

WHAT IS SO SPECIAL ABOUT AUTHORITATIVE OR DOCUMENTARY TEXTS THAT WE CANNOT MANIPULATE THEM AS IF THEY WERE BY SHAKESPEARE?

By Sergio Viaggio, United Nations Office at Vienna

Introduction

In my *General Theory of Interlingual Mediation* (forthcoming, I hope), I point out a rather puzzling paradox: A literary translator is more or less free to tamper with his original at will (to “manipulate” it as the euphemism has it), but fie the mediator that dares “manipulate” a birth certificate, a *résumé*, or a UN draft resolution on the establishment of dates for an international conference on biodiversity! Is it the very concept of “manipulation”? Is it the nature of literary and non literary texts? Is it the nature of literary versus non-literary translation? Or is it the nature of literary as opposed to non literary translators?

We cannot begin to answer the question unless we have a clear notion (read “theory”), on the one hand, of speech and, based upon it, of literary speech, and, on the other, of translation and, based upon it, of literary translation: No theory - no dice!

García Landa describes speech as the mutual production of social perceptions in a specific social situation governed by a specific *exponential field*¹ consisting of subjectively internalised and systematised linguistic and extralinguistic knowledge that -in order for communication to succeed- both interlocutors must activate. This linguistic and extralinguistic knowledge (including the relevant social praxis) activated in order to produce or comprehend speech he calls the *hermeneutic package*. The object of a speech perception is meaning meant, a *linguistic percept* (*intended -LPI²-* or *comprehended -LPC-* as the case may be) consisting of a *noetic plaque* effable in propositional form and an *emotive relief*; this comes to the speaker’s awareness³ clothed in second-degree, speech signs⁴. It is essential to bear in mind that the relationship obtaining between the cause or object of both a natural and a speech perception and the resulting percept is one of *identity*. A percept is identical to its object, not similar, analogous or equivalent to it: I am perceiving -however imperfectly- that tree, not one like it; similarly, I am perceiving that which I wish to convey, not something like it. And you will have understood what I wish to convey if you also manage, on the basis of the sensorially perceptible stimulus that I am producing to that effect, to “see” that which I wish to convey, not something like it. In other words, communication will have succeeded between us if $LPI=LPC$. Still, you -or even I- may have an imperfect, skewed or partial perception of my intended meaning. Insofar as such is the case, communication fails totally or partially.

¹All the terms -whether my own or pilfered- that are relevant to my own concept appear in bold italics.

²In his 1998 article -as in other previous publications in English- García Landa uses the English acronym *LP* (linguistic percept), but in his 2001 book he opts for the Spanish *EPH* (espacio perceptual hablístico). In my own later writings I have reverted to the English acronym, which is shorter.

³A moot question that both García Landa and I trying to resolve. If, as I tend to think at present, meaning meant comes to the speaker’s mind as a perception, then an *LPI* is the object, or cause, of it and it is perceived by the speaker himself as an *LPC* (the first and often only perception of his *LPI*, which need not be made manifest externally for an interlocutor to perceive in turn). In this case, the interlocutor’s *LPC* would be a **second** perception of the same *LPI*.

⁴Second-degree in the Pavlovian sense, i.e. as opposed to first-degree or natural signs, which we share with other animal species.

It is also crucial to note that both the linguistic signs that produce the percept and the emotive relief that envelops it vanish from awareness almost at once, so that only the noetic percept is stored in medium- and long-term memory. In most cases, for instance, we can remember what the poet “said,” but hardly the words he used to say it; we can also remember that what he said affected us in a certain way, but we cannot actually re-experience the effect unless we re-perceive the stimulus. The same happens with natural perception, we can remember that a certain wine was velvety and that we found it exquisite, but we cannot re-experience the actual feeling unless we taste it anew (of course, the newly experienced feeling may well not be as we remembered it). The great difference -and the enormous advantage- of speech percepts over natural ones is that we can memorise them: we do not need the actual reproduction of the natural, first-degree stimulus to re- evoke noetic content, nor do we actually need the acoustic stimulus to “(re-)hear” the words. This manipulability and re-effability of speech percepts, i.e. of our representation of the world, our feelings, our will, our desires, by means of a second-degree signal system of signs with conventional semantic value -the product of biosocial evolution- has ensured the survival of the species, and, at the same time, its uniqueness. It made possible, for starters, the synchronisation of hunting and, generally, that which Searle (1995) calls “collective intentionality.”

