading University, UK, between 1960 and 2000 as Assistant Lecturer, Lecturer, Reader and Personal Professor, having completed his MA and PhD from Cambridge University between 1954 and 1960.

His work includes 19 books, 27 chapters, 47 articles on French writers and language matters. As well as translating into French Georges Darien: *Gottlieb Krumm, Made in England,* he also translated his own *Puns*

into French. Other writings include a novel, 20-odd poems, 3 short stories. He loves cinema, jazz and cricket.

Graeme Ritchie is a Senior Research Fellow at the University of Aberdeen, UK, has degrees in mathematics, linguistics and computing science, and has worked for nearly 40 years in computational linguistics and artificial intelligence. Since 1993 he has been investigating humour and language, particularly the development of formal and computational models of humorous mechanisms, and helped to create the first large-scale computer system for generating simple puns. He is the author of about 90 peer-reviewed papers, and also of *The Linguistic Analysis of Jokes* (Routledge, 2003). Since 2002 he has been a regular contributor to the annual International Summer School and Symposium on Humour and Laughter.

Ian Ruffell is Lecturer in Classics at the University of Glasgow, UK. His research interests are in ancient Greek drama, particularly comedy, and he has also published on Roman satire. He is currently completing a monograph on politics and anti-realism in Old Comedy.

Marguerite Wells is a former Associate Professor (Reader) in Japanese at the University of Wollongong, Australia. She has acted professionally and trained in the Ōkura School of *kyōgen*, as well as being a theatre critic. She has degrees in Japanese Studies from Monash University, the Australian National University (where she did a Master's Degree on the Plays of Inoue Hisashi) and Oxford University, and has co-authored Japanese language teaching materials with Anthony Alfonso. She is author of *Japanese Humour* (Macmillan, Basingstoke 1997) and worked with Jessica Milner Davis on *Understanding Humor in Japan* (Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 2006). Her after-dinner performances of *The Battle of the Black and White Rice Cakes* tend to bring down the house.

In 1991 the BBC commissioned Marguerite Wells to translate Inoue's play *Yabuhara Kengyō* and adapt it for radio. It was directed by Ned Chaillet, with John Woodvine as the narrator, Roger Allam as Yabuhara Kengyō, and Mia Soteriou. Musical Direction was by Mia Soteriou, and the play was broadcast on BBC Radio on 13 October 1991 and on the BBC World Service in January 1992. Marguerite Wells's translation has been published as Inoue Hisashi, *Yabuhara, the Blind Master Minstrel*, in *Half a Century of Japanese Theater*, vol. 6, Japan Playwrights' Association, Tokyo, 2004, pp. 63–136.

Sam Whitsitt teaches courses on literature, and language and culture at the Advanced School of Modern Languages for Interpreters and Translators of the University of Bologna at Forlì, Italy. His work covers several different areas that range from articles on such writers as James Joyce, Henry James, Melville, and Alice Walker; directors such as Spike Lee and his film *Do the Right Thing*; ideas such as the relationship between language and blue jeans in American culture; to concepts such as that of semantic prosody in the field of corpus linguistics.

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Chapter 1

Translation and Humour, Humour and Translation

Delia Chiaro

Verbal humour travels badly. As it crosses geographic boundaries humour has to come to terms with linguistic and cultural elements which are often only typical of the source culture from which it was produced thereby losing its power to amuse in the new location. Humour generating devices such as words and phrases with more than one meaning and distinctive references to people, history, events and customs of a particular culture are characteristics that are often the basis of wordplay. And it is the combination of such linguistic and culture-specific features that creates one of the most arduous challenges not only for professional translators of comic literature, theatre and films, but also for anyone who has tried to tell a joke or be funny in a language other than their own. Yet laughter and smiling, two physiological functions inextricably linked to humour are universal, as are equally universal emotions such as happiness, joy, amusement and glee. However it would seem that problems with conveying verbal humour, arise when language gets in the way. And the fascinating challenges caused by its translation into other languages may well be the reason why since the mid-nineties, this particular aspect of translation has attracted significant attention within academia with the publication of special issues of renowned journals dedicated to the subject (Delabastita 1996; 1997; Vandaele 2002; Chiaro 2005). Furthermore, humour and translation has become a popular subject for postgraduate dissertations in the field of Translation Studies (TS), while a glance at many TS conference programmes will reveal numerous presentations on the subject too. This two-volume compendium inserts itself in this wave of revival and attempts to provide a comprehensive overview of all areas, past and present, in which humour has been, and is, translated. Accordingly, not only does the collection contain essays on translation within the 'great literary tradition' (Bollettieri and Whittsitt; Elzeer; Ewans; Lee; Mateo; Ruffell and Wells) and the conventionally much discussed area of jokes (Ritchie; Davies), but it also contends in the second volume, with diverse areas of translation in postmodern society with contributions

regarding the translation of humour in cinema and television (Bucaria; Delabastita; Fuentes Luque; O'Hagan; Rossato and Chiaro; Schröter; Valdeon; Wai-Ping; Wells and Zabalbeascoa), its role in global advertising (Gulas and Weinberger); in comic books (Zanettin); in video games (Mangiron); and in live interpreting (Antonini). Furthermore, care has been taken to ensure that a good number of translational language directionalities from and into English are represented. Essays explore lingua-cultural specificities of Arabic; Danish; French; German; Italian; Japanese; Norwegian; Spanish and Swedish, as well as Ancient Greek, Latin and numerous dialects of the British Isles. The collection also includes Walter Redfern's notes and reflections on his own translations into French and Spanish of a letter he wrote to his (Liverpudlian) father, in English. There is, by default, a certain amount of overlap in the two volumes in terms of content. For example, Ewans' essay on the present day translation of the work of Aristophanes appears in the first volume even though it deals with theatre translation and is thus clearly multimedial. Similarly, also in Volume 1, Wells' discussion of the Japanese poem *Geisha Song* was translated into English for the radio and not simply to be read. My only excuse is that the very uncontrollability of language with its fuzzy boundaries renders such overlap inevitable.

The area of humour and translation has not always been so popular in academia. Before the mid-nineties academic literature on the subject was scarce and often more anecdotal than scholarly in nature. Yet scholars have always been attracted by the topic of paronomasia (i.e. puns or double entendres), which well exemplifies humorous tropes owing to the fact that it best illustrates language in one of its displays of extreme convolution (e.g. Delabastita 1993, 1996, 1997; Henry 2003; Redfern 1984). Moreover, long before the birth of TS, scholars of diverse disciplines had been fascinated by the fact that puns owe their meanings to the very structure of the language to which they belong and that, once divorced from it and transported to another language, they could no longer operate as such. With the logic of the Age of Reason, Addison writes:

> . . . a Conceit arising from the use of two words that agree in the Sound, but differ in the Sense. The only way therefore to try a Piece of Wit, is to translate it into a different Language: If it bears the Test you may pronounce it true but if it vanishes in the Experiment you may conclude it to have been a Punn. ([1711]1982: 343)

Thus, according to Addison, a 'Piece of Wit' can be tested by means of translation. If it cannot be translated we can be certain that we are dealing

with a pun, a linguistic element which has more than one meaning in its original language. Significantly too, the term used for 'translation' in many Romance languages derives from the Latin *traductio* (e.g. French *traduction*, Spanish *traducción*, Italian *traduzione*, Portuguese *tradução*, etc.) which not only means 'transposition' but ironically was also the term for a rhetorical device that, according to Lausberg, referred to 'Figures of moderate similarity' which he then goes on to gloss with the French terms *jeu de mot/calambour* and the English *pun* (1967: 147, my translation). Thus, etymologically, translation and puns are related by their inherent duplicity (see Delabastita 1997: 1 for a lengthy discussion).

A pun, commonly defined as the 'lowest form of wit', is essentially considered to be a word with two meanings often used in jokes and verbal witticisms. For example, homophones are words with the same sound but different meanings, (example 1) and homonyms are words with the same form but different meanings (example 2):

(1) The three ages of man: tri-weekly; try weekly; try weakly.
(2) How do you make a sausage roll? Push it.

But this, of course, is a somewhat narrow and simplistic view of puns. Puns with 'two (or more) meanings' in a sentence or an utterance can be created by adopting dozens of other, often more sophisticated linguistic devices such as polysemes (single, different words with different meanings), metatheses (also known as spoonerisms); malapropisms; chiasmus (a rhetorical device involving repetition such as 'Trifles make perfection, and perfection is no trifle', a quotation attributed to Michelangelo); blends; antanaclasis (the repetition of a word or phrase whose meaning changes in the second instance, e.g. 'Your argument is sound . . . all sound') – the list of exploitable options is endless (see Wales 1990). In fact, the category of puns can be extended beyond the conventional terminology that refers only to lexical items with two (or more) meanings, to include forms of duplicity that exploit any linguistic element for comic purposes ranging from supra-segmental features such as stress and rhythm (example 3); word formation (example 4); syntax (example 5) as well as conversational rules and implicatures.

(3) How do you make a cat drink? Easy put it in a liquidizer.
(4) Is a Buddhist monk refusing an injection at the dentist's trying to transcend dental medication?
(5) Ladies are asked to rinse out teapots and stand upside down in the sink.

Examples (3)–(5) can be considered puns in the broadest possible sense, and certainly stand the test of the Semantic Script Theory of Humor (Raskin 1985), later elaborated into the General Theory of Verbal Humor (Attardo and Raskin 1991). The single scripts in which the examples are couched each contain two opposing but perfectly overlapping scripts that, according to Attardo and Raskin, are the quintessential elements required for a text to classify as a joke. Taxonomies and categorizations of the linguistic options available to be exploited for humorous purposes abound in the literature, (see especially Attardo 1994; Nash 1994; Alexander 1997; Ritchie 2004). However, we should consider ourselves very lucky if in an attempt to translate examples (1)–(5) into any other language we are able to come up with translations that manage to maintain both original content and the duplicity which render them amusing. In order to translate example (1) faithfully, the target language would need to possess a term that means to 'attempt' which, at the same time, can double up either graphically or phonologically, as a prefix that means 'three times'. Once this condition is satisfied, that same language would also have to boast another word to mean both 'week' and 'feeble'. The chances of one, let alone both, these options being possible are extremely remote. This does not mean that the joke cannot be translated, but it does mean that it may require drastic changes if it is to remain a joke. And the same is also true for the other examples, the likelihood of being able to use the same devices to play on the same meanings in other languages is quite dubious.

Hockett (1977) divides jokes into 'poetic' jokes that especially exploit features pertaining to language and 'prosaic' jokes which make use of some aspect or other of world knowledge. He identifies several similarities between poetic jokes and poetry, including 'untranslatability'. In fact, poetry, especially classic poetry, is traditionally considered to be 'untranslatable' owing to the need to adhere to the rules of rhyme, stanzas, cadence and metre. But, of course, despite these difficulties, poetry *is* translated. Shakespeare, Dante, Baudelaire and Brecht have all been translated but plainly remain diverse from the original in their multilingual versions as illustrated by **Marguerite Wells**' discussion of *Yabuhara Kengyō* ('Geisha Song') by Japanese poet Inoue Hisashi. However, Hockett's distinction between 'poetic' and 'prosaic' jokes does not intend to mirror 'poetry' and 'prose' *strictu sensu* but rather we can assume that the linguist's use of 'poetic' can be equated to a 'literary' use of language in its widest sense. The sounds and the pace and the lingua-cultural play in **Walter Redfern**'s *Letter to my Father* well exemplifies the poetic nature of literary prose, subsequently highlighted in the author's discussion of the mental acrobatics

involved in its translations into French and Spanish. The problems Redfern faces in translating his letter are no different from those described by Wells, albeit Wells has the added complication that the translation needs also to be adapted for radio.

Thus verbal humour or wordplay can be seen in terms of self-referential use of language in which, for its own purposes, almost anything goes. Linguistically, verbal humour is a '. . . projection of the syntagmatic onto the paradigmatic . . .' which as Sherzer points out is '. . . precisely the Jakobsonian definition of poetry' (1978: 341). And humour, like poetry, is conventionally 'untranslatable'.

However, to complicate matters further, verbally expressed humour (Ritchie 2000) often consists of the combination of linguistic play with encyclopaedic knowledge so much so that, as Cicero claimed

> . . . there are two types of wit, one employed upon facts, the other upon words . . . people are particularly amused whenever laughter is excited by the union of the two. (*De Oratore* II LIX & II LXI)

And in translation, it is precisely this type of verbally expressed humour (VEH), that plays on both linguistic and cultural features, that is the most arduous to translate:

(6) Sum ergo cogito. Is that putting the cart before the horse?

And here we find a further analogy with poetic language. Much literature calls on the reader's encyclopaedic knowledge through references and allusions to other literary works, history, art. Such intertextuality is also present in VEH. Example (6) can only be understood by recipients who are cognizant of the Cartesian quotation as only they will immediately know that it has been inverted. Recipients will also need to be familiar with the idiom 'to put the cart before the horse' as well as being able to link it to the stereotype of English spoken with a French accent which would make 'the' sound like /dI/ so that 'the cart' becomes /dIkart/ = 'Descartes'.

Obviously, the type of knowledge required of the recipient need not always be elitist in nature. In order to appreciate examples (2) and (5), the recipient should be familiar with the British sausage roll and Women's Institute meetings in church halls. And the countless multifaceted allusions adopted by Joyce, some of which are examined by **Bollettieri Bosinelli** and **Whitsitt**, well exemplify this type of intertextuality and requires the reader not only to possess 'elitist' cultural knowledge (e.g. classic literature, historical

facts and knowledge of more languages), but also everyday knowledge such as the word for a urinal in Dublin.

Graeme Ritchie opens this collection of essays by getting to grips with the fine line that divides 'linguistic' jokes from 'referential' jokes (or Hockett's poetic/prosaic, or again, Norrick's (2004) verbal/non-verbal jokes), highlighting the complexity of definition owing to the fact that jokes are couched in language. Example (7) is a typically referential/prosaic/verbal joke. It plays on the knowledge that, generally speaking, human meat is not for consumption:

(7) 'Mummy, Mummy, I don't like Daddy!'
'Then leave him on the side of the plate and eat your vegetables.'

To say that the joke is purely referential rather than linguistic, poetic or verbal would, however, be simplifying matters as it clearly plays on the ambiguity of the term 'like'. While 'like' is not strictly polysemous, it is possible to 'like' a person and also to 'like' chocolate. These two connotations of the word are very different (see also Chiaro 1992: 77–99).

And this tangled argumentation may well explain why researchers have shunned the field for so long. Vandaele likens research in humour and translation to a '. . . vast, disorienting, dangerous [. . .] ocean' in which '. . . both sailors and swimmers appear to be equipped with amateurish tentative maps rather than proper maps supplied by cartographers, and consequently tend to lose their way' (2002: 149).

1. Equivalence and Translatability Revisited

As we have seen so far, the issue of the interlingual translation of VEH opens up a gigantic can of worms. In fact, whether the humour to be translated is a short text, such as a joke, whether it is a longer text such as a novel or a more complex product such as a film, a play or a sitcom and whether we are dealing with puns or irony, satire or parody, the transposition from Source Language (SL) to Target Language (TL) will present the translator with a series of problems which are both practical and theoretical in nature. Such difficulties are due to the fact that the translation of VEH patently touches upon the most essential and highly debatable issues of TS, namely equivalence and translatability.

In most professional translation contexts, a translated text should bear as much likeness to the original as possible; the two texts will be expected to

correspond to one another, they are, in effect, supposed to be equivalent. However, the concept of equivalence is far from being clear-cut and over the years, has been greatly debated by translation scholars. Indeed, it is generally agreed that equivalence between Source Text (ST) and Target Text (TT) need not be total. For example, to use the distinction made by Nida (1964, 1969, 1975), translations may be either 'formal' or 'dynamic' or else, according to Newmark's distinction, either 'semantic' or 'communicative' (1981, 1988, 1991). Both scholars shift the emphasis from the text itself onto the process of translation, emphasizing the choice between formal (*ad verbum*) and functional (*ad sensum*) equivalence. Recognizing that equivalence cannot be absolute, Nida suggests that translation should aim at 'closest natural equivalent of the source language message' (1975: 12) hence nuancing the extreme positions of the past which at times called for mirrored, word for word translations often at the expense of meaning. Nevertheless, this desire for translation to be a bona fide replica of an original is something which many recipients expect. Yet while it is perfectly reasonable for consumers to expect the instructions of their electrical goods, for example, to be a faithful translation of the Japanese original for reasons of safety if nothing else, a faithful translation does not necessarily mean word for word equivalence. Likewise recipients of translated humour will expect to be amused by it, thus justifying functional equivalence even if it entails an extreme departure from the ST.

Michael Cronin (2003) adopts the metaphor of the translator as a master forger who creates fraudulent texts. In order to be successfully spent, these texts must appear as alike as possible to the original. But, of course, they are not originals. And they never can be. They are false. Mere copies. Translations are by default different from the originals otherwise there would be no need for them in the first place. In fact, what is atypical of translations *tout court* is the fact that they only exist by virtue of a double which exists in another/the original language, without which they would no longer qualify as being translations. The possibility of being able to create a TT that is the true double of another would presuppose the absence of different languages.

With regard to VEH, an artefact that needs to stand the test of being amusing to its target recipients, more often than not, the new, translated humour falls flat. This is because often the translation is unmistakably a forgery. Instead of the invisible watermark which can only be seen when the note is held up to the light, the watermark on phoney notes can be clearly seen. Furthermore, when the master forger is up to his neck falsifying money and pressed for time he seeks help from his inexperienced

apprentices – and this results in poor quality banknotes which are then unacceptable as legal tender. If we take Cronin's metaphor one step further it would not be unfair to compare the well guarded secrets belonging to the mints of individual nations to the highly cultural and lingua-specific features of single languages. Humorous texts well exemplify extreme lingua-cultural specificity as they often entail recognition of cultural elements with which it would be impossible to be familiar without having had direct exposure to them. Let us consider the classic playground riddle:

(8) Q. 'What's brown and comes steaming out of cows backwards?'
A. 'The Isle of Wight Ferry.'

Like all riddles, a person could only answer (8) if they had heard it before (see Opie and Opie 1959). However, over and above shared connotations of the terms 'brown' and 'steaming' which intend to lead recipients up a metaphorical garden path, in order to 'get' (8), the recipient needs to know that Cowes is a seaport of the Isle of Wight and, presumably, this is not especially common knowledge outside the British Isles.

However, 'untranslatable' as it may be, VEH is by default translated into dozens of languages. The works of great literary humorists such as Boccaccio, Cervantes, Wilde, Joyce and Nabokov, to name just a few, exist in translated versions in a plethora of languages worldwide (see **Rosa Maria Bollettieri Bosinelli** & **Samuel P. Whitsitt** and **Marta Mateo** for discussions of the translations of wordplay in Joyce and Smollett and **Charmaine Lee** on how Boccaccio 'retells' earlier French traditions in Italian retaining their mischievous innuendoes). Similarly, theatrical and cinematic comedy, as well as operetta and sitcoms are indeed also translated and exported. Of course the translated doppelgangers will be dissimilar in some way from the originals from which they stem. The problem with translating humour more often than not is that it is 'untranslatable' in the sense that an *adequate degree of equivalence* is hard to achieve.

So what exactly do we mean by equivalence? When dealing with an example of wordplay which pivots around a pun, an interlingual translation may well involve some kind of radical compromise due to the fact that, as we have seen, the chances of being able to pun on the same item in two different languages is extremely remote. Furthermore, VEH may also play on socio-cultural peculiarities of a particular locale which, when coupled with linguistic manipulation, will complicate matters further. Thus, as far as the translation of VEH is concerned, formal equivalence, namely the similarity of lexis and syntax in source and target versions, is frequently sacrificed for the sake of dynamic equivalence (see Nida, above). In other

words, as long as the TT serves the same function, the same *skopos* as the ST (Vermeer 1989), and in the case of humour, that function would be to amuse the recipient, it is of little importance if the TT has to depart somewhat in formal terms from the original. Some feature of the ST is lost in exchange for a gain in the TL (see Chiaro 2008a). For example, much obscene verbal humour in the Italian version of the series *South Park* has been cut and substituted elsewhere in the episode with different, 'softer' (i.e. more acceptable by the general public) wordplay. Such compensation is typical not only in cases of censorship but also when a stylistic feature such as VEH in the ST cannot be rendered at the same point in the TT (see Vinay and Darbelnet 1958) and is thus substituted elsewhere with an instance of wordplay which was not present in the ST (see also Bucaria, Volume 2).

One humorous feature which is inevitably lost in translation is regional and ethnic connotation. Yet, dialect is frequently used for humorous purposes, suffice it to think of stand-up comedy in which many comedians will tend to use a regional variety (see Chiaro 2008b). **Christie Davies** engages in the issue of jokes based on conversations between two speakers of different English dialects and the need to translate them into Standard English for the benefit of many native speakers of English themselves, let alone foreign speakers. He explores the necessary ingredients that need to be preserved in the translation in order to signal the qualities of the dialect speakers to recipients of the joke. Surely not the simplest of tasks.

Intralingual translation was one of the three translation typologies identified by Jakobson (1959) and refers to any type of rewriting of a text in the same language but in a different code from the original. Thus paraphrases and synopses of texts as well as close-captioning for the hard of hearing are types of intralingual translation. Of course it could be argued that translating dialect comes close to interlingual translation (Jakobson's second translation type involving transfer into different languages, see page 33) especially if a dialect is considered to be a language in its own right. An example of this would be the Italian film *Gomorrah (*Roberto Saviano 2008), which was shot almost entirely in Neapolitan dialect and required subtitles for Italian audiences. Whether these subs are to be considered intra- or interlingual remains a moot point.

An example of the linguistic complexity involved in translating dialect can be seen in the verbal humour of Lebanese playwright Ziad Rahbani who juxtaposes colloquial Arabic with Levantine dialect in his scripts. **Nada Elzeer** examines the English translation of his work underscoring the peculiarities of Levantine wordplay. Dialects are also exploited for humorous purposes in video games. **Carmen Mangiron** (Volume 2) looks

at how localizers of best selling video game *Final Fantasy* succeeded in adapting idiolects and dialects present in the original Japanese version for other players of other languages and **Minako O'Hagan** reports on the use of regional variety in open intralingual subtitles (open caption telop) to underscore humour in popular Japanese TV formats. Again, **Yau Wai-Ping** (Volume 2) reports on the use of both Standard Chinese and Cantonese in subtitled VEH in Hong Kong thus paving the way to public acceptability of a 'Low' variety thanks to its recognition and use by the nation's media.

As we have seen, it would be absurd to think that a translator can create a carbon copy of the ST in such a way that the two texts can perfectly mirror each other. What does occur in the process of translation, however, is a kind of linguistic and cultural give and take which converts the content of the ST into a new form in the TL. However, translations are to a greater or lesser degree dependent on the source texts from which they derive, so, accordingly, a translated text can be conceptualized in terms of a single text deriving from the pre-existing ST in which of a sort of osmosis has taken place that allows the TT to assimilate the ST and create a fresh, yet interdependent text. There will, or at least should be, an area of overlap between ST and TT. The greater the area of overlap, the closer the equivalence between the two texts will be. The greater the area of superimposition, the greater the osmosis between Source and Target and, in the case of VEH, the greater the likelihood of amusement in the Target Language (see Chiaro 2008a: 579). Naturally, the degree of osmosis also depends on cultural factors – it would not be the case when what is funny in the Source Culture is not funny in the Target. However, one problem with VEH is that translation is so difficult that the TT often has difficulty in expanding and creating the right amount of overlap. Thus the ST occupies more space than the TT with the result that the new text jars or else, as often occurs, it has to be substituted by a text which bears little or no resemblance to its source. In some cases there may even be a total absence of what Popovič defined the 'invariant code' (1976), something which both ST and TT will have in common, a sort of mandatory lowest common denominator of similarity between Source and Target versions. Consider the following Italian joke:

(9a) *Hai saputo che Monica Lewinsky riprende a lavorare nella Casa Bianca? Sembrerebbe che dovrà prima superare una prova scritta.*
[Back-translation : Have you heard that Monica Lewinsky is going to start working at the White House again. Apparently she's got to sit a written exam first.]

In Italy, written exams in all subjects are almost always followed by vivas, *esami orali*. All subjects are regularly examined by means of a *viva voce* exam unlike the situation in countries such as the UK where, following final university exams, only certain candidates undergo a viva. Thus (9a) works on the unsaid and on the diverse collocation of the term 'oral'. My back-translation is quite inadequate because, unlike the source joke, in which '*prova scritta*' (written exam) immediately conjures up '*prova orale*' (oral exam), thus linking the joke to the infamous Lewinskygate scandal from the late 1990s. In English, the term 'written exams' conjures up no parallel oral exam and thus nothing is missing to suggest a link with the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal.

The best strategy in this case would be to substitute the joke with a fresh one in the TL such as:

(9b) 'It seems Monica Lewinsky is on the loose again, teaming up with HBO to do a documentary about her affair with Bill Clinton. It's not really a documentary. It will be more of an oral history.'

A different joke which does however manage to retain the invariant code contained in the ambiguity of the term 'oral'.

So how do translators handle VEH? By and large, they tend to adopt one of the following strategies:

a. leave the VEH unchanged:

'Tenez, allez voir ma mère, elle a une mémoire d'éléphante de mer!'
[Back-translation: 'You'd better go and see your mother, she has a memory like an elephant. She's an elephant seal!']

This utterance taken from French feature film *Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulin* (Jean-Pierre Jeunet, 2001) plays on the homophony between *mère* (mother) and *mer* (sea) and also on the expression *avoir une mémoire d'éléphante* (to have the memory of an elephant – elephants never forget?). In French a sea elephant just so happens to be *éléphante de mer* thus creating the perfect humus for VEH. In the dubbed Italian version of the film, translators opted for a literal translation:

'*. . . le conviene andare a trovare mia madre. Ha una memoria da elefante mia madre. È un'elefantessa!*' (you should go and see my mother. She has a memory like an elephant. She is an elephant seal).

Needless to say the wordplay is totally lost in an attempt to conform to formal equivalence.

b. replace the source VEH with a different instance of VEH in the TL:

In the English version an attempt at retaining the verbal humour of the original script has been made by substituting the French homophone with a 'blend', that is, a word formed from the parts of two other words, such as 'smog' ('smoke' + 'fog') and 'brunch' ('breakfast' + 'lunch'). Thus, the same line subtitled for English speaking audiences (in the film entitled '*Amélie*') becomes:

> 'Go and see my mother. She's got a memory like an elephant. Mum-ephant.'

c. replace the source VEH with an idiomatic expression in the TL:

> A further option available to translators could have been to cut the wordplay and replace it with the idiomatic expression ' You'd better go and see your mother, an elephant never forgets' .

d. ignore the VEH altogether:

When an example of VEH is ignored in translation, we can never be quite sure whether the omission is due to a deliberate translational strategy or to the lack of recognition of the original wordplay. This is a strategy which is probably inevitable in the case of visual jokes on screen. In a scene from British romantic comedy *Notting Hill* (Roger Mitchell 1999), the script on the front of a man's t-shirt reads: 'You are the most beautiful woman in the world.' All romance is lost when the character turns round so that the audience can then read ' Fancy a fuck?' on the back of his t-shirt with no further translation for non-English speaking audiences – or rather a translation is provided in white letters on a white background so unlikely to be read with ease. Of course, this could be explained by some kind of accidental-but-on-purpose censorship in Catholic Italy, an issue ensued by **Chiara Bucaria**'s investigation into *Six Feet Under* (Volume 2). On the other hand, translators may have been reasonably certain that most audiences would be familiar with the ubiquitous English four-lettered word.

There is no escaping the fact that VEH is different from verbally expressed anything else. And this may well be why unfunny translations of what were

originally funny texts, stick out like sore thumbs. Over and above language and culture-specificity, the production and the reception of humour fulfil what Karl Popper (1975) referred to as expressive and signalling functions which communicate emotion. Humorous discourse primarily serves an important social function. It can serve not only for the purpose of pure enjoyment, to make us feel good, (which should be reason enough to translate as much of it as possible) but humour also serves to condemn and to criticize, to pacify, to help us cope, to break the ice and according to some, even to heal. In conversation it is a crucial bonding agent which tells us that we are part of the group, that we belong (Norrick and Chiaro 2009).

So far we have examined aspects linked to the difficulty involved in the actual *process* of translating humour which, as Vandaele (2002) suggests, should be considered separately from the *study* of translated products. Yet, of course, the two are firmly linked like two sides of the same coin: if the process is complex, presumably its close examination will be equally, if not more, intricate. **Marta Mateo**'s analysis of VEH in *Humphrey Clinker* and its Spanish translation highlights precisely this tension between process, product and analysis. Matteo especially gets to grips with issues concerning foreignization and domestication (Schleiermacher [1813]2004; Venuti 1995) and how to strike the right balance that will enable Spanish readers to appreciate an eighteenth-century text without excessive effort. While global practice appears to be that of foreignizing (i.e. leaving the reader to tackle the world of the writer, for instance leaving many cultural features untranslated), Matteo suggests that domestication (i.e. the writer helping the reader to understand the writer's world by adapting cultural features to the source culture) may be useful given literary conventions and the wide range of humorous tropes employed by Smollet.

2. Humour: Recognition of the Indefinable

Taking a step back from translation let us now examine the notion of humour. And here we have the regrettable problem of definition. There is, as yet, no universal consensus amongst scholars over the definition of the term humour itself. From its original Latin meaning of 'fluid' *umor*, over the centuries the term has travelled from its early days as a medical term of the science of physiology, to the discipline of aesthetics, from France to England and finally across the Atlantic to become an unclear umbrella term. Ruch, in fact, claims that the term has what he calls ' multiple usage'

(1998: 6). Thus we find that the term embraces concepts such as comedy, fun, the ridiculous, nonsense and scores of notions each of which, while possessing a common denominator, all significantly differ from one another too. Furthermore, the concept of humour often appears to be used as a synonym of *sense of humour* (Ruch 1998). Thus, it should come as no surprise that without a definition of the basic substance of the discourse at issue, the classification of a text type qualifying as being humorous in nature becomes somewhat arduous. In fact, unlike say, telephone directories, instruction manuals and menus, there are no explicit genre specific features or linguistic markers which signal *at all times* that a text is humorous.

In conversation, for example, there are, of course, recognizable pragmatic gambits which can be adopted when someone is about to tell a joke such as the standard 'Have you heard the one about . . .?' and there are plenty of lexical, syntactic and semantic signals inherent to jokes in all cultures. If, in England, someone embarks upon a story about an Englishman, a Scotsman and an Irishman, we can be quite certain that he/she is not being serious. If we are asked how many translators it takes to change a light bulb we know that we are going to hear the answer whether we want to or not. But, jokes are just one tiny fraction among scores of humorous text typologies. However, because of their conciseness, availability and ease of collectability, jokes simply happen to make up the most exploited and analysed genre of VEH studied by linguists – and not only linguists – working within Humour Studies (HS). Thus these examples turn out to be exceptions rather than rules as jokes certainly do not represent the most recurrent form of VEH. Most probably, much, or possibly even most VEH, whether written or oral, consists of serious discourse containing one or more instances of what Attardo has termed ' jab lines' (2001). Jab lines are humorous elements which are fully integrated within the text in such a way that they do not disrupt the narrative flow. This is quite different from what happens in a joke where the punch, which tends to occur in final position, disturbs and indeed interrupts the flow of the text. Coates shows how 'humorous talk' is adopted to construct solidarity amongst women (2007); Holmes investigates the role of humour on the workplace (2006) and Chiaro discusses the way in which bilingual/cross-cultural couples adopt VEH in their relationships (2009). In all these studies the emphasis is on humour that occurs blended within talk in general rather than on humour that is framed within jokes. In fact, we can safely say that the texture of humorous talk as well as humorous prose, more often than not consists of an interwoven tapestry or intermittent occurrences of jabs rather than a series

of punches which are the offspring of actual jokes. However, semantically speaking, punches and jabs are alike as objects. Thus, presumably, jab lines include verbal gags, so called 'good lines'. The kind of clever, streetwise, cool remark we are so used to hearing delivered with perfect timing by the good guy on the movie or TV screen. The line is normally self-referential, or an allusion to a vague global culture with none of the linguistic or cultural specific excesses more typical of the joke form proper, devoid of a dedicated narrative framework. An example of a good line is the famous 'you talkin' to me' uttered by Travis, played by Robert De Niro in the film *Taxi Driver* (Martin Scorsese 1976, USA). The line has since been featured in countless films, television shows and quoted in interviews with the intention of raising a laugh.

Yet recognizing a jab is not necessarily as clear-cut as it may seem. What if a remark is based on irony? It can sometimes be extremely hard to understand whether someone is being ironic when they do not designate the irony via evident prosodic or stylistic features. In such cases the recipient can never be quite certain of her interlocutor's perlocutionary intentions – of course this is the case of much interaction, but there appears to be an added dose of ambiguity in humour. Neither a punch nor a jab we could perhaps define irony in terms of a nudge, which can sometimes be so gentle as to misleadingly appear sincere.

The concept of insincerity leads us to the deceptive nature of humorous discourse. It is sufficient to remind ourselves of the numerous members of parliament who in 1729 took Jonathan Swift's satirical *Modest Proposal* at face value and actually thought the idea of serving Irish infants as edible platter a plausible one; not to mention the famous BBC documentary on 1 April 1957 in which Richard Dimbleby's serious manner convinced the English that spaghetti grows on trees in Switzerland. A more up to date example can be found in the character of Borat (played by Sacha Baron Cohen in *Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan*, Larry Charles, 2006, USA/UK) the fake journalist from Kazakhstan filming a spoof documentary across the USA. His interlocutors were under the impression that they were being interviewed for a serious documentary programme on life in the USA, whereas they were, in fact, being taken for a mediatic ride. Indisputably, part of the artifice of the perpetrator of humour itself lies exactly in producing that double faceted textual ambiguity which leads the recipient to wonder whether or not he or she is to take the text at face value. Deception is part and parcel of the game of which so much seems to depend on recognition by the recipient of the instigator's intentions – a recipient who thus possesses the mysterious

key to the purpose of the text at issue. And here we find ourselves on the shaky ground of speaker's intentions and concealed implicatures.

According to Attardo and Raskin (1991), humorous texts are recognizable because they consist of two overlapping scripts within a single text which can be read in two different ways, one which is more readily discernible and another which is more obscure. This theory works exclusively on the proviso that the recipient possesses an extensive encyclopaedia or a complete and perfect set of what Attardo has labelled Knowledge Resources (Attardo and Raskin, 1991; Ruch et al. 1993a.). These six Knowledge Resources (KR) consist of script oppositions, logical mechanisms, situations, targets, narrative strategies, and language. If, in the case of Borat Sagdiyev's American victims you did not recognize him because you had never seen him before, you were not just lacking in a KR but you were missing an entire comic dimension and consequently got conned. It is of course impossible for someone to possess such a complete and exhaustive set of schemata to recognize VEH produced in all cultures at all times. Such an ability is more comparable to the mechanisms of a search engine than to the brain of an individual. And comic dimensions, crucial knowledge resources unidentified by Attardo and Raskin, are part of each individual's cultural DNA.

Moreover, the very fact that natural languages possess dozens of idioms like 'You must be joking'; 'I am being perfectly serious' or 'pull the other leg' simply highlights the necessity for negotiation and repair strategies within everyday conversation which clearly suggests that regular chit-chat can make a mockery of Gricean maxims (Grice 1975) and that the line between serious and humorous discourse is not as clear-cut as we might think it is. When people function in humorous mode they are breaking the Gricean maxims of Quality ('Do not say what you believe to be false') and Manner ('Avoid ambiguity'). Also perhaps, joke-tellers may flout the maxim of relevance and even quantity such as in lengthy 'garden path' jokes (see Chiaro 1992) which deliberately mislead recipients to then be suddenly let down in their expectations. Such jokes are acceptable in most Western cultures, but there remains some uncertainty as to whether such deliberate and extreme flouting of maxims is tolerable elsewhere.

Furthermore, if the uncertainty of a text is written or televised, the fact that *scripta manent* adds to the recipient's tentativeness. However, generally speaking, of course we all know *intuitively* what is meant by humour and by humorous discourse, we have all experienced instances of this construct. But is intuition adequate ground for theorizing? In other words, are we

really suggesting that with regards to VEH, all the translator has to go on is his or her instinct?

3. Humour, Emotion, Personality and Translation

Leaving aside intuition, let us just ask ourselves how we recognize a text, or part of a text, as being humorous. Well, supposedly there are several answers. A psychologist would ask 100 people to read it and if and only if 5 respondents find something funny in it then it would be considered as being potentially humorous. On the other hand, Text A would be considered funnier than Text B when a fairly balanced sample of people judges it higher in funniness than the other text.

Funniness is normally exhibited by a positive humour response. However, a 'positive humour response', term coined by Paul McGhee (1972) to conceptualize the perception of a humorous stimulus as being funny, has been deemed inadequate in personality research and replaced by the term 'exhilaration' (Ruch 1993b). Exhilaration, incorporates reactions such as laughter and smiling to the 'humour response' as well as a series of physiological changes. Possibly most important of all, exhilaration includes the emotional effect which is experienced to a humorous stimulus, an effect which leaves the recipient with that agreeable feeling of physical well-being with which most people are familiar. However, the behavioural response to a humorous stimulus, typically laughter, is merely a part of a larger whole. Furthermore, let us not forget that we could theoretically split our sides laughing simply by being successfully tickled or by consuming nitrous oxide. Neither is it uncommon to laugh because of nervousness or fear. Likewise, it is common knowledge that smiles do not exclusively communicate amusement. However, even if the reaction to a humorous stimulus may well be invisible, an internal physiological reaction, combined with an emotional response, namely exhilaration, will certainly occur and this effect can be quite separate from a visible display of appreciation.

But again is exhilaration as a response to a text proof of its being humorous? Surely not on at least two grounds:

a. as we know, one may well be amused and experience exhilaration with a perfectly serious text for one of a myriad reasons because discourse – and situations *tout court* – are often unintentionally funny. Which leads us straight into the philosophical meanders of the humorous versus the comic and intentional versus unintentional.

As it is possible to make people laugh quite unintentionally because of mistakes (sort of verbal banana skins), slips of the tongue can be seen as a starting point which lead to 'accidentally but on purpose' verbal humour. So called 'Freudian slips' are thought to reveal spicy information about the speaker's subconscious (Freud 1965) and we may well laugh at the verbal carelessness of such speakers. However, much VEH consists of the reported slips of others and here is a tradition in British newspapers and magazines for readers to submit instances of unintentional wordplay:

(10) A sign in a Scottish boarding house read 'Bed and Breakfast with local honey'.

While being amused at the accidental ambivalence of the term 'honey', which did not occur to the owner of the establishment, the writer is also displaying a sort of one-upmanship at having spotted the mistake. And it has been argued that jokes proper work on the same techniques as slips of the tongue (see Sherzer 1978). Thus, we can laugh *at* someone's verbal (or, indeed, physical) blunder; or we can laugh *with* someone reporting someone else's blunder or, thirdly, simply laugh and admire the display of invented wordplay by a jokester. We can be quite sure that the linguistic options available for deliberate language play are the same as those which occur in accidental play.

b. one may not react positively to a humorous text because of personal characteristics which extend from innate personality traits to momentary emotional state or mood. Some aggressive forms of humour can be quite hurtful if the recipient recognizes him/herself as the object of that humour and feels that s/he is being laughed at. Humour is, after all, in the eyes and ears of the beholder.

Let us return to our initial question. How do we recognize a text as being humorous? Surely we can resort to theories: psychoanalytic, philosophical or linguistic theories or even a combination of a series of convincing hypotheses. Freud's psychoanalytic theories need little introduction, as it is well known that they regard the perpetrator's underlying feelings of aggression, tendentiousness and superiority (Freud [1965]1905) while the best known philosophical theories underscore the element of incongruity that appears to be necessary in humour (Hobbes [1651]1986; Bergson [1900]1940; also see Attardo 1994 for an exhaustive overview of humour

theories). Finally, linguistic theories highlight the incongruity inherent in script oppositions (Attardo and Raskin 1991) in which verbal humour is created by a single script that contains two overlapping yet opposing scripts one of which will surprise because of its incongruity. If a text reflects at least one of these features does it presumably qualify as being humorous? The problem is that all theories of humour, like all theories of language, potentially leak. And translation, as well as being a language thing, is also a cultural thing.

So maybe we are just asking the wrong question. Unempirical as it may seem, perhaps we should just trust our instincts. If humour is an innate emotion and all humans are equipped with the capacity to feel exhilaration when faced with a humorous stimulus and if most humans have experienced exhilaration in response to VEH in their own language, why is it when VEH is translated, that the effect is not always successful or not equally successful, or, even not at all successful as it was in the Source Language? Does it all boil down to a question of humour being so culture and language specific that it cannot possibly be understood outside its motherland? This could well be, but this somewhat contradicts the universality of the emotional response to humour. So is it just a question of inadequate, poor quality translations?

If having a sense of humour is regarded as a virtue, a positive personality trait (Ruch 1998), there appears to be an underlying suggestion that it is something innate and something which cannot be learnt. In fact, some people are more open to humour than others, are more easily amused and generally tend to see the funny side to life's ups and downs. We can safely presume that a translator equipped with such a personality is likely to recognize instances of humorous discourse. But again, according to personality studies, some people are averse to certain types of humour – the terrible three being religion, politics and sex, not to mention the most politically incorrect forms of humour of all, sick humour and humour which jokes about disasters and disabilities (Ruch 1992). What is the translator to do if he/she loathes the topic of the humour he/she is to translate? If it is particularly malicious and aimed at a peripheral group to which he/she belongs? Is he/she to grit her teeth and get on with the job? And let us not forget the issue of censorship, an external variable interfering with our translator. **Chiara Bucaria** (Volume 2) examines the translation of instances of black humour in the Italian dubbed and subtitled versions of the TV series *Six Feet Under*. In both translational modes, the Italian version displays a certain amount of verbal restraint in matters of distaste (death; sickness; homosexuality etc.). Vice versa, **Michael Ewans** (Volume 1)

quotes the example of an Australian audience's walkout during a performance of his faithful translation of Aristophanes' '. . . ribald celebration of male sexuality' *Peace* unlike the readers of Boccaccio who appear to have been more open-minded, as were also recipients of Old French *fabliaux*, the *lais* and the Occitan *vidas* and razos from which the author adapted liberally, to not particularly veiled sexual innuendos discussed by **Charmaine Lee** (Volume 1). The issue of censorship also arises with regard to the translation of Japanese video games. **Carmen Mangiron** (Volume 2) refers to problems related to diverse attitudes of acceptability towards issues of gender and sexuality in Japanese and Western cultures. Obviously these issues impinge upon translation. And Wells' difficulty in finding as many different modern words for 'prostitute' in English as those available in Japanese underscores the extent to which regular transactions of persons become encoded into their language and/or how far they become censored. Finally, **Roberto A. Valdeón** (Volume 2) examines the way in which the discursive portrayal of two gay characters in the sitcom *Will and Grace* shifts in the Spanish version that results in a less politically correct reading than the original.

However, even given that the translator in question is perfectly well-balanced and recognizes and is unaffected by the tasteless and the crass, one thing is recognizing humour, another is appreciating humour and another still is producing it. Such a person would surely resemble Ruch's (2002) hypothetical computer programme which, as well as being able to generate humour, would also be capable of perceiving, understanding and responding to it. How many people we know are actually able to deliberately create VEH? Possibly some people are able to do so, to a greater or lesser degree, even if not consistently or creatively enough to be comedians. Nevertheless presumably faced with a humorous text, a translator would be expected to tackle it in the same way as he/she would produce an interlingual rendition of a legal agreement or an academic paper. Yet instinctively we know that these are two very different tasks. And it isn't simply a question of the language of highly referential technical texts. We know that the latter are infinite and extensive yet restricted by default by a number of finite rules and conventions which the translator can indeed learn, as opposed to VEH which is anarchic, somewhat unrestricted by rules and, I would argue, possibly un-learnable. Thus it is uncertain whether our hypothetical translator can be trained to consistently find the right solution to the unrestrained behaviour of VEH. As we have seen, poetry, and also song, are two other notorious areas of untranslatability. Yet poetry and song behave in the opposite way of humorous texts as both poetry and song are

restrained by features such as rhyme, rhythm and genre-bound rules and conventions. It could be argued that, at least partly, these constraints make translation difficult. Yet along a cline of translatable complexity, humour easily wins first prize. The thing is, there is the added element of dexterity in the creation of VEH which exists in no other text type. Let us put ourselves in the translator's shoes. As we have said, the translator needs to recognize the humorous quality of the text. There is no need to appreciate it, but to identify it as such is indispensable to a professional translator. And whatever the quintessential element in the text which renders it humorous may be, what the translator needs to do is to adapt, recreate or invent a trigger that aims to produce a similar emotion of exhilaration in the recipient which is created by the recognition of humour. However, a full equivalent effect is unlikely, given the common requirement to rework the TT and to compensate for the untranslatability. And *skopos* can be taken too far as in the notorious example of a conference interpreter who asks the audience to laugh because the speaker has just told a joke she had been unable to translate for her delegates (Bertone 1989). With regard to this, **Rachele Antonini** (Volume 2) reports on a variety of strategies enacted by live interpreters working on the yearly Oscar ceremony. It is the very fact that the translator must provoke exhilaration in the recipients of the translation which renders the interlingual solution to the transposition of humorous discourse more complex than the straight language switch of a technical text or even of serious literary prose. Humour does indeed fulfil Jakobson's poetic function of consciously foregrounding and estranging language and meaning against a background of referential language (1959), but at the same time it also accomplishes an emotive feat, in the real sense of the word. The translator of VEH must transform herself into a temporary wit, and however professional he/she may be, he/she is almost bound to fall short if he/she does not possess special pre-requisites which are more typical of a comic actor than a linguist.

4. Humour an Intercultural Issue

However, the translation of humour is only very partially an interlingual problem, it really is above all an intercultural one. Cross-cultural differences are such that global advertising campaigns require enormous care and attention when using humour. As **Charles S. Gulas** and **Marc G. Weinberger** point out humour is dependent not only on the joke itself, but also on the complex interaction between the joke, the joke-teller, and

the audience. Indeed, a given joke may be humorous from one source and highly offensive from another. And with the presence of the internet, anybody, anywhere is able to access texts which were not necessarily aimed at them. Thus, as **Gulas** and **Weinberger** explain, enormous care and sensitivity is required in promotional campaigns.

Chiaro (2005: 136) discusses how, even for two cultures sharing the same language such as the UK and the USA, comedy may face insurmountable barriers, arguing her case with the example of the highly successful stage comedy, *The Play What I Wrote*, by Sean Foley and Hamish McColl based upon Morecambe and Wise, a British two-man comedy act in the 1970s. Despite the fact that the play is full of slapstick, custard pies and groaning puns, it failed miserably on Broadway. It simply did not work in the USA because the duo did not have the same far-reaching and cross-generational appeal to audiences who could not identify with the institution of Morecambe and Wise – the Americans obviously missed a key comic dimension. And many British sitcoms suffer a similar fate and are thus 're-versioned' ('adapted' in TS terms) with fresh scripts and new actors for the USA (see Chiaro 2005). Both *Ab Fab* (BBC, 1992–2005) and *The Office* (BBC, 2001) are just two examples of sitcoms which were made afresh for US television. Yet, while British comedies screened in their original form tend to be relegated to pay TV channels, (e.g. Ricky Gervais' *The Office* and *Da Ali G Show* (Channel 4, 2000) ran after midnight on Sundays also on pay-TV cable networks like HBO and BBC America) US products are screened liberally in Britain and across Europe at prime time. Of course, one of the problems with British sitcom is that it traditionally pivots on the issue of class, while US comedy prefers to play on the characterization of the individual. And while US TV experiments with cutting edge products such as cross-genre *Desperate Housewives* (ABC, USA, 2004–present), and *House MD* (Fox, USA, 2004–present), containing a potpourri of romance, thriller and humour, and the British sitcom follow suit in products like *Shameless* (Channel 4, UK, 2004–present), they still remain firmly tied to their fixation with class (see Wagg 1998). In other words, it would appear that the UK tends to produce very culture-specific series whereas the US locates its series in more general scenarios with characters who have internationally recognizable features. Moreover, as **Davies** argues, it is class displayed through Britain's many social varieties, which is so often the subject of English jokes, that creates that extra Knowledge Resource, namely Comic Dimension shared only by some. There is nothing inherently funny with Eric Morecambe and Ernie Wise's dance in which they pranced around the stage kicking one leg behind them or at their considering famous personalities as being

'Rubbish!'. Yet, even today, they still raise a laugh and hardly seem dated. Would the French or the Chinese find them equally funny? And it is the issue of class together with a light-hearted glance at Anglo-French relationships, or rather the public's perception of feelings between the two peoples that rears its head in classic UK sitcom *'Allo 'Allo!* discussed by **Dirk Delabastita** in Volume 2.

However, US television channels are by no means the inventors of adaptations of products for culturally diverse audiences. **Ian Ruffell**'s discussion of Greek comedy translated for audiences of Ancient Rome highlights the addition of innovative comic dimensions for new and diverse audiences. In particular, the Romans opted for a 'clash of cultures' by exaggerating the 'Greekness' of the source culture to comic effect. Greek comedy, via Rome and subsequently the long passage through the Western theatrical tradition eventually resurges in themes of modern day sitcoms and their stock characters.

Jackobson identified three types of translation (1959) intralingual, interlingual and intersemiotic. Intralingual translations refer to those which reword the verbal signs of a language into other verbal sounds of the same language such as the children's version of a classic text. Interlingual translation, which Jakobson named 'translation proper', refers to the verbal transfer from one language to another. Intersemiotic translation denotes the transfer of verbal signs into other signs such as sounds and visuals as occurs in the adaptation of a book into a film. When considering adaptations, where translation proper stops and intersemiotic translation begins becomes a somewhat moot point. **Charmaine Lee** discusses the concept of originality with the tales of Boccaccio as a prime example of re-telling and re-working of other languages and cultures.

However, translational mode in screen translation, that is, subtitling and dubbing, should not be undervalued (for a detailed discussion see Chiaro 2009: 141–52). While most dubbed and subtitled comic films are notoriously ineffective in English language markets, *La Vita è Bella* (Roberto Benigni 1998, Italy) and *Amélie* have been worldwide successes. On the other hand, 'Cool Britannia' movies such as *The Full Monty* (Peter Cattaneo 1997, UK) are global blockbusters, competing well with films made in the USA. However, these European films are exceptions to the rule. Mr Bean has also travelled successfully both on the big and small screen but he is silent thus the issue of language transfer inhibiting comedy's achievement abroad does not arise.