The fact that noetic content can be verbalised without much ado is essential for communication and translation: The species has survived against all natural odds because we can communicate “what we think;” the relative ineffability of “what we feel” has not stood in the way of our discovering penicillin, figuring out the speed of light, guessing at the existence of anti-matter, building the pyramids, putting together the Space Shuttle programme or devising *penne alla arrabiata*. This ontological difference between the noetic and the pragmatic (let alone between the noetic and the poetic) explains, for instance, that there is but one science, effable in principle in any language, and as many literatures as there are social groups and lects - and it specifically explains why literary translation has long remained a breed apart, stubbornly remiss to theorisation (not anymore, however). García Landa’s revolutionary insight of speech as a social perceptual process opens wide the door for a new, refreshing look at speech and translation. Indeed the primary social function of speech is the mutual production of noetic perceptions; and that is, also, the primary social function of translation - a language game the constitutive rule of which, quoth García Landa, is the reproduction of the same percept by means of a new linguistic vehicle in a new social situation. Since our social perceptual apparatus consists of both our first-degree natural ability to hear what speakers say and our second-degree hermeneutic ability to “make sense” out of the noises they proffer, in order for a speech percept to be successfully produced, the subject of comprehension must be equipped with the relevant sensorial⁵ and hermeneutic wherewithal, and be able to activate it in the specific social situation and apply it to the specific act of speech.

This revolutionary concept, however, has two limitations:

If we take it literally, then comprehension is a binary, all-or-nothing proposition: either you “see” what I mean or you do not. This is, indeed, the way that things work out on line, at the microlevel of the units of sense that progressively amount to speech comprehension (and

⁵Needless to say, the initially acoustic stimulus has now been transmuted into visual images, whilst the deaf literally “see” speech, and the deaf and blind actually “feel” it as tactile pressure on their nervous terminals. The nature of the first-degree perception (acoustic, visual, tactile) does not stand in the way of second-degree percept - although it certainly imposes its own limitations and opens its own possibilities: acoustically produced speech is 100% linear, visual and tactile speech is both linear and spatial.

production). Linear comprehension, however, is further processed -even on line- ending up in an integrated, systematised and **critically analysed** metarepresentation of globally intended meaning.

Here, at the level of metarepresented meaning, operate the socially relevant contextual effects of comprehension: *cognitive* and *qualitative*, i.e. the impact of noetic comprehension on the subject's assumptions and what that impact "feels like" - i.e. the cognitive and emotive reverberation of noetic comprehension. It stands to reason that informative texts are functionally less dependent on non-cognitive effects than expressive or appellative ones, and even more so that literary texts swim or sink on their qualitative effectiveness, which is ultimately aesthetic. Functionality is, in this context, synonymous with relevance: Each subject decides (mostly unconsciously) the relevant degree of sameness of propositional content and the adequate quality of effects that are sufficient or optimum for his nonce purposes: Regardless of the journalists' and the editor's concept and intentions, no reader reads all the newspaper, nor does he read what he does actually read with the same degree of intellectual interest or emotive involvement (which ultimately determines intellectual interest, of course).

The critical (often unconscious and more or less immediate) meta-analysis of meaning comprehended, moreover, is performed exclusively on the basis of the subject's intellectual ability and interests as fuelled by his emotive involvement. Whereby hangs a tale: It is not enough for the subject of comprehension to be equipped with the relevant sensorial and hermeneutic tool kit - he must be ready to apply it properly. All too often, it is not the case. It is not enough to be able to understand: one must be **willing** to understand. Since one cannot simply refuse to understand the way one can refuse to speak, resistance to understanding only works "innocently" if it is unconscious. The same applies to one's resistance to speak: the only way we can "innocently" not say what we really mean is when we are not aware that we are hiding it.