As far as Western societies are concerned, slapstick, seeing someone slip on a banana skin or receiving a custard pie in the face are stock examples

of visual, non-verbal humour, as were the 'messes' in which Stan Laurel kept finding himself. Bergson claimed that we laugh at 'inelasticity' and 'rigidity' in 'something human' which brings to mind clumsy clowns such as Buster Keaton and Groucho Marx. Something about their movements, (Groucho's walk), and facial expression, (his raised eyebrows) undoubtedly made people laugh and as long ago as Ancient Greece we find that Socrates, supposedly speaking through Plato, asserted that 'when we laugh at the ridiculous qualities of our friends, we mix pleasure with pain' (360–347 BC; translation, 1925: 338–9). Furthermore, male comedians who prefer visuals over words also have in common the facial expressions of a child who has just done something wrong (e.g. Michael Crawford, Stan Laurel, Mr Bean, Charlie Chaplin, etc.). We can presume that visual humour is easily exportable because of the lack of language barriers. Yet, interestingly, it appears to be US and UK silent stars who have managed to 'go global' despite the fact that other nations are likely to have had their own silent stars. Italy's Totò and France's Fernandel were silent stars before gaining further recognition with the talkies yet their fame remained within their national boundaries except for a small following in non-English speaking Europe.

But the reason why some comedies are more successful than the numerous screen comedies which are not, could be due to the fact that their screenplays contain few instances of 'extreme' VEH such as puns. If this hypothesis were true, such films would consequently present fewer difficulties in translation than comedies which are denser in terms of banter. Actually, extremely successful British comedies such as *Lock Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* (Guy Ritchie 1998) and *In Da House* (Sacha Baron Cohen 2002) are virtually unheard of in countries like Italy and France. Both films are highly culture and language specific, in fact, the former is acted mainly in Cockney and Scouse and the latter in Ali G's (Sacha Baron Cohen) particular brand of teenspeak. Interestingly, both films were highly criticized in the USA for being linguistically incomprehensible. The kind of culture-specificity I am referring to is very much linked to knowledge which can only be gained at a precise moment of time within a certain language community. The following riddle, from Opie and Opie's seminal study of children's language and folklore, was common in UK playgrounds in the fifties:

(11) Q. If Christie had two sons what would he call them?
A. Ropem and Chokem.(Opie and Opie 1959: 106)

It would be totally incomprehensible to children today as they will not be familiar with murderer John Reginald Christie who strangled several

women in the early fifties (a necrophiliac, Christie raped his victims while they were dying, so, possibly, Opie and Opie's version of the riddle is an example of self-censorhip as the answer to the riddle was probably '*Rape*'m and Chok'em'). A similar example is provided by David Letterman's 'Top Ten' feature in the presenter's daily eponymous show, as mere proficiency in English is not sufficient to get many of the quips that can only be understood by people in the USA at that particular moment (see Bucaria 2007).

Yet, US comedy, which is undoubtedly successful worldwide, appears to contain many good lines and few puns. This may well be a deliberate and clever global marketing strategy. Yet, the struggling European cinema industry seems to hold tightly onto its rich variety of cultural identities inherent to each single nation and exploits them at will in comedy (i.e. the use of accent, regional stereotypes etc.) possibly without knowing, or perhaps being perturbed by the fact that they are unlikely to be successful abroad because of linguistic barriers. Chiaro (2005) discusses how some languages have become more equal than others in terms of translation. Like English language movies and television products, phenomena like British chick lit is well known worldwide through its translations. Italian chick lit, which does exist, remains at home and unlike Sophie Kinsella, a global writer, Luciana Litizzetto is unheard of beyond the Alps. It is difficult to tell whether such anonymity may be due to translational issues, poor marketing by the ST publishers or disinterest outside Italy.

Certainly, the Marx Brothers and Woody Allen are household names worldwide, and the sheer amount of translated products from the USA on TV provide researchers of languages other than English with plenty of material to study (see **Adrià Fuentes Luque** and **Patrick Zabalbeascoa**, Volume 2). But such Anglo-centricity speaks a thousand words. Furthermore Marxian humour is choc-a-bloc with puns, and extreme VEH that is quite unusual today. I would like to argue that the slower world of the 1930s and 40s allowed for the luxury of such arduous translations across the non-English speaking world (see Chiaro 2006). Woody Allen himself actually oversees the dubbed versions into French, German, Italian and French and pays special attention to the way the dialogues are recited. In Italy, the late Oreste Lionello, the actor who voiced his films, was frequently mistaken for the American actor because the quality of his voice was so similar to Allen's (Lionello 1995).

It is also noteworthy that feature films aimed at children, which are by nature full of VEH, are also dominated by English language originals. An attempt to evaluate translational quality in the translated versions of a number of these films is made by **Thorsten Schröter** (Volume 2). The issue

of quality is also faced by **Rossato** and **Chiaro** who adopt empirical methods to investigate how the humour in *Good Bye Lenin!*, a German film (in a sense a minority language with respect to English) was perceived by Italian audiences (Volume 2). What emerges from this study, is that in many cases the reaction of Italian respondents watching in translation was more similar than the reaction of a sub-sample of German respondents from the ex-GDR than a sub-sample who has always lived in the FRG. It is likely that Germans who had never experienced the ex-GDR, although they watched the film in their own language, lacked the extra cultural information conveyed via translation. More importantly, this seems to imply a good quality adaptation.

This first volume closes with an essay by **Walter Redfern** which is an intentional (or unintentional) Think Aloud Protocol (self-reports of the mental processes while carrying out a task) based on his own translations into French and into Spanish of a poem the author wrote to his father, in English. If the poem both raises smiles, triggers laughter and yet, sends shivers down the reader's spine, in either of the two translations, we can safely say that the banknote **Redfern** is spending (see Cronin mentioned earlier) is well and truly valid.

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Chapter 2

Linguistic Factors in Humour

Graeme Ritchie

1. Introduction

It is generally recognized that the comprehension of any particular instance of humour requires the recipient (audience) to have certain knowledge. Not all humorous items work equally well in all settings, as the humour is affected by specific knowledge (or beliefs) about the world, or by particular cultural assumptions – jokes that are hilarious in one country may be incomprehensible in another. This means that any statements that we make about the workings of an example of humour should be seen as relative to some state of knowledge. Usually, such states of knowledge are taken to comprise facts about the world, cultural beliefs and social conventions, all of which can vary between individuals. In this chapter, we focus on a particular kind of variable perspective: *knowledge about language*. We will review some of the ways in which linguistic knowledge can contribute to humorous effects, emphasizing the variety of roles which linguistic knowledge can play. One consequence of this variety is that it is difficult to simply partition humorous texts into the easily translatable and the completely untranslatable. Before we launch into our review of linguistic aspects of humour, it is necessary to digress briefly to set down some basic points.

2. Setting the Scene

2.1 Jokes and other forms

Humour occurs in many forms: physical slapstick, visual humour, jokes relying on gestures or sounds, aphorisms, short stories. Here we are concerned with humour conveyed in language, sometimes known as *verbally expressed humour* (Ritchie 2000) or *verbalized humour* (Attardo 1994: 96). We shall have nothing to say about humour in other media, such as visual gags. To simplify the discussion, we shall often illustrate particular devices by using *jokes*, that is, short, relatively self-contained texts whose central purpose

is humour. There are good arguments, methodologically, for using jokes as 'laboratory animals' on which ideas about textual humour can be tested (Ritchie 2004), but many of the effects illustrated here show up more widely, in newspapers, novels, plays, and so on. Hence it is not just translators of joke books who may be concerned with the issues highlighted here.

2.2 Linguistic theory

None of the many theoretical frameworks for describing language have made much of an impact on the analysis of humour. It is unusual to find a detailed account of some humorous phenomena framed in terms of the specific apparatus of any of the linguistic theories of the past century (but see Popa 2005). This is not to say that humour analysts ignore or dismiss linguistics. It is normal for analyses of humour to rely on informal but familiar notions from traditional linguistics, such as ambiguity or phonetic similarity, but these concepts are usually not defined within any overall linguistic theory. Instead, the meanings of these terms are left as intuitively clear to the informed reader. In this way, the analyses are usually intelligible to a reader who is schooled in the basic concepts of linguistics, but the full technical apparatus which features in theoretical articles on linguistics is rarely glimpsed in these informal discussions of humour texts. We shall follow these practices, relying on fairly basic and general linguistic concepts to describe the mechanisms.

2.3 Referential vs. verbal humour

A recurring observation about humour conveyed in language is that there are two broad classes of textual humorous items. *Referential* (or *conceptual*) humour uses language to convey some meaning (e.g. a story, a description of a situation or event) which is itself the source of humour, regardless of the medium used to convey it. *Verbal* humour, on the other hand, relies on the particular language used to express it, so that it may use idiosyncratic features of the language (such as which words sound alike, or which sentence structures are ambiguous). Attardo (1994) shows how this distinction dates back as far as the writings of Cicero, and gives an extensive list of authors who have discussed this dichotomy; this includes Bergson (1940) and Freud (1966).

A brief word about terminology is needed here. The phrase 'verbal humour' is used in different ways by different authors. Attardo (1994: 27, 95) uses it to indicate humour which crucially depends on the linguistic

form, and this is the usage we adopt here. However, there are other conventions. Raskin (1985) introduces his approach as being concerned with 'verbal' humour, but his analyses are based on all types of humour conveyed in language, that is, our 'verbally expressed' humour. The widely-cited General Theory of Verbal Humour (Attardo 1994), which we have not space to discuss here, is about humour expressed in language, not merely humour dependent on specific language devices. To complicate matters further, Norrick (2004) uses *non-verbal* to describe jokes which cannot be effectively conveyed in written language, since they are dependent on audible material (e.g. tone of voice) or on non-linguistic devices such as gestures; 'verbal' jokes would then be those which can be expressed successfully in writing. In this chapter, we will stay with the terms outlined earlier: anything conveyed in language is 'verbally expressed humour', 'verbal humour' is dependent on language-specific devices, 'referential humour' is based solely on meaning.

Many authors write as if the division between verbal and referential humour is both clear-cut (i.e. every example falls into one class or the other, but not both) and obvious (i.e. it is always apparent into which class an instance of humour falls), although this view is not unanimous: 'Conceptual humour and verbal humour are not distinct categories, however' (Armstrong 2005: 184). There appears to be no strict definition of the boundary between verbal and referential humour, with classification of examples being left to general intuition. Sometimes *translatability* is proposed as the criterion for distinguishing the two types (e.g. Bergson 1940; Attardo 1994; Armstrong 2005). It is certainly true that the two types of humour put quite different demands on the translator, but the 'translatable' criterion is not well-defined: Does it mean 'it can be translated into every language', or 'there is some language somewhere into which it can be translated'?

The following sections will illustrate some ways in which the situation can be more complicated.

2.4 Language as narrative medium

There are some examples of amusing text in which the sole function of the language is to convey a description of a situation or of some events, so that the humour is clearly referential, by any reasonable standards. For example, consider this brief newspaper report, quoted in Parsons (1971: 51):

(1) Nineteen-year-old Texan Roger Martinez set a world record by swallowing 225 live goldfish in 42 minutes in a San Antonio contest. His prize: a free fish dinner. (*Sun*)

(Parsons edited a number of collections (in 1952, 1953, 1971), which bring together amusing news items and unintentionally humorous misprints or clumsy phrasings). In (1), the facts are stated baldly, with no linguistic devices or tricks. If the reader finds this amusing, it must be because of the situation itself. Even if the two facts – the feat of swallowing and the award of the prize – were to be presented in reverse order, the effect would not be changed greatly. The only contribution of language here is to convey the information. (It is sometimes hard to draw the line between a linguistic constraint and a cultural factor. In a culture where there is nothing remotely corresponding to a 'fish dinner', and hence no convenient phrase for this, translation using a circumlocution might be so cumbersome that the humorous impact might be lessened.)

A very common way of using language to narrate humour is for the text to have a definite humorous ending, the *punch line*. That is, a simple sequence of events, or a situation, is recounted, but the humour is created by some particular effect of the ending, as in the joke (2).

(2) Fat Ethel sat down at the lunch counter and ordered a whole fruit cake.
'Shall I cut it into four or eight pieces?' asked the waitress. 'Four,' said Ethel, 'I'm on a diet.' (Suls 1972: 83)

The only contribution of language structure here is the necessary placing of the punch line 'I'm on a diet' at the end, after the *set-up* (cf. Attardo 1994). Once again, all of the situation, and even the dialogue, could be expressed in another language (so this must be referential humour). In ordinary conversation, people sometimes, when recounting an event that has happened to them, use a form which is reminiscent of this 'set-up/punch line' structure. This could be an influence from the more ritualised cultural form of the joke, or it could be that the joke-form evolved from the telling of everyday anecdotes.

A further step in the direction of humour which depends on the details of the presentation is exemplified by another example from Parsons' 1971 collection:

(3) Over the range from about 450 degrees centigrade to upwards of 500 degrees centigrade, the coal passes through a phase of elasticity during which it can be moulded between the fingers like putty. (*The Elements of Fuel Technology*)

In (3), the particular choice of description for the malleable state of the coal – 'can be moulded between the fingers like putty' – leads (accidentally) to the image of material at more than 450 degrees centigrade being held in the hand, which is likely to strike readers as humorously odd. However, this is *not* a language-specific effect, in the sense of being expressible only in English – the same maladroit description could be adopted in another language. On the other hand, the bare facts could have been conveyed unhumorously by another choice of words, such as 'has the consistency of putty'. So the humour is not about the linguistic structures themselves, but about two clashing images conveyed in well-formed language. Morreall makes the distinction between 'incongruity in things' and 'incongruity in presentation' (1983: 62). While (1) seems to exemplify the former, (3) is more complicated. The phrasing 'can be moulded between the fingers' is a presentational choice with respect to the core message (i.e. the coal is soft), but on the other hand conveys a particular situation (i.e. the hot coal between the fingers) which is incongruous. This probably still counts as referential humour, even though (at some level) the chosen description plays a large part. It would take us too far from our central concerns here if we were to explore the extent to which the humour is derived from a feeling of superiority towards the unfortunate writer; cf. Attardo (1994: 49–50). Whether a translator should retain the amusing phrasing would depend upon the purpose of the translation (Zabalbeascoa 2005). If the document being translated is the original '*The Elements of Fuel Technology*', a translator might judge that a non-literal translation, avoiding the accidental humour, would be better; however, in the context of Parsons' anthology of entertaining mistakes, a more direct translation would be appropriate.

2.5 Language as misdirection

A very widely discussed type of humour consists of a text in which the early part (the set-up) can be interpreted in more than one way, but the audience (hearer or reader) will typically not notice the less obvious reading of the text. The meaning of the final line (the punch line) raises doubts about this default understanding of the initial part, and causes the audience to seek an alternative way of interpreting the set-up. This other interpretation is compatible with the punch line, but in some way leads to humour. See Attardo (1994) and Ritchie (2004) for more details. Joke (4) exemplifies this.

(4) An old man was driving on the freeway when his car phone rang. It was his wife. 'Herman,' she cried, 'I just heard on the news that there's a car going the wrong way on 280. Please be careful.' 'Hell,' exclaimed Herman, 'It's not just one car. It's hundreds of them!' (Tibballs 2000: 38)

In example (4) the initially assumed reading is that Herman is driving in the normal and legal direction, but the punch line causes the audience to become aware of an alternative interpretation.

It might appear that there is no linguistic contribution to such a joke, apart from the very simple one of placing the punch line at the end, as in (2). However, the set-up has been constructed so as to avoid revealing the alternative interpretation prematurely (cf. Dolitsky 1983, 1992).

(5) A pair of suburban couples who had known each other for quite some time talked it over and decided to do a little conjugal swapping. The trade was made the following evening, and the newly arranged couples retired to their respective houses. After about an hour of bedroom bliss, one of the wives propped herself up on her elbow, looked at her new partner and said 'Well, I wonder how the boys are getting along'.

Yamaguchi (1988: 332) quotes joke (5) (from *Playboy*), and observes there is a form of *evasion* occurring here, in that a number of specific language choices occur in the set-up to help conceal the alternative interpretation: the vague phrases 'the trade was made', 'newly arranged couples', and so on. Here we see linguistic devices deployed in support of referential humour. This joke could be translated to another language (subject to the obvious provisos about cultural expectations), providing that the target language allowed the same degree of equivocation in the set-up.

Although a joke such as (4) relies on its set-up having multiple interpretations, there is no *linguistic* ambiguity in the text – the different readings are possible ways of making sense of the information supplied. In (5), there is (deliberate) *vagueness* in the language used in order to allow the different possible interpretations. A more pronounced form of this latter technique is the use of actual linguistic ambiguity to create the two readings. All of (6), (7), (8), use ambiguous linguistic structures to create the multiple interpretations.

(6) Do you believe in clubs for young people? Only when kindness fails. (Attardo 1994: 97)

(7) What is grey, has four legs and a trunk? A mouse going on a long vacation. (Rothbart 1977: 91)
(8) A lady went into a clothing store and asked 'May I try on that dress in the window?' 'Well,' replied the sales clerk doubtfully, 'don't you think it would be better to use the dressing room?' (Oaks 1994: 379)

The ambiguities in jokes like these may be highly specific to the language involved, particularly where homophony (sometimes known as lexical ambiguity) is used, as in (6) and (7). Hence, these must be classed as verbal jokes. Nevertheless, at a deeper level, there is a similarity between these ambiguity-based jokes and the referential jokes such as (4) and (5), in the sense that they all depend upon the audience assigning one interpretation to the set-up before having another interpretation forced forward by the punch line. The crucial difference is that (6), (7) and (8) rely on linguistic ambiguity to permit this misdirection.

In humour of this kind, it seems that any kind of linguistic ambiguity can be employed. For example, (9) relies on ambiguity about the focus of the question, (10) uses pragmatic ambiguity about the nature of the speech act, and (11) has ambiguity about the relative scopes of the quantifiers in 'every' and 'someone'.

(9) Why do birds fly south in winter? Because it's too far to walk.
(10) 'Waiter, there's a fly in my soup!' 'Don't shout so loud, sir – everyone will want one.'
(11) In New York, someone is knocked down by a car every two minutes. He's getting pretty fed up about this.

Although such devices are mostly used within simple jokes, they can occasionally be employed by authors for playful purposes. Heller (1974: 272) quotes (12) from James Joyce's *Ulysses*.

(12) Come forth, lazarus! And he came fifth and lost the job.

The textual structure outlined above is essentially the same as that of an ordinary misunderstanding, such as might occur in everyday life, or a 'twist-in-the-tail' short story, where an unexpected ending creates an impact. This raises the question: what renders texts with this form humorous, when some short stories with unexpected endings (or everyday misunderstandings) are not at all funny? To examine this question would take us into the much-discussed questions of *incongruity* and *incongruity-resolution*, for which

there is not space here. See, for example, Suls (1972), Attardo (1994: 47–9), Ritchie (2004).

3. Linguistic Knowledge Outside the Text

3.1 Facts about language

Sometimes the cultural knowledge needed to understand an example of humour includes facts about language, even though the literal meaning of the text may be understood without these facts. The anecdote (13) is recounted in Matthews (1974: 146).

(13) Jean Harlow kept calling Margot Asquith by her first name, or kept trying to: she pronounced it Mar*got*. Finally Margot set her right. 'No, no, Jean. The *t* is silent as in Harlow.'

Asquith's quip relies on the audience's knowledge not only of the spelling and pronunciation of 'Margot' (to rhyme with 'cargo'), but of the spelling and pronunciation of the word 'harlot', which does not appear in what was said. Although the word upon which play is made ('Harlow') does appear in the final remark, the same jibe could have been worded '. . . silent as in your surname', where 'Harlow' does not occur. The humour relies on linguistic knowledge (and perhaps cultural knowledge about actress Jean Harlow's sexy public persona), but it is not crucially dependent on the exact linguistic form of the delivery. A translation of this story into another language would be possible, but it would make sense only to readers familiar with the relevant English spellings and pronunciations. Here, the linguistic knowledge is functioning in the same way that facts about the world, society or culture are needed to make sense of any story; for example, (4) depends on knowledge of traffic conventions in car-driving societies, and (5) involves knowledge of certain social trends. This appears to be an example of referential humour which is dependent upon linguistic knowledge. Another example of this is offered by Armstrong:

> Conceptual humour can depend on idiom, and so defy translation, as in the cartoon depicting two scientists looking at a loaf of sliced bread, with one saying: 'That's brilliant, Johnson! It's the best thing since, er, . . .'. (2005: 184)

Here, the caption could be translated without loss of meaning, but unless the reader is familiar with the idiom 'the best thing since sliced bread' (a general expression of enthusiastic approval), the point will be lost.

3.2 Supplying linguistic material

Some presentations of humour leave some of the necessary linguistic connections implicit, so that the audience must fill these in for themselves (to some extent, Armstrong's 'sliced bread' example, above, is an instance of this). Visually presented humour, for example in cinema, can rely on the audience using linguistic knowledge to connect the images to language, even where the spoken words do not directly involve this knowledge. The following two incidents from Marx Brothers films are presented with a spoken set-up but a wholly visual punch line:

(14) Groucho (at his desk with an official document): 'Where's the seal? Where's the seal?'
(Harpo enters carrying a large aquatic mammal.) (*Horse Feathers*, 1932, Norman McLeod)

(15) President of Sylvania: 'I asked you to dig up something I can use against Firefly. Did you bring me his record?'
(Harpo produces a gramophone record.) (*Duck Soup*, 1933, Leo McCarey)

Both (14) and (15) display exactly the same pattern of mis- or re-interpretation shown in earlier jokes such as (6) and (7), even though the punch line is delivered wholly as an action which is perceived visually by the audience. The play on the ambiguity in the set-up can be grasped only once the audience supplies an appropriate English gloss to the visual events: linguistic knowledge is used to relate a non-linguistic punch line to a linguistic set-up. This seems to be verbal humour conveyed partially visually. The difficulty for the translator (of the spoken lines in the film) is similar to a situation where the punch line has been expressed verbally, since the visually conveyed punch line is humorous only because of the language-specific ambiguity. See Chiaro (2008) for discussion of translations of Marx Brothers' humour.

4. Language as the Central Mechanism

4.1 Connotation and register

We turn now to more obviously verbal humour; that is, where the actual linguistic phrasing of the text is itself the source of humour. One simple category of incongruity-based humour is that where the style or register of

certain words or phrases clashes with that of the surrounding context (Attardo 1994). This might involve placing a banal expression in a high-flown context, or a literate expression in a uneducated context, or other clashes of social/cultural setting. For example, consider this speech from the comedy film *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (Terry Gilliam & Terry Jones, 1975):

(16) Follow. But! Follow only if ye be men of valour, for the entrance to this cave is guarded by a creature so foul, so cruel that no man yet has fought with it and lived! Bones of full fifty men lie strewn about its lair. So, brave knights, if you do doubt your courage or your strength, come no further, for death awaits you all with nasty, big, pointy teeth. (www.textfiles.com/media/SCRIPTS/grail, Dec. 2008)

The final phrase 'nasty, big, pointy teeth' uses rather banal vocabulary, with a childish tone. This is not a matter of the meaning of the words – it could be paraphrased unhumorously as 'great savage jaws' – but concerns the register or connotation of this phrasing. Similarly, *The New Yorker* published a cartoon depicting a homeless man on the street holding a sign with the word 'IMPECUNIOUS'. Using this highly literate adjective, where the simple 'POOR' would suffice, clashes with the context of crude simplicity. The animated TV comedy *The Simpsons* often uses such devices. Although the humour in such texts is derived directly from the linguistic phrasing (i.e. appears to be verbal), it may still be directly translatable, if the target language offers appropriate words which are suited to different settings, in terms of social, cultural or educational factors.

4.2 Self-contained puns

The most widely discussed type of verbal joke is the pun, informally defined as 'a play on words similar in sound but different in sense' (*Collins New English Dictionary*). This characterization emphasizes the central role of phonetic similarity. (This means that the wordplay illustrated above by (16) would not be classed as punning.) There are, however, a variety of linguistic types of pun; jokes such as (6) and (7) could be classed as puns, for example.

The noted Irish novelist Flann O'Brien wrote a regular newspaper column under the name Myles na Gopaleen. A recurring feature in

these pieces consisted of very short stories about two characters, Keats and Chapman, in which Keats produced some brief remark which was a play on words; for example, (17):

(17) Keats and Chapman met one Christmas Eve and fell to comparing notes on the Christmas presents each had bought himself. Keats had bought himself a ten glass bottle of whiskey and paid thirty shillings for it in the black market. 'That is far too dear', Chapman said. 'Eighteen shillings is plenty to pay for a ten glass bottle.' Chapman then explained that he had bought a valuable Irish manuscript, one of the oldest copies of the Battle of Ventry, or *Cath Fionntragha*. He explained that the value of the document was much enhanced by certain interlineal Latin equivalents of obscure Irish words. 'How many such interlineal comments are there?' Keats asked. 'Ten', Chapman said. 'And how much did you pay for this thing?' Keats asked. 'Forty-five shillings', Chapman said defiantly. 'Eighteen shillings is plenty to pay for a ten gloss battle', Keats said crankily.(O'Nolan 1993: 190–1)

This could be classed as a *syntagmatic* pun (Attardo 1994), because the wordplay is within the text, comparing 'ten glass bottle' with 'ten gloss battle' (as opposed to having an expression in the text resonate with something outside the text – see below). Like some of the examples in earlier sections, it has a clear set-up/punch line structure, with the (rather contrived) story creating a situation in which the punch line can be uttered. This makes it, like most jokes in circulation, 'self-contained' in the sense that it can be recounted in situations which have little or no connection to its content, because the set-up supplies the only context that the punch line needs. Syntagmatic puns are relatively rare in the 'Keats-Chapman' stories, or in a similar source, the *My Word* tales (Muir and Norden 1991). More common in these self-contained story-puns (Binsted and Ritchie 2001) are *paradigmatic* puns, where the punch line is phonetically similar not to something within the immediate textual context, but to something outside the text, usually a well-known saying in the culture. The following is from Cerf (1964: 251):

(18) King Arthur had lots of knights who fared forth on coal-black charges to rescue beautiful maidens from dragons' clutches, but did you ever know that one of them was mounted on a St Bernard dog? His name was Sir Marmaduke, and he and the St Bernard

> performed many a deed of derring-do. One evening, however, they were caught in a torrential thunderstorm, and sought shelter at a nearby tavern. 'Reservation?' asked the room clerk. 'No', admitted Sir Marmaduke. 'Sorry,' said the clerk, 'no room without a reservation.' It was at this point that he discovered that Marmaduke was sitting astride his faithful St Bernard. 'Hold on,' said the clerk, 'We'll have to find *something* for you. I wouldn't put out a knight on a dog like this.'

In this text, an utterance which makes sense relative to the set-up is also phonetically similar to a well-known expression (in this case, the idiom 'I wouldn't put out a dog on a night like this', used to comment on very inhospitable weather). Outside the world of joke-telling, a similar pattern of wordplay occurs frequently within certain cultures (certainly in Britain) in the form of newspaper headlines (see Alexander (1997) for a review of this phenomenon). In these puns, unlike the story pun, any humour is incidental rather than being central.

(19) A minor football team known informally as 'Caley Thistle' (where 'Caley' rhymes with 'alley') soundly defeats Celtic (then the top team in the country) in a major competition. The next day, a newspaper headline ('The Sun', 9 February 2000) reads: 'Super Caley Go Ballistic, Celtic Are Atrocious'.

The headline in (19) is phonetically similar (to some extent) to the song title and invented word 'Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious'. It is clear that many people were amused by this pun: it is a rare example of a pun which attracted news coverage in its own right. In all of these examples, the pun is dependent on some nearby textual material to which it is related. In all cases, the central meaning of the pun is in some way appropriate to that text, either as an utterance in the story, as in (17) and (18), or by summarizing the attached story, as in (19). In addition, there are phonetic similarity conditions: in (17), the similarity is to something in that neighbouring text; in (18) and (19) it is to some established expression in the cultural setting. Thus there are two kinds of knowledge centrally involved: phonetic and cultural. If we regard the associated text (the set-up in (17) and (18), the news story in (19)) as being a form of 'context' which can be transported along with the pun, then these examples have the same form as everyday puns, to which we now turn.

4.3 Puns in context

The puns described above were termed 'self-contained' because there was a well-defined portion of text which constituted the related information against which the punch line (the pun) played, making the jokes repeatable in a wide variety of situations. However, in some cultures (particularly in Britain) there is a conversational device of creating simple puns within the immediate context, as disposable items, made for the moment and not intended for circulation as jokes. They may also feature in fictional dialogues, for example in novels. The technique is to use an expression which, while making sense at the moment of use, also evokes some other expression, either well-known in the culture (cf. (18), (19)), or associated in some way with the context in which the utterance is made (cf. (17)). Ritchie (2004) offers the following example of an actual incident.

(20) A shopper is carrying a bag of groceries when a vegetable falls out of it; it is a leek. A passer-by draws attention to this by saying 'Hey, your bag's leaking!'.

Here, the utterance makes sense in the situation (meaning 'your bag is losing its contents'), but it is also a pun because 'leak' sounds identical to 'leek', something which is clearly prominent in the current context. This is compatible with the outline given earlier, in which some notion of 'being related to the context' was a factor in the punning. In (20), instead of a neatly supplied textual context, there is a more shapeless, real-world situation, but the same generalization holds. These examples illustrate the way in which the expression which is not present in the pun, but is similar to part of that text, must be *recoverable* (Hempelmann 2003). The criteria for being recoverable are not altogether clear, but it seems to involve some combination of phonetic similarity and salience, where by 'salience' we mean that either the resonating phrase must be present in, or summoned up by, the immediate context (as in (17) or (20)), or must be so well-established that it is easily recognizable (as in (18), (19), the latter not displaying a great deal of phonetic similarity). That is, association with the context and being established in the surrounding culture are both ways in which a particular expression can become 'prominent' or 'foregrounded' for the hearer. Puns (whether self-contained or contextual) present a challenge to translation because they are dependent on a conjunction of two sorts of attributes: phonetic similarity and semantic properties.

One language may display a neat coincidence of these different aspects of words/phrases, but other languages may not.

5. Conclusions

We have shown the linguistic mechanisms in some simple forms of humour, emphasizing the variety of roles that language can play in the creation of the humour, and the varying consequences which this could have for the translation of the humour. As noted at the outset, it is not clear exactly how the notion of 'translatable' applies to humorous text. One possible perspective, in the light of the many variations illustrated in this chapter, is to say that the linguistic aspects of an instance of humour do not unequivocally render it 'translatable' (or 'untranslatable'). Instead these linguistic aspects can be seen as delimiting the options available to the translator.

In this brief review, we have been able only to skim the surface of this topic. To delve more deeply into linguistic aspects of humour, some books worth exploring are Attardo (1994), (2001) and Ritchie (2004). Chiaro (2008) gives a wide-ranging picture of the issues involved in translating humour, with an extensive bibliography.

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Chapter 3

Translating English into English in Jokes and Humour

Christie Davies

Moving back and fore between one of the many local and 'particular' forms of English and universal international standard English is an everyday activity for many native speakers of English. The purpose of using standard English, whether in writing or in speaking, is to achieve clarity, accuracy and succinctness, the key qualities sought when seriously and truthfully conveying information to others (Raskin 1985: 101). You want as many speakers of English as possible to understand you. If you were to write in dialect and to employ an idiosyncratic vocabulary and grammatical forms, people would have difficulty in reading you. Likewise to speak a strongly Ceredigion, Yorkshire, Essex, Chennai, Alabama, Melbourne, Glaswegian, Johannesburg, Antrim or Kerry local form of English, a form that would also carry a strong local accent, would mean that people who do not share your mode of speaking would have difficulty in understanding what you say. If that is your everyday familiar mode of speech then you will have to switch to standard English and to modify your accent if you wish to be comprehensible to Australians, the British, Indians, the Irish, New Zealanders, Newfoundlanders, North Americans, Singaporeans, South Africans and West Indians alike, much as speakers of a particular local form of Swiss-German use high German when dealing with those from another district where the form of Swiss-German used is markedly different. It is even more important for native speakers of English to bear in mind that for many of their readers and listeners, English may be their second language and they will have learned standard English by a process of formal education that does not, indeed cannot, teach multiple local variations.

It is not difficult to choose to use standard English in writing. Most native speakers of English will have learned to speak a local form of English at home or from their contemporaries but at school they are taught to write standard English. Only the semi-literate under-class fail to learn how to do this and most of these cannot write much anyway.

The differences between the written forms of standard English, such as British or American or Australian or Indian, are very small indeed. It is always possible for a native speaker of English to pick up a serious newspaper or a journal in another English speaking country and read it without difficulty. Likewise, journalists and academics routinely write articles for publication in another English speaking country with minimal modification. When they are incomprehensible it is not because of differences in standard English between countries but because they can not resist jargon, over-complicated sentence structures and the quest for an appearance of profundity through the practice of obscurity. It is pardonable when speakers of a local form of English have difficulty in using standard English but deliberately to depart from standard English into a closed, private '*Wissenshaftsenglisch*' in order to restrict meaning and understanding to a coterie seeking an unjustified prestige is both incompetent and a betrayal of your calling as a communicator.

When speaking, most educated people, other than those who have attended secluded boarding schools, are in effect bilingual in English and they can effortlessly move back and forth between international standard English and the local English of their place of origin. By contrast, the speech of the uneducated is trapped in a particular locality. They can understand standard English because they are regularly exposed to it on radio and television and very little of their reading, such as it is, will be in the local dialect but they can not speak standard English. They do not need to because they lack social and geographical mobility and interact mainly with people who speak their own local English. In consequence they sometimes need a translator. When Don Nilsen (see Nilsen and Nilsen 2000), the secretary of the International Society for Humor Studies and a native of Arizona, went to Sheffield University in Yorkshire for a humour conference, he could not understand what the caretaker of the building in which he was staying said to him. The janitor could understand Professor Nilsen because standard American English is used in films, radio and television and differs but little from standard British English but Professor Nilsen did not have a clue what the caretaker was talking about. The fault was not Professor Nilsen's. Why on earth should someone from Arizona be expected to know local Sheffield English? In the end the situation was resolved by the caretaker speaking to me in Sheffield English, my translating him into standard British English for the benefit of Don Nilsen who then spoke to the caretaker in standard American English. If the visitor to Sheffield had been, say, a caretaker from the Shankhill Road in Belfast in Ulster on holiday, I would have had to translate in both directions. If an

American visitor to Sheffield had been a cracker from rural Georgia, we would have needed to find an extra interpreter, an educated American who could turn Southern rural speech into standard American English, so that the man from Sheffield and indeed myself could understand what was being said.

In this context highly local speech is simply a petty nuisance. The caretaker had no problem in understanding Professor Nilsen's questions about such mundane matters as what time the doors of the building were locked at night or where one could buy caffeine free soft drinks but his replies were incomprehensible. What it also showed is the interesting position of someone whose core language is a specific national instance of standard English. That person can communicate both with those from other nations who speak standard English and with those from his or her own nation who speak non-standard English because he or she interacts regularly with both groups but not with those from another nation who speak a type of non-standard English related to *that* nation's standard English. This has considerable implications for the way in which jokes can circulate.

The native speaker of a nation's standard language merely needs a good ear and a wide vocabulary to cope with the non-standard versions of English. However, this is not something one can reasonably expect of outsiders, especially if their first language is not English. It would be better for the purposes of bona fide communication if everyone spoke standard English all the time, for person A needs to understand exactly what person B is saying and vice versa.

However, jokes and humour are a different kind of communication. The basic rule for bona fide communication is to maximize clarity of understanding (Raskin 1985: 88–9). If someone is providing, say, instructions on how to operate a machine, to feed a cat or to plant maize, directions to get from one place to another or a timetable or a weather forecast, then it is important that there should be as little ambiguity and uncertainty as possible; this usually means using standard English. Jokes on the contrary play with ambiguity, create, resolve and then recreate incongruity, make veiled allusions, revel in disguise, often resemble lies and have no clear message. All that is necessary is that someone should get the joke and laugh. Jokes can and do make use of local versions of a language. They use the flavour of and familiarity with the local. Joke-tellers put on accents to tell them and play on the differences between dialect and standard English (Davies 2001, 2005).

Even a joke told in standard English will often use as a comic term, a word from a local dialect or even from a language that the joke-tellers do not

know. Very few British and American Jews today still speak or ever did speak Yiddish but Jewish jokes in English use Yiddish words to convey the joke's origins and setting or a humorous quality or role for which there is no real English equivalent (Rosten 2003; Wiener and Davilman 2004). You can more or less translate *Schnorrer* as (roughly) impudent beggar who thinks he is morally entitled to your largesse, *Fresser* as enthusiastic guzzler of food not over-inhibited by polite manners or *handl* (deal, trade, negotiate, do business) into standard English but it would sound odd and clumsy in a joke. Fortunately useful words from other languages, including humorous ones from Yiddish, easily get imported into English so that schlemiel, schlock and schlep are now part of standard English, while retaining a hint of humorous derision lacking in their English predecessors and alternatives. Indians when speaking standard English will deliberately and humorously call someone a *chumcha,* literally a spoon but meaning a functionary who has become a mere instrument of his superiors, a thing moving rigidly at the will of its wielders. Similarly speakers of standard South Wales English will use the Wenglish word *crachach,* an ironic term for those over-conscious of what they see as their elevated social position. They are local words that can be introduced for the purposes of humour and, if necessary, indirectly explained to outsiders on the way. Such words are in a sense the very opposite of technical terms such as momentum, potential difference, horsepower, virtual work, ion, proton or marginal cost which achieve precision but lack feeling and humour.

One index of the close connection between local English and humour is the popularity both among local people and among visitors of humorous glossaries of local terms such as John Edwards' *Talk Tidy, the Art of Speaking Wenglish* (1985) and *More Talk Tidy* (1986) about Wenglish, Austin Mitchell and Sid Waddell's *Teach Thissen Tyke* (1971) about Yorkshire English, Frank Graham's *The New Geordie Dictionary*, (1980) and George Todd's *Todd's Geordie Words and Phrases* (1977) about the English spoken in the North-East of England, Michael Munro's *The Original Patter: A Guide to correct Glasgow Usage* (1985), the Australian trio, Afferbeck Lauder's *Let Stalk Strine* (1965), Bob Hudson and Larry Pickering's *First Australian Dictionary of Vulgarities and Obscenities* (1986) and John Blackman's *Don't Come the Raw Prawn* (1991) and Steve Mitchell and Sam C. Rawls' *How to Speak Southern* (1976) and Martin Ragaway's *Plains English* (1977) from the USA. The books are both humorous in themselves, indeed often illustrated with cartoons, and a means to understanding other local jokes and humour. Indeed purchasers buy them for the humour. The Oxford Dictionary they ain't, nor are they the equivalent of the scholarly dictionaries of, say, Scottish (Macleod et al.

1990; Warrack 2000) or Newfoundland (Storey et al. 1990) speech. The latter are for the humour scholar books needed for gaining precise understanding, rather than sources of amusement in themselves. What they do have in common with the latter is that they are one-way only; few people are likely to want to buy a dictionary explaining in local English the meaning of standard English words.

What I have tried to establish is an antithesis between standard English, our first choice for precise, serious, universal communication and non-standard forms which come into their own in humour, in part because they are inferior for the former purpose. Often humour is derived from the clash and the play between the two kinds of English. If you translate jokes that depend on the oddities of local speech into standard English, clearly some of the humour is lost but how much and why?

There are valid reasons why one might want or indeed need to make such a translation. Let me take an example forced on me by circumstances. I was asked by Professor Ulrich Nembach to write an article for *Informationes Theologiae Europae: Internationales Oekumenisches Jahrbuch fuer Theologie* on 'Scottish Religion, Humour and Identity' (Davies 2000). The journal publishes articles on theology and religion in German, English and even French but the readers are in the main educated and sophisticated Germans learned in theological matters and with the excellent knowledge of standard English characteristic of their class. For such a readership I could write about predestination and sabbatarianism and the schisms within the ranks of the Scottish Presbyterians, confident that they would be able to follow subtle points and fine distinctions. Yet I could not reasonably expect them to understand Scottish jokes about religion written (as spoken), in part at least, in dialect such as the following:

> There sometimes appears to have been in our countrymen an undue preponderance of zeal for Sabbath observance as compared with the importance attached to *other* religious duties. The following between Mr. Macnee of Glasgow, the celebrated artist, and an old Highland acquaintance, whom he had met with unexpectedly, will illustrate the contrast between the severity of judgement passed upon treating the Sabbath with levity and the lighter censure attached to indulgence in whisky.
>
> Mr. Macnee begins, 'Donald, what brought you here?' 'Ou, weel sir, it was a baad place yon; they were baad folk – but they're a God-fearin' set o' folk here!'
>
> 'Well, Donald,' said Mr. M., 'I'm glad to hear it.'

> 'Ou ay, sir, 'deed are they; an' I'll gie ye an instance o't. Last Sabbath, just as the kirk was skailin', there was a drover chield frae Dumfries comin' along the road whustlin', an' lookin' *as happy* as if it was ta middle o' ta week; weel, sir, oor laads is a God-fearin' set o' lads, an' they were just comin' oot o' the kirk – an' they yokit upon him an' a'most killed him!' (Ramsay 1874:73)

> An Edinburgh minister was officiating for a few weeks for a friend in a country district where Calvinistic orthodoxy and Sabbath observance were of the strictest. On the first Sunday, the Minister, after service, took his stick in his hand and set off to enjoy a stroll. On the outskirts of the village, he happened to pass the house of one of the elders. The old man, who had observed him, came out, and asked if he was going anywhere on a work of mercy.
>
> 'No', said the minister, 'I am just enjoying a meditative walk amidst the beauties of Nature.'
>
> 'I was suspectin' as muckle', said the elder. 'But you that's a minister o' the Gospel should ken that this is no' a day for ony sic thing.'
>
> 'You forget', said the minister, 'that our Lord Himself walked in the fields with His disciples on the Sabbath Day.'
>
> 'Weel', said the elder, doggedly, 'I ken that. But I dinna think the mair o' *Him* ayther, for it.' (Macrae 1904: 50)

It was necessary to 'translate' or at least modify them into standard English with a *minimum of change* to the text so that the educated German reader of English could follow the jokes and relate them to the arguments about the sociology of religion in which they were embedded. The 'translations' below are easier to understand than the earlier authentic versions which for many readers would have been impenetrable. The jokes remain funny even though blander. The punch lines remain forceful and the central thrust of the jokes, the ludicrousness of the Scots' rigidity in observing the Sabbath despite Christ's example to the contrary (Matthew 12: 1) and in a way that undermines other Christian virtues (1 Corinthians 13: 1–13), remains strong:

> There sometimes appears to have been in our countrymen an undue preponderance of zeal for Sabbath observance as compared with the importance attached to *other* religious duties. The following conversation between Mr. Macnee of Glasgow, the celebrated artist, and an old

Highland acquaintance, whom he had met with unexpectedly, will illustrate the contrast between the severity of judgement passed upon treating the Sabbath with levity and the lighter censure attached to indulgence in whisky.

Mr. Macnee begins, 'Donald, what brought you here?' 'Oh, well sir, it was a bad place where I was before; they were bad folk – but they are a God-fearing set of folk here!'

'Well, Donald,' said Mr. Macnee, 'I'm glad to hear it.'

'Oh yes, sir, they are indeed; and I'll give you an example of it. Last Sabbath, just as the congregation was coming out of the church, a drover from Dumfries came along the road whistling and looking *as happy* as if it was the middle of the week; well, sir, our lads are a God-fearing set of lads, and they were just coming out of church – and they set upon him and almost killed him!'

An Edinburgh minister was officiating for a few weeks for a friend in a country district where Calvinistic orthodoxy and Sabbath observance were of the strictest. On the first Sunday, the Minister, after service, took his stick in his hand and set off to enjoy a stroll. On the outskirts of the village, he happened to pass the house of one of the elders. The old man, who had observed him, came out, and asked if he was going anywhere on a work of mercy.

'No', said the minister, 'I am just enjoying a meditative walk amidst the beauties of Nature.'

'I was suspecting as much', said the elder. 'But as a minister of the Gospel you should know that Sunday is not the right day for doing such a thing.'

'You forget', said the minister, 'that our Lord Himself walked in the fields with His disciples on the Sabbath Day.'

'Well', said the elder, doggedly, 'I know that. But I don't think any the better of Him for it.'

What then has been lost in 'translation' and does it matter? What would be missing if a real Scotsman with an authentic but mild Scottish accent were to tell the two jokes given above without departing from the text of the versions in standard English? He would capture the speech, the tone and the character of Mr Macnee of Glasgow and the Edinburgh minister exactly

for they are already Scotsmen using the Scottish version of standard English, as indeed are the original learned clerical compilers and narrators. What he could not provide would be the striking contrast between the urbane educated speech of the former and the rough-edged dialect of the two *teuchters,* rustics, namely Highland Donald and the severe elder (Davies 2001). The problem is not one of authenticity, though the two Scottish clergymen (Macrae 1904; Ramsay 1874) who compiled the books of jokes and humorous folklore within which the jokes are recorded consciously strove after this quality. The jokes would remain just as funny if the settings were moved to other parts of rural Scotland or indeed to Wales or Northern Ireland where a rigid regard for the keeping of Sabbath is or was combined with a local form of speech that departs recognizably from standard English. However, that would not help the German reader for whom the English of County Antrim or Ceredigion is as unfamiliar as that of Scotland. It would seem impossible to convey directly the differences in class, education and urbanity between the two sets of speakers within the bounds of standard English. In telling the joke in standard English should one introduce other devices to bring out this contrast? Also there is a problem of tone, something that strictly speaking is not part of the text of the joke but a set of assumptions brought to it by the reader. The Scottish dialect word *teuchter* that I have used instead of the standard English word rustic can convey contempt or be used, as here, jokingly. I am assuming on the basis of what I know about the two late nineteenth and early twentieth century compilers of the joke books (Davies 2000, 2001) that they perceive their Scottish readers as sharply aware of the antitheses and indeed the inequality between the two sets of urbane and rustic characters but in some sense identifying themselves with both sets. The jokes clearly place the urbane characters in a superior position and depict the rustics as foolish but the latter are not rejected or excluded. They are not set apart as something 'other' but are perceived as what the educated ones once were or even as a truer, uncorrupted, if extreme, version of themselves. Are these possibilities and nuances preserved in the standard English version?

I have taken an unusual example but I have described a process that occurs all the time as local jokes are adapted for wider national or even international audiences, who can not be expected to understand the dialect version. A Scottish comedian such as Sir Harry Lauder (1919, 1929) going on tour to England or the United States would of necessity have had to adapt his material and to 'translate' it into standard English, leaving only something of the pronunciation and the odd dialect word used as a marker of a joke's Scottish origins to retain its distinctiveness. In the

nineteenth century Scottish publishers of joke books catered mainly for a Scottish market but in the twentieth century firms like Valentine and Sons of Dundee sold collections of jokes in tartan-covered paperback editions all over Britain. The jokes are genuinely Scottish but written in something very close to standard English. Some quite familiar words are spelled so as to indicate a local Northeastern Lowland Scottish pronunciation but they are easily recognizable:

> A Minister was visiting his flock among whom was a shoemaker, who was usually in very good spirits, but on this occasion he appeared to be very gloomy. 'Well, John', the minister said, 'you are looking very solemn today. Is anything wrong?'
>
> 'Oh, a'thing's wrang', replied John, 'the sweep's taen the hoose o'er my heid, an'I canna get anither.'
>
> 'Well, John', said the Minister, 'I've often told you when you are in trouble you should take comfort in earnest prayer.' John promised to do so.
>
> A week or two afterwards the minister again called on his friend John to see how he was getting on; but this time he was hammering in the tackets and whistling all the time.
>
> 'Well, John, your spirits seem to be much better today', said the Minister.
>
> 'Oh, aye, sir', was John's reply. 'I took yer advice an' the sweep's deid.' (Taggart, 1927: 24)

The joke is similar to the earlier ones, namely a conversation between an educated man with a liberal humanistic view of the Christian religion who speaks standard English, presumably with a mild Scottish accent and a more down to earth, religiously cruder, tradesman who speaks Doric (the rougher Lowland Scottish speech of the North-East of Scotland, from an analogy with the speech of the Spartans, the Dorians, as perceived by Athenians, middle-class Edinburgh being the Athens of the North). It is the shoemaker who provides the forceful punch line that is funny because it undermines the Christian ethic of love and charity with which prayer is supposed to be congruent (1 Corinthians 13, 1–13). However, this time the joke is comprehensible to most native speakers of English and they will not need to consult a Scottish dictionary, nor need the editors add a glossary at the end of the book. Whether or not the spelling should be changed for the benefit of non-native speakers of English is optional. It is a pragmatic

choice open to the translator depending entirely on what he or she wishes to achieve and the audience he or she is trying to reach. No amount of theory will be of any assistance here, for it is a matter of judgment, intuition and the feeling that 'I have seen one of these before'. Where necessary it is always possible to consult a colleague who has the relevant experience of doing something similar. Different societies have different conventions or indeed different kinds of irresolvable disagreements about what to do in these circumstances and it is necessary to be aware of these and know how to follow them, but bear in mind that these are conventions not theories. When thinking about how to proceed with a translation it is best to adhere to the principle of subsidiarity and make decisions at the lowest level of abstraction possible. Avoid theory as much as you can and, if it looks to you like gobbledygook, avoid it altogether. You yourself are the practitioner and therefore the expert.

A Scotsman telling this story might use two different Scottish accents. An Englishman would make the minister speak middle-class English English and imitate a Scottish accent when pretending to be the shoemaker. It does not matter which, for one would be as funny as the other. In any case, jokes in oral circulation change at each telling. There are no fixed texts.

Such an approach to Scottish jokes infuriated Professor A. H. Charteris, a Scotsman in exile at the University of Sydney who referred to the books as 'dialect-and-water' (1932: 20). He added sardonically 'Nevertheless this much must be said for the tartan-covered Treacheries. They do give the foreign public what the foreign public wants' (1932: 19). Charteris then selected from the 'Tartan-covered Treacheries' what he regarded as the best and most authentic ones, notably:

> The scene is Deeside, the time the Aberdonian Spring Holiday (roughly, Easter Monday), the wind is sharp from ENE – whiles with hail. Stamping about in order to keep warm, a wee laddie falls into the famous river. Among the trippers intense interest, but no effort at rescue, so cold is the day. A strong, silent Englishman, stripping off muffler, over-coat and jacket, plunges in and brings the drookit bairn to land, and himself resumes his welcome garments. An active, wee 'thristle' of a mannie worms his way through the crowd, taps him on the shoulder and demands:
>
> 'Are 'ee the chielie 'at savit my laddie's life, mister?'
>
> The Englishman breaks silence with a shivering 'Yes!' whereat the other:
>
> '*Whaur's his bunnet then?*' (Where's his cap?) (1932: 33–4]

Charteris' book was published in London and would also have circulated in Australia but one wonders whether some of his non-Scottish readers might not have needed assistance with the joke he chose. Dialect is used throughout the joke and not just in the conversation where the Aberdonian addresses the Englishman. Thristle (thistle) is even put in quotation marks, for reasons that are not entirely clear. For the English or Australian reader it does not matter if some of the words are unfamiliar so long as they understand the gist of the story and of course the punch line at the end. That is all that a joke is, all that a good joke-teller remembers; the rest is reinvented each time it is told. If a translator whether from local English into standard English or between different languages radically alters a joke when translating it, then provided he or she keeps to the same story and the succinct punch line remains much the same, he or she is merely doing what joke-tellers do all the time; the particular version of the joke you start with is arbitrary anyway. From the point of view of those among whom the joke circulates it remains the same joke. This allows for quite radical changes in the joke on the part of joke-tellers. A joke-teller from a part of Scotland distant from Aberdeen might well choose to tell the joke in another dialect, say, that of Ayrshire or Fife. Someone wishing aggressively to put down the Aberdonians for the benefit of and in the company of Aberdeen-haters could in the narrative leading up to the ending deliberately mock their cowardice and fear of the cold and make the brave and honourable Englishman even stronger and more silent and the little Aberdonian weedy, scrawny, ugly, sandy-haired, pallid with freckles and speaking with a peevish whine. The joke also exists as a Jewish joke in a very large number of versions, one of which Richard Raskin (1993) regards as bringing out the familiar and intimate relation of a Jewish mother with G-d. Whether you see all these as the same joke depends on your immediate purpose. For a joke-teller concerned only with gaining a laugh they are all the same and even a humour scholar may choose to do likewise, knowing that this is what joke-tellers do; this is one approach to translating it. On the other hand a folklorist may wish to record each version exactly and if necessary to translate each with care into the language of his or her readers so that they can follow exactly each recorded version in relation to its particular teller and time, place and occasion of its being told. It is perhaps most vital to do this in the case of traditional anecdotes where the tellers themselves often strive to remember by rote the exact details, such as the names of particular persons or localities involved (Utley 1971–1973). Indeed the stories may purport to be based on real events in contrast to modern urban jokes which are based on shared fictional scripts (Raskin 1985: 177, 180). Anecdotes and jokes are two overlapping sets of humorous narratives. If a humorous

anecdote lacks altogether the logical mechanism and punch line that characterize true jokes, then there comes a point where one doubts whether it is a joke at all. If anecdotes are also particularly long and discursive, then they are closer to the Japanese *rakugo*, a monologue with humorous nuances and angles but no final twist, than to jokes. Where a humorous anecdote lacks the key characteristics that define a joke, then the translator must stick closely to the text.

Normally a folklore collector would not translate a traditional humorous anecdote from local English into standard English but it might be necessary to do so in order to present it to an audience or readership whose native language is not English, much as I had to do earlier for the German theologians. Ideally, the folklorist would, as I did in that case, give both the original version, transcribed as best he or she can and then add its rendering into standard English below.

By contrast, a joke can be a mere riddle, a form that almost demands a free translation when turned into another language if a play on words is to be captured. Even when not riddles, modern jokes can be very terse as in the Scotsman Max Hodes' modernist version of Charteris' long tale of an Aberdonian soaking, rescue and bonnet:

> Are you the man who dived into the Clyde to pull my wee boy out of the water?
>
> Aye.
>
> Well, where's his cap? (Hodes, 1978: 58).

In the modern and modernist version only 'wee' and 'aye' are Scottish, stage Scottish of a kind that is familiar to everyone, which uses words that are also part of standard English (Aye, aye, sir; wee nook), though not the ones that would usually be employed by choice outside of Scotland. The joke is no longer set in Aberdeen, the mean city but in Glasgow, no mean city, because for an international audience all Scottish cities are equally stingy for joking purposes and the Clyde that runs through Glasgow may well be the only Scottish river whose name outsiders know. There is no translating into standard English to be done; Charteris's nightmare of 'dialect-and-water' has become water with a mere taster of dialect.

Yet Hodes' version is also a do-it-yourself kit for joke-tellers. To use a familiar architectural analogy, Charteris' joke revels in the pre-modern like a Pugin Gothic revival church whereas the minimalist Hodes version is stripped down modernism like a bleak van der Rohe skyscraper. But in a

postmodern world joke-tellers can playfully 'do what you will' with the Hodes joke and using the basic story line, punch line and allusion to the canny materialism of the Scots add fanciful descriptions and jab-lines to taste. If it is to be the same joke it has to begin as a script about a heroic rescue from drowning and to switch suddenly at the end to a script about the crass materialism of a canny Scotsman but these are the only constraints. You could even switch the joke to the Auvergne, Swabia, Monterrey, Antioquía or any other place about which jokes about the canny, crafty stingy local people are told.

Translators will, of course, recognize as very familiar the tensions between being faithful to the original and being intelligible to the reader or listener (Prendergast 2002). My point is simply to explore them in an unfamiliar and neglected context, that of jokes and of the movement between local and standard English within jokes. Whatever may be argued to the contrary, there is a certain fixity about most written texts. I am not saying that texts necessarily have clearly established meanings but rather that the fact of their being written down and having an author who made choices about what to write down creates an envelope of probability around the text within which disputes about it must take place. To go outside that envelope and to see in it only that which you desire is to create a purely subjective world of meaning that is irrelevant to everybody else. Why should they care about your idiosyncratic desires? Why should anybody listen to you, other than a coterie perverse enough to share your desires and their imposition on the text? By contrast the written text of a joke is only one possible condensation of an ever-changing oral text in circulation. As shown above, the rules of the game are different, not because there are infinite possibilities but because the envelope of probability is larger. Furthermore nothing can be said about the tone or tendency of the joke except in relation to a particular telling.

Two kinds of constraint exist on the transformation of dialect jokes into another branch of English. One is plausibility, a plausibility rooted partly in reality and partly in the conventional scripts that popularly apply to those about whom the jokes are told. If the Aberdeen dialect of the joke about the rescue of the drowning boy were transmuted into the way English is spoken in County Kerry or Newfoundland or Madras or Devon, it would make little sense to listeners because the dialect would lead them to associate the joke with one of these places and peoples and there is no corresponding conventional script making them canny, crafty, stingy. Even if the joke were still explicitly located besides the Dee in Aberdeen, using the wrong dialect would mislead and distract to the point where the joke was

ruined. The joke works in neutral standard English but it needs an emphasis on the place where it is set, perhaps a jab line on the way to remind the listeners of Scotland and some linguistic markers whether in the form of a Scottish dialect word that has come into standard English but remains uncommon or a stage-Scotsman/woman pronunciation of a particular sound.

I like the way you roll your 'r's Miss MacPherson.

Aye, it's ma new heels.

As already noted, the Aberdeen bonnet joke also exists as a Jewish joke told in a Jewish way and with variations. It could, though this has never been done, be switched to, say, Cockney or Wenglish (South Wales English), though the emphasis of the joke would be completely changed, as it would now employ a different existing comic script, that of cheerful, unabashed impudence, not grasping materialism. It might well be fair to call a joke based on this very different conventional script a new joke altogether, even if the basic wording were similar. The choice of dialect determines whether or not a script can be evoked which will in one way or another unlock the punch line of the original Aberdonian joke and make sense. If the version chosen does not do so then the joke no longer exists.

There is, though, one case in which the switching of dialects is unproblematic and that is where the words and the pronunciation used are there mainly to indicate social class, that is, the geographical location is unimportant and the comic script conveys qualities associated with a social class rather than a regional or ethnic group. In such a case any departure from standard English that indicates a lack of education and refinement and a form of speech trapped in the 'local', regardless of which local it is, will do, provided it does not create a false expectation of a different kind of ending. Such a joke may or may not be a social class put down; it may even be a celebration of the outlook of a lower class expressed and understood through the stage-version of the speech of one of many groups occupying the same position in the hierarchy of social class. There may even be a fall guy who speaks a posh sounding standard English. The self-consciously egalitarian Australians are particularly fond of this kind of joke.

It seemed like an appalling affront to the dignity of the upper class bank in an upper class area of Melbourne, when a scruffy-looking male, about 25, walked in. Noses sniffed in disdain. He approached the upper class,

> snooty-looking female teller and said, 'I wanna open a fuckin' cheque account.' Her surprise was barely contained by her practised dignity. She told him she would most certainly not serve a man so rude and would he please leave the establishment. Instead, he repeated his request, 'I wanna open a fuckin' cheque account, ya bitch.' She left her cage with icy decorum and fetched the grey-suited, silvery-haired manager who approached with a supercilious expression. In an accent appropriate to the suburb, he chastened the young guy and impressed upon him the bank's strong belief in manners, decorum, cleanliness and presentation.
>
> In spite of this the scruff repeated, 'I just wanna open a fuckin' cheque account, arsehole.'
>
> The manager raised an eyebrow and asked, very icily, 'And how much would your initial deposit be, perchance?'
>
> The reply came, 'Three-and-a-half million dollars. I just won Tattslotto.'
>
> To which the manager said, 'And what cock-sucking little slut refused to serve you.' (Adams and Newall 1994: 288)

All the participants in this joke are Australian and speak with Australian accents but the one who has won the lottery is lower class and, although there are only hints as to how his pronunciation differs from that of the bank staff, an Australian joke-teller would be able to do the two voices. The main way in which the speech of the lottery winner is marked off from that of the male bank manager is by his free use of 'colloquialisms'; it is interesting that Australians use this word as a euphemism for obscenities, implying that this is how male Australians normally speak and that it is their absence from the bank manager's way of speaking that is noteworthy. The joke as worded here is a typically Australian joke but it also exists in other English speaking countries with an essentially similar punch line. In each case the manager's wish to gain this huge new account forces him to use the same kind of insulting and obscene words as the lottery winner, though retaining his own usual respectable bank manager's way of speaking standard Australian English. It is the lower class fantasy of winning the lottery and forcing those normally disdainful of you not only to be deferential but also to adopt an aspect of your speech that would normally horrify them. What is Australian about the joke is the build up, the use of the terms 'upper class', 'snooty' and 'supercilious', implying that only with bank staff of this kind would the lottery winner's uncouth behaviour be seen as shocking and that in the rest of Australia this would be a fairly normal

and acceptable way to carry on in a bank. This, of course, provides an extra level of amusement to non-Australians but in a way that Australians would relish.

The American equivalent of social class jokes with local accents, speech patterns and vocabulary tend to be about immigrant groups. American stupidity jokes about Poles have nothing to do with Poles or Poland (Davies 2002; Davies and Chlopicki 2004). They are both told and written down in standard American English (Clements 1973). With very few exceptions indeed they do not contain leftover fragments of Polish or indications of how a Pole within the joke would speak. They do not employ a distinctive vocabulary, pronunciation or way of speaking in the way that, say, American or British jokes about the Jews or the Irish do. This makes it easy to switch Polish jokes to other ethnic communities of inert blue-collar workers, such as the Portuguese in San Francisco or Hawaii or the Italians in New Jersey (Davies 1990). Nothing has to be changed except the name of the group that locally represents that social class; it is a substitute for a direct reference to 'class', an unmentionable topic in unequally equal America. Class has to be hidden as ethnicity. Tennessee Williams, classic coarse, brutal, unskilled, working-class, rough trade male, Stanley Kowalski in *A Streetcar Named Desire* (2000) had to be a Pole because this was the best permissible idiom for such a character. There is nothing Polish about him but he has to be portrayed as a 'Polack' for American audiences to accept him as he is. The same point is true of American jokes about Poles. But how do you say the jokes, particularly if there is an internal conversation in the joke? How do you indicate social class if your listeners do not have in their minds any idea of how Polish-American blue-collar speech departs from standard American English?

Larry Wilde, America's most successful writer of commercial joke books, tried to solve this problem by inventing a generic form of defective English, which he then used in the jokes about Poles that he published. The jokes had never existed in this form; he translated jokes in oral circulation in standard American English into an inauthentic and non-existent dialect, possibly designed by analogy with the speech of the negro section of the American underclass:

Filipowicz wanted a divorce from his wife.

'Why?' asked the judge.

'Well', replied the Polack, 'she be trying to kill me.'

'How do you know that?', asked the magistrate.

'Yesterday in the bathroom I find a bottle that say Polish Remover'. (Wilde 1978, 187).

'What you doin'?' asked Ladislas.

'I write letter to myself', answered Sigismund.

'What you tell yourself?'

'How do I know', snapped Sigismund. 'I no get letter until tomorrow!' (Wilde 1973: 120).

Dabrowski and Bijack met on the street. 'Hey', said Dabrowski, 'why I no hear from you? How come you no call me on telephone?'

'But you don't have a telephone!' said Bijack.

'I know', said Dabrowski, 'but you do.' (Wilde 1977: 152).

The problem with Wilde's translation of existing Polish jokes into a synthetic debased form of English is not so much that it is grossly inauthentic, for all widely circulating ethnic jokes use language that is only an echo of the speech of the group that is the butt of the jokes, but that the fake Polish speech does not correspond to anything in the minds of his readers. When ethnic jokes about Poles were recorded by folklorists subsequent to the publication of Wilde's best-selling Polish joke books (Wilde 1973, 1977) none of them used the kind of synthetic broken English that Wilde had invented. The jokes were told in standard American English exactly as they had been before when recorded by folklorists (Clements 1973, and see also for later period Polish files, Folklore Archive, University of California, Berkeley) and indeed as they had been and were to be reproduced by other compilers of Polish joke books (Macklin and Erdman 1976; Kowalski 1974; Zewbskewiecz et al. 1965).

Here we can see another aspect of the boundary that limits the kind of English in which jokes can be told. It is a limit set by the oral culture within which jokes exist. If, as Wilde did, you go outside it in order to try to make the jokes work better, you pay the penalty of being ignored; your version does not go into oral circulation.

In Britain by contrast differences in social class and the ways of speaking English associated with it are a central, explicit and universally understood aspect of humour. When the American Blonde Girl jokes came to England they were converted into Essex Girl jokes (Davies 1998; Don 1991) so that the images of stupidity and promiscuity were reinforced by the common, slovenly sounds of 'mud in yer mouf' (Thames) Estuary English spoken by

members of a rehoused after slum clearance lower class. It gives a sharp edge to the joke that the bland Blonde jokes lack.

The Essex Girl Jokes' twenty-first century descendants are the Chav jokes, generic lower-class jokes in lower-class English.

How many Chavs does it take to clean a floor?

None, 'That's some uvver bleeder's job, innit.'

What's the first question at a Chav quiz night?

'What you lookin' at?'

The jokes (www.chavworld.co.uk, www.chavscum.co.uk: September 2005) would not be funny if told in any other kind of English. If they were taken to America, they would no longer be funny because they depend on a contrast between two kinds of British English, as indeed does the joke below to be told in standard, indeed very formal, English, as if by a member of the Crown Prosecution Service speaking in court at a criminal trial.

Why did the Chav cross the road?

To start a fight with a random stranger for no reason whatsoever.

It tells us all an American needs to know about Chavs if he wishes to turn the earlier jokes into a version of American English. Yet how would it be done? When writing and publishing Polish jokes, Larry Wilde could not find a form of American English that would identify routine, uneducated, unskilled, blue-collar workers. What form of English would an American be able to use in jokes about native, white, Anglo-Saxon trailer park trash, the social group that is the nearest equivalent to Britain's Chavs? (Pike and Quick 2005)

Likewise it would be difficult to move to America British jokes that depend on the incomprehensibility of local dialects, such as those spoken in Lancashire and Yorkshire.

A Lancastrian went on parade in the army. All the other men had rifles but he did not. The officer taking the parade stopped next to him and asked him, 'Where is your rifle?'

The Lancastrian replied, 'Ah've geet noorn.'

Neither the officer nor the sergeant could make out what he said. Finally the sergeant said, 'I've an idea, sir. These Northerners are all pretty

much the same. There's a Yorkshireman I know, Private Ramsbottom in the next regiment, why don't we send over for him.'

Ramsbottom arrived and the officer again asked the gormless Lancastrian: 'Where is your rifle?'

Lancastrian: 'Ah've geet noorn.'

Officer to Yorkshireman: 'What did he say?'

Yorkshireman: ''E's baht'.

The joke is just about comprehensible to British speakers of standard English and they could probably tell the joke using those words and have a shot at the pronunciations. Most of them know the comic Yorkshire song *On Ilkley Moor Baht 'at* (on Ilkley Moor without a hat). Likewise the Lancastrian pronunciation in the joke of 'I've got none' can be made out. The humour of the punch line of the joke lies in the pause forced on the reader of (or listener to) the joke as he or she decodes it. But to an American (or Australian or Indian) it would be completely incomprehensible. The Yorkshire and Lancashire utterances would have to be turned into two geographically adjacent versions of American (or Australian or Indian) English. Perhaps the Hillbilly speech of the southern Appalachians alongside the Plains English of peanut Georgia would work but that is a problem for an American translator confronting a task little different from that of someone trying to render the joke into Latvian or Italian.

The criminality and aggressiveness of the Chavs in the joke is only funny if use is made of comic Chav English (or its direct or implicit contrast with pedantic prosecutor-speak standard English). The Chavs have to be placed at a distance if they are to be safely funny. The point can be emphasized by considering also a piece of humorous verse, indeed song, written by Rudyard Kipling, *Loot*, about an experienced soldier instructing new recruits in how to loot the possessions of the natives during a colonial war.

LOOT

If you've ever stole a pheasant-egg be'hind the keeper's back,
If you've ever snigged the washin' from the line,
If you've ever crammed a gander in your bloomin' 'aversack,
You will understand this little song o' mine.
But the service rules are 'ard, an' from such we are debarred,
For the same with English morals does not suit.
(*Cornet*: Toot! toot!)

Why, they call a man a robber if 'e stuffs 'is marchin' clobber
With the—
(*Chorus*) Loo! loo! Lulu! lulu! Loo! loo! Loot! loot! loot!
Ow, the loot!
Bloomin' loot!
That's the thing to make the boys git up an' shoot!
It's the same with dogs an' men,
If you'd make 'em come again,
Clap 'em forward with a Loo! loo! Lulu! Loot!
Whoopee! Tear 'im, puppy! Loo! loo! Lulu! Loot! loot! loot!
Now remember when you're 'acking round a gilded Burma god
That 'is eyes is very often precious stones;
An' if you treat a nigger to a dose o' cleanin'-rod
'E's like to show you everything 'e owns.
When 'e won't prodooce no more, pour some water on the floor
Where you 'ear it answer 'ollow to the boot
(*Cornet*: Toot! toot!)
When the ground begins to sink, shove your baynick down the chink
An' you're sure to touch the—
(*Chorus*) Loo! loo! ulu! lulu! Loo! loo! Loot! loot! loot!
Ow, the loot! . . .

It is a song intended for a general audience, for there are few unfamiliar words and the departures from standard pronunciation and hence orthography are mild. Yet these departures have to be there. If they were standardized out of existence, then the song would become too close to being an endorsement and 'from such we are debarred, for the same with English morals does not suit'.

The chorus of the song, the presence of a snappy, yappy, puppy dog, the tooting of the cornet all emphasize that Kipling is writing farce. Nonetheless, the language used by the singer has to drive home that he is NOT part of the official moral Britain (Davies 2004) that has insisted that the 'rules are 'ard' but from a class below and outside it.

The army of Kipling's British Empire was not like that of the former Soviet Union or the Free French army in Italy in World War II, where looting and raping were an approved perk for the soldiers (Aydelott 1993; Beevor 2003; Djilas 1962) and in relation to which the Russians and the French would have employed a coarser, more direct humour. Kipling has to use every resource of comic distance available to him to keep it as farce, precisely because the activities he describes are the subject of such strong

moral disapproval. The use of a rollicking lower-class English is absolutely necessary. Look at the slang euphemism 'snigged' for stolen and the contrast between it and the formal, legal-sounding word 'debarred' used to indicate that something is prohibited. It is a parallel set of tricks to those used by Damon Runyon (1950) to extract humour from criminal activities. If Runyon's humour had ever been punctured because he had used the wrong kind of language, we would have been left with events that were merely sordid and repellent.

In many jokes, and in Kipling's comic song, what we have seen is the relationship between deviance and humour. Humour is a deviation from bona fide communication, an abandonment of its rules. But local speech is also deviant, it deviates from the standard grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation of the language and those who use it are, at least in the modern world, fully aware of this. As such it goes well with humour and is often used for humorous purposes. Humour regularly exploits departures from other social conventions such as the sad solemnity we are expected to feel when a disaster or the death of a celebrity is reported on television, or the indignation called for at a criminal or wicked act or the reverence in relation to religion and the avoiding of rudeness in personal encounters that are expected of us (Davies 2002). Humour plays with deviance and rule breaking. It evades all the rules that constrain how we are expected to speak or write including those of logic. It is appropriate then that deviant forms of English should be used to express the deviant sentiments about deviance that are the very basis of much humour.

Concluding Thoughts

Much humour depends on the use of non-standard forms of English and in particular on the contrasts between these and standard English. However, it is unreasonable to expect those who have learned a standard version of English as a second language to be familiar with local non-standard variations on it. Indeed, even the native speaker of English from outside a particular country may have problems with local non-standard versions. An Indian, whose main and preferred language is the standard English of India, can not be expected to be familiar with broad Scots (see the humour in Anstey 1897), nor will an Australian be able to follow the chee-chee English of Delhi, both of which are the basis of much local humour. In order to make such humour generally accessible it is necessary to move it in the direction of standard English. It is a worthwhile task, both for scholarly

reasons as when a joke or tale is the subject of analysis or used as a social fact and also in order to expand the range of humour enjoyed by individuals. Often it is better and easier to do this by changing the type of English used than to translate the original joke into another language altogether. No doubt you could translate the jokes and other humorous materials that have been cited here into, say, Dutch or Danish, using local forms of those languages, such as the speech of rural Jutland or of Limburgh, to indicate the departures from standard English in the original. However, given that most Netherlanders and Danes already have a good grasp of standard English, would there be any point? It is quicker and cheaper to provide them with a version of the humour that is closer to standard English and thus more accessible. The simplest way to do this is to standardize the spelling and the grammar. The deviant forms used are merely a set of hints on how to tell the joke and most native speakers telling the joke do not follow them anyway. They simply note from the text that the joke should be told in a roughly Scottish or Yorkshire or Texas way and then make it up again as best they can when they come to tell the joke. What should be left in place are one or two dialect words as flavour and contrast but in such a way that it is clear what they mean. This can be done indirectly either by repetition, such that an approximate synonym drawn from standard English is used shortly after it in a way that indicates that they are equivalents or by introducing an extra character into the joke who only speaks standard English and to whom the word is explained in an internal conversation.

What I have tried to indicate above are the reasons why doing so is more problematic in some cases than in others. It is question of assessing how much of the humour is lost when such changes are made. It may be a lot, or it may be only a very little. There are also questions of tone and of taste. Standard English is the language of seriousness. Those who speak both standard English and also a local version of English will often deliberately move between them to indicate a shift from a serious to a humorous mode and back again using the standard English version for high seriousness and the local version for fun. In order to tell a joke that they heard or read in standard English they may even translate it into local English to make it funnier, albeit inaccessible to some. However, it also means that sometimes a humorous text or utterance that is merely absurd and outrageous when in local speech becomes objectionable when rephrased in standard English because readers or listeners may now think that you really mean it. It is no longer a laughing matter. It would have been better to leave it as it was, safely in the domain of the humorous.

A Final Message for Those Actively Involved in Translation

The key point for the translator always to bear in mind is that language is social and purposeful and that the most important knowledge a translator needs is an insight into the nature of social relations in the society where and when the joke was told or a text was written. It can only be acquired through an empirical knowledge of the history and social order of that society, gained through wide reading as well as direct contact. Only in this way can you understand what the people in a society are laughing at. In the wide range of examples I have given, you can see why, if you had been doing the translation itself, it would have been necessary, say, to know about religious divisions in Scotland and how they were linked to education and differences between city and country dwellers, to know the special Australian perception of obscenities, what they call colloquialisms, to see through the American pretence that there are no social classes in America, whereas it is the basis of British jokes. Only in this way can one provide a proper rendering of the respective jokes. None of this can be deduced from theory, whether translation theories or educational theories. In any case these abstract formulations are not in fact true theories, since they do not generate testable hypotheses and so there is no way of knowing when they are valid, nor, should they conflict, of rationally choosing between them. Often they conceal within them a set of values that you may wish to reject or else explicitly espouse values you may wish to resist. I shall not even speculate as to whether such theories should be regarded as a waste of space or merely as a waste of time; that is a matter for each individual translator to decide for him or herself. I would, suggest, though, that the most useful approach is one of a thoroughgoing empiricism, grounded in a detailed knowledge of individual societies, and of experience in the process of translation. The translator, like the teacher or the writer, is a person skilled in a craft. What I have attempted to provide in this article is not a bundle of theories which would be pointless, nor a set of instructions which would be condescending, almost impudent, but a box of tools from which the translator can, on the basis of his or her own insights and judgement, select those that are of use for the task in hand and deploy them as he or she chooses.

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Chapter 4

Translating Aristophanes into English

Michael Ewans

1. Aims and Method

Aristophanes wrote comedies in verse – which for the ancient Greeks was a combination of differing patterns of short and long syllables.[1] There were different kinds of verse in his comedies, ranging from spoken dialogue lines via 'recitative' to complex sung lyric patterns. One of my first principles is that the translation must be not only in (unrhymed) verse throughout, but also must be in a verse that reflects for actors the formidable range of Aristophanes' own poetry – from the truly lyrical via both parody of the high tragic style and the freely conversational to crisp exchanges that often are the vehicle for a slapstick comic routine – not to mention Aristophanes' often highly in-your-face obscenity! Because this demands a degree of flexibility, the main dialogue meter of Greek drama, the iambic trimeter, is normally rendered in my translations into an English pentameter (five stresses). But because Greek and English frequently demand a very different number of words to express the same concept, when the sense requires it, I expand to six stresses or contract to four or, rarely, three. Similarly the 'recitative' sections (Greek tetrameters) are translated in verses of six to seven stresses, and the lyrics, which have a norm of three stresses, I sometimes reduce to two or expand to four. In many passages the tone is constantly shifting, and the modern verse must be alive to the rapid changes of tone and half-hidden implications, which give the actors the 'hooks' they need to develop a performance.[2]

The 'impossible' ideal toward which the translator of drama must strive is a version that is *accurate* – a representation of as much as possible of the meaning(s) with which the original playwright imbued his Greek text – and also *actable*, capable of being delivered effectively by an actor on the modern stage.[3] All strategies which are adopted must, in my view, be justifiable under the umbrella of this creative tension between the actable and the accurate. My aim in my own translations has been to give Aristophanes a credible voice in English for the first part of the twenty-first century, without

resorting to free adaptation, cuts (except where absolutely essential), or adding gratuitous modern jokes of our own invention (though I make one exception to this).[4]

2. Proper Names

The greatest single problem in translating Aristophanic comedy for performance is the proliferation of proper names. Each of these plays was composed for one performance on a particular occasion before an audience of Athenians; in consequence Aristophanes can and does assume that his spectators have a total familiarity with religious cults, people and places. Here is a literal translation of the opening lines of *Lysistrata*, which are fast and furious – and highly allusive:

LYSISTRATA But if someone had summoned them to a place of Bakchic revelry,
or [a grotto] of Pan or to Kolias or [a shrine of] Genetyllis,
you wouldn't be able to move for all the wild drumming.
As it is, there's not a single woman here –

Line 2 needs at least three footnotes, and in most published translations that is exactly what you get. But no one can act a footnote.[5] The translator must first know exactly what kind of celebrations Aristophanes is evoking[6] and then bring the *effective meaning* of what Lysistrata is saying before a modern audience:

LYSISTRATA But if someone had summoned them for an orgy,
or a sleep-out or a celebration of the love goddess,
you wouldn't be able to move for all the wild drumming.
As it is, there's not a single woman here –

Aristophanes often uses cult titles and other allusions. The translator can help with these by inserting a gloss, either to replace the god's name or title ('the Kyprian, the Paphian' can become 'the goddess of love') or to supplement it ('Apollo, god of healing'). Where Aristophanes uses a name because it evokes something specific, I replace it with the thing evoked, as for example, at *Lysistrata* 65ff.:

[KALONIKE] But look – here are some coming for you,

LYSISTRATA – and over here some more.
KALONIKE Phew!
Where are they from?
LYSISTRATA The stinky swamp.
KALONIKE Oh yes,
someone's just stirred it up.

Where I have written 'the stinky swamp', Aristophanes named without comment the particularly malodorous swamp at Anagyrous, knowing that his audience would understand the allusion. Leaving this name in the English version can only cause puzzlement, and cute English puns (e.g., 'Stinkton')[7] are not as effective for actors as the strategy adopted here. Similarly in the famous 'chopping block' speech in *Acharnians*, Dikaiopolis argues that the Athenians would have reacted to an outrage against themselves just like the Spartans did to the Megarian decrees (541ff.):

Suppose a Spartan sailed out in his boat,
denounced and stole a puppy dog from the Seriphians,
would you have stayed at home? Hell, no!

Seriphos was an island in the Cyclades, which Aristophanes selected for inclusion in this sentence because it was one of the most insignificant of the Athenians' allies. But modern audiences are most unlikely to know this, so I replace the name with words which convey the underlying meaning:

Suppose a Spartan sailed out in his boat,
denounced and stole a puppy dog from one of our small allied states,
would you have stayed at home? Hell, no!

Intruded glosses of this kind can go far to solve the problems of translating proper names.

Frogs demands a slightly different approach from the other plays, and considerably more names must be retained unglossed in the English version. The second part of *Frogs* is a contest between tragic playwrights, with extensive quotations and allusions, and the only possible approach for the translator is to help with unobtrusive glosses where possible and hope that the production can adopt a 'crash through or crash' approach, catching up the modern audience in the sweep of the feelings of the contestants rather than hoping they will understand every reference.

3. Puns and Double Entendres

These are arguably the most difficult aspect of Aristophanic humour to translate into a modern language. On very rare occasions there is actually a modern pun to convey the sense of the original – as when the In-Law, having his private parts singed by Euripides so he may masquerade as a woman, cries out (*Thesm* 241–2):

> Ah!! Water, water, quick,
> Before the fire spreads to another arse.

Here, miraculously, the assonance of 'house' and 'arse' allows the original pun (*oikian/prôkton*) to work even better in English than in Greek.[8] And in the same play a Greek proverbial expression turns out to be an English one too: 'in scheming we just take the cake' (*Thesm* 94; also *Knights* 277). Elsewhere we are less fortunate, and a lateral approach is needed. For example, I do not believe that the puns at *Knights* 76ff. can be retained in good actable English. Aristophanes wrote:

> But nothing gets past Paphlagon.
> His eyes are watching everywhere; he's got one foot
> in Pylos, and the other's here, in the assembly. So
> his arse is among the Chaonians,
> his hands among the Aitiolians, his mind in Klôpidai.

The Chaonians are mentioned for a pun between their name and *chaos* (= 'void'), the Aitiolians for a pun on *aitein*, to demand, and the village of Klôpidai for a pun on *klôps* (= thief). Sommerstein tried to construct a parallel set of English puns:

> So that his arse is right in Chasmos, his hands in Extortia, and his mind in Larcenidae.[9]

But apart from the fact that the original names were those of real people and places, while these are made-up ones, this approach does not give an actor the material he needs for a good performance. It is better simply to abandon the puns, and go for the effective meaning instead:

> But nothing gets past Paphlagon.
> His eyes are watching everywhere; he's got one foot

in Pylos, and the other's here, in the assembly. So
his arse is gaping wide, his hands are forcing
people to pay bribes, his mind is bent on theft.

This strategy usually works. But more rarely the original pun, especially if combined with personal allusion, is completely untranslatable. Take for example *Lysistrata* 56ff., which in a fairly close translation read:

LYSISTRATA My friend, you'll always see Athenian girls
do everything much later than they should.
There's not a woman here from Paralia
or Salamis.
KALONIKE Them? First thing each day
they're hard at it, woman on top.
LYSISTRATA I expected and counted on the women
of Acharnai to be the first ones here
– but they've not come.
KALONIKE Theogenes' wife
hoisted her wine cup in the air and lost her way.

Neither the allusions to Paralia and Salamis[10], nor the joke about Theogenes' wife[11], really work at all in the modern theatre, so the best strategy is simply to cut these lines from performance.

On very rare occasions it is necessary to substitute a good modern joke for a now ineffective Greek one. Here Trygaios is telling the Arms-Dealer that he would like to buy his cuirass to use as a loo, and sitting on the neck-hole to illustrate his point (*Peace* 1231ff.):

ARMS-DEALER How will you wipe yourself, ignorant git?
TRYGAIOS Easy. I just put one hand in this hole here,
the other here.
ARMS-DEALER You need two hands?
TRYGAIOS Why yes; {I've got two cheeks}
[I can't be caught stealing an oar-hole from another man.]
ARMS-DEALER You're going to use a thousand-dollar cuirass as
a chamber pot?

The oar-hole joke carries no resonance today,[12] but simply cutting it leaves Trygaios without a retort to justify his confident 'Why, yes'. At the

suggestion of my lead actor, we replaced it with 'I've got two cheeks'. Obviously with my prime criterion of accuracy I would be loath to do this too often, and indeed this is the only place, in the six translations from Aristophanes which I have created and staged, where substituting a modern joke became necessary.

4. Obscenity

For all the 'permissiveness' we were supposed to have developed in the 60s and 70s of the twentieth century, few translators to this day are prepared to render fully into English Athenian comedy's total lack of inhibition in sexual and scatological allusion. Why should the pleasure of hearing Aristophanes' jokes in all their scatological glory be denied to the audiences of the twenty-first century, who can read De Sade's horrific scenes in unexpurgated English versions, and can summon up on the internet pornographic images which are far more disgusting than anything that Aristophanes ever suggested for the delight of his Athenian audience?[13] There are moments where you have to be bold, ignore contemporary 'political correctness', and accept Aristophanes' ribald celebration of male sexuality – as here, where Trygaios celebrates the imminent return of the allegorical figure of Festival to the Council of Athens, who have been without her for ten long years of war. Festival, a beautiful young woman, has just taken off all her clothes (*Peace* 887 ff.):

[TRYGAIOS] Council, Executive, now look at Festival.
Consider all the blessings that I'm bringing you.
You can raise both her legs
into the air, and celebrate a feast!
And look, here is an oven for you.
2nd SLAVE Wow, it's beautiful!
So that is why it's got all smoky – this is where,
before the war, the Council kept their trivets!
TRYGAIOS And then, now that you've got her, you
can hold some games tomorrow –
wrestle her to the ground, stand her up on all fours,
anoint yourself and join the all-in fight – fuck her
both front and back, with fists and prick.
Then after that, the next day, you can have a chariot race,
fierce competition with the woman up on top;
chariots will upset other chariots,

there will be many moans and groans as people come to grips,
while some jockeys will fall off with their cocks erect,
coming unstuck at twists and turns.
So now, Executive, take Festival!

These lines caused a small walkout on one (but only one) night of the run of my production in 2009; but should the sensitivities of a minority of the modern audience be an excuse for cowardly euphemism?

5. Tragedy and Religion

Aristophanes used the colloquial Greek of the late fifth century; his contemporary, the tragic poet Euripides, used more elevated but still contemporary language. Plays by Euripides are parodied at length in *Acharnians*, *The Women's Festival* and *Frogs*, and in the latter Aristophanes is involved in a contest with the great tragedian of the previous generation, Aeschylus. It is true that tragic language was a *Kunstsprache*, an artistic language which retained some archaic words together with forms from dialects of Greek other than Attic; but this is no excuse for the large number of translators who reach for a Shakespearian tone and Elizabethan vocabulary whenever a piece of tragedy appears, quoted or misquoted, in Aristophanes. Shakespeare's English is certainly a language of tragedy with which many people in modern audiences are familiar; but it is now more than 400 years old, while Euripides was Aristophanes' contemporary, and Aeschylus' best plays were only 60 years in the past when Aristophanes presented *Frogs*. There was also much less difference between comic and tragic verse than Greek-less readers might imagine; Aristophanes and the tragedians both used the same Greek metres, and the only formal difference is that tragedy has stricter rules on what combinations of long and short syllables may be used. Accordingly I translate tragic and paratragic speeches and lyrics into contemporary English – obviously with a more formal style than that of the remainder of the comedy, but drawing on my experience in creating accurate but actable translations of Aeschylus and Sophocles.[14] Here is the climax of the recognition scene in *The Women's Festival*, where Euripides (disguised as Menelaos from Euripides' *Helen*) 'realizes' that the In-Law, who is disguised as a woman, 'is' his wife Helen (*Thesm* 901ff.):

(IN-LAW) I won't betray my husband, Menelaos, who's besieging Troy.
EURIPIDES Lady, what did you say? Turn your sparkling gaze on me.

IN-LAW I blush to show you my humiliated face.
EURIPIDES What is this? Silence holds me fast.
Oh gods, what do I see? Oh lady, who are you?
IN-LAW And who are you? The same word holds both you and I.
EURIPIDES Are you a native woman or a Greek?
IN-LAW A Greek. I yearn to know your native land.
EURIPIDES I've never seen a woman more like Helen.
IN-LAW I know that you are Menelaos – from the seaweed!
EURIPIDES You've truly recognized this most unfortunate of men.
IN-LAW At last you're here; come, come into your wife's warm pussy!
Take me, husband, take me, hold me tight.
Let me kiss you. (drops the tragic pose and female voice)
Get me out of here, get me out of here,
as quick as you can!

The dialogue proceeds as in Euripides until '. . . this most unfortunate of men' (except for the seaweed, which is a characteristic Aristophanic touch – and a good cue for the costume department in production). Then Aristophanes gets his laugh by substituting 'pussy' for Euripides' 'arms'. The key to making this passage work in translation is to keep the language formal but contemporary, and then drop the elevated tone immediately as the In-Law reverts to his own persona and to the real action of the comedy in the last two lines. This gives the actor a fine opportunity to change his manner completely.

A similar strategy is needed when Aristophanes uses tragic diction without parodying any particular tragedian, as when Lysistrata emerges in despair from the Acropolis at the start of the second half of her play (706ff.). Again the necessity here is to abandon the tragic idiom decisively in the English the moment Aristophanes does so in the Greek (715):

(mock tragic)
1 OLD WOMAN Queen of our mighty enterprise,
why have you come forth frowning from the temple?
LYSISTRATA The deeds of wicked women and the female mind
have made me lose my courage, and I wander restlessly.
1 OLD WOMAN What are you saying? What are you saying?
LYSISTRATA It's true. It's all too true.
1 OLD WOMAN What is so terrible? Please share it with your friends.
LYSISTRATA It is shameful to speak, and difficult to be silent.
1 OLD WOMAN Please do not hide from me this evil we have suffered.

LYSISTRATA We need a fuck. That's it in short.
1 OLD WOMAN Oh Zeus!
LYSISTRATA Why call on Zeus? Here's how it is.
I just can't keep them away from their men
any longer. They're deserting.

Another aspect of Aristophanes that needs to be freed from mock-archaic English is prayer and invocation. Just as Shakespeare should not be heard in the tragic and paratragic sections of a modern Aristophanes, the King James Bible should not be heard in religious sections of the comedies, both because 'thee' and 'thou' and so on, are archaic, and because they remind audiences of Christianity, which is a very different faith from ancient Greek cults. It is disappointing to read a paper on religious language in *Acharnians* which states that: 'English translators succeed in reproducing the religious register of the ST [Source Text] quite closely probably because religious English is a marked variety (i.e. old third person singulars, inflected second person singular, special titles of the deity, archaic pronoun forms).'[15]

I would argue by contrast that such 'religious English' language is totally inappropriate to the invocations in Aristophanes, for example Dikaiopolis' hymn to the Phallus, which begins (in my translation) like this (*Acharnians* 262ff.):

God of the phallus, friend of Dionysos,
fellow-reveller and wanderer in the night,
adulterer and pederast!
After six years I call on you, as I
go gladly back to my hometown.
Now that I've made a private peace,
I'm free of troubles, battles,
and that wretched Lamachos.

6. Dialect

There is another problem, which affects translation of several plays by Aristophanes – dialect. The playwright did not hesitate to caricature the barbarian god Triballos in *Birds* and the Skythian Policeman in *The Women's Festival* by writing their parts in mangled, half-incoherent Greek; the Scottish, Irish, Italian, deep Southern and Russian forms of mangled

English which have been used in many translations of these scenes, and for the Megarian and the Theban in *Acharnians* and the Spartans in *Lysistrata*, strike a politically incorrect note, now that the superiority over people from other regions and ethnicities of characters who speak English with the accents of south-east England, or WASP New England, cannot and should not be assumed.[16]

It is important to realize that the Megarian and the Theban in *Acharnians*, or the Spartan characters in *Lysistrata*, are *not* caricatured by being given dialogue in their local dialects; they use their own dialects (or rather, Aristophanes' version of them)[17] simply because that is how they would have spoken in real life. Accordingly I have decided in my versions to translate their words into the same modern Australian English as the rest of the play. Directors who want to mark them off decisively from the Athenian characters have plenty of options – costumes, mannerisms, or if they wish, using an English dialect or accent of their own choice. There is certainly an element of racist caricature in the barbarous Greek spoken by the Skythian Policeman in *The Women's Festival*, but the means by which to present his stupidity and lust in performance should be left to the director and actor. (In my production, the character's absurdity was fully expressed in body language and behaviour, without recourse to mutilating the English text.)

7. Lyrics

Aristophanic comedy includes lyric sections either for the chorus or for soloists, which were sung in the original performance. Some translators, who use prose for the dialogue (a practice to which I have objected earlier), translate the lyrics into rhyming verse – perhaps to compensate. In my view this creates too great a contrast between the lyric and the spoken sections;[18] and in any case the Greeks used rhyme only in drinking songs, and rhymed verse on the modern English-language stage strikes an archaic note, which must at all costs be avoided. It also diminishes the accuracy of the translation, due to the need to choose words which rhyme with each other for the end of lines.

Some experimental translations[19] have even attempted to replicate the metres of the original Greek; but Greek verse was a combination of patterns of long and short syllables, unlike modern English verse, and imposing this alien discipline on what you can write in English constricts the flexibility of the English text and inevitably leads, like using rhyme, to inaccuracy in the translation.

So I have aimed for an unrhymed verse in which some of the lyric genius of Aristophanes can (hopefully) be expressed. Take for example Trygaios' marvellous prayer to Peace (987ff.):

> . . . Give your whole self
> boldly to your admirers; we
> have been worn out by our desire for you
> for thirteen years.
> Free us from battles and disturbances,
> so we may call you 'she who stopped the war'.
> Stop our excess suspiciousness,
> which makes us talk
> nonsense about each other.
> Blend all us Greeks together once again,
> starting afresh with the
> essence of friendship, and pour in
> our minds gentle forgiveness.
> May our market place be filled
> with good things – from Megara, garlic,
> early cucumbers, apples, pomegranates,
> little woollen cloaks for slaves.
> And may we see men coming from Boiotia
> with geese, ducks, pigeons, wrens,
> great baskets of Kopaic eels;
> all around them we'll be buying, and
> jostling together with Morychos,
> Teleos, Glauketes and the other
> gluttons. May Melanthios
> come late to market; all will be
> sold out, and he'll lament in tragic tones
> and sing the monody from *Medeia*:
> 'Alas, alas, I'm widowed of my lovely wife –
> the eel laid on a bed of beetroot';
> all those who see him will rejoice!

Free verse is essential in a modern version of Aristophanic lyrics because the tone is shifting constantly; this monody begins with religious intensity, moves to political/social comment ('stop our excess suspiciousness'), then evokes the good things that will return to the market (much of the genius of Aristophanes is in his painstaking deployment of homely detail), and

finally portrays the paratragic lamentations of the disappointed glutton Melanthios. The translator must respond to each of these moods.

8. Conclusion

Most modern productions of Aristophanes present loose adaptations with insufficient respect for what he actually wrote. This is unfortunate and unnecessary. A translation based on the principles outlined in this chapter can be as close as possible to Aristophanes' Greek and still entertain modern audiences with the richness of his own comedy – not with a pastiche version of his plot and characters with modern jokes added. Not to do this is either timidity (a fear that these comedies might not be funny for a modern audience without additional modern humour), or ignorance that the plays can be effectively translated for actors with a close respect for the original text, or an arrogance which assumes that Aristophanes needs major adaptation to appeal today (if you believe that, why choose to stage him at all?). Whichever of these reasons is the cause, the effect has been to diminish the chances for a contemporary audience to engage closely with the work of a remarkable playwright. I hope that my approach to translating Aristophanes will be taken up by other translators and theatre practitioners (as well as students), and will be met with the same success elsewhere that my own new translations have achieved in production in Newcastle, Australia.

Notes

[1] In the light of this it is alarming that many translations of Aristophanes are into English prose. Cf. e.g. Sommerstein 1973 (2nd. 2002 – still in print and widely distributed), in which the lyrics are freely translated (perhaps to compensate) into rhymed Gilbertian verse that today sounds totally anachronistic. Cf. also the Penn State series.

[2] All quotations from Aristophanes in this chapter, except one which is attributed to another translator, are taken from my own two volumes of translations; *Aristophanes: Lysistrata*, *The Women's Festival* and *Frogs* and *Aristophanes: Acharnians*, *Knights* and *Peace*, both forthcoming from the University of Oklahoma Press. I have also, with permission, incorporated some material from the Introductions to those editions into this chapter.

[3] Ewans 1995, xxxv. It is surprising (and disappointing) that actability has not been an important criterion for many translators of Aristophanes. See, for example, Halliwell 1998, Preface, in which the only criteria are 'readability' and 'historical accuracy'!

[4] This chapter is concerned with translating in the present and for the future. For an account of past translations of Aristophanes into English see Walton 2006, 158–60. He also discusses modernizations and adaptations, pp. 162–6. For a more theoretical approach see Robson 2008.

[5] So too Walton 2006, 151.

[6] See Henderson 1987, 66–7 or 1996, 208–9.

[7] Henderson 2000, 277.
[8] Cf. also *Acharnians* 1210–11, analysed by Robson 2008, 169–70.
[9] Sommerstein 1981, 17.
[10] A name which of itself provoked erotic thoughts; Henderson 1987, 74.
[11] This involves an untranslatable pun between hoisting a sail and lifting a wine cup (*akatos* meant both), referring as often in Aristophanes to women's propensity to drink. It is not possible to say today why it was appropriate, since Theogenes cannot be certainly identified (Henderson 1987, 74–5).
[12] It wasn't a very funny joke anyway; it just refers to stealing the wages of the man who ought to be rowing. Olson 1998, 302.
[13] On the differences between ancient Greek and modern Western attitudes to 'obscenity' (a Roman, not a Greek word), and the roles of sexual and scatological allusion in Aristophanic comedy, cf. Henderson 1975, 2ff. and 32–3.
[14] Cf. Ewans 1995, 1996, 1999, 2000.
[15] Manteli 2009, 7.
[16] So too Halliwell 1998, liii–liv. William Arrowsmith created a storm of controversy in the USA by caricaturing the Skythian Policeman in *The Women's Festival* as a Negro. See Scharfenberger 2002.
[17] For details of the Megarian and Boiotian words and forms used in *Acharnians* cf. Olson 2002, lxx ff.
[18] As Greek was a pitch-accented language, and the sung sections were accompanied by just one player on the *aulos* (double flute), the transition from speech to song and back again would not have been as great as it is in the modern musical.
[19] Cf. especially Neuburg 1992.

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Chapter 5

Translating Greece to Rome: Humour and the Re-invention of Popular Culture*

I. A. Ruffell

In this chapter I shall examine the way in which Greek comedy was translated in and to Rome in the mid-to-late Republican period. The species of Greek comedy that was adopted by the Roman comic playwrights was the situation-based comedy with stock characters favoured by Greek Middle and New Comedy of the mid-fourth to the third century BCE, which had spread out from Athens to dominate the Greek world. Through the surviving Roman comedies, this process of translation, adaptation and reception continues into the English theatrical tradition via Shakespeare (e.g. *The Comedy of Errors* re-working Plautus' *Brothers Menaechmus*)[1] and Jonson among others, into other European traditions and ultimately into modern situation comedy.

1. Translating Comedy

Roman literature, poetry and drama in the Republic and early Empire was always to some extent a culture and practice of translation. While there were some genres that the Romans claimed for themselves, not least satire,[2] in most forms of literature Roman production was jump-started from the extensive Greek repertoire, and the pressure of Greek models and precedents was palpable. The beginnings of Latin literature in any formal sense were themselves acts of translation: when Livius Andronicus translated Homer's *Odyssey* and when, traditionally in 240 BCE, he first performed in Rome a translation of a Greek comedy and a Greek tragedy. This move of drama from Greece to Rome already involved creative adaptation and reworking rather than literal or close translation, borrowing not just the stories, themes and individual plays, but also the verse forms themselves, albeit selectively and altered in certain respects for the new Roman stage.[3] The interface between Greek and Roman, for both audiences and authors,

was to continue to be a potentially highly productive source of creative tension throughout the period. In the first century BCE and beyond, the pointed and sometimes polemical return to Greek models was repeatedly used to reinvigorate or invent Roman genres: the formalization of Roman oratory, the self-conscious elegance of Catullus and his associates, the historical techniques of Sallust and, later, Tacitus, the national epic and lyric of Vergil and Horace all derive force from a return to and creative use of Greek models to a greater or lesser degree.[4]

The creative and literary interaction of Rome with Greece mirrors, and is to some extent driven by, their political relationship. By the middle of the third century BCE, Rome had gained control of the Italian peninsula, including the Greek cities of South Italy. It is through these states that Rome first assimilated Greek culture. Livius Andronicus himself is supposed to have been brought to Rome from one of those cities, Tarentum. As an expanding Mediterranean power in the second half of the century, it further acquired the Greek cities in Sicily through its conflict with Carthage in the First Punic War, while increasing involvement in mainland Greece and the powers of the Eastern Mediterranean led to the acquisition of mainland Greece (annexed as Macedonia province in 146) and Asia province (bequeathed in 133), centred on the great cultural centre of Pergamum. Rome's development into the unchallenged power of the Mediterranean led to the further Hellenization of the city and its elite, both in intellectual and in literary terms, and also materially through the looting of Greek art.