And why would a speaker be unwilling to speak or an interlocutor unwilling to understand if not for the fear of the **effects** of comprehension? In order for communication to succeed both parties need, for sure, a shared hermeneutic package, but they also need what Toolan (1996) calls *mutual orientedness* - a Gricean conscious and, above all, unconscious, emotive disposition to cooperate, to make themselves understood and to understand, i.e. aptly to apply their hermeneutic ability. This cooperation can only be ensured if the interlocutor's emotive feathers are not ruffled the wrong way. The speaker may well wish to do exactly that, of course: if he manages, he succeeds; if he doesn't, he fails. Depending on a party's motivations and intentions, then, metacommunicative success may equal communicative failure and vice versa. In any event, communicative success is measured on two levels: noetic and pragmatic. García Landa's model applies only to the noetic level (which, let me repeat, is the core one). But communication may well succeed noetically and sink pragmatically - or the other way around. Interpreters know it very well: if you want them to laugh, you better change the joke! At the pragmatic level, we thus have the counterpart of the shared hermeneutic package: mutual orientedness and the ability to apply it successfully. We need to have the will and ability to induce and experience feelings - the success of the poem depends both on the poet's literary skill and the reader's literary sensitivity. In the case of aesthetic effectiveness, we could speak of a shared *emotive package* - otherwise, the reader remains unmoved or, worse, gets irritated.

Human communication aims, then, at more than the sheer exchange of *LPs*. Between speaker and interlocutor there travel many different layers of meaning - even though in communication through speech all these different layers are grounded in noetic meaning and are "peeled off" as metarepresentations on the basis and as a consequence of noetic comprehension. A crucial branch of this process has to do with metarepresenting the speaker's motivations,

intentions and feelings. It is not enough, in other words, for two people to understand what they are saying to each other in order to ensure metacommunicative success. Metacommunicative success necessitates what I term *relevant identity* between meaning meant and comprehended, i.e. such a degree of noetic comprehension between meaning meant and comprehended that is *sufficient* (from barely enough to optimum to full), and of pragmatic correspondence between intended and achieved contextual⁶ effects that is *adequate* (from barely acceptable to optimum) for the larger social stakes at hand. Successful metacommunication, thus, entails both more and less than sheer perceptual identity between meaning meant and understood.

This, so far as non mediated, monolingual communication. By the same token, if we look at translation as the sheer reproduction of noetic meaning in a second speech act, we are describing only part -if a crucial one- of what translators actually do. I think it more practical, therefore, to think of translation as interlingual mediation, the constitutive rule of which is not simply to reproduce meaning meant but actually help achieve this relevant, second-degree cognitive *cum* pragmatic understanding. Since the metacommunicative stakes and purposes may not be totally or partially shared by all participants and “stakeholders” in the mediated event -the author, the originator, the mediator himself, or any particular (group of) addressee(s)- it is up to the professional mediator **expertly** to decide -on the basis of his deontological loyalty to his client as well as to the profession at large- the degree and nature of noetic identity and pragmatic correspondence that counts as relevant at each moment for the larger social stakes in hand.

In other words, unless we take stock of the metacommunicative motivations that lead both speaker and interlocutor to speak and to try to understand, and of the effects intended by the former and experienced by the latter, we end up with an extremely impoverished picture of human communication, let alone translation: True, speech is produced and comprehended as a sequence of percepts, but, as we have seen, the metacommunicative **purposes** that lead people to produce and comprehend speech and the effects they expect thereby are too decisive to be ignored. For simplicity’s sake, we can amputate the speaker’s motivation preceding the double act of speech by the speaker-translator-addressee triad and the effects on the addressee(s) after its end, but the effects on the translator as a first subject of comprehension and his motivations as a second speaker cannot possibly be excised from the middle. This explains the translator’s **inescapable** if mostly invisible “visibility.”