Roman literature of the late Republic largely consisted of that Hellenized elite talking to itself. Translation and adaptation of Greek humour is a part of that literature, particularly in the use of Hellenistic poets such as Callimachus and Theocritus, for whom humour was a central part of their response to epic.[5] The context and production of Roman comedy is rather different. Our earliest extant comedy, known by the first century BCE as *fabula palliata* ('play in Greek dress') belongs to the early period of Rome's expansion as a Mediterranean power – its military crisis during the Second Punic War and its consolidation and increasing involvement in Greece in the early second century. It is distinguished from the later trend of translation by being less exclusive and less self-consciously literary and sophisticated, by being performed in public to large audiences, and by being translated theatre. Whereas that later trend might exploit in many cases the familiarity of that educated elite with the Greek literary models, such familiarity should not be assumed for the audience of Roman comedy.

Although the theatrical culture of Rome was to continue well into the imperial period, the second century BCE was easily its time of greatest vibrancy as a focus of new literary and poetic production. Roman theatrical culture was also distinctive for having humour at its centre. Although adaptations of Greek tragedy were also a part of early Roman theatrical culture, particularly associated with the names of Ennius and Pacuvius, the dominant genre was comedy, and comic drama in either new genres or in revivals continued to be dominant in the course of the next century.[6]

The position of drama at the time was clearly an ambiguous one. Comedy was performed at games provided by the state (at least the *ludi Romani, ludi plebeii, ludi Apollinares, ludi Megalenses*) as well as more ad hoc but nonetheless important occasions, such as funeral games,[7] but there was no permanent stone theatre in Rome until 55 BCE (Theatre of Pompey); earlier attempts had failed or been resisted.[8] The origins of the poets of early Roman drama about whom we know anything substantial were, with the possible exception of Cn. Naevius, for the most part of non-Roman and non-elite origins and reflected this ambiguous status. Of those whose plays survive, Plautus (T. Maccius Plautus) was from Umbria, and is supposed to have served his apprenticeship in Oscan farce, while Terence (P. Terentius Afer) was supposedly by origin a slave from North Africa. The third major writer of the first half of the second century, Caecilius Statius, of whom we only have fragments, was from Insubrian Gaul and may possibly also have been of slave stock.[9] At the same time, it seems reasonably clear that elite patronage was also central from the beginning, both in the organization and supplementary funding of the main festivals, in sponsoring one-off entertainments and in being the patrons of poets.[10]

The *fabula palliata* directly appropriated the form of comedy that was dominant in the contemporary Greek world, so-called 'New Comedy'. Greek New Comedy, whose most successful practitioners were Menander, Diphilos and Philēmōn, was a comedy of domestic drama, with stories in which themes of love, marriage and inheritance featured strongly, with plots involving intrigues, mistaken identities and long-lost children. There was a repertoire of largely stock characters – the young son, the old father, the slave, the courtesan (*hetaira*), the parasite, the cook and so on. Although originating in and often set in Athens, the generic nature of the plots and characters had made this extremely popular throughout the Greek world, where a desire for theatre had exploded in the fourth century.[11] Despite its ubiquity, no substantial amount of any New Comedy survived from antiquity and, until the twentieth century, access to these Greek plays was extremely imperfect, known only through fragments preserved in other

authors and through the Roman adaptations. Discoveries on papyrus, where Menander is one of the most popular authors, mean that we now have one complete play, *Bad-Tempered Man (Dyskolos)*, more than half of some others – *The Girl from Samos (Samia), The Arbitration (Epitrepontes)* – and scenes from many more. The comparative study of Roman and Greek comedy and of the relationship between them still relies heavily on the pioneering and foresighted work of Eduard Fraenkel, writing before most of the twentieth-century papyrus discoveries had been made, but still influential and only recently translated into English for the first time.[12] The rediscovery of Greek New Comedy has clarified in broad terms some of the stylistic differences between the two forms of comedy. It is, however, unfortunate that, with one exception, we do not possess any clearly overlapping examples of a papyrus New Comedy with a surviving play of Plautus or Terence.

We know from comments in prologues, particularly by Terence, and from ancient scholarship, that the practice that developed in the *palliata* was to take one play by a Greek dramatist and make its plot, characters, scenes and speech the basis of the Roman version, although none of the plays are a literal translation. Choice of playwright could vary considerably: Caecilius evidently returned to Menander again and again; Plautus ranged across the major (and some minor) Greek poets; Terence's six plays are also heavily Menandrian. There does appear, however, to have been considerable freedom in making this adaptation to the Roman stage. It seems that plots could be expanded or altered, and elements could be introduced from other Greek originals, a process described by Plautus as 'turning'.[13] As the genre evolved, and at least by the time of Terence, the nature of this adaptation could be the source of rhetorical self-positioning by the poets. Terence in his prologues is defensive about what his critics had called *contaminatio*, suggesting that they were being pedantic and pointing to the prior example of Plautus, Naevius and Ennius (*Andria* 9–21). He also is self-conscious about re-using Greek originals that had already been treated before (*Adelphoe* 6–14), which had (he claimed) led to charges of plagiarism by his rivals. Plautus, it seems, had far fewer limitations (whether self-imposed or imposed by the rhetoric of competition).

The prologue, indeed, was one of the major areas for change or development. Menander clearly favours an expository prologue either opening the play or delayed by dialogue. The effect of this is to put the emphasis in the play on dramatic irony, one of the major sources of humour, as in the hidden pregnancy in *Samia* or the identity of the child in *Epitrepontes* and attendant misunderstandings. Plautus more often than not follows suit, although he can eschew such openings altogether.[14] Terence abandons

this altogether in favour of using them for the self-conscious poetics of attack and defence. The result is that his plays, while closer to Menander in many respects, nonetheless operate much more through surprise.

The other poets of Roman comedy turned these Menandrian stories into something rather different: cruder, faster and funnier, with a delight in language, in imagery, in comic routines, in song and dance that is strictly curtailed in Menander. These elements all point back to older traditions of Greek comedy, to the Old Comedy of Aristophanes and his contemporaries, although in most cases this is probably due to parallel popular traditions of comedy rather than any direct influence. Both traditions, too, existed in a period of rapid social and political change. What we do not see in Plautus or most of his contemporaries is any direct engagement with politics or any explicit attempt at satire, indeed little direct suggestion of that external world other than sporadic hints.[15] Yet, there is a great deal in the plays that speaks implicitly of contemporary concerns.

The setting and names of these plays that had been translated to Rome and into Latin remained thoroughly Greek. Indeed if anything their 'otherness' is pointedly emphasised and exaggerated, and was undoubtedly a source of much of the humour. In the hands of Plautus and those who worked in his tradition, the unruliness of the humour and the performance is such as to render this far more than the comedy of the 'other'. For one thing, the humour is much more about the clash of cultures. For the worlds of Roman comedy are, as we shall see, far from hermetically Greek. Greek-sounding characters use technical terminology that is at times much more clearly Roman than Greek – not least in the language of violence: military tactics, capital punishment and torture. The roster of characters or the specific implementation of characters is also significantly different, with emphasis on and expansion of the role of professionals such as pimps and prostitutes, often at a much lower and more violent end of the market and much more explicitly commercial than we see in Menander, and a central, starring role given to the flamboyant, cunning slave, who tends to be particularly prone to using the language of the Roman military (and the target of Roman threats directed against him). In an expanding military and economic power heavily reliant upon slavery, this fantasy is very near the bone.

At the same time, the contemporary Greek world was, however, itself a potentially unruly and problematic one in social and political terms. Rome's expansion into Southern Italy and Sicily brought not just contact with Greek culture but also a series of high-risk military conflicts and near-extinction on a number of occasions, the latest being in the Second

Punic War, with which Plautus' career overlapped. Greek culture itself was thoroughly ambivalent, and adoption of Greek culture brought its own backlash at elite and non-elite level, while the social melting pot of Italy required considerable negotiation. It is not for nothing that to 'act the Greek', *pergraecari*, is used insultingly in Plautus to refer to crooked, extravagant, wastrel behaviour.[16] The plays may be imported, but this is a concern much closer to home.

2. Translating Humour

To explore these issues in more detail, in the second part of the chapter I examine those passages of Roman comedy where the Greek model is substantially preserved. These are *The Bacchis Sisters (Bacchides)* of Plautus, which adapts *The Double Deceiver (Dis Exapatōn)* of Menander, of which we have portions of two acts on papyrus, and the substantial fragments of Caecilius Statius' *Necklace (Plocium)*, which have been preserved by Aulus Gellius together with the passages of Menander's *Plokion* on which they are based. In both cases, we can see how plot and situation-based humour is adapted, the move towards slapstick and verbal games, how the Roman dramatists moved away from a naturalistic approach to character, how the clashes between Greek and Roman and master and slave are handled and how the pace and timing changes.

Because of the discovery of *Dis Exapatōn*, recent studies have focused on *Bacchides*; I am going to start by looking again at Caecilius whose work was highly rated among the Roman comic playwrights.[17] The majority of Caecilius' plays adapted Menander, to judge by the preserved titles and extant fragments, but Gellius in his comments implies that they were substantially changed in places, as we can see in the preserved examples. In his approach to the Greek model, Caecilius, although having had a much more obvious preference for Menander, nonetheless seems to have used similar techniques of adaptation to Plautus in adapting him; Terence by contrast is closer to Menander in terms of his style and humour.[18]

In his account of *Plocium/Plokion*, Gellius also makes broad general claims about the relative qualities of the respective authors, focused on the role and nature of humour in the works. He claims that despite their initial attractions (*lepide quoque et venuste scriptae videntur*, 'they even seem to have been subtly and charmingly written' 2.23.2) when set against their originals, they are considerably lower in tone (*oppido . . . iacere atque sordere*, 'are common and vulgar' 2.23.3), compared to the Greek comedies, whose

wit (*facetiis*) and brilliancies (*luminibus*) are praised. Whether or not we draw the same aesthetic conclusions, the observations do point to a fundamental difference in the nature of the humour in the process of translation. Or again, 'how idiotic and clumsy Caecilius seemed and how obviously changing Menander' (*quantum stupere atque frigere quantumque mutare a Menandro Caecilius visus est*, 2.23.7). The use of *frigere* suggests a general poetic awkwardness, but also perhaps specifically in versification; the idiocy again points to a fundamental difference in humour (and an unsympathetic critic of the absurd).

Gellius gives us some limited context for the fragments and thereby some of the plot of the plays, which we can flesh out in broad terms by considering the other extant fragments in both Greek and Latin. In the first pair of fragments, an old man, Lakhēs (speaking), is married to an heiress who is ugly but rich. Her name is Krōbylē. Gellius does not preserve the names of either the father or his son, Moskhiōn, but they are preserved in a third or fourth-century CE mosaic from Mytilēnē.[19] Son and daughter are mentioned in fr. II. Lakhēs has an excellent female servant who is suspected by the wife of being his mistress and so she forces him to sell her. Meanwhile, a poor family has moved in next door from the countryside.[20] Its paterfamilias is talking to Lakhēs in fr. II. Unknown to the family, the daughter has been raped by someone at a festival and is pregnant (fr. VIII), a common Menandrian plot device. The culprit, as often in Menander, was undoubtedly the boy (now) next-door, Moskhiōn, like his namesake in *The Girl from Samos* (*Samia*). In Menander, as in *Samia*, we would expect social norms to be reasserted over the course of the play, for Moskhiōn to be recognized as the culprit/father – presumably through the eponymous necklace, described in fr. V as a 'reminder of the rape' (*commemoramentum stupri*) – for boy and girl to marry, for adultery and illegitimacy to be evaded, and the integrity of both households (*oikoi*) restored. Whether the servant plot strand related to the adultery strand is on current evidence unknown, but in other plays servants (and *hetairai*) play a role in bringing about a happy resolution.[21]

In the first fragment, then, the emphasis is all on the character of Lakhēs' relationship with his wife Krōbylē. I give both the Greek and Latin versions, with translation.

Λα. ἐπ' ἀμφότερα νῦν ἡ 'πίκληρος ἡ κ<αλὴ>
μέλλει καθευδήσειν. κατείργασται μέγα
καὶ περιβόητον ἔργον· ἐκ τῆς οἰκίας
ἐξέβαλε τὴν λυποῦσαν ἣν ἐβούλετο,

ἵν' ἀποβλέπωσιν πάντες εἰς τὸ Κρωβύλης
πρόσωπον, ἦ τ' εὔγνωστος οὖσ' ἐμὴ γυνὴ
δέσποινα. καὶ τὴν ὄψιν ἣν ἐκτήσατο
'ὄνος ἐν πιθήκοις' τοῦτο δὴ τὸ λεγόμενόν
ἐστιν. σιωπᾶν βούλομαι τὴν νύκτα τὴν
πολλῶν κακῶν ἀρχηγόν. οἴμοι Κρωβύλην
λαβεῖν ἔμ', εἰ καὶ δέκα τάλαντ' <ἠνέγκατο,
τὴν> ῥῖν' ἔχουσαν πήχεως. εἶτ' ἐστὶ τὸ
φρύαγμα πῶς ὑποστατόν; <μὰ τὸν> Δία
τὸν Ὀλύμπιον καὶ τὴν Ἀθηνᾶν, οὐδαμῶς.
παιδισκάριον θεραπευτικὸν δὲ καὶ λόγου
†τάχιον· ἀπαγέσθω δέ. τί γὰρ ἂν τις λέγοι;

La. Now the lovely heiress is going
to sleep soundly.[22] She has done a great feat
and one to shout about: she threw out of the house
the girl who was causing her grief, just as she wanted,
so that all men can look on the face of Krōbylē
and so that she, my wife, might be acknowledged
as my mistress. And as for the look she possesses
it's what we call an 'ass among apes'.
I want to keep quiet about that night,
the harbinger of many woes. Oh, that I took Krōbylē
as my wife: even if she brought with her ten talents,
she still has a nose a foot long. Then there's her
snootiness: how is that to be endured? By Zeus
on Olympos and by Athena, it can't.
She's driving away a delightful slave, who obeyed even before
we could speak; but let her go. What could anyone say?

Menander, *Plokion (Necklace)* fr. 296 K-A (333 K-Th.)[23]

In this passage, despite the abuse of the wife, Krōbylē, for her appearance, the dominant mode of humour is ironic and indeed, compared to the Roman development, it is positively mild. The irony is clear in the first line, with the 'lovely' wife/heiress. The act of this paragon in driving out the maid is described as 'great and (to be) celebrated', again heavily ironic, not least in its contrast to the more straightforward aggrandizing use of the same idea in Aristophanes and Plautus.[24] There is humour here at the expense of the excessively despairing husband, with elements of parody and paratragedy heightening the effect (10, 13–14[25]), but more so at the

wife. She, whether out of pride as developed further on or out of jealousy or both, is said to want to be the only woman on view in the house, despite what is said about her appearance. The jokes about her appearance involve characteristic Menandrian moves: the use of the cliché is clearly and self-consciously flagged as a (mildly comic) aphorism,[26] while the joke about her nose involves a joke on weights and measures, transferring the weight of the money she brings to the length of her nose. The other major joke here is over the power dynamics in the household, the bid for being the 'mistress' (*despoina*) of her husband rather than his wife. The term is used of goddesses, royalty and mistresses of slaves. All the positive action is being done by her and not by the notional head of household. It is this element of power that is amplified in Caecilius' translation and adaptation.

is demum miser est qui aerumnam suam nesciat occultare
foris: ita me uxor forma et factis facit, si taceam, tamen indicium.
quae nisi dotem, omnia quae nolis habet: qui sapiet, de me discet,
qui quasi ad hostis captus liber servio salva urbe atque arce.
quae mihi quidquid placet eo privat vi me †servatum.†
dum ego eius mortem inhio, egomet vivo mortuus inter vivos.
ea me clam se cum mea ancilla ait consuetum; id me arguit,
ita plorando, orando, instando atque obiurgando me obtudit,
    eam uti venderem; nunc credo inter suas
    aequalis et cognatas sermonem serit;
    'quis vestrarum fuit integra aetatula
        quae hoc idem a viro
    impetrarit suo, quod ego anus modo
    effeci, paelice ut meum privarem virum?'
    haec erunt concilia hodie: differor sermone miser.

He is a poor man, who does not know how to hide his pain
abroad: thus, my wife finds evidence against me, even if I am silent, in my appearance and actions.
She has all the qualities that you do not want in a wife, except her dowry: anyone who's wise will learn from me,
who, like a free man held by the enemy, am a slave when my city and its citadel are safe.
Whatever I value, she takes from me by force.
While I long for her death, I live as a dead man walking among the living.
She says that I have been meeting privately with my maid – she accuses me of this.

So by her weeping, begging, pressing and demanding she bludgeoned me
into selling her; now I think she is spreading gossip among
her friends and relations:
'Which of you was there, when her youth was intact,
who could have demanded this very thing
from her husband, which I, an old woman, have just
achieved, to deprive my husband of his mistress?'
This is how her meetings will be today – I, poor thing, am torn
apart by gossip.

Caecilius Statius, *Plocium (Necklace)* fr. I

The focus here is much more on the personal relationship and attitudes between the husband and his wife, the personal standing and striking characterization of the hen-pecked husband and his dominating wife, than the account in Menander.[27]

Unlike Menander's somewhat reticent account of Krōbylē, the narrative of the wife's activities, including the reporting of her direct speech, leave a much more vivid impression – her explicit rather than implicit accusations of her husband's having an affair with the slave (7, 14), her psychological assault on her offending partner (8), her gossiping with her neighbours (9–15) and her sale of the offending slave-girl are all presented clearly and forcefully. Her pride in her control of her husband also reveals elements of her character in a way that the ironic reversal of the household in Menander fails to do.

Integral to the jokes is a romanization of this relationship, despite the scene remaining Greek in other respects. No longer is the wife an *epiklēros*, a distinctly Greek and particularly Athenian position, where a daughter with no surviving siblings or parents becomes the vehicle for the assets of the *oikos* before being married off (often to a male relative). Rather, she is a wife with a substantial dowry, a position that afforded rather more latitude for the wife in Rome than in Athens.[28] More significantly, the jokes are adulterated with flavours of Roman society and politics. The language of the woman's gossip with her neighbours are termed *concilia* (15), a term most often associated with Roman assemblies, councils and summits, an arena populated primarily by male citizens.[29] The activity of the wife and her friends and relations perhaps also reflects Menandrian reticence and perhaps the influence of the Roman context. It is not usually associated with citizen-wives in Menander, but equally it is not in itself a specifically Roman phenomenon. Rather, there seems a reticence on the part of Menander and/or Greek New Comedy; such women's gossip and the

anxieties about such female social interaction are a feature of both Aristophanic comedy and Greek oratory.[30]

In addition to the jokes on gender reflecting both the different performance contexts and the interests of the context (and/or author and/or genre), so too the joke comparing the husband's captivity to his wife to slavery and war – either his household is safe while his person is not or (perhaps more likely), his body is taken but his soul is not – reflects two definite preoccupations in Roman comedy: firstly, slaves, masters and their relationships, and in particular the reversal of that hierarchy; secondly, the language, strategy and tactics of war. The hyperbolic joke and comic simile is typical of the grandstanding we find in Plautus.[31] Here it crosses the Roman military, civic and religious context (insofar as those are separate) with strongly Roman paratragic elements. The collocation of 'citadel and city' (*arx urbsque*) is found in a number of archaic religious contexts as well as in the tragedy of Ennius, where Andromache laments that she is 'bereft of citadel and city' (*arce urbeque orbam*).[32]

Perhaps the best examples of these themes are in Plautus' *Pseudolus*, where the stratagems of both the slave Pseudolus and his rival/analogue Simia are particularly couched in the language of war, and in *Bacchides*, where Chrysalus elaborates his plan in a song that features sustained allegory from the sack of Troy crossed with elements from the Roman military and servile contexts.[33] This military colouring may reflect both Rome's turbulent recent history, coming out of the back of the long and traumatic (even if ultimately successful) Second Punic War, and its wider militarization and military ideology. The slave as a stock type itself goes back to Greek New Comedy and beyond that to Greek Old Comedy, but the reversal of hierarchies – as again very clearly in *Pseudolus* and *Bacchides* – is not so clearly explored in Menander and contemporaries as it is, for example, in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, where the elaborate beating scene of Dionysus and his slave Xanthias is playing on exactly this theme.[34] The language of violence is also evident in the metaphor of the final line. The verb differor is suggestive of popular mob violence in Rome, the practice of *flagitatio*, 'the demanding of property with shouts'.[35]

Other jokes are considerably stronger than the Menandrian examples, with more obvious disjunctions and absurdities: as well as the SLAVE::FREE joke, the dead man walking idea ramps up the mild paratragedy into a much more radical DEATH::LIFE joke, albeit perhaps at the expense of a certain repetition. The rhyming comic list of the wife's manipulation also has no match in the Menander passage and with its asyndeton and assonance again reflects a comic technique more to be found in Greek Old

Comedy.[36] Other elements such as alliteration and diminutives (*aetatula*) are far more evident in Caecilius than Menander, again reflecting both Plautine and Aristophanic practice.[37]

None of these would be the most immediately obvious difference between the two plays in performance. The most substantial differences, perhaps, are the formal metrical (rhythmical) ones. Menander's dialogue is in iambic trimeters, the standard metre for dialogue in Greek drama, both comedy and tragedy, and the closest, according to Aristotle, to ordinary speech.[38] In Caecilius, although the text and metre are disputed, the monologue has clearly become a song. Such *cantica*, delivered by actors, are a distinctive feature of Roman comedy, particularly Plautus, and Caecilius here follows his older contemporary. They are not a feature of Greek New Comedy, where the sung element is no longer integral to the plot or the humour, with the chorus reduced to generic act-dividing songs rather than being active participants as they are in earlier Greek comedy. The specific emphasis on actors' song, particularly in the adaptations of what were originally monologues (as here), seems to be a distinctive feature of Roman drama, in both tragedy and comedy.[39] The song then provides added variation, but also pace. It reinforces the aggressive humour at the expense of the wife, which forms the climax of the scene. The speed and timing is central to the routine, in a way that it is not in Menander.

In the second pair of fragments, the old father Lakhēs is speaking to the father of the family next-door. Here we can see the way that the two poets handle comic routines and a casual conversation between two male characters.

Λα. ἔχω δ' ἐπίκληρον Λάμιαν· οὐκ εἴρηκά σοι
τουτὶ γάρ;
Α. οὐχί.
Λα. κυρίαν τῆς οἰκίας
καὶ τῶν ἀγρῶν καὶ <τῶν ἁ>πάντων ἄντικρυς
ἔχομεν.
Α. Ἄπολλον, ὡς χαλεπόν.
Λα. χαλεπώτατον.
ἅπασι δ' ἀργαλέα 'στίν, οὐκ ἐμοὶ μόνῳ,
υἱῷ πολὺ μᾶλλον, θυγατρί.
Α. πρᾶγμ' ἄμαχον λέγεις.
Λα. εὖ οἶδα.

La. I have an heiress who's a regular vampire ('Lamia'): haven't I mentioned this to you?

Ne. No.
La. Head of the house
and the estate and everything, right enough,
we reckon her.
Ne. Apollo! What a pain.
La. A right pain.
She's difficult with everyone – not just me alone,
much more to my son and daughter.
Ne. You're talking about
trouble that's difficult to combat.
La. Don't I know it.

Menander, *Plokion (Necklace)* fr. 297 K-A (334 K-Th)

The humour here is focused on two elements. Firstly the wife is characterized as Lamia, a popular bogey figure in the Athenian folk imaginary – a flesh-eating monster. She also happens to be (in at least some versions) hermaphroditic,[40] which sets up the second part of the humour, which reverses the traditional and legal domestic hierarchy. Whereas the senior male is the head (*kyrios*) of the household, with unquestioned and almost limitless authority over both wife and children, here it is the wife who is *kyria*, an absurdity in any Greek city, but particularly Athens, whose regulation of women was particularly marked. The power over the household is emphasized with the threefold relationships in 5–6: it is not just husband, but son and daughter who are under her thumb.[41]

The description of the wife as a difficult thing to fight has perhaps an element of the comic, but the metaphor is faint here and certainly not developed as in the previous Caecilius fragment. Caecilius, by contrast, increases the physicality and the humour. The metrical form is a lot closer to the original, the Latin (iambic) *senarius* being a close analogue for the Greek iambic trimeter, and lacks the variations of the first passage with its potential for humour.[42] Caecilius does, however, shift the roles of the personnel along with the angle of the humour. In this passage, the neighbour is not just the feed but actively starts the routine and delivers the punchline.

A. sed tua morosane uxor, quaeso, est?
B. va! rogas?
A. qui tandem?
B. taedet mentionis, quae mihi,
ubi domum adveni, adsedi, extemplo savium

dat ieiuna anima.
A. nil peccat de savio.
ut devomas vult, quod foris potaveris

Ne. But is your wife a nag, I wonder?
Hu. Ha! Do you need to ask?
Ne. How then?
Hu. Just talking about it disgusts me: as soon as I come home and sit down, right away she gives me a kiss with an air of hunger.
Ne. There's no mistake with the kiss.
She wants you to spew up what you've drunk out on the town.
Caecilius Statius, *Plocium (Necklace)* fr. II

Again, relationship and character are emphasized, the imagery is much more vivid, and there is personal offensiveness that is not there in Menander, focused on the demands that the wife is making of the husband. The neighbour's inquiry about whether the wife is morosa – nagging, peevish, even depressed – sets up expectations of jokes around character and the psychological effect on the husband, but what we are given instead is a joke which has as much to do with her appearance again and the husband's physical repulsion (*taedet*, disgust). The punning joke on *ieiuna anima*, literally breath (or spirit/life) that is (or causes) hunger or starvation plays on both. The breath itself is enough for disgust (and therefore causing loss of appetite or sexual starvation), but also sets up a further, emetic joke, delivered by the neighbour. The neighbour's joking suggestion that the wife wants to have her husband cough up his drink suggests punishment for loss of household (indeed her) property and hints at greed to go along with her repulsive appearance.

This latter joke cuts both ways, of course, and gains humour at the expense of the men as well as the ugly and grasping wife. For the neighbour, it is equally taken as read that the husband is off drinking the household's money. This kind of frank acknowledgement of the frailties of a male *kyrios* or, in Roman terms, *paterfamilias*, is one of the characteristic ways in which Roman popular comedy differs from the Menandrian. This sort of joshing between males is also more characteristic of Aristophanic characters, who even in the middle of debates about the big issues of the day are still able to acknowledge frankly their own failings and weaknesses.[43] Equally, the relative reticence about female citizen-wives in Menander is again on display here. Whereas for the earlier Greek Old Comedy, there was an increasing role of women, both *hetairai* and ultimately citizen-wives on the

stage, in Menander the opportunities for the active participation of the citizen-wife either on or off-stage was strictly curtailed. By contrast, in Caecilius, we have a vivid, if monstrous, account of the wife, albeit at second-hand.[44]

The final set of fragments relates to the rape/pregnancy plot strand. Gellius again gives the context and the back-story. Having managed to keep her pregnancy a secret, the daughter of the household is now in labour; the family's slave (Parmenōn is listening to the labour and not knowing the circumstances displays, as Gellius puts it, 'fear, anger, suspicion, pity and grief' (*timet, irascitur, suspicatur, miseretur, dolet*, 2.23.18)[45]. After criticizing Caecilius for failing to present these emotions vividly, Gellius presents the slave's lament, when he finds out the truth.

ὦ τρισκακοδαίμων, ὅστις ὢν πένης γαμεῖ
καὶ παιδοποιεῖθ'. ὡς ἀλόγιστός ἐστ' ἀνήρ,
ὃς μήτε φυλακὴν τῶν ἀναγκαίων ἔχει
μήτ' ἂν ἀτυχήσας εἰς τὰ κοινὰ τοῦ βίου
ἐπαμφιέσαι δύναιτο τοῦτο χρήμασιν,
ἀλλ' ἐν ἀκαλύπτῳ καὶ ταλαιπώρῳ βίῳ
χειμαζόμενος ζῇ, τῶν μὲν ἀνιαρῶν ἔχων
τὸ μέρος ἁπάντων, τῶν δ' ἀγαθῶν οὐδὲν μέρος.
ὑπὲρ γὰρ ἑνὸς ἀλγῶν ἅπαντας νουθετῶ.

Thrice cursed is he who, though a poor man, marries
and produces children. How worthless is a man,
who neither has protection for his family
nor, if he publicly has bad luck,
could cover it up with money,
but lives an exposed and wretched life,
storm-tossed, with a share of all miseries,
but no share of good things.
For I am grieved on one man's behalf but I give this advice to everyone.

Menander, *Plokion (Necklace)* fr. 298 K-A (335 K-Th)

Pathetic and moralizing this certainly is, but there is not much humour here. Such comparisons between the rich and the poor, embodied in the two neighbouring households, evidently were part of the ideological orientation of the play, where they combine with a town/country opposition. Rural living teaches, according to one fragment (fr. 301 K-A), virtue and a free/liberal life (ἀρετῆς καὶ βίου . . . ἐλευθέρου). Conversely, as the other substantial book fragment of the play suggests, coming into town is

dangerous, teaching envy and dissatisfaction (fr. 299 K-A, 336 K-Th): staying in the country is alright because there is no publicity and the rural poor are not engaged in running the state. This is the implicit logic of fr. 298, which presupposes that in public life, poverty is an embarrassment.

The slave's lament is radically truncated and reshaped in the version by Caecilius, which is less concerned for pathos and goes straight for a much more straightforward class opposition.

> is demum infortunatus est homo
> pauper qui educit in egestatem liberos,
> cui fortuna et res ut est continuo patet.
> nam opulento famam facile occultat factio.
>
> He, then, is an unlucky man
> who as a poor man brings up children into poverty.
> His fortune and state are obvious as they are.
> For the rich man, bad reputation is easily covered up by his connections.
>
> Caecilius Statius, *Plocium (Necklace)* fr. VIII

Gellius criticises Caecilius for 'stitching together' chunks of Menander with grandiose, 'tragic' elements.[46] He might also have pointed out that the language here is thoroughly implicated in Roman class politics, and much more directly than in Menander. *Opulento* shades wealthy into decadent, while the linking of this to *factio* moves away from the Menandrian reticence over what exactly wealth enables the poor man to do, and instead suggests the class of rich men closing ranks to protect one of their own. The emphasis on social connections or even 'class' (*factio*) is clearly introduced last for emphasis and surprise, a comic twist to the opposition (perhaps we might expect money, as in the original passage).[47]

There is in the Caecilian passage a rather more sardonic tone to wealth and class than we usually see in Menander, who prefers to push reconciliation and harmony between classes. *Dyskolos* is a particularly good example, where the rich playboy learns to work, the chippy poor man learns to respect the rich and the rich man is (eventually) generous and welcoming. It is the eponymous rural separatist who sticks to his ideals who is particularly mocked.[48] What is important for Menander is compromise and mutual respect; what is deprecated is anything that accentuates class conflict: poverty is something to be handled in an appropriate manner. We can perhaps see a similar tendency in the passage from *Plokion*: the pathetic poor man who cannot protect his family and lays himself open to public exposure is 'worthless' (ἀλόγιστός). The remaining fragments of

Caecilius contain some elements that fit the Menandrian profile, condemning extravagance (fr. XIII), and what seems to be an acknowledgement that a wrong has been committed by wealth (fr. XVIII). What is more fascinating is the approach to poverty, presumably coming from the neighbour. In fr. XV, someone is going to the forum to make a defence of poverty (*pauperii tutelam*); in fr. XVII, likewise someone is going to the forum to make a public defence to the *plebs*, again very suggestive of the Roman social and political context as elsewhere in the fragments.[49] These are only hints, but there is a suggestion that the humour around money and class is rather sharper both in terms of humour and ideology in Caecilius than it is in Menander.

If the process of translation is affected by the differing social contexts, one element that remains broadly similar is the concern for legitimacy and the maintenance of the family. In a final set of comic expansion, we can see just those shared concerns being articulated more heavily in Caecilius. In a separate discussion by Gellius of the usual term of pregnancy, he quotes Menander, where someone (presumably Moschiōn) is taking advice about the state of the girl next-door (perhaps from the slave, Parmenōn): 'Is a woman pregnant for ten months?' (γυνὴ κυεῖ δέκα μῆνας; fr. 307 K-A) becomes:

A. soletne mulier decimo mense parere?
B. pol nono quoque,
etiam septimo atque octavo.

A. Does a woman usually give birth in the tenth month?
B. Hell, the ninth too
or even the seventh or eighth.

Caecilius Statius, *Plocium (Necklace)* fr. IV

In the context of a plot based on rape and paternity, this comic expansion looks to be developing a joke relating to the uncertainties of paternity as much as the uncertainties of pregnancy *per se*. Such difficulties of establishing securely dates of conception and terms of pregnancy in the Greek and Roman world are likewise in evidence at Plautus, *Amphitryo* 479–90, another play where paternity is central. There is, then, both expansion for humorous effect here, which both relates to plot and character, the mutual relationship of naive young man and more worldly-wise counterpart, and broader social concerns.

As we can see, then, from this account of Caecilius' *Plocium*, the process of comic expansion and comic cuts make the process of translation address social and cultural concerns that are both parallel and in some

respects markedly different, while also pointing to a very different tradition of comedy to that of Menander, one much more at home with verbal fireworks and the internal logic of comic routines. Very similar analysis can be had from Plautus' *Bacchides*, which is now known to be clearly using Menander's *Dis Exapatōn* or *The Double Deceiver*. Although this is not the best-preserved of Menander's plays – only a couple of scenes have certainly been identified so far on papyrus – these remnants demonstrate clearly that the play was the source of *Bacchides*, or *The Bacchis Sisters*, and allow us to see in detail Plautus' methods in translating and adapting Menander. These texts are much more widely available and have been much more extensively studied recently than those of Caecilius, but show very similar techniques of expansion, compression and hybridization.[50] I focus here on those elements that augment the picture established so far.

Bacchides follows broadly the same story as its Menandrian model. A young man is in love with a prostitute who, however, is contracted to a soldier for the rest of the year. She needs money to buy herself out of the contract. The young man, who happens to be abroad collecting a debt for his father, asks a friend to let her know that he will pay the money. With the help of his cunning slave, a plan is hatched to use the recovered debt and claim that it had been left in Ephesos to avoid pirates. Back in Athens, it just so happens that his friend is in love with the same prostitute's sister, and that as luck would have it they share the same name ('Bacchis' in Plautus, but possibly not Menander). When the young man arrives back home he overhears his friend's father and tutor trying to find a way to separate that pair of lovers and he assumes that his friend has stolen his lover. This is where the papyrus of *Dis Exapatōn* begins. The young man is encouraged to confront his friend, but before he does so, he resolves in a monologue (with comments on his friend and on his lover) to abandon the scheme, unaware that it had already been put into practice by his slave. The overlapping scenes encompass the young man's father being told the truth and the confrontation between the young man and his friend. In rather different ways, the matter is cleared up between the young man and his friend, but this leaves a problem which needs resolving: how to save the lover. This latter problem occupies the remainder of the play. This requires a second deception or set of deceptions, in order to extract the money out of the young man's father and buy the girl from the soldier. Whether the two plays develop along similar lines and are resolved in quite the same fashion has to remain for now an open question. In *Bacchides*, there is not one but two more deceptions as the slave persuades the young man's father to cough up two doses of 200 gold coins to pay off the soldier and as a gift to the lover. There is also

a farcical ending in Plautus as both fathers are won round by the two prostitutes. The change of name may be significant in this respect: Plautus often changes the titles of the plays he is adapting, as here, and these probably reflect an important element in the reworking.[51] There are major differences in how these scenes are played at both the large and the small-scale. Pace and rhythm are very different, in part due to Menander's comedy using act divisions and Plautus' action being continuous, but also to Plautus ramping up the humour.[52] In Menander, the revelation and resolution of the first deception is presented onstage in a scene between father and son, with an act-break (where the chorus would have performed probably a generic piece) covering the actual return of the gold. Renewed dialogue between father and son in Act IV is followed by the father heading off to the marketplace and the son developing further thoughts about his friend and his lover, laying most of the blame at the door of the latter and exploring the joy of refusing her. In Plautus, the young man's initial monologue is expanded (*Dis Ex.* 18–30 ~ *Ba.* 500–25) in two main ways that amplify the humour. First, a series of escalating gags are inserted where what start out as vicious attacks on his lover turn into hopeless and hapless acknowledgement of his own infatuation (503–8). This concludes with:

> ego istanc multis ulciscar modis.
> adeo ego illam cogam usque ut mendicet – meu' pater.
>
> I'll take my revenge on her in many ways.
> I'll bring her right down to beggary – my father's.
>
> *Bacchides* 507–8

Whereas the young man is presented relatively 'straight' in the Menander passage, in Plautus his predicament is played for laughs at his expense.[53] Secondly, the young man ends by worrying about the possible fate awaiting the slave and the imperative to intercede on his behalf. Such a problem is left hanging (as the slave may potentially be) until the larger-than-life return of the slave at 640. Both create suspense. The young man heads off to give the gold back but the suspense over the outcome for the slave continues. Meanwhile his friend comes out onstage and after a few lines the young man returns and we head straight to the confrontation.

The rapid entrances and exits compared to the formal act-break give a much more farce-like feel to the rhythm. The confrontation is also sped up metrically, with the whole exchange switched from Menandrian iambic trimeters to faster Plautine 'recitative', trochaic *septenarii* (526–72). Stichic

use of the *septenarius* is something of an analogue to the Greek recitative metres, which were a substantial, architectural feature of older Greek comedy, but which were used only infrequently by the time of Menander and his contemporaries.[54]

The humour in Plautus is focused on the sharp confrontation, both by cutting the intervening dialogue with the father and the short monologue that follows, but also by the handling of the confrontation itself. In Menander the confusion is patched up quickly once the two friends meet, whereas in Plautus it is spun out for comic effect. This in itself is not a fundamental difference in technique: elsewhere, Menander is happy to play on the comedy of misapprehension (as in *Samia* and *Epitrepontes*). Plautus, however, makes the confrontation sharper and foregrounds the misapprehension with a series of additional comic routines. The greeting is turned into a self-conscious play on convention as the greeting formulae are doubled by the resentful young man and his unsuspecting friend. The near-conventional invitation to dinner serves up a further set of gags as the young man says it will make him throw up and the friend assumes he is ill (537–9).[55] This in turn leads into a second, much more extended sequence where the young man's enigmatic accusations of his friend about the human source of his ill-humour (539–60) are made in a riddling fashion that drops extravagant hints, combined with mutually ironic generalizations about false friends.

Pi. inprobum istunc esse oportet hominem.
Mn. ego ita esse arbitror.
Pi. opsecro hercle loquere, quis is est.
Mn. benevolens vivit tibi.
nam ni ita esset, tecum orarem ut ei quod posses mali
facere faceres.
Pi. dic modo hominem qui sit: si non fecero
ei male aliquo pacto, me esse dicito ignauissimum.

Pi. He must be a scumbag.
Mn. I reckon so.
Pi. I beg you, for god's sake, tell me who it is.
Mn. He's well disposed to you.
If it weren't so, I'd be begging you to do him whatever harm
you could do.
Pi. Just tell me who it is: if I don't do
him harm somehow, say I'm a really big scumbag.

Bacchides 552–6

This riddling, guessing game clearly puts the emphasis on developing the comic routine over any kind of realism. Critics have accordingly tended to locate one of the key differences between Menander and Plautus in the former's concern for psychology and the latter's concern for humour. The humour–psychology opposition is, however, a false opposition: both the *para prosdokian* routine in the first monologue, the self-conscious rejection of dinner and the guessing game routine do point to aspects of character, motivation and, indeed, psychology. Conversely the Menandrian monologue, while a more dignified convention, is far from naturalistic. The difference is that the humour in Plautus is doing far more of the work. In this, and in his tendency to exaggerate and develop the humour as a major source of articulation within scenes, Plautus is closer to the practitioners of Greek Old Comedy.[56] Such exaggeration applies not only to words, rhythm and pace but also staging: as with many entrances from abroad, the young man is accompanied by a group of comedy porters.[57] Again, while Menander is not averse to comic business, usually through the lower-class characters (the sheep in *Dyskolos* 393–426 being a conspicuous example), the physical comedy is amplified in Plautus.

Even while keeping broadly the same plot, Plautus freely and in some cases pointedly adapts the names of characters and this too is well demonstrated by *Bacchides*. Menander's anodyne and stereotyped young men, Sōstratos (the young man returning from Ephesos) and Moskhos (the friend staying in Athens) become the far more exotic Mnesilochus and Pistoclerus. In both cases, the more elaborate compound names may be to emphasise all the more the Greek quality of the fictional world, something in which Plautus delights.[58] There may be irony too in the connotations of faith or trust in the name of Pistoclerus (*pisto-*) and memory in Mnesilochus (*mnēs-*), as well as the hardly razor-sharp Nicobulus ('one who wins by good advice').[59]

Much more obviously pointed is the transformation of the slave Syros of Menander into Plautus' Chrysalus (*chrys-*, gold), who dominates the action, like many other Plautine slaves. The amplification and promotion of the cunning slave, bombastic, self-confident and brazen, is one of the key areas in which Plautus transforms Menander. While the basic types are there in Menander, in Plautus they are promoted into extraordinarily dominant and over-the-top figures in a highly self-conscious comic universe. That the name is significant is reinforced by play on the name early on at *Bacchides* 240–1, cueing in his first deception of Mnesilochus' father Nicobulus, 'No time for sleep: we need – golden Chrysalus' (*hau dormitandumst, opus est chryso Chrysalo*). The self-consciousness here is palpable. Chrysalus,

who seeks serially to swindle huge amounts of cash from Mnesilochus' father, is one of the most extreme of an extreme type – and he knows it. That Grecising names are a key part of Plautine theatrical self-consciousness (and therefore humour)[60] is evident later on in the play as Chrysalus returns to the stage in mistaken triumph, unaware that the first deception has gone awry because of Mnesilochus' decision to return the cash. The formation of Menandrian slaves into the much more dominant Plautine slaves is one that is articulated through Chrysalus' own words:

non mihi isti placent Parmenones, Syri,
qui duas aut tris minas aufferunt eris.
nequius nihil est quam egens
consili servos, nisi habet
multipotens pectus:
ubi quomque usus siet, pectore expromat suo.

I don't like those Parmeno and Syrus types,
who steal only two or three minas from their masters.
Nothing is worse than a slave
who lacks ingenuity, if he does not have
a multiply manipulative character:
wherever there's a need, let him draw on his own character.

Bacchides 649–53

Puns and wordplay are a feature of Plautine humour and names are no exception. In addition to play on Chrysalus and gold, often self-aggrandizingly in his own mouth as frequently in this song, there is also much play on Bacchis and Bacchus (Dionysos) and his followers (*bacchantes*).[61]

Self-consciousness and hybridization in language extend beyond names, however. As with *chryso Chrysalo*, one very obvious feature of Plautus is the use of either untranslated Greek or recognizably Greek loan-words within the Latin. On the one hand these contribute to the distancing of the comic world, but on the other they reflect the colourful language mix in Rome and South Italy. Again, however, there is an acute sense of self-consciousness. Mnesilochus on resolving to harden his heart against Bacchis claims she will find dealing with him 'like telling stories to a dead man at his tomb' (*quam si ad sepulcrum mortuo narret logos*, 519), which, aside from developing the original with the characteristic comic expansion

and vivid addition of the grave itself, uses the barely-transliterated Greek *logos* (< λόγους). In Greek, the term can be used of comic plots, and there may be humorous flattery of the audience.[62] Here, as elsewhere, the self-consciousness of the genre's ambivalence and its awareness of its central culture-clash is palpable.

3. Conclusion

From these examples of the translation of Greek New Comedy to Rome, we can see that the process is a complex one, involving literal translation at times but also cutting, expanding and reshaping the material to suit a different performance context. Roman comedians (at least before Terence) moulded their material to a very different approach to humour, in which verbal play, vivid comic imagery, physical comedy, theatrical self-consciousness and the opportunities afforded by running jokes and joke-routines overtake the more restrained and naturalistic plays of Menander, but which is rather more typical of earlier Greek comedy. With the reinvention of the bourgeois comedy of Menander and his contemporaries, Roman comedians return to dramatic comedy the unruly elements of popular humour and performance that had largely been air-brushed out of their Greek models.

The clash of language and culture is a central part of that humour. What looks like at first sight a decision to keep the theatrical world at arms' length by sustaining and even exaggerating its Greekness turns out to be a highly self-conscious juxtaposition of Rome and its 'other', at once both unreal and brought back constantly to Rome. While Menander, in particular, was concerned to try to reconcile fault-lines in his theatrical worlds, Plautus and, from what we can see, Caecilius gleefully and self-consciously exploited them, revelling in the differences: rich/poor, free/slave, Roman/Greek, replicating within the fictional world the fault-lines of Roman society. The increased emphasis that the Roman comedians put on slaves, violence and the military – and the way that they handled them – reflects the performance context of the developing Roman hegemony of the late third and early second century, its growing economic and imperial power, its anxieties, its crises. Roman comedy, with its fundamental ambiguities – between Greek and Roman, elite and non-elite, official and unofficial – was ideally placed to engage with this time of rapid social and political change.

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Notes

[1] On Shakespeare, see especially Miola (1994).
[2] Quintilian 10.1.93.
[3] For Livius Andronicus, see Cicero, *Brutus* 72, *de Senectute* 50, *Tusc. Disp.* 1.3; Aulus Gellius 17.21.42.
[4] The constructive use of Greek intertexts has been a focus of work in Roman poetry, in particular, in the past 25 years, especially stemming from the work of Conte (1986). See Harrison (2007), with bibliography.
[5] Arguably, this is most evident in Ovid. Vergil's *Eclogues* transfer and translate some of the humour of Theocritus' *Idylls*.
[6] These new genres were *fabula togata* and the literary mime. Later Roman tragedy, such as Ovid's lost *Medea* or the tragedy of Seneca, may not even have been staged (as argued by Zwierlein 1966 in particular). By the early second century CE, Juvenal can write scathingly of hack tragic poets, cranking out a monstrously large *Orestes* or *Telephus*, but seems to envisage only the production of text, not performance (*Satire* 1.4–6).
[7] Thus Terence's *Adelphoe* and the *Hecyra* (failing for the second time) were performed at the funeral games for Aemilius Paullus in 160 BCE (according to the didascalic notices attached to each play).
[8] Most conspicuously in 154 BCE: see Livy, *Per.* 48; Valerius Maximus 2.4.2. Other stories about (apparently unsuccessful) attempts to build theatres are known: see Duckworth (1952, 79–80).
[9] On Livius Andronicus, see Beare (1940); for Naevius' 'Campanian arrogance', see Gellius 1.24.1–2; for the servile implications of the cognomen Statius, see Gellius 4.20.12–13, but such an origin for Caecilius has been doubted (e.g. by Robson (1938), who suggests a Samnite connection). In other genres, Ennius was from Apulia, with Pacuvius his nephew; Accius was from Umbria.
[10] In the case of Terence, he responds to accusations by rivals that he is peddling the work of his patrons (*Adelphoe* 15–21). The story of Terence's association with the Scipionic circle (which goes back to the Suetonian life) has been increasingly doubted, not least on chronological grounds. See Duckworth (1952, 56–9, with references), who takes a moderate position. That there was a circle at all has been put into question by Zetzel (1972).
[11] On the theatrical culture of the fourth century, see Taplin (1999). On the characters of New Comedy, see Wiles (1991).
[12] Fraenkel (2007).
[13] See, for example, *Asinaria* 11, *Maccus vortit barbare*, 'The Clown turned it in a foreign mode'; *Trinummus* 19.
[14] Very brief, non-expository or non-Plautine prologues in *Asinaria*, *Casina*, *Pseudolus*, *Trinummus* and *Vidularia*; no prologue or extended delayed exposition in *Curculio*, *Epidicus*, *Mostellaria*, *Persa*, *Stichus*. On Plautus' prologue technique, see Duckworth (1952, 211–8).
[15] There is some evidence that a more politicised form of humour was practised by Naevius; the reason we hear of it is that his enemies/victims, the Metelli, apparently managed to have him imprisoned for it towards the end of his life, until he apologized (Aulus Gellius 3.3.15). Plautus evidently alludes to his fate in *Miles Gloriosus* 211–2.
[16] See, for example, *Bacchides* 743, 813.
[17] In the list of the critic Volcacius Sedigitus (quoted in Aulus Gellius 15.24) he is first, ahead of Plautus. Varro reckoned that he was first for the quality of his plots (*sat. Menipp.* 399).

[18] The evidence suggests that most fragmentary Roman comedians were closer to Plautus and Caecilius than to Terence. See Wright (1974).

[19] See Webster *et al.* (1995, II.469), with bibliography and discussion. Another mosaic from Kydonia depicts *Plokion* (Webster *et al.*, 1995, II. 471).

[20] For this, see Menander fr. 299 K-A (fr. 366 K-Th).

[21] In addition to the unfortunate *hetaira* Khrysis in *Samia*, another possible analogy is Habrotonon in *Epitrepontes*, who plays the critical role in identifying a baby by a token.

[22] Literally 'on both ears'.

[23] Text generally follows Kassel & Austin (1983–) with some emendations for readability, as in the final line (see their *apparatus criticus* for more details). Numeration in brackets refers to that of the Teubner edition by Kōrte & Thierfelder (1959) also followed by the Oxford Classical Text of Sandbach (1991). The text of Caecilius follows the numbering of Ribbeck (1898), but is in general terms that given in Kassel & Austin (1983–), with some modifications; for textual discussion, see Riedweg (1993). For accessible translations of the Menander fragments, see Miller (1987, 240–2), Balme (2001, 271–2).

[24] So Dikaiopolis on his decision to make a personal peace treaty with the Spartans in Aristophanes, *Akharnians* 128; used by Callinus of Pseudolus in Plautus, *Pseudolus* 512.

[25] In 10, the opening part of the line recalls in particular Eur., *Hipp.* 881. The exclamation οἴμοι fits with the tragic tone, but perhaps plays against the non-tragic versification (breach of Porson's law); the oaths in 13–14 are, however, not particularly tragic and again the versification is distinctly non-tragic in 14, but the use of ὑποστατόν recalls its use in tragedy, especially Euripides (*Suppliant Women* 737; *Antigonē* fr. 177 Kannicht).

[26] 'about the ugly among the ugly' (ἐπὶ τῶν αἰσχρῶν ἐν αἰσχροῖς, *Appendix Proverbiorum* 24.).

[27] Wife and husband may or may not have had the same names: the example of the *Bacchides* suggests that the names could readily be changed: see as follows.

[28] For the respective legal positions with regard to dowries, see Just (1989, 70–5) and Gardner (1986, 71–7, 97–116), Treggiari (1991, 365–96).

[29] See *OLD* s.v. *concilium* 1, 2 & 4.

[30] It is a central part of the plot of both Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazousai* and of Lysias 1, *On the Murder of Eratosthenes*.

[31] For parallels for the image in Plautus, see Wright (1974, 123).

[32] Ennius, *Andromacha* fr. 83 Jocelyn. For the use in archaic religious contexts, see Cicero, *On Divination* 2.69, quoting an old oracle; Festus-Paulus, p. 102.11–13 Lindsay, quoting an oath of the Fetial priesthood. In military contexts, it is found quite often in Livy (4.61.9, 24.37.6, 31.45.6, 37.37.3; cf. 31.46.11 *urbem arcesque*). See also Fraenkel (2007, 159).

[33] See *Bacchides* 925–78, with discussion in Fraenkel (2007, 46–55). See Barsby (1986, 174) for the Roman colouring, especially the triumphal mead (972) and slave auction (977).

[34] *Frogs* 605–73. On Xanthias in *Frogs*, see Dover (1993, 43–50). For slaves and master, see McCarthy (2000). For the military elements crossed with slaves, see Fraenkel (2007, 158–61).

[35] Lintott (1999, 9–10).

[36] See, for example, Aristophanes, *Clouds* 43–52, with several instances. For a full consideration of the technique, see Spyropoulos (1974, 122–3, 139–47). Plautine parallels are collected by Wright (1974, 123–4). For rhyming gerunds, see *Asinaria* 222–3; for an example of a comic list in *Bacchides* in an expansion of the *Dis Exapatōn* parallel, see 541–2: *reperiuntur falsi falsimoniis / lingua factiosi, inertes opera, sublesta fide*, 'they are proved false in their falsehoods, disruptive in their speech, useless in their service, and with bad faith'.

[37] See Wright (1974, 122–3), comparing *Miles Gloriosus* 57, 1021, 1042 (alliteration); cf. *Mostellaria* 216–7, *Rudens* 893–4 (diminutives).

[38] Aristotle, *Poetics* 1449a24–6.

[39] See Fraenkel (2007, 105), who discusses adaptations of monologue to song in the tragedy of Ennius as well as the comedy of Plautus and Caecilius. The song is generally seen as a mix of long anapaests and *septenarii*, with the central portion bacchiac and cretic. For metrical analysis, Riedweg (1993, 140–1) with further bibliography. Lindsay (1922, 316) offers a radically different analysis (mostly dochmiacs with a number of other cola). Actor's monody is a particular feature of late fifth-century tragedy, especially Euripides and is parodied by Aristophanes in *Frogs* 1325–63.

[40] See *Wasps* 1035 with MacDowell (1971, ad loc.), *Wasps* 1177.
[41] For the *kyrios*, see Just (1989, 26–39). For gender politics in Menander, see especially Lape (2004).
[42] For the emotional effect of metrical variation (in relation to recitative metres), see [Aristotle], *Problems* 918a10–12.
[43] See, for example, the exchange between Khremēs and Blepyros in *Ekklēsiazousai* (*Women at the Assembly* 441–451).
[44] The best example for action is the sacrifice that the wife of Kallippidēs is having performed at the sanctuary of Pan in *Dyskolos*. Despite this having a major role in the plot, she herself has at best only a passing appearance on stage.
[45] Addressed in fr. 300 K-A (fr. 337 K-Th).
[46] *trunca quaedam ex Menandro dicentis et consarcinantis verba tragici tumoris*, 'speaking some shortened bits from Menander and stitching together words of tragic grandeur' (Aulus Gellius 2.23.21).
[47] For *factio* as social connections or class, see Plautus, *Aulularia* 167, *Trinummus* 452; Titinius, *Setina* fr. III.2.
[48] For the *Dyskolos*, see especially Konstan (1995, 93–106), Rosivach (2001).
[49] This is most obvious in fr. XIV, which compares a 'mad omen' (*insanum auspicium*) to the taking of the auspices by actors or magistrates.
[50] See especially Bain (1979), with earlier bibliography; and more recently Damen (1992), Anderson (1993, 3–29), Owens (1994); see also the commentary of Barsby (1986). Texts of *Dis Exapatōn* in Sandbach (1991, 37–42), Arnott (1979–2000, I.139–73), anticipating the final publication by Handley (1997), with commentary and additional bibliography; translation in Arnott (1979–2000), Balme (2001, 199–205) and Miller (1987, 171–81), the latter also giving the overlapping part of *Bacchides*.
[51] For the deceptions, see Barsby (1986). Elsewhere in Menander, families are reunited at the end of the play, and the ending has struck scholars as much more Plautine than Menandrian. See Anderson (1993, 23–8).
[52] See Damen (1992), with bibliography; for performance aspects of Plautus, see Slater (1985), Marshall (2006).
[53] The effect may be exaggerated by our loss of the earlier scenes in Menander, which may have set up the young man as more of a target, but the difference is striking.
[54] Although the specific connotations of Greek recitative metres are not entirely clear, the best guess is that these were higher tempo than the standard dialogue metre. They were accompanied by the oboe (*aulos*) as Plautine recitative was by the *tibia* (cf. *Casina* 798). The iambic tetrameter catalectic and iambic *septenarius* had specific connotations, with both suited to comic and energetic actions. For the iambic *septenarius*, see Marius Victorinus, *Ars Grammatica* (*Gramm. Lat.* 6.135.25–9 Keil). Marius Victorinus (by way of a general observation about Terence) claims that Roman comic playwrights followed the practice of Old Comedy in their adoption and deployment of long metres (*Gramm. Lat.* 6.78.22–7).
[55] On both sequences, see Bain (1979).
[56] For an influential statement of the opposition, see Bain : '. . . unrealistic and . . . unbalances the carefully worked out psychology of the original' (1979, 34). The deconstructive approach of Anderson restates the opposition: 'Mnesilochus becomes a caricature of indecisive love, a victim of Plautus' humour' (1993, 12). For the Menandrian monologue, see Blundell (1980). The critical emphasis on Menander's realism and psychology goes back to antiquity. See, for example, Arnott (1968).
[57] The porters are addressed at 525; another conventional element in Plautus is the meal for the returning man – the refusal is indicative of his state of mind (536–40).
[58] See, for example, Leigh (2004, 5–6).
[59] Though of course we don't know the father's name in Menander. For the irony, see Barsby (1986, 12). Philoxenus ('kind to guests/friends') may have some connotations too, although the extravagant compound is important. In *Dis Exapatōn*, we know of a character called Dēmeas (fr. 2 Sandbach = fr. 109 K-Th), possibly one of the fathers as Dēmeas is in *Misoumenos* and *Samia*, although the context for the fragment is unclear.
[60] On Plautine metatheatre, see Slater (1985).
[61] Gold: 640–1, 647, 663, etc. Bacchus: 53, 371. It is unclear at the moment whether Plautus is exploiting or inventing the name Bacchis. There may also be a pun on the name of the

paedagogus, Lydus (so Barsby), although this is one name that has not been changed from the original.

[62] For λόγος of plot, see Aristophanes, *Wasps* 54, *Peace* 50, cf. *Birds* 30. What *logos* translates is not absolutely certain: there is a gap in the papyrus at that point, but it is highly unlikely on grounds of metre and space that this noun was in the original; the participle λέγουσα is, however, used (*Dis Exapatōn* 29).

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Chapter 6

Rewriting the French Tradition: Boccaccio and the Making of the Novella

Charmaine Lee

According to Graham Allen, 'Authors of literary works do not just select words from a language system, they select plots, generic features, aspects of character, images, ways of narrating, even phrases and sentences from previous literary texts and from a literary tradition' (2000: 11). This statement appears in his volume on intertextuality, a term which 'promotes a new vision of meaning and thus of authorship and reading: a vision resistant to ingrained notions of originality, uniqueness, singularity and autonomy' (2000: 6).

As is well known, the term *intertextuality* was coined by Julia Kristeva in the late 1960's in her work on Bakhtin's theories of language and literature that stressed the importance of dialogism, polyphony, hybridization. Though Bakhtin never actually used the term intertextuality, *interdiscoursivity* perhaps being more appropriate to express his ideas (Segre 1982), his work has become fundamental to modern critical theory, in particular in its application to postmodernism. Theories of the postmodern insist upon its double-codedness, its use of the very modes of representation it seeks to question. Such a view of postmodernism informs the work of Linda Hutcheon, who stresses the importance for the postmodern of one form of intertextuality in particular: parody. 'Parody', she claims, 'is a perfect postmodern form, in some sense, for it paradoxically both incorporates and challenges that which it parodies. It also forces a reconsideration of the idea of origin or originality that is compatible with other postmodern interrogations of liberal humanist assumptions' (Hutcheon 1988: 11). Indeed, for Hutcheon, parody is synonymous with intertextuality (Allen 2000: 189). This opinion might be questioned, but the important point here is that both Hutcheon and Allen emphasize how intertextuality and/or parody lead us to change our views about originality, and how this is typical of postmodern art forms. Nevertheless, the same could be said of

what could be called the 'premodern', that is, the literature and culture of the Middle Ages.

Medieval education was based on the *auctores*, classical and medieval Latin authors who were used as models for grammar and style. As a result, medieval writers did not strive to create works that were completely different from what went before, but rather to produce a 'creative imitation' (Barański 1997: 5) of previous works belonging to the canon. This view of originality in literature, implicit in the famous dictum, attributed to Bernard of Chartres by John of Salisbury, that the men of the age were 'dwarves standing on the shoulders of giants', is explicit in the medieval arts of poetry which recommend the correct choice of models and how to expand on them, thereby giving over much space to ornamentation through figures and tropes, generally derived from the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (Murphy 1974; Purcell 1996).

This manner of composing spills over from Medieval Latin to vernacular literature, as is clear from what Marie de France has to say in the Prologue to her *Lais*, written around 1160:

> Custume fu as ancïens,
> Ceo testimoine Precïens,
> Es livres ke jadis feseient
> Assez oscurement diseient
> Pur ceus ki a venir esteient
> E ki aprendrent les deveient,
> K'i peüssent gloser la lettre
> E de lur sen le surplus mettre.
> (*Prologue*, 9–16)
>
> (It was customary for the ancients, in the books which they wrote (Priscian testifies to this), to express themselves very obscurely so that those in later generations, who had to learn them, could provide a gloss for the text and put the finishing touches to their meaning.)

In the *Lais* 'Marie claims repeatedly not to have made the stories up herself, but to have heard them from others, claiming furthermore that many of them are true, her gift is less the stories themselves than the way that she tells them' (Gaunt 2001: 59). Reference to a source, written or, as in the case of many of Marie's tales, oral, was expected by the medieval audience since this guaranteed the text's literariness. So Marie's near contemporary, Chrétien de Troyes, in the prologue to *Erec et Enide*, probably the first Arthurian romance, presents the story as one that had circulated orally

in the courts, but it is his retelling of it which will be the definitive version. Marie and Chrétien are among the earliest vernacular writers to discuss the role of the author and his part in the creative process, but this is always described as providing a previous text with *sens* and *conjointure* (meaning and structure), to use terms employed elsewhere by Chrétien (Kelly 1966), rather than inventing something new.

A similar view of how an author should proceed is put forward by Dante in his *ars poetica*, *De vulgari eloquentia*. Writing specifically for those who wish to compose poetry in the vernacular, Dante, in Book II, seems to echo Chrétien's view that so far vernacular poetry has not been written properly, and thus has not been able to compete with Classical poetry, because the correct rules of ornamentation have not been applied:

> Antequam migremus ad alia modum cantionum, quem casu magis quam arte multi usurpare videntur, enucleemus; et qui hucusque casualiter est assumptus, illius artis ergasterium reseremus. (1968: II, iv, i)
>
> (I wish, before moving on to other matters, to enquire thoroughly into the canzone form, which many clearly employ more at random than according to the rules; and since, so far, all this has been taken for granted, I will now throw open the workshop of that art).

Dante, Barański argues, looks to Horace, rather than Cicero, as well as to some medieval arts of poetry, 'eliminating the need for *inventio* by fixing unambiguously not just the *materia* that poets need to treat, but also the form and "ornamentation" in which they have to carry out this task. All that vernacular poets intending to write in the "illustrious vernacular" have to do, therefore, is select from these preordained general elements and ensure that they elaborate them according to the correct criteria as presented by Dante in the rest of Book II' (2001: 17). Despite the fact that Dante viewed himself as an *auctor* in his own time, he still believed that literature was essentially commenting and elaborating on a given subject.

It is against this background that Boccaccio's codification of the new genre of the novella in the mid-fourteenth century should be viewed. In many ways, Boccaccio was still a profoundly medieval author whose overriding model was Dante. As has often been pointed out, the hundred tales of the *Decameron* reflect the hundred *cantos* of the *Divine Comedy*; giving the protagonists the names of real people follows Dante's example in the *Commedia*, as does the mixing of different styles of discourse (Rossi 1976: 14, 1985: 14; Bruni, 1990: 289–302). More important still is the fact that

Boccaccio was a scholar of Dante, one of the earliest commentators of the *Commedia*, and therefore familiar with his works and his views on composition. However, he would probably not have read *De vulgari eloquentia*, which seems to have resurfaced only in the early sixteenth century, though he knew of its existence since he mentions it in the *Trattatello in laude di Dante*. So again, with Boccaccio, it was not so much what he wrote about, but how he wrote it, moreover placing his tales within a frame, thus transforming a miscellaneous collection of stories into a single work. Yet some of the tales, especially those of the first three days, seem to have circulated earlier and were then arranged in the frame-story according to their subject (Fido 1995), as Boccaccio himself implies in the Introduction to Day 4, suggesting, too, that his critics 'recassero gli originali'[1] ('produce the originals' IV, Intr., 39 [*my translation*]).

Boccaccio, then, has no qualms about pointing out that his tales are not the originals and indeed it is well known that the sources of the *Decameron* are to be found in many different genres and traditions, but that one of the main sources is without a doubt the French tradition, and by 'French' I also mean Occitan. Though Boccaccio obviously knew and wrote in Latin, it is more than likely that such sources of inspiration as the *Seven Sages* or the Troy and other classical legends would have been known to him in the French versions. To these must be added the Old French *fabliaux*, the *lais* and the Occitan *vidas* and *razos*. Apart from single texts and genres, however, it is the whole of the courtly tradition that permeates the *Decameron* and which was present to Boccaccio as he combined and rewrote these different sources, often by employing comedy and parody, to create the new genre of the novella.

Boccaccio's enthusiasm for the French courtly tradition went back to his long stay in Naples from 1327 to 1340/41 during the reign of Robert of Anjou, where his father had sent him to learn the banker's trade. The Angevin court in Naples was a lively cultural centre, promoting not only the pre-Humanistic, though sometimes rather moralistic Latin culture favoured by the king, but more particularly the courtly French and Occitan culture (the Angevins of Naples were also counts of Provence), introduced to Naples at the time of its conquest by Charles I of Anjou in 1266. The young Boccaccio was attracted to court life and culture and much of his early work, such as the *Filostrato*, *Filocolo*, *Teseida*, is a rewriting of French texts that circulated in Naples at the time.

Though the *Decameron* was written once Boccaccio had returned to Florence and is often credited with being typically Tuscan, it could also be described as the sum of all that Boccaccio had learned in Naples, most tales

containing some or most elements derived from the French tradition. This is true, too, as far as Boccaccio's attitude is concerned, which, as Picone (2006) has pointed out, is not at all favourable to the Florentine mercantile class, but rather harks back to an ideal past when 'furono nella nostra città assai belle e lodevoli usanze, delle quali oggi niuna v'è rimasa, mercé della avarizia che in quella con la ricchezza è cresciuta, la quale tutte l'ha discacciate' ('once upon a time our city boasted some very attractive and praiseworthy traditions that are no longer observed: they have all been displaced by the prevalent avarice that has accompanied the increase in wealth' VI, 9, 4) and which he seemed to have found 'In Napoli, città antichissima e forse così dilettevole, o più, come ne sia alcuna altra in Italia' ('In Naples, a very ancient city and as pleasant as any city in Italy, maybe more so' III, 6, 4). The very setting of the frame-story is a *locus amoenus*, such as appears in many Occitan love lyrics or French romances, and it provides a means of escape for the *brigata* from the plague raging in Florence, but which also symbolizes the city's moral decline.

Many of the tales in the *Decameron*, then, derive their material from the French tradition. I shall not be concerned, however, with the search for specific texts behind the different tales, but rather with Boccaccio's attitude toward this material, as he combines elements from different sources: single texts, themes, motifs, genres, in order to create a new genre which, while reviving the French tradition, translating it into a new idiom, moves beyond it. When Boccaccio rewrites a *fabliau*, for example, it requires little adaptation, since these comic tales, often set in the towns and villages of North Eastern France, are already on their way to becoming *novelle* and need only be fitted into a new geographical and historical background, usually Tuscany, and the characters given the names of people who would be familiar to the audience (Di Girolamo-Lee 1995). On the other hand, when the source is a more courtly *lai*, a genre that is far more present in the *Decameron* than had hitherto been thought (Picone 1982, 1991), it requires greater adjustment to fit Boccaccio's ideas on style and this frequently involves parody and the comic use of language.

A good example is the tale of Caterina and Ricciardo (V, 4), whose closest analogue is probably Marie de France's *Lai du laüstic*, the lay of the nightingale. It tells of a lady married to a jealous husband and in love with a knight who lives in a neighbouring castle. Their love can go no further than gazing and talking from one window to another. When questioned by her husband as to why she spends so much time at the window, especially at night, the lady replies that she likes to listen to the nightingale. Her husband captures and kills the bird, throwing the body at his wife and staining her tunic with

its blood. She sends the dead bird as a message to her lover, who places it in a gold casket and carries it with him at all times. The nightingale, then, is a symbol of their pure, courtly love.

In Boccaccio's tale, Caterina, daughter of Lizio di Valbona, loves Ricciardo Manardi, a friend of the family. The couple plan to spend a night together on the terrace, where Caterina has a bed made because, she claims, it's now May and too hot to sleep in her room, and besides she wishes to sleep to the song of the nightingale. Despite her father's objections, the plan succeeds. However, after a night of happy love-making, the couple fall asleep, only to be awoken at daybreak by Lizio, who calls to his wife to come and see how their daughter 'è stata sì vaga dell'usignolo, che ella l'ha preso e tienlosi in mano' ('[has] had such a craving for nightingales, she kept watch and managed to grab one – she's still holding it in her hand' V, 4, 33). Lizio manages to control his anger and, rather than punishing the couple, puts things right by having them marry, also considering the fact that Ricciardo 'is a rich young man and of good family'.

There is no need to go into great detail to explain how Boccaccio has reworked Marie's *lai*, turning her tragic, courtly version into a comic tale with a happy ending. In both tales there is an impediment to the protagonists' love, the husband in Marie's version, the father in Boccaccio's and perhaps, too, social norms, since Ricciardo was a friend of the family who should have shown more respect, as Lizio reminds him on discovering the couple. Both tales set the scene for the main episode in late spring or early summer, the time when love blossoms along with nature in Medieval lyric and romance, though Caterina's insistence that she is feeling hot is evidently linked to her forthcoming passionate encounter with Ricciardo. Moreover, Boccaccio, who typically mixes different source-themes and motifs, has added a further courtly theme, the *aube*, or separation of the lovers at dawn. Here, however, the lovers are fast asleep at dawn, while Lizio is awake and discovers them. Given this premise the audience/reader would expect the tragic ending present in Marie's tale, and indeed Ricciardo's reaction on waking up expresses the audience's expectations: 'si tenne morto' ('he felt he was as good as dead' V, 4, 40) and 'parve che gli fosse il cuore del corpo strappato' ('he felt as if his heart were torn from his body' [*my translation*] V, 4, 42), with Boccaccio cleverly recalling what indeed had happened to the unfortunate courtly lovers in the tales of tragic love in Day IV: Guglielmo Guardastagno (IV, 9), whose heart was torn from his body and served roasted to his lady by her husband, or Guiscardo (IV, 1), whose love for Ghismonda is discovered by her father, who does have him killed, tearing his heart out and sending it to his daughter in a golden chalice.

Ghismonda then kills herself by drinking poison from the cup containing the heart. Ricciardo's reaction fits the courtly pattern, but by then the audience already knows he need not fear, for its 'horizon of expectation' has been frustrated through the use Boccaccio has made of the nightingale motif, playing on its double meaning, which in turn brings two different cultural codes into contact. The nightingale is a courtly symbol and often figures in courtly lyric and romance, the nightingale in *Romeo and Juliet* being a good example; in the *Lai du laüstic* it symbolizes pure love. The nightingale, however, is a bird and in Italian popular culture to the present day *uccello*, 'bird', also means 'penis' and this is clearly the meaning given to it by Lizio when he discovers the couple, implying that Caterina has caught the bird she desired so much. He further elaborates on this image by saying that it would be a good idea if the couple were to marry quickly 'sì che egli si troverà aver messo l'usignolo nella gabbia sua e non nell'altrui' ('that way he'll have stuck his nightingale in a cage of his own and not in someone else's' V, 4, 38). The 'cage' clearly refers to the vagina, as is the case in popular song, such as *Fora de la bella bella cabia/ese lo rignisionello*, copied in the *Memoriali bolognesi*. The comic effect, which turns the tale into a parody of the courtly *lai* and other such tales, including Boccaccio's own of Guiscardo and Ghismonda, is obtained through word play, which also unexpectedly introduces 'low' popular culture into the 'high' courtly code. This technique of suddenly taking the tale into a different direction is typical of Boccaccio, who frequently parodies his sources and analogues in this way.

Two other well-known examples are the tales of Alatiel (II, 7) and Alibech (III, 10). The former follows the pattern of the so-called 'Byzantine' novel, in which the protagonists are separated and only reunited after much wandering, usually around the shores of the Mediterranean; Shakespeare's *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* is an example of this type. The heroines in these stories often risk losing their virginity, but always manage to stay intact. Alatiel, however, contrary to what would normally be expected, willingly yields to at least eight men before finally being 'restituita al padre per pulcella' (II, 7, 1: 'returned to her father as though still a virgin' [*my translation*] II, 7, 1) and goes off to marry the king of Garbo as she had set out to do (Segre 1974). As for the tale of Alibech, Paolella (1978) has shown how the structure is that of a saint's life, probably that of Saint Mary of Egypt, a popular tale of repentance in the Middle Ages, who starts life as a sinner, a prostitute, and ends up as an ascetic in the desert. Alibech's career goes the other way: she wishes to live piously in the desert, but is led into sin by Rustico, a holy man she comes across and who convinces her that she must help him

'rimettere il diavolo in inferno' ('put the devil back into hell' III, 10, 1), which she happily does frequently. Here, too, there is a double entendre to the 'devil' and 'hell', which Alibech later illustrates by gestures to the amusement of the women of her family. Alibech, like Caterina, and even Alatiel, will not be punished but finds a husband and, presumably, 'lives happily ever after'.

In this tale, as in that of Caterina and Ricciardo, comedy and parody rely mainly on word play, on the duplicity of meaning, which Boccaccio frequently exploits. Going back to V, 4, Boccaccio concludes the tale again by stressing the meaning the reader should give to the term *usignolo*: 'con lei lungamente in pace e in consolazione uccellò agli usignoli e di dí e di notte quanto gli piacque' ('after which in all peace and comfort, he had every leisure to go after nightingales with her night and day to his heart's content' V, 4, 49). He uses the term *uccellò*, from *uccellare* 'to hunt or snare birds', in effect 'falconry', an activity which is typically associated with courtly, chivalric lifestyles, but which is also open to other possible interpretations, as in this case. A further example would appear to be the tale generally thought to be the most courtly and chivalrous in the *Decameron*, that of Federigo degli Alberighi (V, 9) (Picone 2006), significantly still in Day V.

Once more the background against which this tale should be read is the French and Occitan courtly lyric and romance. The protagonist is a member of a noble Florentine family, also mentioned by Dante, *Paradiso* XVI, 89, but the story is set in the recent past. The tale is actually presented as a tale within a tale, since Fiammetta, the narrator, claims it was told by one Coppo di Borghese Domenichi, who was known for his love of things past. Thus this tale of noble behaviour belongs to that by-gone past which Boccaccio harks back to. Federigo loves Giovanna, who ignores him, however, and who, as we later discover, is married, hence forming a typical courtly triangle. In order to attract her attention, Federigo attempts to excel in courtly and chivalric activities: jousts, tourneys, feasts and acts of generosity, but this being a world no longer interested in such deeds, he soon becomes penniless and is forced to go and live in a small property in the country, with only his falcon to comfort him. Giovanna's husband then dies and her son is taken ill. Since they too would spend time in the country, the boy had taken a liking to Federigo's falcon and now claims that if he is given it, his health will improve. So Giovanna at last goes to visit Federigo for a meal; feeling that he has to honour this long-desired event but has nothing to offer, Federigo kills the falcon and serves it for dinner.

At this point, like the *aube* in V, 4, Boccaccio inserts another motif derived from courtly romance, the *don contraignant*, or 'rash boon'. Giovanna says 'mi conviene [. . .] chiederti un dono' ('they oblige me to ask you for a present' V, 9, 30), using precisely the term, *dono*, usually employed in romance, but with the ironic difference that she states explicitly what she wants, while Federigo is unable to give it to her, which is the exact opposite to what normally occurs in such cases, where the request for the *don* is made and is conceded by the other party before they know what it is. The son then dies and Giovanna is the sole heir to her husband's fortune. As might be expected, her brothers want her to remarry, choosing a rich man, but she declines and picks Federigo. The tale concludes with the observation that Federigo became happy and wealthy and 'learnt to be more provident' (V, 9, 43), mending his ways and fitting into a more mercantile society. However, a more appropriate conclusion lies in Giovanna's comment to her brothers: 'io voglio avanti uomo che abbia bisogno di ricchezza che ricchezza che abbia bisogno d'uomo' ('I'd rather have a man who's in need of money than money lacking a man' V, 9, 42: Picone, 2006), which recalls the courtly tenet, summed up by the troubadour Bernart de Ventadorn, 'amors segon ricor non vai' ('love does not seek wealth'). Federigo, like the courtly lovers of troubadour song, will make a better lover because of his poverty and his noble soul, revealed when he served Giovanna his falcon, his last possession. Moreover, the eating of the falcon almost seems to refer back, in the typical manner of the *Decameron*, to the tales of eaten hearts in Day IV. The lady consumes her lover's noble essence.

One of the sources given for this novella is the *fabliau Guillaume au faucon*, in which the lovesick Guillaume claims he won't recover unless his lord gives him his treasured falcon, when in fact he desires his lord's wife. The humour of the tale relies on word play involving the term *faucon* 'falcon', which can be segmented as *faus con* 'false cunt', so that the gift of the falcon is really that of the wife, who betrays, is 'false' to her husband. Here, then, the falcon is a symbol of female genitals, which is not the case in Boccaccio's tale, where, as said before, it represents Federigo's noble soul, since the falcon was considered the most noble of birds in the Middle Ages. It therefore symbolizes masculinity here, but it is also a bird, an *uccello* and, in the *Decameron's* subtext, a symbol of the male genitals, that Giovanna has asked for and that Federigo has given, at the expense of her son's life, the final obstacle to their happy union. This interpretation of the falcon is already implicit in the reference to Federigo having few distractions in his country home, so 'quando poteva *uccellando* e senza alcuna persona richiedere

pazientemente la sua povertà comportava' ('he patiently endured his poverty, hunting with his falcon and being beholden to nobody' V, 9, 8), but on the day that monna Giovanna went to visit him 'per ciò che non era tempo, né era stato a quei dì, d'uccellare, era in un suo orto e faceva certi lavorietti acconciare' ('As it was not the season for hawking, Federigo was out in his kitchen garden where there was some work that needed overseeing' V, 9, 19), but this was soon to be put right. The reference to the typical courtly pastime of *uccellare* cannot but recall the use of the term in V, 4, where the double entendre is made explicit.

Right from the start this play on the word is present in the *Decameron*. As is well known, the book is dedicated to 'most gracious ladies', who cannot always find consolation in love, unlike men who 'se alcuna malinconia o gravezza di pensieri li afflige, hanno molti modi da alleggiare o da passar quello, per ciò che a loro, volendo essi, non manca l'andare a torno, udir e veder molte cose, *uccellare*, cacciare, pescare, cavalcare, giucare o mercatare' ('if a man is down in the dumps or out of sorts, he has any number of ways to banish his cares or make them tolerable: he can go out and about at will, he can hear and see all sorts of things, he can go hawking and hunting, he can fish or ride, gamble or pursue his business interests' *Foreword*, 12). Their first activity would be *uccellare*, which sheds a different light onto all the others as well. A glance at the different occurrences of the verb *uccellare* in the *Decameron* shows that it almost always means more than just 'hawking'; it can often imply 'to trick' (III, 3, 33; 5, 3; IX, 5, 11; 8, 25), the trick is frequently linked in some way to sex (IX, 3, 33; 5, 11), or the sexual act is consumed while a husband is away *uccellando* (V, 7, 24; VII, 7, 13–27–33). Boccaccio's insistence on 'hawking' as Federigo's main activity is not by chance and it still raises a laugh from modern readers despite the courtly and in many ways tragic content of the tale.

This, however, is the point: tragedy is not Boccaccio's aim. Day V clearly illustrates his attitude to his source material since 'si ragiona di ciò che a alcuno amante, dopo alcuni fieri o sventurati accidenti, felicemente avenisse' ('the stories are about lovers who have suffered the most grievous misfortunes but achieve happiness in the end'). Tragedy is even avoided in the final tale of the day, a tale of 'sodomy', a crime in the Middle Ages and well beyond, in which all three protagonists, two male and an unfaithful wife, end up happily in bed together. Thus Day V stands in contrast to the preceding Day IV, whose theme is 'coloro li cui amori ebbero infelice fine' ('people whose love has ended in tears'). Several tales in Day V begin on almost the same premises as those of the preceding day, but then take a different turn. As we have seen, the story of Caterina and Ricciardo,

where a father catches his daughter red-handed with her lover, is basically that of IV, 1, the tale of Guiscardo and Ghismonda, but thanks to the play on the meaning of the nightingale, it avoids a tragic conclusion, just as it avoids that of its probable source, Marie de France's *Laüstic*. The tale of Federigo degli Alberighi might seem courtly, but the reference to *uccellare* shifts it onto a different plane.

This is not to say that in these tales Boccaccio was turning his back on the French courtly tradition in favour of the ideology of the Florentine mercantile class; as Dentith (2000: 18) points out, parody 'can have its polemic directed to the world rather than the preceding text'. Instead Boccaccio was forging a new style, that was neither the 'high' *gravis* style of courtly literature, nor the 'low' *humilis* style of the *fabliaux*. What he was aiming at was the *mediocris stylus*, the middle style, which Dante recommends for *comedia* in *De vulgari eloquentia* (II, 4, 5).

Boccaccio's stylistic model for the *Decameron* was in fact Dante and with his collection of a hundred tales, he hoped to go beyond his model. Like Dante, he disliked the Florentine culture of his day, so harked back to the French culture he admired and which constitutes one of the main intertexts of his work. It was not enough merely to present the French tradition as such, but it had to be renewed in a way typical of novelistic parody which 'does not simply cancel those genres which it attacks; it includes them among the possible voices in a competitive babble out of which the novel is constituted' (Dentith 2000: 76). Thus the rewriting of the French tradition always moves away from the monologic medieval genres towards polyphony, through parody and word play, to create a new, modern narrative genre, the *novella*, in which the double-coding implicit in the genre also 'points in two directions at once, toward the events being represented in the narrative and toward the act of narration itself' (Hutcheon 1989: 76). The term *novella* fits comfortably into modern theory since it implies, as suggested by the earlier collection of tales, the *Novellino*, an ability for 'bel parlare'; its concern is not only *what* the tales narrate, but *how* they do so and this is the subject of the 'Author's afterword' to the *Decameron*: 'se alcuna cosa in alcuna n'è, la qualità delle novelle l'hanno richesta, le quali se con ragionevole occhio da intendente persona fian riguardate, assai aperto sarà conosciuto, se io quelle della lor forma trar non avessi voluto, altramenti raccontar non poterlo' (Concl., 4 'supposing there *were* anything off-colour in any of the stories; the nature of those stories required it, and any reasonable person considering the matter objectively would readily grant that there was no other way in which I could have told them without distorting them out of their proper form').

Notes

[1] All quotations from the *Decameron* are from Branca's edition (1980); translations, unless otherwise stated, from the Oxford World Classics version (1993).

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Chapter 7

Translating Humour for Performance: Two Hard Cases from Inoue Hisashi's Play, *Yabuhara Kengyō*

Marguerite Wells

Inoue Hisashi
16 November 1934–9 April 2010

Mr Inoue passed away at the age of 75 while this book was in press. His passing will be a great loss to Japanese theatre, letters, media and intellectual life, all of which were enriched by his extraordinary learning, creativity and free thinking.

1. Introduction

Inoue Hisashi[1] is a distinguished Japanese playwright and novelist, television writer, essayist and multi-media personality and graduate of Sophia University in Tokyo. He began his theatre career by writing comedy sketches for a strip theatre in Asakusa, Tokyo, branching out into television and modern theatre before becoming a novelist and essayist. According to Mr Inoue, the greatest influence on his theatrical work is Bertolt Brecht who revived the combination of music with serious comedy in European comedy; and indeed many of Inoue's plays, including *Yabuhara Kengyō*[2] the subject of this study, are musical comedies. He has won numerous prestigious Japanese awards for his plays and novels, and has been President of the Japan P. E. N. Club. In the 1970s, he was Visiting Fellow at the Australian National University, where he tutored me on his work. In 1991 I was commissioned by the BBC to translate Inoue's play *Yabuhara Kengyō* and adapt it for radio. The production was directed by Ned Chaillet, with John Woodvine as the narrator, Roger Allam as Yabuhara Kengyō, and Mia Soteriou. Musical Direction was by Mia Soteriou, and the play was broadcast on BBC Radio on 13 October 1991 and on the BBC World Service in January 1992. My translation has been published as Inoue Hisashi, '*Yabuhara, the Blind Master Minstrel*', in *Half a Century of Japanese Theater*, vol. 6, Japan Playwrights' Association, Tokyo, 2004, pp. 63–136.

The following is a study of the English translations of two of the more complex songs from this musical, *Yabuhara Kengyō*, demonstrating Inoue's extraordinary range and linguistic virtuosity. It aims to give the reader some

idea of the difficulties of translating Japanese at all, of the kinds of Japanese humour appearing in the songs, and of the challenges of translating two very different formal styles of humour for performance[3].

2. Translating a Mock-Heroic Ballad Is Difficult but Rather Fun

In the days when *samurai* were bold, the professions of minstrel, masseur and acupuncturist in Japan were reserved for the blind. This was indeed an enlightened government policy, although not without its drawbacks, as Inoue Hisashi shows in his darkest of dark comedies on the rise and fall of the fictional historic figure Yabuhara, the Blind Master Minstrel, Yabuhara Kengyō[4].

The era of the play is the Edo period (1603–1868), the time when the administrative capital of Japan was located at Edo. The time is the 1780s. The place is the mansion of a master fisherman of the port of Shiogama in northern Japan. Sugi no Ichi, now an apprentice but later to be known as Yabuhara Kengyō or Yabuhara the Blind Master Minstrel, performs a mock ballad.

Narrator: It seems that Sugi no Ichi was better at the impromptu mock ballad than at the heroic ballad that was the stock-in-trade of the blind minstrels . . . The heroic ballad was related to the mock ballad as *nō* is to *kyōgen*[5], opera to operetta, serious literature to popular literature, the romantic hero to the comedian. . . . It was, as it were, a parody of the heroic ballad . . . Well, we could go on telling you about it all day. Let's show you.

Two of the minstrels stand and perform a comic mime to accompany the tale.

Sugi no Ichi (chant): Of the Wars of the Genji and Heike I sing,
Somosomo Genpei gassen Dan-no-Ura no tatakai . . .
Of the Battle of Dan-no-Ura[6]. . .
(He continues smoothly) I'm sorry I'll read that again.
Naranu[7] [LAUGH][8]
Of the Wars of the Black and White Ricecakes I sing,
Kuroshiro mochi gassen Irori-ga-Ura no tatakai wa,
Of the Battle of Hearthplace-ga-Ura[9]. . .
Upon a time, in the reign of the Great Mortar-and-Pestle[10],
Toki wa Usukine miyo no koto,

In the first year of Happytum past the New Year's Eve of Kettle,
Tempuku gannen Yakan no toshikoshi,
In the New Year of Teapot, when the pine decorations still stood at the door,
Chagama no shōgatsu Matsu no uchi,
Lo! on the Buddhist altar of a mansion,
To aru yashiki no butsudan ni,
See the festive ricecakes in their serried ranks.
Medetaki mochidomo seizoroi.
In the first rank, black ricecakes, clad in sesame,
Mazu ichiban ni, gomairi no Kuroko Mochi,
Took unto themselves the highest seat.
Kamiza ni den to naorarekereba,
Lord Whitecake, then, in dudgeon high spake out:
Shiromochidono ga dairippuku,
'Contemptible varlets, oh ye ricecakes black[11],
'Onore nikkuki kurokomochi,
Being of low estate and dusky hue,
Hadairo kuroki iyashi mi ni te,
Placing yourselves in higher seat than mine,
Ware yori kamiza ni suwaru to wa,
Cast shame upon the honour of my house.
Gōman buson Burei senban,
When Fuji's peak, fairest under the sun,
Hi no moto ichi no Fujisan mo,
Is crowned with snow of whiteness pure and clear,
Mine no shirayuki areba koso.
I, Whitecake, whiter than the driven snow,
Sono shirayuki yori mo nao shiroki,
'Tis I who must the lord's seat occupy,
Kono Shiromochi koso ga go kiden no,
And sit in highest state, for so it is,
Kamiza ni suwaru wa atarimae'.
And hath been so, since ever time began'.
On hearing this, Lord Blackcake gave a sneer,
Komimi ni hasanda Kuroko Mochi,
And laughing quoth: 'What drivel, pray, is this?
Nitari to waratte mōsaruru.
'Nani o nukasu ka Shiroko Mochi,

Go! Write me 'snow'. In ink of blackest hue
Yuki to iu ji wa sumi de kaku,
'Tis written. Are not the forms
Kami ya hotoke no misugata mo,
Of gods and bodhisattvas
Sumi de kaku dewa nai kai na.
Painted in Indian ink? Black though we be,
Sono ue tatoe kuroku to mo,
When we in coat of beancurd do appear,
Tōfu no byakui o kiru toki wa,
There's neither black nor white;
Shiroi kuroi wa naki mono zo,
We all are one. If thus it galls you,
Sahodo ikon ni omou nara,
Genji and Heike though we may not be,
Genji to Heike ja nakeredomo,
Then let the best cake win'. Thus did he rail,
Shōbu no ue de' to nonoshirite,
Returning him to Cupboard Castle high.
Todana-ga-Jō e to kaeraruru,
The whitecakes, aweful in their towering rage,
Shiroko no mochi wa hara o tate,
With mighty mail of kidney beans girt them about,
Uzura azuki no ōyoroi,
Great helms of crystal sugar on their heads,
Tebayaku zakku to mi ni tsukete,
Placed they forthwith. Of sugar black
Sunazatō no ōkabuto,
Zujō ni den to itadakite,
Their great swords, clanging, sheathed they at their sides.
Kurozatō no ōtachi o koshi ni buchikomi daionjō.
'My kith and kin: Forward to Cupboard Castle!
'Yo ni yukari no monodomo yo,
Todana-ga-Jō e semeiran!
Take all unworthy ricecakes prisoner
Kuroko mochi o hajime to shi,
Amata no mochidomo karametori,
Black ricecakes specially. Before the gate
Irori-ga-Jō no monzen de,

Of Hearthplace Castle, grill the varlets at the stake!'[12]
Hiaburi no kei ni shite yararan!'
A vassal of the house of Whitecake bold,
Shiroko no Mochi no bunke ni wa,
Lord of the Castle of Saucepanlid there was,
Konabe-ga-Jō no aruji ni te,
A knight of high renown, hight Tenderson,
Zōni no Kami Yawasuke naru bushō ari.
Sieur of the Dumpling Soup.
This Dumpling Soup Lord swiftly clad himself
Zōni no Kami wa sassoku ni,
Aona no yoroi o mi ni matoi,
In mail of spinach green. Upon his head,
Sujiko no kabuto o itadaite,
A helm of salmon roe with bobbing plume,
Gonbo no yari o hissagete,
His lance of burdock bore he at his side,
Sasa kamaboko no uma ni nori,
And mounted on his steed, brave Fishcake Leaf,
Shiroko no mochi no ato ni tsuku.
Brought up the rear. So to the battle went
The whitecakes bold. And with them too,
Sate ika,
Went Mushroom Shichirō, seventh of that name,
And Hachirō, eighth of the House of Parsley,
Shiitake no Shichirō, Seri no Hachirō,
Sir Radish the Magistrate, stout of heart and leg,
Nerima Daikon[13]*, Hangan Ashibuto,*
Carrot the Red and bold Beancurd the Charred,
Ninjin no Akasuke, Tōfu no Yakiemon,
Lord Devilstongue Jellyman, also called The Quiverer.
Bonito Stock came too, a broth of a boy[14],
Konnyakku no Buruemon, Katsuo no Dashisuke,
And Haddock, Headfish of the House of Cod,
Sir Cuttlefish, Lord of the Land of Squid,
Tara no Darasuke, Surume no Ajirō,
And Greenleaf Julienne, yet but a stripling,
Hikina no Saburō, Tako no Nyūdō nado,

Friar Octopus the Bald and many more. The names to the heavens rang,
Sono na mo takaki, osechiryōri no menmen,
A very feast of chivalry.
Among them one there was, a youth of mark,
Sono naka demo medatsu wakamono wa,
A beauteous lad, complexion pale as milk,
Hadairo shiroki bishōnen,
This morn his first to battle: Squarecake Whitetree.
Kesa uijin no Shiroki Kakumochi.
Ranked before Hearthplace Castle gates,
Irori-ga-Ura-Jō no manmae naru,
Grilled as on rack of iron o'er charcoal fire,
Sumibi ni kaketaru kana'ami no ue de,
Poop, pooppoop, pootttt!
Putt, puputt, puutto,
Swelled with the heat of battle's raging flame,
Fukure ni fukurete zo hikaekeru.
Murmuring, creaking, anxious to be gone,
See the white ricecakes, burning for the fray.
The whiles did Blackcake, Lord of Cupboard Castle,
Ippō, Todana-ga-Jō shū Kuroko Mochi,
Shade with his hand the eyes that with concern
Kote o kazashi yose te o nagame,
Viewed the approaching horde. 'Tis no small thing.
'Kore wa ōgoto, ichi daiji,
The matter hath assumed some gravity,
Yukari no mochidomo zen'in shūgō',
Let all my kith and kin assemble now,
Come to my aid.' And so the call went out,
To yobawarikereba,
To Chestnut Ricecake, Persimmon Cake and Wheaten Cake,
Kuri Mochi, Kaki Mochi, Komugi Mochi,
To Lozenge Cake and Millet Cake and unto Yamcake Bold,
Hishi Mochi, Awa Mochi, Tororo Mochi,
Sir Soupcake came and Sesame, a ricecake of renown,

Lord Soycake the Saucy and Prawncake the Pink there were;
Miso Mochi, Goma Mochi, Shōyu Mochi,
Young Pheasant Cake came too, and Gingercake,
Kiji Mochi, Ebi Mochi, Shōga Mochi,

[Interpolation: *Namagome nama mugi nama tamago*][15] [LAUGH]

And Soyflour Powdered Cake, aye full of beans,
Mame de gozareya Kinako Mochi,
Led Softcake who in autumn most is seen.
Aki no hajime no Jinda Mochi,
And Cayenne Cake whose bite is sharp and clean,
Piripiri karai wa Nanban Mochi,
Brought Peppercake who makes the noses run,
Hana o hajiku wa Karashi Mochi,
And Buckwheat Cake, he who the Noodles smote[16].
Soba o nettaru Sobakai Mochi,
Also came Jamcake, Knight of the Mortar and Pestle,
Usukine irazu no Ohagi Mochi,
With Envycake, the green-eyed harridan.
Rinki no kakaa no Okayaki Mochi[17].

[Here followeth a section with a series of puns. Originally I threw my hands in the air and omitted these lines from my translation, which was already long enough anyway. However I now provide a gloss to show the degree of difficulty that puns present to the translator; the result is not at the same level of sophistication as the rest of the translation. Any suggestions gratefully received!

The underlying pun depends on the fact that *mochi* (rice cakes) is a homophone of *-mochi* (holder or owner), so here we have, for example, landholders, the rich (money owners) and jesters (drum holders) as well as people with piles who are a perennial Japanese joke, and the strong man (the power holder) hidden under the floor of the verandah who is the Japanese metaphor for the power behind the throne – the invisible puller of the strings.

Beginning with people of stature and people with children,
Mimochi ni komochi o hajime to shi,

Owners of hills[18], landowners, people with criminal records,
Okamochi, tochimochi, kyōjōmochi,
People with coughs, birdlime, jesters[19],
Sekimochi, torimochi, taikomochi,
People with money, people of property, people with good hearts,
Kanemochi, monomochi, yoi kokoro mochi, [LAUGH]
People with piles, people with inflammations, women with husbands,
Jimochi, tanmochi, dannamochi,
Deep earth delvers, molecakes[20],
Tsuchi no soko naru moguramochi,
The strong man under the verandah[21] and so on,
Engawa no shita naru chikaramochi nado,]

All told, their force, eight hundred horse and more,
Tsūgō sono sei wa happyaku to ki,
With battle cry and clash of arms did bravely,
Toki no koe o ba agenagara,
From Cupboard Castle issue to the fray.
Todana-ga-Jō yori utte deru.
To change the scene: meantime, up in a loft,
Hanashikawatte uraguchi no,
At the back gate of the castle in a barn,
Naya no muroya no wara no naka ni,
From under straw did rise,
Mikka sanban mo Shirakawa Yobune no[22],
Fermented Beanfriar[23] Tarōzaemon,
Nattō Tarōzaemon itohige nyūdō,
Bearded with white, that to his face had grown,
In three days' sleep; drowsed with the fumes of beancurd.
At the cries his eyes did open wide.
Seki no koe ni zo me o samashi,
Rustling the straw, in haste then did he rise.
Casting aside his straw-weave padded cloak,
Warazu to dotera o nugisutete,
Swiftly he donned his mail of woollen thread,
Keito no yoroi o zakku to ki,
Buckling his salted helm upon his head,
Shiokara kabuto no o o shimete,

And leaping to his steed, brave Saucerhorse,
Kozara no koma ni uchinotte,
The Chopstick Brothers going on before,
Waribashi kyōdai saki ni tate,
His trusty squire beside him, young Fishsalad,
Namasu no Sukasuke, tomo ni tsure,
Forth did he ride unto the place of battle,
Irori-ga-Jō no yokote naru,
That lay full nigh to Hearthplace Castle high.
Kesa no ikusa no shūsenba,
Up rode he then to Dinnertable Field,
Ozen-ga-Hara e to noridashite,
And as he rode, to all thus did he cry:
Koe o agete zo yobawaruru.
'Ye ricecakes white and black! The first of spring,
'Kore, shirokuro no mochidomo yo,
Is with us in its glory. Wherefore then,
Medetaku akeshi hatsuharu ni,
Do ye with these alarms affright the earth?
Nanjira, akireshi yakara nari. Ye godless crew!
Kami o osorenu yakara nari.
Be ruled by me:
Should any ricecake raise yet more to-do,
Sono ue, sawagu mochi areba,
In chains of woollen thread shall he be bound,
Kono Nyūdō ga keito ni te,
By hand and foot! Let there be no affray!'
Ganjigarame ni karame toran.'
The ricecakes black did nod, 'Yea, verily,'
Kuroko no mochi wa kore o kiki,
'Ge ni mottomo' to unazukite,
And did withdraw their kerns, and yet,
Sassoku hei o kaesedomo,
Lord Whitecake unappeased,
Shiroko no mochi wa osamarazu,
Spurred forth between the Friar and the throng,
Nyūdō ga mae ni tobi idashi,
'Our force we raised for reasons strong and good,
'Warera hei o ba agetaru wa,

Yamu ni yamarenu riyū ari,
The honour of the Whitecakes to defend.
For peacemakers have we no need; for arbitration none,
Chūsai muyō, chōtei fuyō,
Avaunt ye greybeard! He who prates of peace,
Hikkonde ore hige otoko.
Declares himself the Whitecakes' deadly foe!'
Moshi aku made mo chūsai o,
Iiharu naraba, sono hō ga,
Kono Shiroko Mochi no kataki nari!',
Quoth he, and Beanfriar of the threaded beard,
Ieba, nattō itohige nyūdō,
Did, weary, laugh a flat and pulpy laugh:
Betta kutakuta to uchiwarai,
'Brave words, oh white one, speak ye to the face,
'Yaa, shiraketaru tadaima no ichigon,
Of Fermented Beanfriar Tarōzaemon,
True heir and heritor of the House of Bean.
Ware koso wa mamerui ga chakuryū
Now let us try how you enjoy the taste,
Nattō Tarōzaemon Itohige Nyūdō,
Of my new threads, polished in recent days,
Chikagoro neritaru atarashiki ito no,
Prepared for you.' Brave words he spake,
Ajiwai o ba miyo ya!'.
Declaring himself before the assembled horde.
Nanoritaru koso isamashikere.
Lord Whitecake, reckless, laughed a sticky laugh:
Shiroko no mochi betabeta to warai,
'Your great and solemn threats I laugh to scorn,
'Katahara itaki taigen sōgo,
I, Whitecake, scion of the House of Rice,
Ware koso wa mochigome ga matsuei,
The freshly pounded whitest of my line,
Tsukitate no Shirokomochi nosuke!
Say unto Beanfriar Tarōzaemon,
Nattō Tarōzaemon Itohige Nyūdō,
Fight fair, fight square, now have at you, Sir Friar!'