In direct communication, speaker and interlocutor have no one to help them communicate, but a mediator (a friend, the bartender, a lawyer, a marriage counsellor) has a chance -and in the case of a professional mediator, a deontological **obligation**- to cater more specifically to either notion of relevance and acceptability depending on where his loyalty lies. When speaker and interlocutor need not just any mediator, but an interlingual one, and when, to boot, the act of speech production is separated in time, space and culture from that of speech comprehension, the thing gets so complex as to become at times unmanageable. Given the new social coordinates and, especially, the systematically more marked asymmetry in social and individual experience, interests or individual sensitivities and hermeneutic ability, the interlingual mediator must establish, as I pointed out, what counts as relevant identity of meaning under the

⁶Let me remind you that by contextual effects I understand both cognitive and non-cognitive, emotive or *qualitative* (from strictly pragmatic to aesthetic) effects. Non-cognitive effects are not related to a change in the subject’s assumptions but to the subject’s feelings about those assumptions and are not equal to propositional enrichment or any other kinds of metarepresentation. Qualitative effects are, however, the by-product of cognitive effects, themselves a by-product of noetic comprehension. Qualitative effects, in other words, are produced **by** and (more or less immediately) **after** noetic comprehension.

new circumstances for the larger social stakes (larger than any isolated *ad hoc* understandings of individual segments of the arch-act of speech). This insight allows us, finally, to understand “manipulation”: The mediator “manipulates” the original in order to achieve a new balance between cognitive and qualitative contextual effects. Depending on the new balance intended (intended by the mediator - if normally at the behest of someone else: the speaker, the mediator’s addressee(s) or the translation’s originator), the mediator may, nay, must, “tamper with” both form **and** content.

Similarity, isotopy, equivalence and representation

My contention would be that what a literary or documentary translator -as opposed to, say, an adapter or a localiser of a pragmatic text⁷ - would normally seek to achieve is to **represent** a text in the target language and culture. In that respect, I cannot but agree with Goodman (as quoted by Ross 1981) that similarity is totally irrelevant to representation. In order to represent a three-dimensional image in perspective, for instance, the artist must distort it; this distortion is, precisely, what makes it look **real**. Something analogous happens when a translator seeks to represent a foreign work in a new linguistic and cultural medium. As Goodman stresses, the goal of a literary (or, add I, documentary) translation that is meant to represent the work in the target language and culture is maximal preservation of what the original **exemplifies** -whether a sonnet or a death certificate- as well as of what it says. Ross adds that this emphasis on the importance of exemplification in translation is salutary, for we must indeed be concerned not only with the meaning of a work, but also with the kind of text of which a work or any of its components is an example (1981:13).

Similarity must, then, defer to equivalence; except that equivalence has also been traditionally understood as a one-tier proposition (semantic, lexical, metric, effectual, etc.). If global identity of perception is pursued, then equivalence itself must defer to a package representation, in which well-nigh nothing may end up being similar or strictly equivalent in the end. The same applies to isotopy: any statistical and other analyses of what becomes what in parallel or translated texts or corpora must always bear in mind that isotopy and inter-textual synonymy and isonymy, important as they indeed are for different pedagogical or professional purposes, are **secondary** with respect to the relevant perceptual identity pursued -and achieved- in each case.

⁷A hybrid case would be that of an adapter (or “localiser”) of a literary text with a view to producing an adapted literary text.