Iza jinjōō ni shōbu, shōbu!'
With these fine words did Whitecake leap on Beanfriar
To iu ma ni hashirikakari,
And grappled they with many a battle cry
Kappuri yotsu ni kumiatte,
Of 'Enya! Enya! Now! Take that! And that!'
'Enya, enya' to nejiaeba,
To make the welkin ring. The mighty strength
Of Beanfriar, Whitecake could not overcome
And hand and foot he bound him, trussed him up
Ganjigarame ni shibariage,
Like fowl upon a spit.
He dragged him thus to Dinnertable Field.
Ozen-ga-Hara ni hikidaseba,
The Chopstick Brothers swift came spurring up,
Waribashi kyōdai kake kitari,
And, flanking him, unto the Gate of Mouth,
Shiroko no mochi o kaibasami,
Kuchi no gomon e to hōrikomu,
Did straight conduct him. Then within the mouth,
Kuchi no naka de no uketori wa,
Did Sir Incisor of the House of Tooth,
Mazu wa Maeba no Magutarō,
Come forth to meet him. Molar clept the Chewer;
Niban wa Okuba no Okutarō,
And then Sir Nyahnyah, also called The Tongue.
Sono tsugi Shita-no-Ya Berobei, [LAUGH][24]
So fled he thence,
Sō kō suru uchi kuchi no oku, ōō
Unto the nether reaches of the Mouth,
Nodo no hosomichi[25]*, tado tado tado,*
Unto the very Throat, that narrow road,
From whose glug-glugging path do few return.
Traversing the wooden bridge men call The Chest,
Mune Itabashi o uchiwatari,
Into that deep and terrible abyss,
He fell headlong, that is the Pool of Tum.
Ibukuro-ga-Fuchi ni sakaotoshi,
The terror of the Pool of Tum and then,

Ibukuro-ga-Fuchi no osoroshisa,
The awesome whirlpool of the Gastric Juice,
Ieki no uzumaki monosugoku,
Did Whitecake's body batter unto pulp.
Shiroko no Mochi no mi wa hosoru.
At length quoth he, with many a long-drawn sigh:
Soko de Shiroko wa chōtansoku,
'My stay in the Town of Gut will not be long.
'Hara no Machi ni mo kore ijō,
Naga no tōryū kanō maji,
They say in ancient times Yoshitsune[26],
Mukashi Kurō Yoshitsune wa,
When he did journey forth unto the East,
Azuma e kudaru sono ori ni,
Did clothe himself like to a hermit priest,
Yamabushi sugata ni nari o kae,
And thus prolong his stay.
Ochinobi tamō to tsutaekiku,
Yet hermit garb will not a cake protect.
Ware mochi no mi-no-ue nareba,
Yamabushi sugata wa kanawanedo,
In yellow of the globeflower, then, shall I
Yamabuki[27] [LAUGH] *iro ni mi o yatsusan,'*
Disguise myself.'
So sighed Lord Whitecake, now of yellowed hue,
Tote, kiiro ni narishi Shiroko Mochi.
Pushed ope he then the Great Chrysanthemum Gate[28],
Kiku no gomon o oshiaki, [LAUGH]
Whiles conch and flute and bell and drum,
Horagai ni fue, kanedaiko,
Did play a fanfare: fartchara boom pooh pooh,
Peepee, poohpooh, pee, pisspisspiss,
Peehyara don poo poo.
Gōgō puu puu pii don don,
Piihyara dondon puu puu puu,
Thus heralded,
To uchinarashi,
Unto the fallen castle entered he,
Otoshi-ga-shiro no bentō e,

And into the cesspit fell. Oh piteous end!
Iri ni keru koso [LAUGH] *aware nare.*

Inoue Hisashi told me it took him three days to write the play and another three days to write the mock-ballad[29]. The humorous techniques he used include parody, nonsense, farce, burlesque, punning and other linguistic jokes, scatology and sheer bravado. It might be argued that there is an element of satire on white supremacy. Of these, nonsense[30] and satire are not mainstream Japanese comedy techniques but the others have a venerable history, especially punning.

As Inoue himself points out, the only languages that have fewer possible sounds than Japanese are the Polynesian languages. This means that native Japanese words are long (think of names like Takahashi, for example, compared with one-syllable Chinese names) as syllables need to be used over and over again to avoid ambiguity. The Japanese learned writing from the Chinese. As in Europe we first wrote in Latin, and then wrote our own languages in Roman letters, so in Japan they first wrote in Chinese, and then adapted the Chinese characters to a spelling system (two spelling systems actually), which are used interspersed with Chinese characters. In the process they acquired a very large proportion of Chinese vocabulary as Europe acquired Latin and Greek vocabulary. The problem was that the 300 or more syllables of Chinese had to be squeezed into the 90 or so syllables of Japanese. Result: huge quantities of homophones, a writing system straight out of Dante's *Inferno* (or Heironymus Bosch)[31] and a language that has an immensely rich field for punning, making the pun, in many variant forms, the foremost Japanese humour technique in traditional literature.

Puns are a quandary for the translator as other chapters in this book doubtless agree. What do you do? I took the coward's way out and left out a large section of puns (see above), but a few English puns have been interpolated, just enough to establish that puns were being used.

For similar reasons, there is no rhyme in Japanese. Like the Polynesian and Austronesian languages, the Japanese language has a Consonant-Vowel structure (CV-CV-CV with N sometimes at the end of a word). There are only five vowels (the five pure vowels a, i, u, e and o), few consonants, and virtually no consonant clusters, so there are only six ways any word can end, in one of the five vowels or N. Therefore rhyme occurs all the time by accident and is not used deliberately. One of the colourful strengths of the Japanese language, however, is onomatopoeia and you can see it used as a rhetorical device at several points.

The general principle that guided the translation was to say in English what the playwright would have said if he had been writing in English. Thus in order to maintain the metre, it was necessary in places to add some English words to make a line scan. In some cases, one Japanese line translated as two or three English lines, or as less than one line. Going through the translation and the original and marking the interpolations would be a very advanced translation exercise. Seeing it translated it into languages other than English would be fascinating.

In translating this performance piece I was of course helped by the fact that English provides a somewhat parallel format, the English ballad or 'lay' celebrating olden heroic times and deeds, and a comically ossified vocabulary which, while archaic, is still recognizable to the modern ear. Studies of mediaeval French literature and Old Norse sagas helped, too.

This is a ballad to be chanted to music by a minstrel and therefore it needed a rhythm. It is also rich in archaisms and so it was necessary to decide on a style that would do it justice at the same time as being comprehensible to a modern audience. Like any sensible English speaker (such as Shakespeare) when looking for an oratorical metre, I naturally chose iambic pentameter[32], a very natural rhythm for the English language, and I chose to cast it in the style of *Le Morte d'Arthur*[33].

3. But Then How on Earth Do You Translate a Patter Song?

For this excerpt from the same play, the time is the northern summer of the year 1778; the place is a river bank in Old Edo Town, now known as Tokyo.[34] Three men, their shaven pates, robes and long wooden staves showing that they are blind minstrels, members of the Guild of the Blind, are sharing a tipsy *sake* picnic in the cool breeze on the river bank, and gossiping about their betters. Their target this time is the Kengyō, or Blind Master Minstrel, Yabuhara himself:

AWA NO ICHI: They say that the saintly Kengyō's gone mad after the women.

IZU NO ICHI: What's wrong with being woman-mad?
When a man's got money and position,
what is there in life but women?

As they speak, a rhythm is being beaten out on the body of the guitar. Two characters, Izu no Ichi and Kai no Ichi, take up the rhythm and form a

two-man band, drumming on the *sake* decanter with their chopsticks and chanting while a third character, Awa no Ichi, dances:

Listen while I tell you
Watch while they go past
Sniff while they fart
And while women live . . .
Master Yabuhara this past month
Has slept with woman after woman

Translating this comic scene thus far was reasonably straightforward, but then came the chorus. Inoue Hisashi had made a song out of a list of eighteenth-century Japanese words meaning prostitute. This challenges not only the fecundity of a translator's ability to find synonyms, but also her conscience about politeness norms. This transgressive topic presented the acme of difficulty – to find as many words as possible for 'prostitute' and then string them together euphoniously while respecting the playwright's brilliant original.

Clearly a literal translation would not achieve this. In fact, a literal translation of *anything* from Japanese to English is virtually impossible, but here is the most literal translation I can produce:

Kick-roll lithe girl go-come *geisha*
Ship-bun laying jewel kelp-wrapped *geisha*
Octopus-woman grass-wrapped Fukagawa *geisha*
Bodhidharma pleasure boat roll-without-seeing *geisha*
Puppet umbrella-stop crepe-paper *geisha*
Courtesan gentian wildcat *geisha*

[Later there is a reprise]:

White-neck bath-woman gun *geisha*
Horse-dung rice-piler long-sleeve *geisha*
Dirt-scratcher foot-rubber Akasaka *geisha*

A literal translation thus hardly qualifies as a translation at all. To make any sense of it, the audience needs to know that *geisha* does not mean prostitute. *Geisha* means skilled person. They are highly trained entertainers who have served a long apprenticeship and whose job it is to make a party go by playing an instrument, singing, dancing, drinking and flirting with the client, making conversation and playing silly games. Sleeping with the

client is not part of the service and is at the choice of the *geisha*. But as with every other aspect of Japanese society, there was and is a hierarchy. At the bottom were the prostitutes who used the title *geisha* as a euphemism. Thus we have Fukagawa *geisha* and Akasaka *geisha*. Fukagawa and Akasaka are both place-names, and the implication is that the women so named are prostitutes and not *geisha* at all. These complexities dispose of two of the 27 words for *geisha* used in the song. Meaning nothing in English, they will be no use in the translation.

So here is the difficulty. Although the language of the song is intriguing and probably colourful, in English, when literally translated, it means almost precisely nothing. How is an English speaker even to work out that this is a list of words meaning prostitute and not a song about *geisha*? That is the first problem for the translator. My first solution was to make a song out of a list of English words for prostitute, but coming up with 27 in the white heat of translating a whole play to a BBC deadline was not possible. This was in 1991. The two sources that occurred to me were a thesaurus and my brother, but I did not refer to either. In the end I took the coward's way out, again throwing my hands up in the air and leaving the song out of the play-script that I sent to the BBC, because that had to be cut by one-third to accommodate the shortened running time anyway. Then along came the happy days of the internet, and a Google along the lines of "prostitute synonyms" produced some considerable assistance and I was able at last to begin – and complete – the translation.

Here is a romanized version of the original song:[35]

Listen while I tell you
Mono wa iu uchi ni kike
Watch while they go past
Hito wa tooru uchi ni miro
Sniff while they fart
He wa naru uchi ni kage
And while women live...
Soshite onna wa ikiteru uchi ni
Master Yabuhara this past month
Yabuhara-sama wa kono hitotsuki ni
Has slept with woman after woman
Tsuginaru onna to kyōne shita

Kekoro[36] *saburuko*[37] *ōrai*[38] *geisha*
Binsho[39] *fusedama*[40] *konbumaki*[41] *geisha*

Takome[42] *kusamaki*[43] *Fukagawa*[44] *geisha*
Daruma[45] *dorafune*[46] *mizuten*[47] *geisha*
Kugutsu[48] *kasadome*[49] *chirimen*[50] *geisha*
Oiran[51] *senburi*[52] *yamaneko*[53] *geisha*

Reprise:
. . . Shirakubi[54] *yuna*[55] *teppō*[56] *geisha*
Bafun[57] *meshimori*[58] *furisode*[59] *geisha*
Akakaki[60] *ashizuri Akasaka*[61] *geisha*

Most of the words used by Inoue are of an etymology by no means obvious. Accordingly the footnotes list the Japanese, followed by the literal meaning, and an explanation of the cultural background.

The second problem for the translator, therefore, was how to convey even a modicum of this rich panoply of Japanese history, culture and sleaze? A simple list of English words for prostitute would not do the job, would be merely a mechanical version of the song, conveying the barest minimum of the complex Japanese meaning, not worth singing or dancing to at all and certainly not worth staging in a Japanese play. Without any Japaneseness to it at all, it would have been the odd one out among the songs, and inconsistent with the play as a whole; I decided to have the best of both worlds, and while establishing right from the beginning that this was a list of English words for prostitute, to try to mine the Japanese for all the striking images that could be extracted from it. Thus the first line and alternate lines have been made into lists and every second line into a very Japanese image, in Kipling-esque parenthesis. To my great relief, this met with fulsome approval from the editor (a Japanese theatre specialist), who recognized the value of a song that would work on stage. This is how the English goes:

Wanton, trollop, tart and floozie
(Kick-her-over *geisha*)
Poxy doxy[62], bawd and quean
(Come-and-go *geisha*)
Whore, street-walker, trull and hackney
(Captain's doughnut *geisha*)
Strumpet, crumpet, concubine
(Laying jewel *geisha*)
Mistress, madam, chicken, jade
(Seaweed roll *geisha*)
Scarlet harlot[63], hustler, cat

(Octopussy *geisha*)
Hooker, slut and courtesan
(Mortar-pestle *geisha*)
Drab and tootsie, fancy woman
(Tumbling Tom *geisha*)
Moll and wench and hack and jade
(Puppet dangling *geisha*)
Laced mutton, nymph, grizette and drab
(Roll over *geisha*)
Hussy, blower, pussy, pro
(Umbrella stop *geisha*)
Bag and bimbo, broad and tramp
(Mountain cat *geisha*)

Reprise:
. . . Girl of easy virtue, loose
(Bath-house *geisha*)
Fallen, kept, painted, fancy
(Pistol-shot *geisha*)
Woman of the night or town
(Crepe-paper *geisha*)
On the street or on the game
(Horse-shit *geisha*)

For good measure, I added a verse to be used as an encore and in order make use of the foreign words on my list. It may double as a verse to please both French speakers and any ancient Greeks and Romans who happen to be in the audience:

Fille-de-joie and meretrix
(Dirt-scratching *geisha*)
Demi-mondaine, demirep
(White-neck *geisha*)
Paphian and Light o' Love
(Long-sleeved *geisha*)
Hetaera, poul and cocodette
(Crepe paper *geisha*)

Compared with the mock-heroic ballad which has parody, farce, puns and so on, the list of comic techniques used in the original Japanese song

comes down to a short list of zero. Unless you count a little scatology and obscenity, *there are no comic techniques used in this song*! What, then, makes a patter song a comic song?

And yet, all the patter songs you can think of are comic songs. The patter songs in Gilbert and Sullivan operettas, for example, are always literally show-stoppers. In the case of the *geisha* song, which is merely a list of nouns with their accompanying adjectives, there is nothing to make it humorous except the sheer joy of the linguistic gymnastics, the human ingenuity that came up with all these graphic (if politically incorrect) terms, and the surprise and pleasure of the virtuoso performance. In short, here is a form of humour that consists purely in the pleasure of language.

It would seem that a patter song is more in the nature of play than of joking, related to nonsense rather than comedy, and that here is a member of the humour family that is too often overlooked. The question of how patter songs come to be associated so regularly with the comic is one that may deserve further analysis.

Some aspects of my translation are unsatisfactory to me in several respects. Quean is not ideal. While it is a perfectly good word, this is a play and the audience will hear 'queen' and not 'quean'. The anachronisms in particular are less than satisfactory and fail to match up to the high standards of Inoue Hisashi himself, who is immensely well-read, with an elephantine memory. All his words for prostitute seem to have been current at the date when the play was set, but in order to find enough English words to place the images within lists, modern words had to be used as well as archaisms and also American as well as British slang. Yet more possibilities have turned up since. Here are some that have not been used:

adventuress
barque of frailty
bit of muslin
brass
call-girl
camp follower
chippie
cocotte
comfort woman
Cyprian
fallen woman
fast woman
harpy
harridan

Jezebel
lady of pleasure
light-skirt
mistress
Mrs Warren's Profession[64]
oldest profession
painted woman
prostitute
round-heels
sex worker
slattern
street girl
sporting lady
white slave
woman of ill repute
woman of pleasure
woman of the street
working girl

Most bizarre of all, this translation of a song made up of words for prostitute does not include the word prostitute! For a translator, whether of humour or serious material, the quest for the perfect is never complete.

Notes

[1] Inoue Hisashi, 16 November 1934–9 April 2010. Mr. Inoue passed away while this book was in press. Family name Inoue, personal name Hisashi. The Hepburn romanization system for the Japanese language has been used throughout this chapter.

[2] Inoue Hisashi, *Yabuhara Kengyō*, Shinchōsha, Tokyo, 1974.

[3] In loving memory of Herr Dr Professor Captain Arthur R. King Jr., my friend, Professor Art, who Fought the Good Fight for so many people and in so many ways. With thanks to Jessica Milner Davis for her assistance and encouragement.

[4] As there are large numbers of archaisms used in the piece, where there has been doubt about the romanization, I have followed the readings used in the original production, by the Gogatsusha Theatre Company as recorded on the LP record, *Yabuhara Kengyō*, published in 1975 by Japan Victor Corporation, record serial number JV1368-9-S. There have been a few trivial cases where the performer diverged from the script. In these cases I have followed the script. Please note that English archaisms are also used for the purposes of fidelity and comedy.

[5] *Nō* is an extremely formalized musical drama, while *kyōgen* is the comic relief that appears on the same programme between *nō* plays. They are performed on the same stage but by different actors. The spelling Noh is often used but this is archaic, misleading and does not follow any systematic romanization system.

[6] The Battle of Dannoura in 1185 was a naval battle between the Minamoto and Taira warrior families, also known as the Genji and the Heike or the Genpei. The Minamoto family won

and took political power. The Taira were scattered. The wars of the Genji and the Heike were the stuff of the heroic ballads of the blind minstrels, and this opening worries the audience, who are expecting a parody, then makes them laugh with relief when the minstrel pretends to have made a mistake, and gives them the parody they were expecting.

[7] *Naranai* or *naranu*, means *That won't do*, or *That's no good*, or *No, it's not*, and so on. Since in Japanese the verb comes at the end of the sentence, it is possible to put a negative where a positive was expected and turn the audience's understanding upside down at the last moment. A current fad in American slang is to make a positive statement, followed by – NOT. This is clumsy, but in Japanese it can be done smoothly with *naranu* or similar. It is a laugh line in Japanese, so I have used the name of a once popular British TV program to get the laugh.

[8] The lines that got a laugh in the Gogastusha LP record are marked thus throughout. They are not many because it is a dazzling bravura performance, with dance, mime and a chorus, and chanted often at tongue-twisting speed, so that there are few pauses where the audience has a chance to think long enough to laugh.

[9] A pun. *Ura* means *bay* in Dan-no-Ura but in Hearthplace-ga-Ura it means *behind* the hearth. The two words, both pronounced URA, are written with different characters.

[10] Mortar and Pestle were used for pounding rice to make the sticky cakes.

[11] The battle is black against white. The white ricecakes, note, are the arrogant racists and are beaten, indeed, eaten.

[12] Some varieties of ricecake would traditionally have been grilled on a metal rack over coals.

[13] *Nerima Daikon*: a type of Japanese radish originally grown in what is now Nerima Ward in Tokyo. The joke is about *daikon ashi*. Many Japanese women worry about what they call their 'radish legs'. That is to say, legs shaped like thick carrots, thick at the top and tapering to the ankles. Years of adaptation to sitting on one's knees on the floor has undoubtedly contributed to this problem.

[14] This is a pun that I inserted, to make up for the many I missed.

[15] In the performance, the actor playing Sugi no Ichi at this point went off into gabbling the most commonly-heard modern Japanese tongue twister, 'Raw rice, raw wheat, raw eggs', taking the audience by surprise by jumping into the familiar language of the twentieth century and making the point that the list of ricecakes he is reeling off is a considerable tongue twister in itself.

[16] This is a reference to *soba*, Japanese buckwheat noodles.

[17] A pun. *Yakimochi* means grilled ricecakes and also jealousy – which is traditionally attributed to women.

[18] Land is immensely valued in Japan, as is cabinet timber, so someone who owns a hill or a mountain owns land and probably valuable stands of timber as well.

[19] Birdlime does not fit the pattern of owning or holding; a professional jester was a drum-holder.

[20] Another that does not fit the pattern. *Moguramochi* is an alternative name for *mogura*, a mole.

[21] The strong man (the power holder) hidden under the floor of the verandah is the Japanese metaphor for the power behind the throne – the invisible puller of the strings.

[22] *Shirakawa yobune*: Shirakawa (which means White River) was a district of Kyōto. When asked if they had seen Shirakawa, people who were pretending to have been to Kyōto might say they had crossed it by night boat (*yobune*) and so did not see it. Thus *Shirakawa yobune* is a metaphor for someone who is pretending to knowledge he does not have or else it means to sleep through events. As this would not work in English, it has been replaced with a reference to one of the poems of Keats: 'Drowsed with the fumes of poppies' (John Keats, *To Autumn*).

[23] *Nattō* is a pungent savoury dish, which is eaten in small quantities like pickles on rice and is very good for you because it is made of fermented beans. It is a perennial joke because half of the Japanese people love it and the other half hate it. Like yoghurt, poi or other fermented foods, it is an acquired taste and part of the audience will find this Nattō character distasteful or even revolting. All of the audience will however find him amusing. The threads and his beard are the products of the fermentation which he uses to tie up his hapless captive.

[24] The inside of the mouth is considered unclean in the Japanese tradition (this is why Japanese women traditionally cover their mouths when they laugh) and has sexual connotations. A Japanese audience will therefore react to this passage about The Mouth as scatology and it gets one of the few outright laughs.

[25] This is a pun as well as a literary allusion. The reference is to *Oku no Hosomichi* (translated as *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*), a poetic diary of travel, written in 1694 by the great *haiku (hokku)* poet Matsuo Bashō. I have used a *Hamlet* reference that should ring a quiet bell with a theatre audience: That . . . 'undiscover'd country from whose bourne no traveller returns'. (William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act III, Scene 1).

[26] Yoshitsune of the Minamoto clan is the great anti-hero of Japanese legend and his journey to the area that is now Tokyo (The East) is the subject of *Yoshitsune Azuma Kudari*.

[27] This is a pun. Yoshitsune disguised himself as a *yamabushi* or hermit priest. But as no one was going to believe a ricecake was a priest, Lord Whitecake disguised himself in the yellow of the globeflower *yamabuki*.

[28] The anus. The insignia of the imperial house, the chrysanthemum, can, with a certain lack of reverence, be seen as an end-on drawing thereof.

[29] Personal communication, 1976.

[30] *Ero-guro-nansensu* (eroticism-grotesquerie-nonsense) was a fashion in literature and art between the Wars, but the degree to which nonsense developed along with *ero* and *guro* is questionable.

[31] Dante (d. 1321), *The Divine Comedy*; Heironymus Bosch (d. 1516), Netherlands painter who painted scenes of Hell.

[32] Iambic pentameter: a poetic metre of five feet per line, where the accent is on the second syllable, for example, to take a line from Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*: The QUAL/ iTY/ of MER/ cy IS/ not STRAINED/.

[33] Malory, Sir Thomas, *Le Morte d'Arthur*, completed c. 1469 (written in English, despite its title).

[34] A previous version of parts of this section was published on the internet in Pamela Hewitt (ed.), *The Fine Print*, N.1 (Jan. 2005), pp.1–10. I refer to it and quote from it with grateful acknowledgement. Available at: *http://www.emendediting.com/html/ezine/index.html (accessed on 14 March 2010)*

[35] The references given in short form in the following footnotes are: Koh Masuda, *Kenkyusha's New Japanese English Dictionary*, Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1974; Shinmura Izuru (ed.), *Kōjien*, Second Edition, Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1978; *Nihongo Daijiten*: Kindaichi Haruhiko et al. (eds), *Nihongo Daijiten*, Tokyo: Kodansha, 1989; Nihon Daijiten Kankōkai (eds), *Nihon Kokugo Daijiten* (20 vols.) Tokyo: Shōgakkan, 1972–6; *Nelson*: A. N. Nelson, *Japanese – English Character Dictionary*, Tokyo: Tuttle, 1962; T. Morohashi et al., *Kōkanwa Jiten* (4 vols.), Tokyo: Daishūkan Shoten, 1981.

[36] *ke-koro* kick-roll: Until 1789, this was a slang name for a prostitute of the lowest rank in the Asakusa area of Edo. You kick her and she rolls over (*Nihongo Daijiten*, *Nihon Kokugo Daijiten*).

[37] *saburuko* lithe girl: An ancient word meaning a light woman or a playgirl. *Saburu* means lithe and beautiful deportment and *ko* means child. Found in the *Man'yōshū* (AD 759), *Kōjien, Nihon Kokugo Daijiten*.

[38] *ōrai* go-come: *Ōrai* means a busy thoroughfare, so it could mean a woman who is a public convenience, a woman who comes and goes (call-girl) or else a street walker, or all of them. It is not a reference to an orgasm, because in Japanese that is to go (not to come) and is a different verb from the one used here (*Kōjien*).

[39] *binsho* ship-bun: This is a beauty. At the end of the Edo period, binsho meant an unlicensed prostitute whose customers were sailors of the river ports of Osaka. (*Nihon Kokugo Daijiten*) It is written with the characters that mean ship-bun. The bun is a *manjū*, the squishy, white steamed pork bun that is served with yum-cha. In Japan it more usually has bean jam in it and is rather like a jam doughnut. By analogy with the shape of a jam doughnut, which has the jam inserted into it with a squeeze bottle, *manjū* is the most common word for cunt.

[40] *fusedama* laying (hidden) jewel: The verb used here is the verb meaning to lay something down, and it also means to keep something hidden. Brothel quarters were segregated and licensed, but there were unlicensed brothel areas as well. In the unlicensed brothel area of

Fukagawa in Edo, this meant a prostitute in a private house who brought customers there (*Kōjien, Nihon Kokugo Daijiten*). The fact that it means to lay and not to lie, should neatly suggest the sexual meaning of the English verb to lay, at least to members of the audience who know the difference between the two English verbs.

[41] *konbumaki* kelp-wrapped: *Konbu* (kelp) is one of the two most common types of seaweed used in Japanese cooking. Foods such as herring may be wrapped in *konbu* and stewed in soy sauce. The implication would seem to be that she is a prostitute in a seaside town.

[42] *takome* octopus-woman: Presumably a grasping woman – grasping both money and men. The implication would seem to be that she is a prostitute in a seaside town. Translated as Octopussy, a reference to a character in the James Bond short story of that name by Ian Fleming. Octopussy is quite a complex pun. Octopus-pus-foot-pussy pussy-cat cat-pussy (sexual reference).

[43] *kusamaki* grass-wrapped: This is the name of a sweet rice-cake sold wrapped in a leaf or herb.

[44] Fukagawa: A district of Tokyo.

[45] *daruma Bodhidharma*: The Bodhidharma (known in Japanese as the Lord Daruma), a disciple of the Lord Buddha, meditated for nine years cross-legged facing a wall and when he decided to get up, he found that his legs had fallen off. He is the original of the Tumbling Tom, which appears universally in Japan as a good luck charm. This is one of a number of references to the prostitute's propensity to fall over (*Nihon Kokugo Daijiten*).

[46] *dorafune* pleasure boat: Resorts on Japan's many beautiful rivers would have had pleasure boats of more than one type; cf. English: barque of frailty.

[47] *mizuten* roll-without-seeing: A geisha (or similar) who would fall on her back for anyone, without discriminating among clients. (*Kōjien, Nihon Kokugo Daijiten*).

[48] *kugutsu* puppet: Female puppeteers sang and engaged in prostitution. Mentioned in the *Konjaku Monogatari* (*Tales of Now and Long Ago*, AD 1104) (*Nihon Kokugo Daijiten*).

[49] *kasadome* umbrella-stop: A prostitute of the highest class, so called because when she was out in public, a manservant would hold a long-handled umbrella over her (*Nihon Kokugo Daijiten*).

[50] *chirimen* crepe-paper / cotton crepe: Legitimate geisha would, of course, wear silk. The low-class prostitute would wear much lower quality cloth, as the lowest-ranking actors wore wigs and costumes made of crepe paper.

[51] *oiran* courtesan: an *oiran* is a prostitute of the very highest rank – the playmate of politicians. Originated in the Yoshiwara licensed brothel area of Edo (*Nihon Kokugo Daijiten*).

[52] *senburi* gentian: Named after the alpine flower, a number of varieties of which are native to Japan. The implication would seem to be that she is a prostitute in a mountain resort.

[53] *yamaneko* wildcat: The Japanese for wildcat, feral cat or lynx is mountain-cat. A name for the prostitutes who operated in the grounds of the shrines and temples of Edo. Also a name for geisha of Asakusa Park in Edo and of Maruyama in the Gion, Kyoto (*Kōjien, Nihon Kokugo Daijiten*).

[54] *shirakubi* (or shirokubi) white-neck: the nape of the neck was considered very erotic, and demure women wore their kimono done up so that a minimum of the nape was showing. A loose woman (or a geisha) wore her kimono collar set back from the neck, with the nape whitened with white make-up. The reference here is to an unlicensed prostitute (*Nihon Kokugo Daijiten*).

[55] *yuna* bath-woman: Women working as prostitutes in bath houses throughout Edo and Osaka. A picture may be found in *Kōshoku ichidai onna*, a prose work by Edo period writer, Ihara Saikaku, often translated as 'A Woman Who Loved Love' (*Kōjien, Nihon Kokugo Daijiten*).

[56] *teppō* gun: contraction of *teppō jorō* (gun prostitute) (*Nihon Kokugo Daijiten*). An acquaintance of mine once wrote an obviously autobiographical short story in which he said that after a period of abstinence he had 'gone off like a pistol shot . . .' – it seems a typical experience.

[57] *bafun* horse-dung: The implication would seem to be that she is a country bumpkin.

[58] *meshimori* rice-piler: Maidservants at an Edo period inn. They attended to the travellers at table and in bed (Nelson, *Kenkyusha*). *Meshimori onna* (rice-piler women) appeared when, in 1659, the Shōgunate banned prostitution at the post stations of the Tōkaidō, the highway between Edo and Kyoto. At first they did not wear beautiful clothes like the licensed

prostitutes but were restricted to cotton clothing. Gradually they developed into prostitutes in the full sense (*Nihon Kokugo Daijiten*).

[59] *furisode* long-sleeve: The long-sleeved kimono (sleeves almost sweeping the ground) was the mark of the young girl. After she married she wore shorter sleeves. In the Edo period, this referred to a young prostitute who had graduated from the status of *kaburo*, a little girl attendant on a courtesan, to the next rank and the garb of a girl of marriageable age (*Kōjien, Nihon Kokugo Daijiten*).

[60] *akakaki* dirt-scratcher: In the Edo period, women who worked in public bath houses, washing clients and working as prostitutes (*Kōjien*). There is a picture in *Kōshoku ichidai otoko*, 'A Man Who Loved Love', another work by Saikaku.

[61] Akasaka is a district in inner city Tokyo.

[62] Poxy is not in the original, but the alliteration and rhyme were impossible to resist.

[63] Scarlet is not in the original, but this alliteration and rhyme were also impossible to resist.

[64] Title of a play about a prostitute by George Bernard Shaw.

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Chapter 8

The Laughing Word of James Joyce

Rosa Maria Bollettieri Bosinelli and Samuel P. Whitsitt

The word is my Wife, to exponse
and expound, to vend and to velnerate,
and may the curlews crown our nuptias!
Till Breath us depart!
FW 167.29–31

patpun fun for all
FW 301.13

James Joyce is one of the most frequently cited and less frequently read of twentieth-century writers. This is partly because he is considered difficult and obscure, and readers therefore get discouraged even before starting the great adventure of reading his work. The comic side of Joyce's writing, his humour, irony, and parodic attitude are not the first things that come to mind when approaching this author. In this chapter, however, we will argue that even the smallest item of Joyce's prose, the word, has more often than not a laugh or a smile inscribed into it and that once one begins to see this aspect of his writing, then reading Joyce can be great fun.

1. The Laughing Word

By 'laughing word' we mean a lexeme of everyday English language that is used in such a way that it provokes puzzlement and wonder at first, but then once its unexpected meaning hits home, triggers a smile of recognition, a chuckle or even laughter in the reader.

We must keep in mind that Joyce, an Irishman, wanted to master English, to master the very language of the English oppressors and 'masters' who had conquered his country and erased its original Gaelic tongue, and also

to make English his own personal idiom, and recognizable as such. And to make his language memorable, he adopted different strategies. One of these was to distort the signifier itself, which he did in unusual ways. He would take, not just unusual words, but common, everyday English words, which he would then transform into strange, unexpected signs pointing to displaced objects.[1] For example, at the beginning of the eighth episode of *Ulysses*,[2] also known as 'Lestrygonians', a chapter dedicated to Mr Bloom's wanderings along the river Liffey at about 1 o'clock in the afternoon in search of something to eat, Bloom starts reflecting on the art of advertising, stimulated by having just seen the publicity for 'Kino's' trousers, apparently painted on the side of a boat floating in the river:[3]

> All kind of places are good for ads. That quack doctor for the clap used to be stuck up in all the greenhouses. Never see it now. Strictly confidential. Dr Hy Franks. (*U* 8. 95–96)

The reader might consider at first that the colloquial expression, 'that quack doctor for the clap' – meaning 'that charlatan who offered remedies for venereal disease' – is somewhat strange, and the notion of advertising such an activity in 'greenhouses', that is, places for growing delicate plants, rather bizarre. It is only on second thought that Joyce readers, trained as they are to doubt the apparent innocence of everyday words, may suppose that 'greenhouse' in this context is not what one might 'normally' think, and that it is necessary to do further research, and that research will finally take one to discover that in the context of Dublin, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the word 'greenhouse' referred to public urinals. It is this kind of research that attunes the reader to this word, making him or her alert for further recurrences of the same word in *Ulysses*. And in fact, when later in 'Wandering Rocks', the central chapter of the novel, we are told of Stephen's father coming from a 'greenhouse', we are prepared to suspend the obvious meaning – that of a hothouse for plants – which would have seemed rather puzzling:

> on Ormond quay Mr Simon Dedalus, steering his way from the greenhouse for the subsheriff's office, stood still in midstreet and brought his hat low. His Excellency graciously returned Mr Dedalus' greeting. (*U* 10. 1199–1203)

Moreover, what we also now know is that when the heavy drinker, Simon Dedalus, salutes the vice-regal representative of the British Empire, he has

just relieved himself in the 'greenhouse'. And we also know that for the British, with their love for gardening, the greenhouse, understood in its traditional sense, was certainly significant. To call, then, a public urinal in Irish Dublin, a 'greenhouse' is to transport and transform an object, dear to the English and their gardens, into a space where Dublin men urinate, publically. It is this ambiguous oscillation between signifieds that makes the text radiate with irresistible irony and Irish humour. And so it is that when we come to the end of the novel, in the episode called 'Penelope', and hear Molly Bloom mention a 'greenhouse', the meaning has become explicit, yet resonates from the very research we had to undertake to make it explicit. So when Molly muses on how men are:

> always trying to show it to you every time nearly I passed outside the mens greenhouse near the Harcourt street station just to try some fellow or other trying to catch my eye as if it was 1 of the 7 wonders of the world (*U* 18. 549–53)

the reader can entertain not only visions of how men would display their *growths*, but how these *growths* are bloomings in blossoming greenhouses, and the text threatens to take off on a roll of its own laughter.

But how could a translator deal with an everyday word that in the original cultural context has a double meaning, but does not in the target language? A quick look at some translations shows that the predominant choice was to ignore the wordplay between the two meanings, 'a place for delicate plants', and 'urinal'. Both the Italian versions have *vespasiani* – that is, 'urinals' –(Joyce/De Angelis 1988: 149; Joyce/Flecchia 1995: 120); the Spanish translation has *los urinarios* (Joyce/Tortosa 2004: 174); the Catalan translation has *els urinaris* (Joyce/Mallafrè 1982: 160); the French translation (Joyce/Morel [1929] 1981: 223) reads *les urinoirs*.

Quite clearly the translators in question did nothing other than ignore the subtle irony of Joyce's use of 'greenhouse', and this is a rather obvious example of what Delia Chiaro pointedly affirms in the opening lines of her introduction to this volume:

> Verbal humour travels badly. As it crosses geographic boundaries humour has to come to terms with linguistic and cultural elements which are often only typical of the source culture from which it was produced thereby losing its power to amuse in the new location.

More examples would only confirm this somewhat disheartening, opening remark. Even so, it must be kept in mind that *Ulysses* has been

translated in at least 53 different languages, and more translations are under way.

2. The Winking Word vs the Punning Word

In one of the first book-length studies on Joyce's language, Leo Knuth (1976) called Joyce's strategy of addressing the reader, 'the wink of the word', a phrase that has remained, for us, one of the best descriptions of the instability, the semantic oscillation, the blend of different terms, and the creative power of Joyce's word. The winking word allures the reader into an amusing hide-and-seek game, establishing an atmosphere of complicity between the reader and the text that will reward the reader's effort of trying to understand the multi-semantic power of Joyce's use of language. The subtitle of Knuth's book, in fact, reads, *A Study in James Joyce's Phatic Communication*.[4] In his introduction, Knuth claims that *Finnegans Wake* 'might be described as the apotheosis of the pun' (1976: 15). However, Fritz Senn's provocative statement that 'there are no puns in Joyce' (Senn 1999: 69) comes to mind. What Senn means of course is that, at least as far as *Finnegans Wake* is concerned, labelling every lexeme as a pun equals denying any art to Joyce's last book. A 'big joke' will never be a masterpiece of literature. Redfern (1984: 166) in fact, considers *Finnegans Wake* 'a work of literary and linguistic Stakanovism', and asks:

> Is it Joyce, or the pun, that makes pedants of us all? [. . .] What is clear is that Joyce sought to fabricate a synthetic language expressing in puns and approximations countless similarities transcending language barriers: an international echolalia. (Redfern 1984: 167)

If Redfern is right, as we think he is, the apparently paradoxical remark by Giorgio Melchiori – that because *FW* in the original looks foreign to its reader, its translation is easier than it seems – makes more sense than it would appear at first.[5]

Going back to *Ulysses*, Senn remarks that if one were to underline all the puns in one of its episodes:

> Where would one find passages that are not latently ambiguous or full of stray secondary vibrations? The implication is, and Joyce seems to have felt it so, that if ever anything is unambiguous in language, this would be the exception, not the norm. (Senn 1999: 71)

According to Ellmann:

> the pun is Joyce's stock in trade [. . .] Puns are of different kinds and their effects are also various, so that they make us laugh or wince [. . .] conjure up lofty associations or vulgar ones. Words are expatriated and repatriated like Dubliners [. . .] The pun, verbal emblem of coincidence [. . .] makes all the quirky particles of the world stick to each other by hook or by crook. (1977: 90–5)

In a chapter called 'The Poetics of the Pun', Umberto Eco defines *pun* as 'a sort of pseudo-paronomasia which constitutes a forced embedding of two or more words. *Sang* + *sans* + *glorians* + *sanglot* + *riant* give "sanglorians".'[6] (Eco 1982: 65).

It is clear that Eco makes no distinction between the umbrella term 'pun' and a subcategory like 'portmanteau' or 'mot-valise'. From among the various examples that he gives of varying kinds of paronomasia in *FW*, we would like to quote, 'Jungfraud's Messonge-book' (*FW* 460. 20–21), a phrase that concentrates all the diffidence that Joyce had towards psychoanalysis, despite (or because of?) the fact that Jung was one of the doctors who tried to cure Joyce's daughter, Lucia, who was affected by schizophrenia and died in a mental hospital near London. As Eco says:

> There is no phonic similarity between the vehicles 'Freud' and 'Jung', but there is a cultural parenthood between the theories of the two authors. Thus the authors become the metonymical substitute for their own theories and vice versa. These similarities are organized by our culture into the same semantic field – one concerning the study of dreams. [. . .] Joyce looks for a possible phonic link and finds the German word 'jungfrau' into which Freud and Jung can be embedded as 'junfraud' [. . .] As a final result, we face a word which imposes upon us the recognition of a similarity between psychoanalysis, oneiric processes, youth, fraud, virgin. Since the pun is contextually associated with 'messonge', message + songe + mensonge (message + dream + lie), the potential short circuit between the two puns 'junfraud' and 'messonge' suggests a cluster of ideas concerning various relationships between the theory of dreams, sex, messages sent by the unconscious, the capacity of these messages to lie through a disguising virginal naiveté, etc. (Eco 1982: 68–9)

It seems that Eco's brilliant discussion concerns what other authors call portmanteau words, among them Derek Attridge who dedicates a whole

chapter of his *Peculiar Language* to 'Unpacking the Portmanteau: or, Who is Afraid of *Finnegans Wake*?' (1988: 188–209). His very interesting discussion of 'The pleasures of the pun' (188–95), and of 'The power of the portmanteau', offers some interesting suggestions as to how to approach the pun and its subcategories, like the portmanteau. As he says:

> [T]he pun turns out to be not an aberration of language but a direct reflection of its 'normal' working. I have suggested two approaches to the pun, both of which reveal it as a product of language's necessary mode of operation: as one signifier with two possible signifieds, which in a particular context are simultaneously activated, and as two identical signifiers, which in a particular context are made to coalesce. Each approach associates the pun with a feature especially characteristic of literary language. The first is polysemy, the second the semantic use of purely formal similarities, and the pun combines these features in a way that heightens the power of both. (Attridge 1988: 193–4)[7]

The question is more complicated than described in the above quotation. Clearly any attempt to make a taxonomy of Joyce's use of the pun is bound to fail, given the range of the different shades of humorous distortions of 'the laughing word'. We have cited some of the most prominent scholars in Joyce studies in order to give the reader an idea of the discussions that have developed over the years. In most recent studies the words 'pun' and 'punning' rarely appear. It is as if Senn's warning about critics' abuse of the word 'pun' has been successful:

> My contention is humbly that we might get something in clarity if not *every* instance of ambiguity, overlay, coincidence, double talk, convergence, historical flutter, interference, every semantic ripple or ghostly configuration etc. etc. were uniformly lumped together. Perhaps Joyce anticipated my point in *Ulysses* where only three instances of 'pun' occur, of which only one, almost, in a more precise sense: 'Chamber music could make a kind of pun on that'. (*U* 11.997) (Senn 1999:73–4)

We agree with Senn about the use of an umbrella word good for any kind of humorous linguistic manipulation, because it actually does not add anything to our understanding and/or enjoyment of *Ulysses* or *Finnegans Wake*.[8] What should be clear by now is that Joyce's *vis comica* takes on a number of nuances in his different works, as we will try to illustrate in the following section.

3. Lots of Fun at the 'Funferal'[9]

In one of the most humorous episodes of *Ulysses*, and not by chance in 'Hades', Mr Bloom goes to the cemetery for the burial of his friend Dignam. As a Jew, he feels isolated and at times humiliated by his fellow citizens at the funeral, mostly all Catholics, and he begins to entertain himself with some reflections on the absurdities of the Catholic religion and of its liturgical practices, and of course the possibilities to play with words and names. And so we have Bloom trying to remember the name of the priest who is going to celebrate the mass at Mr Dignam's funeral: 'Father Coffey. I knew that his name was like a coffin' (*U* 6.95).

This line is not particularly witty but it creates clear problems for translators. Both of the Italian translators do not succeed in rendering the wordplay. De Angelis's literal, word for word translation, creates a nonsensical sentence: '*Padre Coffey. Sapevo che il nome era qualcosa come bara*' (Joyce/De Angelis 1988: 103); and so does Flecchia, although she 'translates' the priest's name into Italian with an even worse result: '*Padre Coffano. Sapevo che il nome suonava un po' come bara*' (Joyce/Flecchia 1995: 82). The French translation '*Le père Serqueux. Je savais qu'il y avait du cerqueil dans son nom*' (Joyce/Morel [1929] 1981: 153) successfully replaces the original pun with a new one, and so do the Spanish and the Catalan ones: '*El Padre Coffey. Sabìa che se llamaba algo asì como café*' (Joyce/Tortosa 2004: 118), '*El P. Tauty. Ja sabia che tenea un nom com de taüt'* (Joyce/Mallafrè 1982: 109).

These examples show that it is possible in translation to carry over the 'laughing word', but not every translator or reader can share Joyce's sense of humour. The translator can successfully trade puns, but the pun in translation is not always equal to the translated pun, as in the above where in the original, there is a resonance amongst the terms, 'funeral', the presiding priest named 'Coffey', and his name which sounds like 'coffin', which the translated puns don't capture. But then, there were some readers who even in the original, did not appreciate what should have been Joyce's humour. Henry Miller had a very critical view of the humour that pervades most of the pages of *Ulysses*:

> Humor? Hardly. A reflexive muscular twitch, rather – more gruesome than mirth-provoking. A sort of Onanistic laughter [. . .] . In those marvelous passages where Joyce marries his rich excretory images to his sad mirth there is a poignant, wistful undercurrent which smells of reverence and idolatry. Reminiscent, too reminiscent, of those devout medieval louts who kneeled before the Pope to be anointed with dung. (Miller 1961: 130–1 qt. in Ibarguen 1989 online)

Our hypothesis is that the translators who share Miller's view above, or even unconsciously have a Victorian we-are-not-amused attitude towards Joyce's texts, have fewer chances of being successful in conveying Joyce's humour and, more specifically, his puns. And this, of course, applies also to those readers, whether Anglophone or not, who have a different sense of humour and/or come from cultures in which laughter is triggered by different devices.

One of the most humorous passages in 'Hades', and perhaps in all of *Ulysses* is the following:

> Mr Kernan said with solemnity:
>
> — *I am the resurrection and the life.* That touches a man's inmost heart.
>
> — It does, Mr Bloom said.
>
> Your heart perhaps but what price the fellow in the six feet by two with his toes to the daisies? No touching that. Seat of the affections. Broken heart. A pump after all, pumping thousands of gallons of blood every day. One fine day it gets bunged up: and there you are. Lots of them lying around here: lungs, hearts, livers. Old rusty pumps: damn the thing else. The resurrection and the life. Once you are dead you are dead. That last day idea. Knocking them all up out of their graves. Come forth, Lazarus! And he came fifth and lost the job. Get up! Last day! Then every fellow mousing around for his liver and his lights and the rest of his traps. Find damn all of himself that morning. (*U* 6.669–81)

The first lines reporting the dialogue between Mr. Kernan and Mr Bloom are tinged with irony.[10] The narrator seems to be patronisingly smiling at Mr Kernan's stereotypical comment on the Catholic creed, and that smile becomes somewhat sardonic when the irony of Bloom's answer emerges from the interior monologue that follows. Bloom's lay reflections about the heart ('A pump after all'), and all the connected clichés get increasingly humorous: there's no pun at the beginning of the interior monologue, so what we would like to call the 'contextual humour' of the passage should not create any problems for translators. But the line 'Come forth, Lazarus! And he came fifth and lost the job', is rather tricky. A translator not only has to find some kind of equivalent between the homophones 'forth' and 'fourth', but how can the culture-bound bitter irony of 'lost the job' be rendered? The remark quite clearly plays on the endemic problem of Irish unemployment at the beginning of the twentieth century, and on the moralistic attitude about the supposed 'lazyness' of the unemployed.

If we look at some translations we find that the Italian one by De Angelis creates another joke that may trigger at least a smile: *Sorgi Lazzaro e cammina. E lui invece fermo,* 'Rise and walk, Lazarus. He didn't move' (Joyce/De Angelis 1988: 105). Flecchia's rendering is literal and doesn't make sense. For the first half of the joke she adopts de Angelis's wording, but then she translates more or less literally the second part: *Sorgi e cammina, Lazzaro! Lui arrivò quinto e perse il lavoro.* A back translation would give 'Rise and walk, Lazarus. He came fifth and lost the job' (Joyce/Flecchia 1995: 84). There is no explanation for changing 'fourth' into 'fifth', but also Morel does the same: *Lazare, lève-toi et sors! Et il arriva cinquième et perdit la partie* (Joyce/Morel [1929] 1981: 157). Flecchia might have been inspired by Morel, but while the French version might have made a weak attempt at recreating a joke (in a game for four people, he who comes fifth will lose the game), the Italian 'imitation' is simply nonsensical. As to Mallafré's translation *Llàtzer, surt a fora. I a la taula del Bernat qui no hi és no hi és comptat* (i.e. who is there is there, who is not there is not there), the Catalan translator creates a rather complicated network of funny allusions, by introducing a reference to the order of Saint Bernat, a very strict religious order, whose rules impose absolute punctuality. Those who are late for a meal, are forced to fast. Moreover the 'taula of Bernat' echoes the symbol of Catalan spirituality, that is, a rock called 'Cavall Bernat' in the natural Park of Montserrat. This rock, whose name is connected to the vulgar expression *carall trempat* (meaning an erect penis) is shaped like a very clear phallic symbol.

As to contextual humour, there are comic situations that are not difficult to translate into another language, nor into another (Western) culture. For example, in 'Cyclops', when the Citizen throws a tin of biscuits at Bloom, the readers cannot help but smile when they realize that what the anti-Semitic citizen threw was a box of *Jacob's* biscuits (*U* 12. 496 and 1812ff. See also Knuth 1976: 21).

Going back to puns, no doubt they travel badly, but according to the general disparaging attitude to their excessive use in literary discourse, poor translation of paronomasia should not be considered a great loss. However, as we have seen above and as Patrick Parrinder confirms, they are an essential feature of Joyce's humour:

> The pun is a universally despised linguistic device, and yet the process of punning and portmanteau word-creation is astonishingly fecund in his hands. [. . .] 'You can't make an omlette without breaking eggs' (a political proverb which is found in the Wake, and whose significance

> was not lost on Joyce). A pun is a sort of scrambled egg or word-omlette. (Parrinder 1984: 233)

The metaphor of a word-omlette is quite appealing. It vividly reminds us of the instability of Joyce's word, and of the impossibility of putting an egg together again after breaking it. The translator's task can be quite similar to the nursery rhyme refrain of Humpty Dumpty. The Carrollian allusions to Humpty Dumpty that populate *FW* make such a metaphor even stronger. By breaking the language norms, Joyce disorientates the reader in a way that can be compared to Alice's comment on *Jabberwocky*: 'Somehow it seems to fill my head with ideas – only I don't exactly know what they are'. (Carroll 1960: 197)

This certainly applies to the experience of reading *FW*. What follows shows what a fine critic like Robert Polhemus can make out of four words, or should we say, four laughing words, from *FW*.

In *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce parodies the Holy Trinity by inventing the wonderful expressive Carrollian trinity: 'Dodgfather, Dodgson & Coo'. This phrase gets at the essential blasphemy that Carroll wrote:

> [. . .] and it illuminates and identifies the means and ends of his comic faith in *Through the Looking Glass*. Even the order of the syllables sums up the process of Carroll's creative regression: it suggests the drive to escape from the burdens of the father and God, from the fixed single self, from filial responsibility and manliness, and the movement to incorporate the voice of the child in himself with the holy spirit, which ends by discovering God, self, and freedom in comic wordplay. (Polhemus 1980: 247)

So, according to Polhemus, Charles Dodgson (aka Lewis Carroll), embodies the 'comic faith' that he sees well represented also in the works by Jane Austen and James Joyce, among others.

The regression Polhemus mentions brings us back to the reflections on the pun we discussed in the first part of this chapter: its untranslatability and its destabilizing force. As a matter of fact the pun as such, like a fault line, runs beneath and through Joyce's discourse, ready, with one twitch, or slip between a signifier and what seemed to be its only signified, to destabilize and challenge any attempt to raise a stable, reasonable, adult male, textual edifice. At least that is the challenge the pun poses according to Chiara Mucci's article, 'In Praise of Punning, or Poetic Language' (1996). Punning is 'threatening for the male' (245), and in its femaleness,

its infantile behaviour, it points to how 'language possesses an inner instability which is laid bare by the ambiguity and "fluidity" of word-playing and punning' (245). But since puns are so language-culture specific, and therefore difficult to translate, one can understand how it is that translators might avoid them, with the result, however, that the pun's destabilizing power is neutralized, just as is that of the text in general. With translation, which often leads to no translation of puns as such, these words cease to laugh, as it were.

By way of a conclusion, we would like to mention a conversation with Seamus Heaney (see also Bollettieri Bosinelli 2008: 66) who, during a meeting with our students of the University of Bologna,[11] quoted Joyce as the predecessor who had solved the dilemma that every Irish writer has to face: whether to use Irish ('my country tongue', said Heaney) or English ('my mother tongue'). Joyce opened the way for Irish writers to use their mother tongue, English, but in their own personal, 'Irished' way. A translator himself, Seamus Heaney talked at length about the pleasure of translating and of 'writing as translation' and pointed out that the very word 'translation' carries the meaning of '*trance*lation', a visionary, creative dimension that inevitably belongs to the process of *trans*lation.

The few examples mentioned earlier are aimed at showing how Joyce succeeds in involving his readers, and even more his translators in a trance-like adventure; but just as in a trance, where some images and thoughts can be blurred, in translations, clear-cut, undebatable solutions are not always found. In any case, as we have tried to argue, Joyce's word, whether 'translated' (as in interlinguistic translation), or 'translating' (as in the manipulation of conventional English), mischievously subverts, and like the proverbial banana peel is always ready to slip out from beneath the foot of the too confident reader – to present then to the world that tragic-humorus, oh-so-'punny' spectacle of 'man falling', or rather, 'the fall of man'.

Notes

[1] Bollettieri also calls this aspect of Joyce's writing strategy 'the trans-creation' of the word, that is, the use of language as translation and transcreation (Bollettieri Bosinelli 2008). The discussion about the word 'greenhouse' that follows is based on her article.

[2] James Joyce's *Ulysses* was published in 1922. In 1984, on the occasion of the centenary of Joyce's birth, a completely revised and corrected edition was published by Garland Publishing Inc. in 3 volumes, as *Ulysses. A Critical and Synoptic Edition*, edited by Hans Walter Gabler, in collaboration with Wolfhard Steppe and Claus Melchior. The edition referred to in this chapter is Joyce 1986, which is based on Garland 1984. Quotations indicate chapter number, followed by line(s) number(s)

[3] 'His eyes sought answer from the river and saw a rowboat rock at anchor on the treacly swells lazily its plastered board' (*U*88–9).

[4] 'Phatic communication' alludes to the work of the anthropologist Bronislav Malinowsky, 1949.

[5] In his introduction to the first volume of *FW* translated into Italian by Luigi Schenoni, Melchiori remarks 'The translator is aware of the reductive nature of his work, and that he or she is able to render but a small portion of the innumerable semantic valences of the language of *Finnegans Wake* [. . .] but nonetheless, the translator is able to make the reader aware of the richness of a text which [. . .] in the original is incredibly elusive, and constantly subverting any reading which would be "totalizing." Paradoxically, it is precisely because even the anglophone reader is able to grasp but only a fraction of the text's semantic value that one could argue that *Finnegans Wake* is more "translatable" than Shakespeare or Dickens' (1982: LI).

[6] The word appears on the second page of *Finnegans Wake*. All the quotations from this book are indicated by the initials *FW*, followed by page and line number. As a matter of fact, all the editions of *FW* have had the same pagination since it was first published in 1939. Thus 'sanglorians' (*FW* 04.7) means that the word can be found on page four, line seven of any edition.

[7] It seems to us that the aim of Attridge's argument is to persuade the critics of Joyce's last book that rather than the trivialization of the pun, *Finnegans Wake* exploits the potential of language to the full, and it does so by using the portmanteau word in all its possible combinations and creative distortions.

[8] Humour, and funny remarks appear in all of Joyce's works, but in this chapter we will concentrate mainly on *Ulysses*, with only some occasional references to *Finnegans Wake*.

[9] The word is jokingly used in *Finnegans Wake* (*FW* 120.10). The title itself refers to a well known Irish ballad that tells the story of a hod carrier, who fell from a ladder and apparently died. At his wake someone lets a drop of whiskey fall on his lips, and suddenly Mr. Finnegan wakes up and joins the revelries at his funeral. The ballad refrain is 'Lots of fun at Finnegan's wake'.

[10] For an extensive treatment of irony in *Ulysses*, see Wright 1991

[11] University of Bologna at Forlì, 13 June 2008.

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Chapter 9

Translating *Humphry Clinker*'s Verbal Humour

Marta Mateo

Even though, from the late 1980s onwards, we have witnessed the publication of special issues devoted to the translation of humour in journals from both translation studies and humour studies (*Contrastes* 1986, *Humor* 18:2, *Meta* 34:1, *The Translator* 2:2 and 8:2),[1] and a few doctoral dissertations have analysed the transplantation of different types/aspects of humour into another language and culture (e.g. Delabastita 1993; Mateo 1995b), the relationship between humour and translation remains very much the subject of isolated papers and, as has been rightly pointed out by some (Vandaele 2001; Chiaro 2005), there is still a strong need for closer collaboration between these two disciplines. The present volume on *Translation, Humour and Literature* may therefore contribute to a deeper understanding of the way in which the mechanism of humour goes across cultural borders and how translation affects a humorous perlocutionary effect of a source text.

This chapter will focus on verbal humour and how its specificity bears on translation choices but, rather than 'simply stopping short at descriptive aspects of translation proper' (Chiaro 2005: 141),[2] it will ultimately try to show that research from translation studies and humour studies can be of use not just to the translation scholar but also to the translator, that is, not only for the analysis and understanding of *translated* humour but for the actual process of *translating* it.

1. Analysing (Verbal) Humour

An overview of **wordplay** or **Verbally Expressed Humour** (Chiaro 2005) – which are terms covering the humorous devices in *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* better than the more restrictive **pun** – is first called for before we illustrate it with this novel by Tobias Smollett and study its translation into Spanish.

In 1776, the Scottish philosopher James Beattie already observed that laughter arose 'from the view of two or more inconsistent, unsuitable or incongruous parts or circumstances, considered as united in one complex object or assemblage' (in Purdie 1993: 42). **Incongruity** is regarded, today too, as one of the essential conditions for humour in general – albeit not the only one. Whether we term it **bisociation** like Koestler (Norrick 1986: 226; Perlmutter 2002: 155) or follow Victor Raskin and Salvatore Attardo in their script-based theory of humour – interpreting incongruity as a contradiction of our **cognitive schemes** or **scripts**, that is, organized chunks of information, which we have internalized in order to cope with the world we live in (Asimakoulas 2004: 822–3; Vandaele 2002: 226–7) – there is general agreement that all types of humour involve some kind of contradiction between our expectations regarding linguistic, social, pragmatic or artistic behaviour and what actually occurs in the humorous text (**text** being understood here as a communicative event: any stretch of speech or writing – of language *in use* – which makes a coherent whole).

Linguistic incongruities violate, for instance, our expectation that at any given moment, one signifying element will represent only one signified, and they do so by resorting to equivocation, aberrant uses of language or to strict punning, which may be defined as 'a cluster of excessive and contradictory significations [. . .], which are all in some way valid, but cannot all be "properly" fitted at the same time to the signifying event' (Purdie 1993: 40) or as 'a projection of the paradigmatic onto the syntagmatic' (J. Sherzer in Chiaro 1992: 34). This excessive signification is in fact inherent to language use, so that verbal humour actually exploits features already present in 'normal' language, such as homophony, polysemy, homonymy and ambiguity. In addition, it usually also entails pragmatic incongruity, flagrantly violating Grice's Cooperative Principle, particularly his Maxims of Quality and of Manner, which may be summed up, respectively, as 'Try to make your contribution one that is true' and 'Be perspicuous' (Grice 1975 in Mateo 1995b: 130; see also Perlmutter 2002: 157; Vandaele 2002: 230–1). It is therefore difficult to establish a clear-cut distinction between the different types of incongruity, since it may also refer to the *way* in which something is said: a certain register may be conventional in a given situation/genre, or a certain tenor may be expected between two language-users, and these conventions may surprisingly not be followed by a particular writer/speaker. We can here speak of semiotic or pragmatic incongruity, which may generate – given the appropriate conditions – *verbal* humour.

But there seems to be more than the breach of pre-established cognitive schemes to the creation of humour. To start with, and paradoxically maybe,

some **logical thinking** is frequently necessary for the receiver to perceive the incongruity (Perlmutter 2002: 156). As Norrick puts it: 'Simply inappropriate and indeterminate utterances are more pathological than funny. Humor requires method in madness, sense in nonsense' (1986: 237).

Another very important factor which supplements the incongruity principle is that of **superiority**, 'the aggregate of social elements in humor dynamics' (Vandaele 2002: 239), since we frequently laugh because we feel superior to a butt in a joke, or because we experience a feeling of pride when we have managed to unravel the mystery behind a linguistic trap or have spotted an incongruity which others have overlooked or unconsciously provoked. However, as Vandaele (2002) studies in depth, we do not need to destroy a target in order to experience a sense of superiority – problem-solving can also generate this feeling – nor can superiority alone explain/create humour.

Another element playing a prominent role in the generation of humour is the **social signification** of the humorous text. First, we tend to laugh at what we have learnt to find funny – which does not imply that 'all structures funny for a given person in a given situation are necessarily just as funny, or even funny at all, for any other person – even from the same culture, group, family, [. . . so] we can never surely predict laughter in any individual case with any particular subject' (Norrick 1986: 228). Secondly, the appreciation of humour partly depends on the degree of inhibition the corresponding social group shows towards the object of comedy (Mateo 1995b: 171–2): a certain amount of inhibition is always necessary, but if this is too great in the social group, the humour centred on that object or theme will be rarer.

In a way, our critical faculties usually have to be inhibited to accept the joke (Perlmutter 2002) and we have to be somehow predisposed to laugh or smile. This is connected with two other contributors to humour: in Vandaele's terms, **good mood** and **cuing** (2002: 241). A cheerful mood places the hearer in the right circumstances to receive the communicative act as humorous – it is vital, for instance, that the situation in which incongruity is manifested should be perceived as non-threatening, and cuing indicates that the act must be interpreted as an instance of humour – since an incongruous event might provoke reactions other than laughter.

Therefore, 'objectively humorous' structures require certain social and subjective variables pertaining to the hearer/reader in order to actually be perceived as funny. Finally, we must also remember that an instance of verbal humour is mostly interesting in terms of its function in the text, rather than per se – which is particularly noticeable in literary texts.

These two aspects – **receiver** and **function** – closely determine the perception of humour and will inevitably be of relevance to its translation too, as will be seen in the following sections of this chapter, devoted to English *verbal* humour and its translation into Spanish.

2. Verbal Humour in *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*

The text selected here to illustrate the translation of verbal humour is Smollett's last novel, which has had a mixed reception since it was first published in 1771 with unusual publicity for the time, enjoying impressive popularity until Victorian times when the author's reputation declined.[3] Nevertheless, it has also often been regarded 'as the most successful epistolary novel in English' (Knapp 1984: vii) and undoubtedly as the author's masterpiece.

It is composed of 82 letters written by a family from Wales: a bachelor landowner, Matthew Bramble, his unmarried sister Tabitha, his nephew and niece and an almost illiterate lady's maid, Winifred Jenkins. They write to various addressees in England and Wales, gossiping about each other and describing their travelling adventures in their tour throughout England and Scotland. The different letter-writers afford Smollett a narrative device, allowing him to describe the episodes from different standpoints so that the reader gets a multiple point of view of the major and minor plots in the book, the characters' responses to them and their personal problems and thoughts. Although some critics believe Smollett did not exploit the possibilities of this technique thoroughly (Ross 1967: 12), it did mean an innovative alteration of the epistolary form used by Richardson, who had initiated the vogue of this genre and had centred his widely acclaimed novels, *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, on one letter-writer.

Smollett's multiple correspondents also provided him with a very good means of characterization since the letters reflect the various characters' idiolects, feelings and personalities rather vividly. As a *declassé*, the Scottish writer had become an external observer of many different classes, from which he collected the necessary material to exploit that gift for narration and description in which he excelled. These fictional personal documents are also a good humour mechanism, through which the writer vents his satire on the political and social situation of the time. Set in the background of the decades between 1750 and 1770 – a time of important changes in the sciences, industry, commerce, as well as in religion, philosophy and the arts (Knapp 1984) – the novel provides us with very accurate and vivid

descriptions of well-known urban and rural places (Bath, London, Edinburgh, the Scottish Highlands, . . .), as well as of contemporary social, economic and political history and celebrities (writers, politicians, actors, artists, doctors, etc.). With the geographical movement of its narrative, *Humphry Clinker* paints a social picture of what looks like a disunited country, the greatest split appearing between (the virtues of) rural life and (the corruption of) urban society.

Although some early reviewers deplored the lack of action in the novel, critics have, since then, variously praised its characterization, its realism, the variety in its prose and, most notably, its humour (Knapp 1984; Ross 1967). Smollett's social satire (on, for instance, the unhealthy conditions in Bath and London, on urban life, on poor food and drink, and on social and political corruption) is reminiscent of Jonathan Swift's (Hopkins 1969: 175) and is mostly conveyed through the central letter-writer, Matthew Bramble, regarded by some as the embodiment of Smollett himself. But *Humphry Clinker* has also been considered as 'perhaps the most grotesque work in all of eighteenth-century English literature' (Hopkins 1969: 170). The grotesque, echoing William Hogarth's caricature, is present in some farcical adventures, in the portrayal of certain characters, like Tabitha Bramble and her eventual fiancé Lieutenant Lismahago, and very particularly in the verbal distortions which are so conspicuous in the letters written by Tabitha and her maid Winifred, and one of the reasons why these letters have been chosen as the object of analysis here.

The other important reason is that the novel itself may be considered of great translational interest: *Humphry Clinker* is undoubtedly a widely read eighteenth-century novel, in view of the fact that during the six decades after its publication it was translated into Danish, Dutch, French, German and Russian, and that it has seen many editions in English-speaking countries and some retranslations (Knapp 1984: x, xiii). Curiously though, it has not been translated into Spanish yet. So we may approach the study of its cross-cultural transfer from the standpoint of a prospective translator of the novel, without any 'interference', so to speak, from a previous translator's strategies. Moreover, the translation of such a novel into twenty-first-century Spanish – or any other language, for that matter – will have to deal with the differences between English and Spanish stylistic conventions of letter-writing; with the fact that one is dealing with different diachronic variants of each language; and with the divergence between the characters' idiolects and sociolects, which not only contribute significantly to their characterization but, equally importantly, to the humour in the novel, mostly in the case of Winifred's and Tabitha's letters, whose verbal humour

makes them particularly interesting – and challenging – for the translator and will be the focus of our attention here.

Let us now see how the humour-generating parameters mentioned in section 1 may help us analyse the verbally expressed humour in these letters (16 altogether: 6 by Tabitha and 10 by Winifred, whom Smollett significantly gave more letters than her lady and nearly as many as her lady's niece, who got 11).

2.1 Incongruity

The incongruity on which all humour is largely based is here manifested through the extraordinary verbal distortions characterizing Tabitha's and Winifred's writing. Both misuse, mispronounce and misspell a great many words, and are prone to 'spontaneous' puns and malapropisms, that is, using learned words for which they are obviously not prepared – or cases of 'higher level coding falling back on lower level coding' (Bolinger 1968 in Chiaro 1992: 20). Apart from her dialectal syntax and vocabulary, and her strange, vulgar or eighteenth-century usages, Winifred's idiolect is also marked by a notorious tendency towards folk etymology. One example from each character will illustrate all this:

> Give me leaf to tell you, methinks you mought employ your talons better, than to encourage servants to pillage their masters – I find by Gwyllim, that Villiams has got my skin; for which he is an impotent rascal. He has not only got my skin, but, moreover, my butter-milk to fatten his pigs; and, I suppose, the next thing he gets, will be my pad to carry his daughter to church and fair: Roger gets this, Roger gets than; but I'd have you to know, I won't be rogered at this rate by any ragmatical fellow in the kingdom – And I am surprised, docter Lews, you would offer to put my affairs in composition with the refuge and skim of the hearth. (Tabitha Bramble, 19 May)

> Providinch hath bin pleased to make great halteration in the pasture of our affairs. –We were yesterday three kiple chined, by the grease of God, in the holy bands of mattermoney, and I now subscrive myself Loyd at your sarvice. –All the parish allowed that young 'squire Dallison and his bride was a comely pear for to see. –As for madam Lashmiheygo, you nose her picklearities– her head, to be sure, was fintastical; and her spouse had rapt her with a long marokin furze cloak from the land of the selvidges, thof they say it is of immense bally. (Winifred Jenkins, 20 November)

Two types of incongruity can be observed: first, the obvious distortion of normal language. Smollett's verbal tricks are intended as linguistic mistakes caused by pretentiousness and lack of expertise on the part of these two women, which characterize them and provoke laughter. These humorous 'lucky lapses' often originate in 'people whose conceptual reach slightly exceeds their linguistic grasp; who know well enough what they want to say, but through ignorance . . . or even through sheer pretentiousness, cannot quite manage to say it' (Nash 1985: 149). As Vandaele has studied, the so called 'subversive' nature of humour goes beyond an 'active' interpretation of 'not-following a rule', since this may also be 'passive' and be due to 'stupidity', 'ridiculousness' and, in the case of our two women, to some snobbery too (2002: 227). In addition, incongruity is also manifested in the mismatch between what the reader expects from two letter-writers who seem to know words like *circumflexion*, *reverence*, *admonition*, *creditable*, *concurrence* . . . and the types of mistakes they make – including misusing those words. Besides, in Tabitha's case, her spelling mistakes and mis-pronunciations do not fit in with what we might expect from somebody of her social class, and what makes it even funnier is the fact that she writes to an inferior, the house-keeper of their mansion in Wales. In Winifred's case, we probably do not expect her acquaintance with some of the words she mangles to create her famous folk etymologies. Both women are clear examples of the fact that, as Purdie rightly observes (1993: 104), comic characters are always involved not just with a social but also with a discursive transgression.

2.2 Logical thinking

However distorting the language used in these letters, which makes them absurd and farcical, the reader can see the logic behind them and follow the thread of the characters' adventures, requests, commands, confessions and expressions of feelings. Even for the *grotesque* type of humour which characterizes these epistles, 'the distortion must not proceed to the point of pure senselessness' (L. B. Jennings 1963 in Hopkins 1969: 167) and the observer's reaction, which is a mixture of 'amusement, contempt, and astonishment' (ibid.), must also be accompanied by understanding. The incongruity found in these letters' reversal of social, linguistic and stylistic expectations does not really require the reader to take a very long path of logical reasoning (something which observers *must* do in other types of humour). Admittedly, some of the 'correct' or standard uses/pronunciations/meanings which would correspond to the characters' words and some of

the terms mangled by Win's folk etymologies are difficult to unravel and require great imagination – even some phonetic knowledge – on the part of the reader, certainly of the translator; and sometimes the reader is also expected to suspend his or her inferential reasoning, or critical assessment at least (see Perlmutter 2002: 159), in order to accept the excessiveness of verbal distortion or to judge some of the errors – at times a little contrived – plausible. But this is also part of the humorous game and even though the reader may sometimes decide to give up on some 'hidden' meaning, the incongruity is always perceived and the logic never destroyed.

2.3 Superiority

Different types of superiority feelings may be described in the generation of humour from the reading of these letters: the observer will feel proud at spotting the mistakes, and particularly at discovering the type of distortion – the reason for the linguistic error (wrong pronunciation? misspelling? inappropriate usage?) – thus being able to unravel the intended meaning (*problem-solving*). That feeling will be enhanced in the 'spontaneous' puns and equivocations sometimes produced by the characters, as the solution leaves us with two possible meanings unintended by the letter-writers. This is related to another type of superiority: we actually laugh more at the characters than at their mistakes; these are unintended by the women but intended by the writer and in fact directed to us, so they help us establish a pleasurable intimacy with him.

Moreover, the pretended 'seriousness' with which the two women use their language and the fact that they themselves seem to feel superior to their addressees create an ironic situation in which we are the privileged observers, 'in complicity with' the writer at the expense of the characters (see Mateo 1995a, 1995b: 55–67), who are *victims* of 'their own' ignorance and pretentiousness. This increases the humour of the verbal distortions, which are thus funny in themselves and as contributors to the ironic game. However, at the same time as the mistakes invite us to disown their originators, in a way we also grant them some of the power or admiration they seem to claim for themselves, or else we would not find them comical. 'Laughing at someone involves our constructing them as discursively powerful, and then denying them that construction' (Purdie 1993: 64). To understand this paradox, we must remember that a constant victim will not be found funny in comic texts 'unless s/he is also constantly resilient' (Purdie 1993: 65). And both Tabitha and Win Jenkins show remarkable resilience. In fact, Smollett gave the latter the honour to close the novel

with one of her letters, which we may interpret not just as part of the irony pervading the whole novel but as a sign of the power or admiration these two characters deserve and which is also essential for them to be humorous.

We must, however, consider the possibility of the reader's not perceiving the joke, that is, his or her not spotting (some of) the distortions, their intended meaning or their humorous purpose. As Chiaro puts it, three systems interact to develop the competence required to appreciate humour: 'linguistic, sociocultural and "poetic"' (1992: 13). If the reader lacks the knowledge the humorist assumes the receiver of the joke will have or if s/he has not got the ability to recognize the way in which language has been manipulated/exploited to create a humorous effect, then the feeling of superiority underlying that effect will not be experienced. In *Humphry Clinker*'s case, the risk lies, in my view, in the reader feeling unable to decode the real sense behind some of Winifred's and Tabitha's weird usages, rather than in not perceiving them or their pragmatic function. This might hinder the understanding of these texts and consequently reduce the feeling of superiority and the full enjoyment of their comedy. On the other hand, as mentioned in section 2.2, this may be compensated for by the reader's feeling it is part of the humorous game.

2.4 Social signification

What Vandaele calls **institutionalized humour** (2002: 241–4) has a twofold manifestation here:

- first, the presence of themes conventionally considered funny – at least in Western societies – such as scatology, sex and religion: Win's folk etymologies and Tabitha's spelling mistakes and unintended equivocations frequently touch on the scatological or the sexual, and the significant number of religious metaphors, both serious and humorous, in *Humphry Clinker* and the demon imagery as an integral part of its grotesque have been the subject of some studies (Jeffrey 1975; Hopkins 1969). Additionally, linguistic mistakes can also be said to have something of the funny in them, socially speaking.
- secondly, there is 'internal' institutionalization, in the familiarity created by the recurrent types of distortion as the letters from these two women develop throughout the novel. The reader gets more and more acquainted with their misuse of language so that, after the initial puzzlement, he or she gradually expects to laugh whenever one of these epistles comes up. Although incongruity is still present as a humour

generator in each new distortion, at text level – that is, considering each letter as a whole, and the letters from each character altogether – we may affirm, borrowing Vandaele's words, that '[t]he inference "incongruity → humour" has been replaced by "normality → humour"' (2002: 244).

2.5 Good mood

Despite the social satire and the pessimism that particularly Matthew Bramble's letters display, those two elements are placed in a comic setting and accompanied by a cheerful mood which may be perceived throughout the book. This, together with the liveliness of most of the letters in the novel (certainly of Tabitha's and Winifred's) and the 'rollicking high spirits' (W. Notestein in Hopkins 1969: 168) which characterize the Scottish tradition of humour that, according to Hopkins, Smollett was working in (ibid.), somehow add a brighter note to the pessimism.

Even if, with Hopkins (1969: 177), we take its happy ending as ironic, the relaxed tone of the novel will hopefully create the good mood which is necessary on the part of the reader too, in order for the comedy to be appreciated. Humour is, in many ways, 'in the mind of the hearer' (Perlmutter 2002: 156), and a positive attitude and not too much involvement are required for an incongruity to be interpreted as an instance of humour rather than in a negative way. The reactions produced by violating what Hickey (1999) calls the Appropriateness Principle, which is what those female correspondents in *Humphry Clinker* constantly do in their letters, may be placed on a scale running from indignation to amusement, through puzzlement, and the exact response partly seems to depend on 'the onlookers' personal interest in the event: the more personally involved they are, the more close will their reaction be to indignation; the less involved, the more likely they are to be merely amused' (Hickey 1999: 15). Smollett's somewhat detached observation may contribute to the 'right' attitude in this sense. This relates back to the adequate degree of inhibition mentioned in section 1 regarding the *social signification* of humour, and to the manifestation of this parameter as *internal institutionalization* (see section 2.4): the letters benefit from 'a self-reinforcing process: earlier humor creates the good mood for what ensues' (Vandaele 2002: 241).

2.6 Cuing

Just as a clown's ineptitudes constitute both the setting for his burlesque and the acknowledgement that it *is* a burlesque (Nash 1985: 85), the

excessiveness of Tabitha's and Winifred's verbal distortions also functions as the reader's cue to interpret them as instances of humour. The comic exaggeration and the fact that we have to pay unusual attention to the language in the letters are indicators of Smollett's joking intention in them. For its part, the context will aid the interpretation of the real sense behind the distortions.

Cuing is important in these letters for the reader to respond to these women's misuse of language with amusement, which s/he will only do if s/he can spot the distortions and perceive their meaning and/or function. Nevertheless, however much the writer may help the reader reach the required level of intellectualization (see section 2.2) and the 'right' mood, it is ultimately – as said above – the latter's receptiveness that will make a text humorous (Perlmutter 2002: 167). Cuing can only maximize that possibility. Moreover, it is possible to recognize a humorous intention in something and yet not find it funny or, conversely, we may be moved to laughter by something which was not offered as a joke (Purdie 1993: 12–13, 44). The subtlety of the humorous process involves culture-specific conventions regulating what people take as funny, or ridiculous, or simply odd. These will have as much bearing on reader response as the new means at our disposal for signalling Smollett's intention when it comes to conveying his humour to a *target* reader.

2.7 Function/text

The verbal distortions in the texts we are analysing not only function as humour generators but also as effective means of characterization and of enlivening the novel. Apart from that, some of Tabitha's and Winifred's misspellings and wrong usages are not funny in themselves – although many of them are – but only when considered as part of the whole text: it is the letters that become humorous as a whole through these linguistic devices, which is something that may be of invaluable help to a translator of the novel. As Nash observes about a passage by Evelyn Waugh, '[t]he humorous impact [. . .] does not depend on the locative strength of single words' (Nash 1985: 23); it is the accummulative effect of the distortions, and the different types of distortions, that create the humour in these letters. The phrase coined by Nash to describe textual humour – '*diverse elements wrought together in a scrupulous design*' (1985: 25) – seems quite appropriate here.

The functions of wordplay in these letters and of these texts in the novel, as well as the impact of each instance of verbal humour, considered as an integral part of the letters rather than in isolation, will all form part of the various factors that will inevitably bear on the choices taken for

them by a translator of the novel, if his or her **skopos** is to transfer their perlocutionary effect. This will be studied in the following section.

3. Translating *Humphry Clinker*'s Verbal Humour

The translation of the verbal humour in Tabitha's and Winifred's letters is framed within that of the whole novel, so that the **local translation strategies** adopted for it will partly be governed by the **global strategy** we take for Smollett's romance. Considering the type of **source text** it is and the characteristics briefly outlined in section 2 earlier – a 'canonized' eighteenth-century English novel recounting a Welsh family's journey throughout parts of Britain, with comments on and allusions to the social, historical and political situation of the country – and after deciding on a **skopos** for our **target text** – for example, to fill a gap in the corpus of Spain's translations of English eighteenth-century literature and to offer a (probably learned) Spanish readership this first-hand and vivid account of the situation in Britain more than two centuries ago –, the most effective global strategy will probably be Venuti's (1995) **foreignizing** translation. On the other hand, the epistolary nature of the novel, composed of personal letters most of which sound very lively and true to life, may require some adaptation to target stylistic norms if we want them to also read naturally in Spanish. Punctuation is a case in point here, since the source letters follow English eighteenth-century conventions and are full of dashes and colons which would probably interfere with the Spanish receiver's fluent reading. Some **domestication** (Venuti 1995) seems to be called for then, if we prioritize the **text type** and the **tone** in the letters. One short digression is required here: I am certainly not implying that this is the only way to translate this novel; I am approaching its translation not from the standpoint of a translation scholar but from that of translator who has to take decisions and opt for the strategies which, in his or her view, will best fulfil the skopos established for the target text; this, and some other issues – like probably the question of punctuation – would have to be negotiated with the publishing house, the client. Apart from this, I am no doubt here following the **translation norms** (Toury 1995) governing literary translation in Spain today, particularly for literatures from 'major' cultures closer to us, for which translators tend to opt for foreignization regarding cultural references and content but lean more towards domestication as far as style is concerned.

What certainly interferes with a foreignizing strategy in this novel is the verbal humour in Tabitha's and Winifred's letters. More than in any other

type of humour, linguistic constraints – originating in the differences between the languages involved in the translation process – will loom large here.[5] The difficulties of translating English verbal humour (based on its own phonetics, morphology, spelling system, regional accents, social connotations attached to certain pronunciations, malapropisms, etc.) into Spanish (with its own linguistic resources and stylistic conventions) will be added to by the fact that one is translating an eighteenth-century English novel into twenty-first century Spanish.

The translational decisions concerning the humorous wordplay in *Humphry Clinker* will then depend on Spanish linguistic constraints, but also on the pragmatic factors mentioned above (norms, skopos, text-type) as well as on the function of verbal humour in the letters. If we decide to rank humour as a top priority in our decision-taking process, our translation will probably be best approached from its mechanism, rather than from the specificity of the humorous items, and with the awareness that the humour of an instance of wordplay in isolation is less relevant than its role in the women's letters.

We will particularly have to prioritize the effect that each of these instances, the different types of word play and, in fact, wordplay as such, will have on the **target reader** – in other words, not just the latter's understanding of individual cases but his or her receptiveness to wordplay as a means of characterization and humour. The cultural norms regarding the means used for humour vary from one community to another and so 'while in British society, verbal play tends to be ubiquitous' (Chiaro 1992: 122), this is not the case in Spanish culture. Nevertheless, Spanish readers would probably find the verbal distortions in the letters humorous and characteristic too, even though not all the *types* of distortion will be just as possible (or funny) – Spanish is, for instance, much less given to punning. The reader, whose closeness with the writer is vital for the perception of humour, will inevitably be present in our decisions.

Finally, the textual resources at our disposal will obviously also determine our final product: as opposed to what happens with, for instance, puns in comedies, where we may count on the *semiotic economy* of drama translation – where linguistic or cultural translation problems from the written text may be solved by resorting to non-verbal performance elements (see Mateo 1995b: 283; Mateo 1998) – we only have verbal means here. On the other hand, if we negotiate with our client the possibility of introducing footnotes in the edition of our target text, we may resort to this type of compensation for some of the linguistic constraints – although the immediacy required by humour perception, even in a novel, will be much impaired. The priorities and constraints of the translation process must

always be weighed up to decide on the solution that will best serve our purpose. Footnotes will give us comprehension rather than dynamism here but, considering our skopos and intended readership, a combination of this type of metalingual comment and other translation procedures will probably often be the best solution. This is, however, something that must be decided in each individual case.

Let us now see some possibilities of translation into Spanish for the verbal distortions generating humour in Tabitha's and Winifred's letters. An analysis of all the instances of verbal humour in these texts yields the following classification of the different types of features,[6] which will be useful[7] if we are to base our translation decisions on the *mechanism* and the *function* of each humorous item in the whole *text*, rather than on its specific *form*.

3.1 Spelling mistakes

This type of distortion is the most frequent in both characters' letters. At the same time, it is a type that highly reveals the formal specificity of each language, as it is usually by chance that a word susceptible to a spelling mistake will correspond to words in another language also prone to being misspelt. In addition, the types of spelling confusion will normally vary a great deal from one language to another – since it has to do with the relationship between the orthographic and the phonological systems of each language, which is specific to it.

Consequently, spelling mistakes highlight the need to approach their translation from their function in a text: that is, once we have decided that they may also contribute to humour in the target text, we will try to exploit the possibilities offered by the target language ignoring the form of the source-text mistake. Our **unit of translation** will necessarily be longer than the word in which the original slip occurs: **compensation of place**, that is, 'making a certain source-text item or feature appear in a different place in the translation in order to avoid loss of meaning, effect, function or intention' (Zabalbeascoa 2005: 193) is almost inevitable if we are to resort to this feature for our target-text's humour.

Here are some examples of these women's spelling mistakes:[8]

> *Tabitha*: cums [comes], bloo/blew [blue], litel [little], lacksitif [laxatif], huom [home], bear [beer], gardnir [gardener], sould [sold], pore anemil [poor animal], loose [lose], rites [writes], phinumenon, unsartain, puruss [porous], safe [save], owl [wool], patience [patients], porpuss

[purpose], yoosed [used], metamurphysis, creeter [creature], rummaticks [rheumatics], and so on.

Winifred: servints [servants], for sartain, tould, axident, laff [laugh], axed [asked], stomick [stomach], winegar, cuck [cook], bear [beer], rite [right/write], pyehouse [pious], disseyffer [decipher], voman [woman], grease [grace], harts [hearts], close [clothes], byebill [Bible], raisins [reasons], frite [fright], menchioned [mentioned], prusias sole [precious soul], parquisites [perquisites], murcy [mercy], forewood [foreward], a creesus [crisis], haven [heaven], and so on.

The possibilities of misspelling in Spanish are considerably smaller than in English due to the more 'phonetic' nature of its spelling system. We may exploit the commoner sources of confusion (*b/v*; *c/z*; *g/j*; *ge, gi/gue, gui*; *ll/y*; *h/no h*; word boundaries and accents) and some possible mispronunciations which may provoke spelling mistakes (e.g. **uateada* for *guateada* ['quilted']), and then create one whenever we have the opportunity. But we will have to weigh up the plausibility and effect of the frequency of mistakes as well as those of each mistake: for example, will *zielo* (for *cielo* ['heaven']) be a plausible mistake, even though *c/z* are often confused? The fact that this word is misspelt by Winifred should not be the only factor for us to decide on our target solution, as the spelling-pronunciation relationship is much more problematic in her language. Introducing a mistake for such a common word – not just in the language in general but considering the characters and the context – would probably tilt our text more towards the caricature. In any case, this (i.e. degree of *incongruity*, *logical thinking* and *cuing*) is something for the translator to gauge.

Some spelling distortions I may propose in Spanish (not necessarily corresponding to those quoted above from the source text) are:

Tabitha: reciva [reciba], lasante [laxante], ilar [hilar], denoche [de noche], vijile [vigile], empoyando [empollando], hemplear [emplear], Dogtor [Doctor], truán [truhán], almuadilla [almohadilla], cojerá [cogerá], aorrar [ahorrar], benebolencia [benevolencia], dirijimos [dirigimos], porqué [por qué], llebar [llevar], hallan [hayan], desobra [de sobra], diez y ocho [dieciocho], and so on.

Winifred: apunto [a punto], escavechina [escabechina], almuada [almohada], hincentivos [incentivos], serbidora [servidora], misiba [misiva], rebelar [revelar], acidente [accidente], calló [cayó], hazoramiento [azoramiento], enbolvieron [envolvieron], probincia [provincia],

malumorado [malhumorado] eluno y elotro [el uno y el otro], Encuanto a suntos [En cuanto a asuntos], inchado [hinchado], conecsiones [conexiones], hechar [echar], a mímisma [a mí misma], and so on.

3.2 Malapropisms and folk etymologies

Both Tabitha and Winifred are prone to these two types of word distortion, folk etymologies characterizing particularly the latter's speech (examples will be shown in the translations proposed below). The translation of these humorous items certainly requires considering them in units no smaller than the phrase in which they signify and often larger than this, since these phrases themselves acquire signification in larger units which will constrain the manipulation we may exert on the specific items. The linguistic context will then have to be as much our point of departure as the malapropism/folk etymology itself.

Due to the Latin/Romance origin of many of the learned words Tabitha and Winifred misuse, we can find corresponding distortions in Spanish, even of the same type, for example, TT malapropisms for ST malapropisms:[9]

Tabitha: have excess to [access] > tenga exceso a [acceso] ; your care and circumflexion [circumspection] > su cuidado y circumflexión/circumscripción [circumspección/cautela]; in reverence to [reference] > en reverencia a [referencia]

Winifred: this is all suppository [supposition] > no son sino supositorios [suposiciones]; I recommend myself to… [commend] > me recomiendo a tus oraciones [encomiendo]; enter in caparison with [comparison] > no se le puede acaparar con [comparar]; our satiety is to suppurate [our society is to separate] > nuestro grupo se ha de supurar [separar]

or TT folk etymologies for ST folk etymologies:

Tabitha: ruinated [ruin] > ruinado; flutturencies [flatulence] > fluturencias [flatulencias]; amissories [emissaries] > amisiarios [emisarios]

Winifred: asterisks [hysterics] > un ataque de disteria [histeria-difteria]; the very squintasense of satiety [quintessence of society] > la crin de la crin de la buena sociedá [la creme de la creme]; in such a flustration [flustered] > tan sufuscada [agitada-sofocada]; I have sullenly promised [solemnly] > le he prometido solentemente [solemnemente-insolente]; an impfiddle > un inciel [infiel-cielo]; axidents, surprisals and terrifications

[accidents, surprises and terrifying things] > iccidentes, sorprendimientos y aterroraciones [accidentes, cosas sorprendentes y terroríficas]

Many other times, however, we will have to resort to **compensation of kind** (Zabalbeascoa 2005: 193), that is, resorting to a different type of distortion to achieve the humorous effect: for example, a) translating a ST malapropism into a TT folk etymology and b) vice versa, or turning either of these two types into c) a spelling mistake or d) a pronunciation error in the translation. The following are examples of these changes:

a) have no deception of [conception] > no tienes nonción [noción-concepción]; odorous falsehoods [odious] > igual de destetables [detestables-destetar];
b) wally de shamble [valet de chambre] > ayuda recámara [de cámara-recámara]; heys of infection [eyes of affection] > su mirada y su efecto [afecto];
c) to partake the house [protect] > protejer la casa [proteger]; the ammunition [admonition] > las hamonestaciones [amonestaciones]; very creditable correxions [connections] > conecsiones muy estimables [conexiones]; odorous falsehoods [odious] > igual de hodiosas [odiosas]; the refuge and skim of the hearth [refuse and scum of the earth] > la hescoria y los deshechos de la sociedad [escoria y desechos]; more occumenical [economical] > más aorradora [ahorradora]; cully-flower [cauliflower] > col y flor [coliflor];
d) my privity and concurrants [my privy and concurrence] > mi conocemiento y conformedad [conocimiento y conformidad]; monstracious [monstruous] > munstruoso [monstruoso]; to unclose [enclose] > azjuntar [adjuntar]; holy mother crutch [Holy Mother Church] > Santa Madreinglesia; discounselled [disconsolate] > disconsolada.

As the example with 'odorous falsehoods' shows, we may have more than one option of type shift; or, as happens with 'Santa Madreinglesia' (for 'Santa Madre Iglesia'), we may combine two types of distortion in one item – in this case, misspelling and mispronunciation. At other times, we may take advantage of an opportunity for compensation of both kind *and* place, as in these two examples:

– he had not a rag to kiver his pistereroes [posteriors] > no tenía ni un arapo con que cuvrirse el trasero (spelling mistake in *arapo* [harapo, *rag*] for folk etymology in *pistereroes*);

– but the squire applied to the mare, and they were bound over > pero el señor recurrió al alcalde y fueron percibidos (malapropism in *percibidos* [apercibir-percibir] for spelling mistake/pun in *mare* [mayor]).

Personal creations must never be ruled out in humour translation, where '[i]n most cases, the best solutions found to overcome difficulties in translation tend to be pragmatic rather than linguistic ones' (Chiaro 1992: 98) and *substituting* one joke with another is a pragmatic solution to a linguistic problem. Thus, in the next example a folk etymology – *exorbitada* [desorbitada-exagerada] – has been created where there was no distortion in the source text (*extravagant*), to somehow compensate for the loss of humour in the next sentence, in which Tabitha's folk etymology *occumenical* has been replaced with a TT spelling mistake in *aorradora* [ahorradora], which is indeed less humorous:

> but she must not expect extravagant wages– having a family of my own, I must be more occumenical than ever > pero que no espere una paga exorbitada: ahora que tengo mi propia familia, debo ser más aorradora que nunca.

3.3 'Spontaneous' puns or equivocation

These are less common in both characters' idiolects than the previous features. But we do find cases in which their spelling mistakes, mispronunciations or folk etymologies produce instances of punning. The translation of wordplay has been very thoroughly studied by Delabastita (1993), whose taxonomy of translation strategies is widely quoted. So I will only mention a couple of examples from *Humphry Clinker* here to illustrate how factors other than the purely linguistic may also determine the translator's decisions. Here is Winifred recounting Tabitha's marriage to Lismahago (my italics):

> the clerk called the banes of marridge betwixt Opaniah Lashmeheygo, and Tapitha Brample, *spinster*, he mought as well have called her inkle-weaver, for she never *spun* and hank of yarn in her life. (14 October)

If we try to stick to the play on *spin*, we will probably have to resort to a footnote, for Winifred's ironic comment on the clerk's term will

make no sense in Spanish as there is no relationship of any kind between the corresponding words in this language (my italics):[10]

> el clérigo leyó las hamonestaciones de Opaniah Lashmeheygo y Tavitha Bramvle, *soltera*; podía haberla llamado *tejedora de lino*, pues no ha tejido una madeja en toda su vida.

The reader may laugh at the unexpectedness of the comparison (*incongruity*) but the *suspension of inferential reasoning* required may be too great. We may, however, resort to substitution and replace the ST pun with a new one in the target language, which must, in any case, fit in the two contexts; the word *doncella* ('maid'), which has the two meanings 'virgin' and 'servant' – as *maid* has in English – seems to fit in the first context (although, admittedly, a 'spinster' is not necessarily a 'virgin'!) and provides us with the possibility of punning:

> el clérigo leyó las hamonestaciones de Opaniah Lashmeheygo y Tavitha Bramvle, *doncella*; podía haberla llamado cualquier otra cosa menos eso, pues no ha *cojido un plumero* en su vida ['. . . as she has not dusted a single room in her life'].

The following example from Tabitha's very first letter illustrates a case of compensations of both place and kind, involving 'spontaneous' punning provoked by different means in the source and the target texts: a non-standard pronunciation produces *shit* for *shut* in the former; this is replaced in the target text proposed here with a spelling mistake in a different place (*verga* [verja] for *gate*), which creates a sexual pun, as *verga* is both 'rod' and a vulgar term for 'penis':

> and don't forget to have the gate shit every evening before dark > y no se olvide de cerrar bien la verga todas las tardes antes de que se haga denoche.

We are thus playing with two recurrent themes in the humour of these letters, scatology and sex, so that this personal creation is, in my view, not out of place here (*institutionalized humour*). Creativity for humour's sake normally has to be checked by attention to other features of the text we are translating: in our case, the *plausibility* of the themes we resort to – with respect to the characters writing about them – and the *frequency* of the type of distortion we are creating. (Thus, since punning is not the most frequent type in these women's letters, overdoing it in our target text will probably

result in different characterization – for instance, making them wittier than they were in the source text – which is something the translator must consider [*function*]).

3.4 Non-standard pronunciations and dialectal syntax and vocabulary

These features would really make up two different sections in an analysis of the source text, for the following reasons: non-standard pronunciations are considerably commoner than dialectal traits, in fact as common as folk etymologies; they are not just instances of a regional accent but also mispronunciations (for instance, the mixture in Tabitha's *jowls* [jewels], *shit* [shut], *partected* [protected], *Villiams* [Williams], *ne'er* [never], *phims* [whims] *purseeding* [proceeding]; or Winifred's *would adone* [would've done], *would a fit* [would've fought], *vax* [wax], *Vales* [Wales], *churned* [journied], *kipple* [couple], *purtests* [protests], *pore art* [heart], *churned* [journied], *portend* [pretend]); and dialectal speech is only really present in Winifred's idiolect (note, for example, her syntax: *he says as how tis . . .* , *you nose* [know], *who would think for to go, I nose what I nose, thof God he nose, being as how . . .* , etc.; and vocabulary: *narro* [never], *varsal* [universal], *arrow* [ever, anyone], *fackins* [in truth], *sounded* [swooned], etc.).

However, from the point of view of the translation process we may consider them together. To my knowledge, there is no satisfactory solution to the translational problem of dialectal variants,[11] as substitution will normally result in a mismatch between the new variant from the target language and the source-text context to which it is supposed to be attached (unless we change this too, applying a recontextualization strategy), and most translators opt for neutralizing this feature in a character's speech since the consequent loss in characterization seems to be less substantial than the alternative loss of coherence. This is sometimes compensated for by adding a gloss in a reporting clause – for example, 'she said/asked in her dialect' – an option which is out of the question here as there is no third-person narrator (*text-type*). We could add some information in a translator's note or an introduction to our edition. But this need not prevent us from trying to apply some other strategy in the texts themselves which may contribute more effectively to the humour and characterization from the point of view of the reader's perception.

We may, for instance, resort to compensation of kind again and so replace Winifred's dialectal traits with spelling mistakes or with mispronunciations in Spanish, considering the fact that, as mentioned earlier, they are not just regional accent markers but frequently wrong phonetic realizations.

In fact, Smollett seems to have placed humour – before realistic characterization – as his main aim here, since Winifred often mixes up phonetic variants from accents other than Welsh: her chaotic use of aspiration (*air* for 'hair', *hottogon* for 'octagon', *pyehouse* for 'pious', *hyllifents* for 'elephants', *honeymils* for 'animals') or changing /w/ to /v/ (*vas* for 'was', *vindore* for 'window', *van* for 'one', *vaned* for 'weaned') are typically cockney features which her speech shows together with other realizations which are found in Scots rather than in Welsh (substitution of /f/ for /hw/, as in *fiff* for 'whiff') and with authentic Welsh variants (*fillitch* for 'village'; *oaf* for 'oath'; *sin* for 'chin'; *pyebill* for 'Bible')[12] (Boggs 1964).

The two characters' non-standard pronunciations and Winifred's dialectal syntax and vocabulary have therefore been replaced with either spelling mistakes or mispronunciations when plausible opportunities came up in the Spanish target text proposed here, for which longer units than the corresponding words have again had to be contemplated and compensation of place applied. So the following examples of mispronunciation do not necessarily 'match' ST distortions: for example, Tabitha's Spanish *uateadas* [guateadas], *dispilfarro* [despilfarro], *guevos* [huevos], *vintiseis* [veintiséis], *recspecta* [respecta], *ixperimentado* [experimentado], and so on; Winifred's *inojadísimo* [enojadísimo], *pionza* [peonza], *tistimonio* [testimonio], *imprendemos* [emprendemos], *rispecta* [respecta]; *entercedió* [intercedió], *vintiseis* [veintiséis], *ispantar* [espantar], *prununciado* [pronunciado], *abujero* [agujero], and so on. We cannot obviously expect the effect to be 'the same', but we can at least aim at some characterization and humour (the reader will laugh at the characters' wrong utterances [*superiority*]), while we avoid contextual incoherence by using phonetic traits which are not associated with any specific regional accent in Spanish.

3.5 Social and diachronic variants

Winifred's speech is also punctuated with usages which carry lower class connotations: for example, *has learned me*; *them things*; *choppings* [a 'low word' for 'to give one thing for another' (Boggs 1964: 324)]; *I was the very moral of* ['low' for 'the very likeness of' (Boggs 1964: 326)]. The same translation constraints as those we have mentioned for dialectal variants show up here, as 'the class structures of different societies, countries and nations never replicate one another. Consequently, there can be no exact parallels between sociolectal varieties of one language and those of another' (Hervey and Higgins 1992: 119). We may here resort to wrong syntactic or lexical usages in Spanish – for example, the common misuse of *cuyo* ['whose'] or

**decir de que* for *decir que* ['say that'] –, and insert them in Winifred's target letters here and there, without actually running the risk of their being perceived by the reader as the translator's own mistakes, as might be the case in other texts (S. Smith 1998 in Asimakoulas 2004: 839). In the context of verbal distortion in which they appear, I expect we may safely guess that, like the mispronunciations mentioned above, they will be taken as this character's personal traits and, therefore, humour contributors (*cuing*).

Finally, both characters' speech display some linguistic features (syntactic, lexical or phonetic) of earlier stages of the English language: for example, Tabitha's *sat a spinning*, *hath, an ell*; Winifred's *had like to have gone* [nearly went], *will be a prying*, *was fain to, hath bin*, *pillyber* [pillowcase], *the dickens* [the devil]; *cyder* [archaic for 'cider'], *spear* ['sphere'], and so on (see Boggs 1964). Since our target text will be functioning in the twenty-first century and it would be practically impossible – and certainly artificial – to recreate the Spanish language of the eighteenth century, the most effective strategy for this translation in this respect seems to me to be sticking to the present stage of the language while avoiding usages which may sound too modern; that is, bearing in mind, once again, not just the humorous role of the linguistic traits in the letters but also their characterization function: certain present-day turns of phrase might indeed contribute greatly to the humour but be perceived by the reader as too implausible, given the characters and the context (*logical thinking*).

4. Conclusion

The translation of humour is a complex issue both from the theoretical and the practical sides, due to the variety of factors which come into play in the creation of humour as well as in any type of translation. Collaboration between humour studies and translation studies is crucial for a rigorous academic study of this topic; but I have tried to show here that research from both disciplines may also be of great use to translation practitioners. Focussing on verbal humour, in which language play is the motor force of the humour mechanism so linguistic constraints loom large in its translation, I have illustrated the different factors governing a humorous perlocutionary effect and its cross-cultural transfer with Smollett's *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* and Spanish translation strategies of my own. There is certainly no implication in my proposals that this is the only way to translate the verbal humour in this novel; even with the same approach suggested here for its translation, which centres the decision-taking process on the

mechanism and function of the verbal distortions in the text as well as on the skopos of the translation, a more experienced and/or wittier translator than I am would come up with very different solutions. (The translator is another, very important, variable.) My main point has been to show the relevance of concepts taken from humour studies, translation studies and pragmatics – such as *incongruity*, *superiority*, *social signification*, *function/skopos*, *translational norms*, *constraints*, *coherence*, *text*, *context*, and so on – both to the analysis of a humorous source text and to the actual process of translating it.

Notes

[1] For an overview on the discourse on translated humour over the last 20 years, see Vandaele 2001, which includes an extensive bibliography of this topic.

[2] This does not imply that the descriptive study of the translational strategies and norms which govern humour translation is not necessary. On the contrary, this approach is crucial in order to go beyond the stale question of the (un)translatability of humour. Descriptive analyses of the translation of humorous texts have shown that these *are* translated and have contributed substantially to our knowledge of what goes on in this type of cross-cultural transfer. The fact that this has been the object of most of my previous publications on the topic and that translators frequently question the validity of translation theory for their own work has led me to focus here on a prospective translation rather than on the description of existing target texts.

[3] The Victorians probably found Smollett's fiction too prickly and indelicate (see Knapp 1984; Ross 1967), and the grotesque which characterizes it has made him appear to some as aesthetically inferior to Fielding and Sterne (see Hopkins 1969: 163). Belittled in the nineteenth century and rediscovered in the twentieth, Smollett now seems to have been acknowledged as an influential literary forefather of writers like Sterne, Fanny Burney, and even Dickens.

[4] Incongruity is present in the very title of the novel, which Smollett chose to focus on a servant who is not at all the central figure in the text and who does not even write a single letter in it. It is no wonder then that the title should have puzzled some of the critics when the book came out (see Knapp 1984: x). Even the servant's name, Humphry Clinker, presents a witty juxtaposition of 'names connoting both the chivalric and its opposite' (Knapp 1984: xiii).

[5] This does not imply that verbal humour is necessarily more difficult to translate than other types of humour. As Chiaro rightly puts it: 'While it is evident that heavily language-oriented word play does indeed create peculiar difficulties in translation [. . .], it appears to be a question of type of difficulty rather than degree of difficulty' (1992: 95).

[6] The systematization has proved to be slightly difficult, since some instances could be interpreted as, for example, spelling mistakes and/or mispronunciations. However, since we will often have to resort to a different type of distortion in our target text from the one originally used in the source text, this will not be very important in our translation process.

[7] '[T]wo complementary procedures that could be of great benefit to scholar and translator alike [are] "[m]apping," i.e. locating and analyzing textual items (e.g., instances of humour) according to relevant classifications [. . .] and "prioritizing,", i.e. establishing what is important for each case (in the context of translating), and how important each item and aspect is, in order to have [a] clear set of criteria for shaping the translation in one way rather than another' (Zabalbeascoa 2005: 187).

[8] The full appreciation of the humour created by these instances would certainly require quoting them in their context, something which, for reasons of space, I am unable to

do here. On the other hand, these lists of examples out of context will hopefully give the reader an idea of the characters' writing. (The intended forms are provided in brackets for the most obscure cases to facilitate comprehension.)

[9] The reader is again reminded that the examples are here quoted out of context, both from the ST and from my own translation of the letters.

[10] All the examples are quoted as 'final' products, that is, containing the decisions I would take for the texts as a whole, and therefore including spelling mistakes and other distortions which may create humour in the translation.

[11] But, unfortunately for the translator, dialectal and social variants are frequently part of the humour mechanism: 'registres, dialectes, sociolectes, idiolectes, etc. Ces attaches d'ordre social, qui se manifestent à travers des variantes articulées par différentes couches sociales, semblent jouer un rôle central dans bon nombre de textes humoristiques' (Vandaele 2001: 35).

[12] Welsh /v/ is quite voiceless and the final consonant in *village* is not found in this dialect, hence *fillitch*; as for *pyebill* [Bible], Welsh /b/ does not have as much voice as the English one, which is why English people often think the Welsh say /p/ for /b/ (Boggs 1964: 323–4, 327; see this article for the explanation of other Welsh features in Win's speech).

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Chapter 10

Language-based Humour and the Untranslatable: The Case of Ziad Rahbani's Theatre

Nada Elzeer

A real translation is transparent; it does not cover the original, does not block its light, but allows the pure language, as though reinforced by its own medium, to shine upon the original all the more fully. This may be achieved, above all, by a literal rendering of the syntax which proves words rather than sentences to be the primary element of the translation. For the sentence is the wall before the language of the original, literalness is the arcade.

(Benjamin 1992: 79)

Benjamin's idea of the real translation could seem to be the natural choice if one considers that the value of a text lies in the fabric of its language. To preserve the specificity of a certain type of language, it is imperative that its constituent elements, whether syntactic or terminological, remain present in the target text. While the merit of any translation is traditionally regarded to be conditional upon whether or not it can pass for an original text, it is fair to say that the majority of literary texts rely for their originality on the colourfulness of the language as well as on the author's individual linguistic choices and innovativeness. For these choices and innovation not to come through would entail an inevitable loss of a major component of the literariness of the original text. The same is true for the translation of any type of text whose value is inherent in its language, as opposed to texts whose value or content are unlikely to undergo significant changes in the target language. Humorous texts are an instance of the former insofar as the linguistic artistry displayed in them appears to be a key component of their integrity. In this article, I propose to look at the translation of linguistic artistry in humour, and the difficulty or impossibility thereof, according to Benjamin's model of the ideal translation and with particular reference

to the theatre of Lebanese musician and playwright Ziad Rahbani, whose work is exceptionally rich in innovative language-based humour.

1. Ziad Rahbani's 'Purpose-built' Language

Since 1972, Ziad Rahbani had been contributing to the theatrical work of his parents (Stone 2007: 93), the legendary Fairuz and Assi Rahbani who, alongside Assi's brother, Mansour, are widely credited with laying the foundation of the Lebanese musical theatre, as well as with the creation of the rather lyrical image of the Lebanese national identity with which most Lebanese have gradually come to identify. It was no surprise therefore that his 1973 theatre 'debut', *An Evening Celebration*, would reflect this lyricism. Soon, however, this was to change, and in 1974, when Ziad's second play, *Happiness Hotel*, came out, there was no mention of the quiet and peaceful Lebanese village, where everyone lives in a lyrical and harmonious atmosphere, and where the love of the homeland always seems to find a way of prevailing. It soon became clear that *Happiness Hotel* was only the start of a very different theatrical tradition: one that mocks and challenges that which had been established by his parents. Ziad did not endorse the image of the Lebanon portrayed by the theatre of the Rahbani brothers, and his plays soon came to be seen as attempts to unmask this illusion (106–7). Naturally, this challenging of the traditional subject matter entailed a challenging of traditional discourse. For his plays to succeed in becoming an antidote to the theatre of the Rahbani brothers, Ziad's language had to become an antidote to the lyrical language of the theatre he was challenging. Indeed, one can notice in Ziad's plays the evolution of a distinctive language where innovation at the level of both syntax and terminology can be seen as a means by which he draws the line between his own theatre and its image of Lebanon, and that of his parents. To the rather sombre lyricism so religiously observed by the Rahbani brothers and that ended up bordering on the cliché, Ziad responds with an exceedingly sarcastic and down-to-earth discourse where the predictable, linguistic or otherwise, is simply not allowed. Ziad's over-reliance on an increasingly innovative language-based sarcasm was soon to lead to the creation of a whole discursive tradition that swept the whole nation. The new type of humour presented in his plays was unlike anything the Lebanese public had ever known, and the success of its language was such that, even more than 30 years after *Happiness Hotel* came out, fragments of dialogues from Ziad's plays continue to be popular. This is particularly the case with Lebanese youth, so much

so in fact that a 'Ziad fan', clearly identifiable by his/her language, is not an uncommon stereotype in Lebanon today.

So, what makes Ziad Rahbani's humour such a success?

Ziad's humour is arguably innovative in that, unlike the traditional humour known to us through Lebanese literature, theatre and the spoken language, it relies heavily on language and intonation, and less on content and situations. It would be an exaggeration to say that Ziad Rahbani was a pioneer in directing Lebanese humour towards the 'linguistic' and away from the 'situational'. Lebanese humour, in general, is thought to have always relied on the wit of linguistic jokes (Frayha, (1988) 29). In particular, *zajal*, the tradition of improvised oral strophic poetry, relies largely on linguistic jokes, and the finest Lebanese jokes are considered to be those improvised by *zajal* poets (30). Usually performed in the course of a competition or debate between two panels of poets, *zajal* is often about each party attempting to win the debate, not only by proving themselves to be more meritorious than their opponent, but also by launching a verbal attack on them, which often takes the form of sarcasm. Naturally, the wittier the poets proved to be in finding the right rhyming words to mock their opponents, the funnier they turned out to be. It is thus not surprising that Ziad's humour was such a success. The Lebanese culture has been built up in a way that makes it particularly receptive to language-based humour. Ziad's innovative approach, however, relates to the way in which he broadened the spectrum and content of linguistic wit. The elements of his humorous language range from the unusual pronunciation of common words to the use of unusual, sometimes previously unknown words; other devices include changing the syntax of set phrases or idiomatic expressions, convoluting the syntax of regular sentences in order to produce sarcasm, juxtaposing different levels of register, and jumping back and forth between the colloquial dialect and the classical language. There is indeed a vast number of ways, both direct and indirect, in which language acts as the source of humour in Ziad Rahbani's theatre.

Of particular interest to us are the playful linguistic movements which involve more complex elements than a pun based on one simple word, and the ways in which these movements, which constitute Ziad's own landmark humour, are sometimes inspired by or built around specific features of the Lebanese or Levantine dialects. One of the most interesting aspects of Ziad Rahbani's humour is how the linguistic joke is usually built up around an initial statement, rather than presented as an independent pun or wordplay. This structure could be considered to reflect Greimas' analysis of the joke structure whereby a joke is made up of two parts: the narration

or presentation part that establishes the 'isotopy', and the dialogue part which breaks this isotopy by opposing it to a new one through 'opposition' or 'variation' by means of a connecting term (Greimas 1966: 70–1). Likewise, Ziad Rahbani's jokes, which are built on the manipulation of language, depend on how the dialogical part of it relates to the narrative part. Preserving the link between the two parts of the joke is thus essential for the joke to survive in translation. This link, however, which Greimas calls 'the connecting term', is language-specific, which means that the translator is likely to be faced with almost insurmountable difficulties when trying to reproduce the joke in the target language. In the section that follows, I will examine a number of the ways in which Ziad Rahbani involves aspects and specificities of both the standard Arabic language and the Lebanese dialect in the production of humour, how this can result in the production of 'connecting terms' of varying levels of complexity, and the implications this can have on the possibility of translating this type of humour in a way that allows its 'pure language to shine upon the original', as Benjamin puts it.

2. Culture- and Dialect-inspired Humoristic Innovation

A culture-specific aspect of the Levantine dialect (or perhaps of colloquial Arabic as a whole) upon which Ziad bases many of his puns derives from the tradition of root-echo responses, in which the root of a word occurring in the initial statement is reused in the reply in order to produce aggressive sarcasm. The word incorporating the relevant root may or may not exist otherwise in the language, and can often have an ambiguous or no meaning, but would still sound funny thanks to its phonetic aspect, or to the amusing way in which it had been coined, or simply because it has no meaning. The Levantine dialect contains a number of such set expressions which can be used as sarcastic replies to statements involving particular roots. Ziad frequently makes use of this tradition in his plays, but rather than restrict himself to the set expressions already in use, he takes linguistic liberties by building new sarcastic replies around the relevant word in unpredictable ways. In *Happiness Hotel*, for example, one of the characters is trying to persuade the receptionist to allow him to stay without an initial payment, assuring him that he will definitely pay him every Thursday when *Zalim,* the horse on which he has placed a bet, wins the race. The receptionist then asks:

– And what if *Zalim* does not win? وإذا ما إجا ظالم؟

– Then *Jarbu'a* will' بتجي جربوعة (*Jarbu'a* is by no means a name that anyone or even an animal is likely to have, the word itself meaning 'female rat'). The receptionist then replies:
– May God [a verb coined out of *jarbu'a*] your neck!' ريته يجربع رقبتك
(Rahbani, 1974/1993: disc one: 27:00).

This sentence is modelled on a set expression of the Levantine dialect that uses another verb (the expression literally translates as: 'May God break/dislocate your neck'). The verb coined out of the word *jarbu'a*, however, does not exist in Arabic. The above reply therefore has no meaning, but is still considered funny, not only because of the amusing newly coined verb and its amusing phonetics, but because the joke displays wit in that it relies on two specificities of the Lebanese dialect in one reply: first, by copying the practice of expressing sarcasm by deriving a meaningless word out of another that occurs in the initial statement, and second, by modelling the reply to a set expression of the Levantine dialect. In this way, the linguistic link between the two parts of the joke becomes even harder to reproduce.

3. Displacing Idiomatic Expressions

There are a number of other ways in which Ziad involves set or idiomatic expressions in the creation of the abovementioned link. One of these ways consists in the displacement of the relevant idiomatic expression outside its context. In one of the scenes of *The American Motion Picture*, for example, an inmate of the mental institution where the events of the play are taking place makes his farewell to his fellow inmates, as he is about to travel to Canada, and one of his fellow inmates wishes him a safe trip by using the set expression used in Lebanon and other parts of the Levant on similar occasions:

– May you go and come back safely تروح وتجي بالسلامة (the phrase 'to go and come back' can also translate as 'to go about' and 'to commute').
– I might not come back, Abu Leila. يمكن مش راجع يا أبو ليلى
– Then, may you go about safely inside Canada إيه جوّات كندا تروح وتجي بالسلامة
(Rahbani, 1979/1993: disc three: 01:50).

The humorous effect of this pun results from the displacement of an idiomatic expression outside its traditional context, that is, by using it for a

different situation to the one for which it is intended. Naturally, the loss of this idiomatic expression through translation would mean the loss of the possibility of displacement and, as a result, the loss of the joke.

4. Idiomatic Variations

Another way in which Ziad frequently derives humour from idioms is by stating them unchanged, as in the example above, and then making variations on them. The inclusion of the original idiom makes the contrast with its variation more immediate, thus enhancing the impact of the joke. An example of this is can be found in *Failure,* a play about a director trying to produce a play in war-torn Lebanon. Disappointed that an item which he should already have received had not yet arrived, he complains to the person in charge with an idiom that can be translated as: 'I thought you were a man of your word.' The Arabic idiomatic expression used, however, literally translates as 'I thought your word could not become two words' and is followed up with the remark يعلمي كلمتك ما بتصير اتنين,'but it seems to have become three or more' من تلاتة وبالطالع مصفاية (Rahbani, 1983/1993: disc one: 13:40). In this example, it is a variation on the first part of the joke, namely the idiomatic expression initially stated, that produces the humorous effect. As a result, the loss of the idiom in its literality would necessarily entail the loss of the joke. Likewise, or rather in reverse, idioms are sometimes used to produce the humorous effect by being presented themselves as a variation on an initial statement. In other words, an initial statement is made, and an idiomatic expression with an element in common with this statement – a word for example, or a word derived from another in it – follows as a punch line. For example, in *Failure*, the producer is chastising the director for choosing the more expensive options in his purchases:

– 'So, you went for genuine leather' يعني إنت بتجيب الجلد
– 'I did; what can I do . . .' جبنا الجلد، شو بدنا نعمل..

To which the producer replies with an idiomatic expression that literally means:

– 'Well, it showed on my own skin' ايه وطلعت بجلدي (meaning 'I am the one who had to bear the consequences', the Arabic word for 'skin' being the same as the word for 'leather' (Rahbani, 1983/1993: disc two: 12:25). Again, the humorous effect is the product of the linguistic link between

the two parts of the joke, which makes the reproduction of the joke in translation almost impossible).

5. Humorous Imagery Built on Idiomatic Expressions

A different way in which Ziad uses the richness of idioms to produce humour without producing direct word games is by building imagery around them. In other words, an idiomatic expression is presented as an initial statement, but the reply is built around the imagery it presents, rather around a particular word in it. The new imagery often seems like an 'extension' of the initial one, rather than bearing a kind of contrasting novelty. In *Failure*, for example, the electrician tells the director not to worry at all, using an idiom which translates literally as 'put your hands in cold water' حطّ إيديك بميّ باردة and to which the director replies: 'They've been put [in cold water] since I met you, mate; they turned into ice' صرلي من وقت ما تعرّفت عليك حاططن، بوّظوا خيّي (ibid.: 09:15). The image that produces the humorous effect here is that of the director's hands turning into ice-cream, which would be impossible to reproduce without the initial image of the above idiomatic expression. This problem could sometimes be more or less negligible or solvable, but the imagery built around the idiom could also be more convoluted or could occupy a larger space in the dialogue, which means that a larger part of the dialogue would suffer in translation. In *The American Motion Picture*, for example, the doctor advises one of his patients to 'be patient' by using a very common idiom that literally translates as 'lengthen your mind' بدك تطول بالك. A dialogue follows between the two, in which the patient pleads with the doctor not to ask him to show patience, until he finally bursts with what literally translates as: 'Mate, it couldn't get any longer; what you see is the longest it will ever get, just as . . . I followed your advice; your advice, I followed it. Lengthen, lengthen, lengthen . . . I am dragging it along all day as I walk, doctor. It's just too long, mate. Would you approve of such a long thing? I don't know what you think, but you've been treading it down and tripping over it. Is that acceptable?' يا خيّي ما بقى يطوّل، أطول شي هيك. هيك متل ما شايفني يا حكيم أطول شي خيّي، هيك متل.. مشينا عنصايحك، مشينا، طوّل وطوّل وطوّل وماشي وساحبه ورايي كل النهار يا حكيم، طويل كتير يا خيّي، هيدا شي إنت، بتريد هيك إنت طويل؟ ما بعرف إذا إنت من رأيك. عم تدعوس عليه، عم تتفركش فيه صرت، معقول؟ (Rahbani, 1979/1993: disc two: 31:00). In this reply, almost every phrase seems to provoke laughter, and the image that it depicts continues to take shape with each one of the phrases. In this way, every new phrase contributes a 'connecting

term' to this 'joke-complex', and creates a new difficulty for the translator. The result is a type of humour that is not replicated, or indeed replaced in translation, whether in accordance with Benjamin's idea of the ideal translation or any other ideal.

6. Polysemy and Common Etymology

The importance of the 'connecting term' of a joke can also manifest itself in exchanges where the wordplay is built on polysemy, or derivation, that is, common etymology, for example. A certain reply can become funny when a word from the initial statement is wittingly reused in it but with a different meaning. This practice seems to be very efficient in conveying sarcasm, and can be used in various ways, some of which can be illustrated with the following examples:

In *The American Motion Picture*, one of the inmates tries to dissuade a fellow inmate not to publish a book that he is writing, in which he intends to unmask the accomplices in the political conspiracy that led to the civil war. He warns him that he will have to face the consequences, and the exchange goes literally as follows:

– Did you say you had a brace fitted for your teeth?' إنت مركّب جسر لسنانك قلتلّي؟'
– Yes.' إيه
– Well, they would be sure to throw you under it' إيه بيزنّوك تحته
(Rahbani, 1979/1993: disc one: 32:00).

The above joke would only make sense if, as in Arabic, the word for 'brace' was the same as that for 'bridge'. The target language, lacking such polysemy, is unable to convey either the sarcasm or the cultural reference to Lebanese wartime militias setting up checkpoints where people from opponent sects were massacred.

Along the same lines, but at a slightly more advanced level, derivation, or common etymology can replace polysemy as the link between the two parts of a joke. Building a joke around a reply that uses a word derived from another that would have occurred in the initial statement can generally be wittier than the use of simple polysemy. This practice seems largely inspired by the tendency of the Levantine dialects to give sarcastic replies, often containing a meaningless verb or noun derived from a word that occurred in the initial statement. In this sense, the wit of the reply is not the only

factor contributing to its funniness, but also the cultural relevance of the practice itself to Lebanese humour, regardless of the level of wit it displays. An example of this use of derivation is the following:

> In *Happiness Hotel*, a musician who is a permanent resident at the hotel asks the receptionist to inform his colleague, a belly-dancer who is another permanent resident of the hotel that they were off work that evening as the cabaret where they work was taking part in a strike:
>
> – Go upstairs and inform Madame Tahiyyat that there will be no shaking tonight, for the whole country is . . . shaken' اطلع بلّغا للست تحيات إنو الليلة، هزّ، ما فيش
> (Rahbani, 1974/1993: disc one: 07:50).

While the word 'shaking' is a rather sarcastic and uncommon way of referring to the profession of belly-dancing, the audience only bursts into laughter when the word 'shaken' is said after a pause, although, unlike the word 'shaking', it is used here appropriately and in its right meaning. On this occasion, the joke may not be difficult to reproduce in the target language, depending on what the target language is, of course, but there are cases where Ziad uses this technique in longer exchanges, playing on both homonymy and derivation in a series of subsequent replies. An example of this can be found in *What About Tomorrow?*, where one of the workers is trying to understand the repeated attempts of a stereotypical contemporary poet to write a poem that never seems to make sense. The dialogue plays on the words 'to try' حاول, 'attempt' محاولة and 'state' حالة, which have the same root, as well as on the word 'situation', which is a homonym of the word 'state'. The dialogue goes as follows:

> – What are you trying to do exactly? شو عم تحاول تعمل إنت؟
> – I am trying to reach the state. عم حاول أوصل.. للحالة
> – Which state? أيّا حالة؟
> – There is no particular state, Najib, the state in itself. At the moment, I have not yet reached . . . the state. I am trying to, and each attempt is an attempt towards the state. ما في حالة معينة نجيب، الحالة بحد ذاتا. هلّق أنا بعدني.. مش بالحالة. عم حاول، وكل محاولة هيي محاولة نحو الحالة
> – But this is not a [normal] state إيه بس مش حالة هيدي (an idiomatic expression meaning 'but you cannot keep going like this')
> (Rahbani, 1977/1995: disc three: 05:05).

In cases like this one, the reliance on the simultaneous use of polysemy, derivation and, as on this occasion, the use of idiomatic expressions

exacerbates the translation problem, as the joke becomes a more complex one with more than two parts and more than one linguistic link.

A more personal characteristic of Ziad Rahbani's language-based humour is his joining together in one expression pairs of words that do not collocate. One of the best examples of Ziad's use of this practice can be found in *Happiness Hotel*, where the 'thinker' is listing the contents of the second chapter of a book he is writing about revolution. The chapter is about 'misery' and so 'Misery' is the title. The word the authors uses for 'misery' التّعتير, however, is one that is only used in the lower register of the colloquial Levantine dialect, rather than in the standard language used in writing, from which it was derived. When the author lists the contents of his second chapter as being: 'Misery, the characteristics of misery, the ideology of misery' التّعتير، ميّزات التّعتير، أيديولوجية التّعتير, the humorous effect is produced when a rather common word, that is, 'misery', is associated with other words, namely 'characteristics' and 'ideology', which belong to a higher register and therefore should not have been paired with it (Rahbani, 1974/1993: disc one: 13:17).

7. Unusual Vocabulary and Innovative 'Terminological Allegories'

Ziad Rahbani's over-reliance on unusual terminology and its potential in producing humour is arguably one of the main factors behind the popularity of his theatre. Throughout his dialogues, one can detect a consistent tendency to replace common and neutral words with their more unusual equivalents. As a result, the dialogue as a whole becomes more humorous, as the audience is amused by the richness, playfulness and attractiveness of the unusual terminology. Unusual terminology can be amusing for a number of reasons. In the case of Ziad's dialogues, the choice of less common words seems to be driven by a preference for dialect- and register-specific words which are falling out of use as the spoken language continues to move towards a more unified and simpler lexicon that is acceptable to all speakers, as well as for words with amusing phonetics, that is, which have a pattern or a combination of letters that would sound funny to the native speakers. More remarkably, however, Ziad often seems to opt for words which are not actual synonyms for those words they are replacing, but which he uses as 'allegories' that the context renders easily identifiable. These are, indeed, the most characteristic features of the humour of Ziad Rahbani, and examples of them can be found in almost every exchange,

although they seem to occur more frequently in his later plays than in his earlier ones. I will examine below some of the most representative examples of this technique.

In *The American Motion Picture*, to say that the conspiracy must be exposed, the intellectual says that it must 'break open' تفلش, a word normally used only to refer to the physical breaking open of concrete objects (Rahbani, 1979/1993: disc one: 19:20). Later on, in the same play, an inmate tells his Armenian fellow inmate who is about to emigrate to Canada after some Lebanese militia blew up both of his Beirut shops: 'Let's hope that the Lebanese expat community over there will not fix you some stuffed (courgette)' انشالله ما الجالية اللبنانية هونيك تحطلك شي محشاية (Rahbani, 1979/1993: disc three: 01:60). The 'stuffed (courgette)', which is a common Lebanese dish, refers here to 'a bomb', and its use in this context is funny because of the visual resemblance between the two concepts, the contrast between their respective contexts and the amusing phonetics of the word 'stuffed (courgette)'. In his later play, *Failure*, Ziad pushes this approach to a higher level, as his choices become more daring and more adventurous, as illustrated in the following example: Having realized that the production costs have far exceeded the agreed spending limit, the producer complains: 'You lowered me down in a play about the basket' (Rahbani, 1983/1993: disc two: 16:30) جيت دندلتني بمسرحية عن السلة. 'You lowered me down', in this context, stands for 'you had me trapped', and is not a verb normally used in this sense. Its use is funny because the verb is most often used to refer to the lowering down of baskets for groceries to be placed in them, and again, because the phonetics and pattern of the verb are amusing to the native speaker. One of the best examples of this practice, however, occurs in *Failure*. A director is trying to produce a play that pays homage to the Lebanese legacy and folklore, calling for the resuscitation of the traditional culture of the Lebanese village. His attempt and its underlying ideology are ridiculed throughout the play. Suddenly, one of the famous characters of Lebanese folklore appears on stage and, in the name of all the characters of Lebanese folklore, protests against the director's 'backwardness': 'We reject all the *qawarma* which you are committing in our name . . .' نحنا منرفض كل القورما اللي عم ترتكبا بإسمنا *Qawarma*, the traditional rustic cured mutton produced in Lebanese villages of old, becomes the symbol of the director's backwardness and, paired with the verb 'to commit', is used here as a synonym or an 'allegory' for 'crime' (ibid.: 01:06:20).

What are the implications of the above techniques with regard to the production of a translation that pays the language of the original text its due, as deemed essential by Benjamin? For Ziad Rahbani's humour not to

be translatable according to Benjamin's idea of the real translation is probably not an issue that would divide opinion. It is clear from the individuality of this type of humour and from the individuality of the language that lies at its centre that the translator is inevitably going to be faced with problems of translatability. In fact, before stressing the importance of the preservation of as many of the linguistic features of the original text as possible, Benjamin highlights 'translatability' as a quality which only certain works have, arguing that 'a specific significance inherent in the original manifests itself in its translatability' (Benjamin 1992: 71). Rahbani's humour could thus be simply classified as 'untranslatable', in Benjamin's terms, and unfit for translation according to his model. The suitability of other models for its translation could also be discussed. One of the better alternatives, for example, could be derived from Benjamin's own theory of *Intention*, whereby the translator should attempt to produce in translation the same effect intended in the original (p. 76). After all, the notion of 'the intended effect' is more explicit in the case of humour than for most other types of discourse, and ways to achieve it could therefore be easier to identify, depending, of course, on each individual case. For if language proves to be irreproducible, the effect it produces allows for some manoeuvring on the part of the translator. In the case of Ziad's theatre, however, and as I have tried to demonstrate in the examples given above, the intended effect is often achieved through specific features of the Arabic language and Lebanese and Levantine dialects that restrict the effect to the relevant language and dialects themselves, which takes us back to the issue of the centrality of language to Ziad's work.

The problem with the translation of Ziad Rahbani's theatre that I have sought to highlight is not that it cannot be translated according to Benjamin's model, but that Benjamin's model is the only model that would be suitable for its translation, for the very reasons that render such translation impossible. In other words, while Benjamin's model can be regarded, albeit in theory, as the safeguard for and an acknowledgement of the relevance of language to content, its applicability is hindered by this very relevance. Thus, the greater the relevance of language to content, the smaller the possibility of following Benjamin's model, and while the examination of the case of Ziad Rahbani's humour is mainly intended to show the extent to which humour can be related to language, and how the variety of ways it can revolve around it could result in its untranslatability, it also suggests that untranslatability becomes prevalent as the language matures and becomes more artistic, more individual. To suggest a translation model for creative language is thus in itself a contradiction, for the notion of

'model' implies an anticipation of the very type of language that endeavours to conquer predictability by having 'untranslatability' as one of its most characteristic features, or indeed, one of its most remarkable achievements.

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Chapter 11

Tripartite: Cross-talk Acts

Walter Redfern

I have called this chapter 'Cross-talk acts', because any two or more-sided conversation is such an act, and translating (with whatever latitude or latitudinarianism – 'lato sensu' is my watchword) is such a dialogue (or multilogue). In more than one way, the essence of translation is a nonchalant vaudeville routine, a cross-talk act.

'A translation must [. . .] retain a vital strangeness and "otherness"'.[1] Thus George Steiner. This dictum of course gives the translator carte blanche, unless he/she remembers that it is all a matter of degree. What Steiner says would be even truer of a translation into a non-native language. I have in mind key terms like: near-miss, slippage, loose connexions, spitting distance, tantamount, and near as dammit: all matters of approximation. Rather than theorize, which could take us till the cows come home, I prefer to give a running commentary, or working model (not particularly exemplary), of an actual rendering of a text of mine into two other languages. This is re-creation or recreation (they have the same genealogy). I offer three *takes* on one subject. It would be inaccurate to use terms such as 'source-language' or 'receptor-language', which would set up a top-down hierarchy, whereas I was determined to place the three languages on an equal footing. As well as a homage to a father, these three texts take on the perennial challenge of transmuting wordplay between languages. I have not consciously checked myself for translationese, but trust that the very nature of the enterprise made this unlikely.

The mother-text, in English, celebrates a father. It is a homage, a thank-you letter, an unsolicited testimonial, which remains the same in all three texts, each of which is, as each says, a variation on a theme (which is one of the many definitions of the pun). The same impulse can breed different outcomes. Why did I do them? My other two languages are French and Spanish. I wanted to test, in a small compass, their flexibility as compared with that malleable phenomenon: the English language.

Letter to My Father

Dear Dad,
You are like a negative.
You played the mouth-organ like a Spanish cow.
When you were in the Ack-Ack, during the Second World-weary War, your mates used to lead you, blind as a bat, by the hand, when darkness fell, to the gunsite. Neither you nor the rest of the crew ever shot down a Heinkel. What with your night-blindness, I can't feel sure our own RAF fighters escaped your fire. We will never know, you said. It sounded like a philosophy lesson.
Father of our house, you went in for joky pater patter. Your gags were toothless crones, chipped mugs, bottomless trousers. But you would grin when you told them, uncovering your fanglike teeth, yellowed by Woodbines ('Coffin-nails', you called them. 'Smoke 500 and you'll get some fag-cards. Smoke 10,000, and they'll give you a harp'): you looked like a well-fed alligator, a threat to no one.
No father-figure, you.
You never lectured me, the future teacher; no paternalist sermons. You never even took a pop at me, when I did something wrong as a kid, leaving that, with a heavy heart, to your shrew of a wife, who flew off the handle as easy as pie.
Each day before you trudged off with a stoical quip ('On with the motley') to your factory, you lassooed your overalls around the ankles with sticky-tape: Dada bike-clips. It was to stop the oily sludge by the production-line from staining your pants' legs which were too long for you. Daddy short-legs. Even as a lad, I stood head and shoulders above you. Though other people thought I left you standing, left you for dead, when I accessed college, whereas you had not gone beyond the elementary, it was not so. We spoke on an equal footing, before and after.
Neither sugar-daddy, nor heavenly father, you brought me up by walking alongside me, semi-blindly.
Working-man, but father of no chapel, you voted Tory. What more can I say?
Common as muck, you were no commonplace.
I have no photo, not even a negative.
I am in hock to you for what you didn't make me into, all you didn't do for me, all you didn't do to me.

An unholy patrimony is mine. You pass all paternity tests, my earthly father. You gave me the earth.
I am the variation on your theme.

The English original plays between various idiomatic versions of 'father' and 'dad'. The osmotic background to the prose-poem is Liverpool culture. At its best, this is wise-cracking, streetwise, wiseacre; up-front about emotions, but giving them a hard verbal shell. At its worst, it gives emotions the hard sell.

This text starts with a wordplay on 'negative': photographic and absence, negation. The weird sentence about harmonica-playing extends the French idiom about speaking a language badly into English, which happily accommodates such baroque conjunctions, and later into Spanish, where it takes on an extra piquancy. 'Ack-ack', a typical English and babyish rhyming acronym, seems to have no equivalent in everyday French or Spanish. Alternatives had to be found for 'pater patter', which continues the paronomasia.

Slang mucks in with puns in the section 'You never lectured'. 'Daddy short-legs' and 'Father of [no] chapel' seem to be exclusively English. Throughout, formal and idiomatic English rub companionable shoulders, as in 'common as muck, you were no commonplace'. The seemingly pejorative comparisons, as in the descriptions of the father's jokes, acquire a plus-value by the very act of laying it on too thick.

Towards the end, the negatives pile up. In fact, the father is defined largely negatively, as some theologians would define God the Father. 'An unholy patrimony', playing as it does on 'holy matrimony', is not available in French.

If my text is a hotchpotch (of references, registers), the kind of father I am repaying my emotional debts to *was* a hotchpotch, like any human being, fallible but valuable.

Le Père Malgré Lui

Tu es le négatif d'un père.
Tu jouais de l'harmonica comme une vache espagnole.
Pendant la deuxième guerre immonde, artilleur dans la défense contre avions, myope comme une taupe, à la nuit tombante tes potes te conduisaient en te tenant la main, pour aller à l'emplacement du canon. Jamais

ni toi ni tes camarades n'ont abattu de Heinkel. Les chasseurs de notre bord, vu ton héméralopie, sait-on jamais?
Tu es tout le contraire d'un père noble.
Père spirituel, tu débitais des blagues éculées, édentées, ébréchées, et tu souriais, découvrant tes crocs jaunis par les sèches bon marché (tu les appelais des 'clous de cercueil'. 'Fumes-en 500, et tu trouveras des primes dans le paquet suivant. Fumes-en 10,000, et on te gratifiera d'une harpe'), comme un alligator repu. Tu ne faisais peur à personne.
A moi, futur universitaire, tu n'as point fait la leçon ni le prêchi-prêcha. Tu ne m'as même pas giflé quand j'étais gosse fautif, t'en remettant le coeur gros à ma marâtre de mère, qui sortait de ses gonds aussi sec.
Avant de partir t'abrutir gaillardement à l'usine, tu scotchais ton bleu de travail autour des chevilles : tu avais l'air d'un cycliste pincé. C'était pour empêcher le sol crasseux, à côté de la chaîne de fabrication, de te maculer le pantalon trop long (même jeune garçon je te dépassais de quelques pouces).
On pourrait croire (on l'a en effet cru) que je t'ai distancé en devenant professeur, alors que tu t'es arrêté au niveau de l'école élémentaire. Rien de tel. On se parlait sur un pied d'égalité.
Tu n'as pas été un père nicieux. Tu as persévéré. Sans être ni pervers, ni père sévère, ni papa gâteau.
Tu es à part entière une valeur de père de famille, père fectionné.
Tu étais là en père manence. Sans idée préconçue, tu m'as élevé à l'aveuglette, à la papa.
Il n'y a pas de photo, même de négatif.
Tu es à l'opposé du cliché.
Je te suis redevable de tout ce que tu ne m'as pas fait, de tout ce que tu n'as pas fait pour moi, fait de moi.
Père pétuel.

The title I chose for the French version takes off from Molière's farce, *Le Médecin malgré lui*, which can be applied to capture this father's reluctance to be a stereotypical father. I faced the problem of finding matches for idiom, slang and tone (the mixture of registers and genres, which is still a sore point with the French, if less so with the more laid-back Spanish). A further problem, with both French and Spanish versions, was to decide how much was mutually comprehensible between readers from different cultures with their variant histories and traditions. With the French, I needed to find an entente cordiale between two historical enemies.

The nearest I could get to 'Second World-weary War' (that is: a war instigated by powers tired of being human) was 'immonde', a twist on 'mondiale'. Neither bats nor moles are altogether blind, except in the three languages (at least).

The French text alone exploits the connotation of 'un père noble' (that is: a stock role in the French theatre, not necessarily aristocratic). 'Spirituel' provides a pun (spiritual/joky), useful in that the father is one and not the other. 'Eculées', strictly, refers to down-at-heel shoes, but I yielded to the temptation (there is a lot of giving in, if not of giving up, in my versions) of a list of similarly-formed adjectives. 'Lecture' and 'sermon' gave 'leçon' and 'prêchi-prêcha', both used for lecturing and sermonizing (academic, ecclesiastical, or parental). I do not think that the Pagliacci reference is common in French, and so I substituted a pointed oxymoron with more or less the same import ('t'abrutir gaillardement'). 'Dada' is not used for 'Daddy'; hence the replacement, a play on 'pincé' (wearing clips/uptight). I had to omit 'Daddy short-legs', because there was no means of twisting with 'tipule' (crane-fly).

'Père nicieux' starts the modulations on 'père-per', as 'papa' was of no lexical adaptability. This choice, blatantly, gives rise to more strained, if understandable, neologisms (those hybrid monsters) than in either of the other two texts. This choice resulted from the shortage of vocabulary and idioms in French concerning fatherhood. I am, besides, ever ready to coin, which is not a monopoly of dukes, pace Queneau[2].

One French idiom ('valeur de père de famille' a stock-market term meaning a safe investment, used ironically here) proved a handy addendum. 'A la papa' (in a down-to-earth way) fits the general drift of the text. 'Cliché' offers a working pun (negative/banality).

Forgive my linguistic racism (or, more accurately, disappointment), but French, in my book, is less supple than English (or Spanish), as regards register, word-order, or word-manipulation. I wanted to elasticize at least the first and third of these three criteria. French neologisms tend to be either borrowings, or based on Latin or Greek roots (as in Barthes's 'francité'). I confess to a nonsense element in my French version, but nonsense can make a tolerable kind of sense. I could alternatively call my coinages nonce-words, hapaxes. (As we grow older, we generate nonce-words plenteously, no longer having easy access to our word-hoard). I hope, at least my hapaxes are happy ones.[3] Perhaps, by analogy with 'inkhorn terms', I could christen them 'dactylographemes'. Of course, by forging 'per/père' words, I was still hogtied by available words starting that way. As a consequence,

I brought in words not present in the other two versions, though they are still in harmony with the overall meaning of the piece.

Whatever I say, this is the most dubious of the three offerings, the most out on a limb.

Oh Mein Papa!

Querido Papá,
Eres un negativo que debo revelar.
Tocabas la armónica como una vaca española.
Cuando estabas en la artillería antiaérea durante la segunda guerra inmunda y cansada de la vida, tus compañeros te conducían por la mano, más ciego que un topo, al anochecer, hacia el emplazamiento de los cañones. Ojalá tuvieras un papamóvil! Ni tú ni los otros del equipo lograron nunca derribar un bombardero enemigo. Con tu ceguera nocturna, no estoy seguro de que nuestros cazas hayan escapado a vuestro fuego. No sabremos nunca, decías; me sonaba a una lección filosófica.
Cabeza de la familia que iba perdiendo el pelo, papagayo, chistabas de costumbre en chistes. Estos se parecían a viejas desdentadas, a tazas astilladas, a pantalones sin fondo. Sin embargo, sonreías cuando los contabas, descubriendo tus dientes colmilludos, amarilleados por el tabaco baratejo ('Clavos de ataúd' los llamabas. 'Fuma 500, y te darán unos cuantos cromos coleccionables. Fuma 10,000. y te darán un arpa').
Tenías aire de caimán repleto que no amenaza ni papa a nadie.
Más padrazo que padrastro, tú.
No sermoneaste nunca papalmente al futuro profesor. No me dabas nunca una paliza de padre y muy señor mío, cuando de niño era malo: dejabas eso, apesadumbrado, en las manos de tu fiera de esposa, que se salía fácilmente de sus casillas.
Cada mañana, murmurando estoicamente a la Pagliacci una de tus alusiones ('Vistámonos de payaso') – pero nunca decías paparruchas, oh mi papá jamás papanatas – antes de salir hacia la fábrica lazabas tu mono alrededor de los tobillos con Sellotape, para que el fango oleaginoso de la línea de montaje no te manchase la pernera, demasiado grande para ti, persona bajita, pero presencia padre!
No me llegabas, ni siendo yo niño, a la suela del zapato. Aunque los otros pensaran que yo te dejaba muy atrás cuando entré en la universidad, mientras tú quedabas en el nivel primario (no entendías ni papa de las cosas académicas), se equivocaban. Hablábamos en un mismo pie de igualdad el uno con el otro, antes y después.

Ni Papá Noel, ni padre celestial, ni papa con su papada en su papado, padre espiritual, me criaste por medio de andar a mi lado, casi a ciegas.
Obrero no sindicalista, votabas partido conservador. Con eso se dice todo.
De lo más ordinario, no pronunciabas verdades de Pero Grullo.
No tengo ninguna foto de ti, ni siquiera negativa.
Estoy en deuda contigo por lo que no me hiciste hacer, por lo que no hiciste de mi, por lo que no hiciste por mí.
Tú eres para mí un patrimonio impío.
Triunfarías en cualquier litigio de paternidad, mi padre terrenal.
No me prometiste, más bien me diste, la luna.
Yo soy la variación; tú el tema.
Eres mi padre!

The permutations here swivel between 'padre', 'papá', and 'papa' (though avoiding various Latin-American senses of this word, mainly to do with food)[4]. 'Pope'/Dad' does not work in English. The title resurrects an international hit song/trumpet solo of some decades back. 'Que debo revelar' (that I must develop) makes explicit an idea implicit in the other two renderings: a developing portrait of a negative, a father who wasn't.

The musical cow remains surrealistic in Spanish. 'Cansada de la vida' matches the 'world-weary' of the English text, omitted in the French one.

'Papamóvil' could usefully serve as a Popemobile, or a dad's car. 'Heinkel' would mean little to a Spanish reader, even one alive round 1940.

'Cabeza de la familia . . . ' adds to the original a pun on head of family/ head of hair. 'Chistar'= to talk, and 'chistes' (jokes), which links them tightly, as in 'pater patter'.

It was pointless ferrying in 'Woodbines', and so I made do with 'baratejo': cheap and nasty. 'Ni papa a nadie': gulps down nobody. I coped with 'father-figure' by contrasting 'padrazo' (indulgent father) with 'padrastro' (martinet). Spanish is very prolific in affixes,which economically engender variety. 'Una paliza de padre y muy señor mío' is the mother and father of a hiding.

I added, perhaps pleonastically, 'a la Pagliacci': Spanish has the idiom 'Vistámonos de payaso' (let us dress as a buffoon); and 'paparruchas' (nonsense) because it's there. Similarly 'papanatas' (simpleton, sucker). I chose 'persona bajita' (titch) to make up for the omitted play on 'Daddy short-legs'. 'Presencia padre!': what a guy!

I supplemented the information in the education segment with 'no entendías ni papa' (you didn't understand a blind thing). 'Papa con su

papada en su papado' was irresistible wordplay on the pope, double-chin, and papacy. 'Verdades de Pero Grullo' are truisms, commonplaces.

'Eres mi padre!' rounds the whole piece off: you're a marvel!

The Spanish version very possibly overdoes things, like a baroque Spanish cathedral space.

Why such relentless wordplay in all three versions? Translation sets us astride two languages, and puns are the perfect straddlers. The pun is a mode of ambiguity, of tension, of facing-both-ways statements – hence the frequency of the comparison with Janus. (Less honourably, a pun can be a mugwump, with its mug on one side of the fence and its wump on the other; it can prevaricate as well as hit hard).

There is a tension in my theme: the extraordinariness of ordinariness, the nonpareil nonentity of a father. Punning seems the aptest strategy for capturing this tension. Besides, I have punned, principally on paper, since the age of approximately eight, and am hardly likely to stop now. I have had a lifelong fascination with puns and their cousins: neologisms, reworked idioms and clichés, what I call twists, but could call reconditioned syntagms, to talk academic.

The relationship with my creator was firmly rooted in a shared sense of humour. And so the textual punning is organic, not superimposed nor (God forbid) 'light relief'. Puns do not have to be funny, and they can make perfectly serious points.[5] In all three texts, I am playing with the idea of father(hood). I am being ludic, but serious, jocoserious. Isn't that what any humour worth its salt is?

A pun is a translation (indeed a variant name is 'translatio') ***within*** a language, shuttling between two or more meanings of a word or phrase. Finally, 'le calembour n'empêche pas les convictions': puns don't mean that you don't mean it.[6] They need not let down an utterance; they can energize it.

My other major experiences of translation were *Gottlieb Krumm, Made in England*, and *Calembours, ou les puns et les autres*.[7] The first carried across a novel written in English by a French writer, Georges Darien, into my non-native language, French. The second transported into French my *Puns, or More Senses than One*, subtitled 'Traduit de l'intraduisible', a joke about the supposed impossibility of translating wordplay. How different is reverse translation, from a mother-tongue into an alien one, from orthodox translation the other way round; the first *thème*, the second *version*? Is self-translation self-recycling, or self-parody? Is it narcissism, vicious circle, onanism?

I hope to have given the slip both to *franglais* and to Spanglish, at the price, maybe, of concocting a no-man's-tongue, which I can defend only by grandly calling it 'macaronic'. I trust that I have at least kept the essential of the sentiments and the tone of the original text in the other two, the mixture of idiomatic and posh speech. Which is the best of the three? And why? It's not up to me to say, without transmogrifying myself into a Spaniard or a Frenchman. I have undoubtedly exploited (or plundered?) the lexis of the other two languages. But is the outcome a tripartite monolith, or just an ersatz, a patchwork quilt with no governing pattern? All I can say is that I intended to write three stand-alone pieces, which would each make sense per se, three riffs.

My arguments probably owe more to the spirit of wordplay or poetry than to that of translation soberly conceived. Unarguably, I made life easier for myself by my readiness to add or omit in each successive text. There was never any question of slavish fidelity to the original. Doing them in staggered sequence, I had the luxury of afterthoughts, 'esprit de l'escalier'. I also had the advantage over a normal translator of someone else's work of knowing what I wanted to convey, while allowing for the indisputable fact that even our own words very often escape our control, so that we can never be totally sure that anything we say is properly understood by a listener/reader.

I believe that I have betrayed (that is: revealed) myself, but not let myself down treacherously. The worst form of betrayal, in translations, is producing flatness, making freshness trite.

Of course, Samuel Beckett was far from the first to make a virtue out of failure ('Fail better!'). Steiner quotes Ortega y Gasset on the sadness of the translator after her/his unavoidable failure to equal the original[8]. Personally, I feel more amused than saddened by failures, amused at the disparity between intentions and achievements. Such disparity is just as likely to strike some as comic rather than tragic or melancholic.

As Borges proposed, in a cheering Chestertonian paradox, of Samuel Henley's English rendering of William Beckford's French tale, *Vathek*, 'the original is unfaithful to the translation'[9]. This is a joke gainsaying the old punning saw 'Traduttore traditore'. It is cheering because it upends the usual unexamined reverence for originals.

I am fully aware that, wanting to elasticize, I have unnaturally distended French and, to a lesser degree, Spanish. Is this not the prerogative of the outsider, who can see the mechanisms, the kneejerk tics, the unquestioned idiocies of the alien tongue? Can any speaker/writer of a foreign

language (or 'langue forestière', as Queneau's inventive nymphet Zazie macaronically puts it) take it entirely seriously?[10] Any acquirer of a foreign lingo first lights on its corniest aspects: clichés of feeling and expression, its systems of congealed utterances. With growing mastery, you earn or grab the right to be playful.[11] You can make, and not just repeat, jokes. You can take liberties, handle it roughly.

According to Steiner, 'translations are inflationary'[12]. I once made Jean Cocteau's comment on Rousseau's account of being delectably spanked by the sister of the Protestant pastor who was his guardian ('Le postérieur de Jean-Jacques est-il le soleil de Freud qui se lève? J'y distingue plutôt le clair de lune romantique') go none too protestingly into: 'Is this portrait of Jean-Jacques's backside the first rosy light of Freudian psychology? Or is it rather the moonshine of Romanticism?'[13] This rendering improves upon (betters/escalates) the original.

After citing Chopin voicing his irritation at being congratulated by English socialites on the 'flowing' quality of his compositions, Milan Kundera quotes his own Italian publisher, Roberto Calasso: 'On reconnaît une bonne traduction non pas à sa fluidité mais à toutes les formules insolites et originales que le traducteur a eu le courage de conserver et de défendre'[14]. Strangeness, as quoted at the outset of this exercise, is of the essence of translation.

Now that I have (and why not?) sung my own praises, admitted my shortcomings, and finished my special pleading, naturally the rest is up to the reader. It always is.

Translation, in its effortfulness and play-spirit, teaches us that we need not be, as Whorf decreed, prisoners of our own language, which makes up our mind for us. We can escape our own backyards, and play away.

Notes

My working tools were, obviously, numerous English, French and Spanish dictionaries, including slang ones, in the search for words of similar segmentations, or idiomatic variations. Often, the best place to refresh or add to your memory of any country's idioms is not a monolingual but a bilingual dictionary, as they are only patchily covered in standard compendia.

[1] George Steiner: *After Babel*. Oxford University Press, 1976, pp. 64–5.

[2] 'Ne néologise pas toi-même: c'est là privilège de duc'. Raymond Queneau: *Les Fleurs bleues*. Paris: Gallimard, 1965, p. 42.

[3] 'If a nonce-word should happen to crop up a second time, should it be called a *deuce word*? Now *deuce word* is my own coinage and is itself a nonce-word'. Allan Walker Read: 'The Sources of Ghost-words in English'. *Word*, 29, 1978, p. 96.

[4] Assuming that fewer potential readers of this essay have Spanish as well as French, I have translated more of my version, but mainly when the Spanish text differed significantly from the English one.

[5] One of the possible ancestors of 'pun' was 'punto'.
[6] Jules Vallès: *Le Bachelier*. In *Oeuvres*. ed. R. Bellet. Paris: Gallimard, 1990, vol. ll, p. 503.
[7] *Gottlieb Krumm, Made in England*. Paris: Gallimard, 1991. *Calembours, ou les puns et les autres*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2005.
[8] Steiner: *After Babel*, p. 288.
[9] J.L. Borges: 'About William Beckford's *Vathek*.' In *Other Inquisitions*. tr. R. Simms. London: Souvenir, 1973, p. 140.
[10] Raymond Queneau: *Zazie dans le Métro*. Paris: Gallimard, 1972, p. 92.
[11] Roland Topor offers as number 55 of his 'Cent bonnes raisons pour me suicider tout de suite: parce que j'ai toujours eu envie de posséder une langue morte'. Quoted in J. Sternberg: *Roland Topor*. Paris: Seghers, 1978, p. 116.
[12] Steiner: *After Babel*, p. 277.
[13] Jean Cocteau: 'Rousseau'. In *Tableau de la littérature française*. Paris: Gallimard, 1939, p. 267.
[14] Milan Kundera: *L'Art du roman*. Paris: Gallimard, 1986, p. 150.

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