There is, then, an added factor about the literary (as opposed to merely “informative”) translation of a literary piece that of its *representativity* vis-à-vis the original. In this respect, literary translation abuts, as we know, on the documentary. Of course, most readers are “innocent” and have little if any idea of what the original “looks like.” I, for one, learned relatively late in life that *Faust* and *The Odyssey* were in verse⁸, and most people do not know what really makes a *haiku* a *haiku*. It is more or less exclusively the mediator’s responsibility to choose how to represent the original by means of his translation. This choice nobody really denies (not even publishers, I am told: in literary translations originators seem to count and meddle less than in truly trivial translations). In translating Dante, for instance, to keep or waive *terza rima*, to give up on verse altogether, to archaize or modernise language, to adapt cultural referents or not, to omit, skip or otherwise “modulate” is, basically, the mediator’s socially acknowledged prerogative. A prerogative that most of his pragmatic colleagues, including himself in such an avatar, cannot dream of enjoying. I think this is due to the historical fact that literary translation (including the translation of paraliterary works: philosophy, theology, etc.) has traditionally been a labour of love embarked upon by the sufficiently scholarly, leisurely and well off. Once one translates because one damn well pleases, then one is bound to translate as one damn well pleases and that’s more or less the end of it (most authors tend to be dead or cannot read the target language anyway). As a matter of fact, I have never seen a literary translation criticised on other than target-language and functionality criteria (which is basically all that manipulationists do). I doubt it very much that any literary critic (especially if he is to review one or two books a week) will go through the gruesome task of checking a translation against the original for content - let alone form. This, however, is not how pragmatic translations are judged by “critics,” who often are only looking for lexical matches (and screaming whenever they fail to detect them). Both the critics of literary translations and those of pragmatic ones, by the way, tend not to be professional translators - which says a lot about the social status of the profession.

In pragmatic translation, however, the sheer labels “authoritative” or “documentary” seem to shift power away from the mediator, to impose strict limits to his “meddling.” In such cases, the kind of formal (including semantic) relationship between original and target texts would appear to be decided upon him - or so many mediators think, and a-critically and meekly accept. But... who decides that a text is “authoritative” or that it is a “document”? Or, rather, who decides that it counts as “authoritative” or “documentary” for the specific purposes? And who decides what kind of special formal relationship is to be pursued as a consequence? Any which way we look at it, the question remains one of social power. Once the mediator “waives” his professional freedom (or, again, his **duty** deontologically to exercise his professional judgement and act accordingly with a view to helping metacommunicative success), once he acts as a physician who accepts to give the injection where the patient wants it, rather than where it is really more effective, all that a mediator is left with is at best powerlessness... and at worst fear.

⁸When I did find out, though, I felt totally abused, insulted, and cheated by the Spanish translators.

Just as, in the abstract, out of a specific context and translational purpose, literary texts do not command any specific kind of representativity, neither do documentary nor authoritative pragmatic texts. As with **all** translation, it always depends on the specific communicative and, especially, metacommunicative *skopos*. Take a birth certificate: Its format and the information consigned is mandated by the relevant national authority for the relevant national administrative purposes. The moment such a certificate is needed as a document abroad, however, only the basic data may remain relevant: name, place and date of birth, possibly the parents' names, nationality and a few other (for some purposes, religious or ethnic information may be relevant -even suicidally so- for others not at all). An Argentine translator now based in France is still trying to convince the President of the French Republic that he was not born in "Billinghurst, Postal Code 2457" but in "Billinghurst **Street, number** 2457, Buenos Aires, Argentina." The problem, as he explains it⁹, is as follows: He was born at Bazterrica Hospital, Billinghurst Street, number 2457; the French bureaucrat -who had before him a "documentary" translation of that most "authoritative" birth certificate- did not know that in Argentina houses can have four-figure numbers (something unheard of in France), he mistook it for the postal code (whilst there was no such thing in Argentina at that time), and entered the information accordingly. A non-literal translation -"domesticated," if Venuti prefers- that read, precisely: "Billinghurst street, number 2457" would have prevented the confusion, of course, but now that the damage is done, it has cost my poor friend a lot of time, aggravation and money to control or undo it every time. And it also means money, aggravation and time for the French Republic. So who wins by taking authoritativeness and documentarity as synonyms of servile imitation of an original's form (including, most notably, its semantic form)?

There is worse: A Mexican colleague explained that "When I was asked to translate birth and death certificates for my Government's relevant institution and proceeded to produce exact copies of the American forms, I was asked to return to the local format and enter just the relevant data. This, they told me, made it easier to find the required information in order to enter it in our local population registry. Nevertheless, the new expert translators enter all the data, whether necessary or not, which delays delivery and increases costs¹⁰." The question is why the new translators refuse to translate relevantly (increasing delays and costs to boot!). My educated guess is they are so in awe of "the original" as a document that they refuse to exercise their freedom, nay **duty**, to translate relevantly from the standpoint of the metacommunicative purposes of translation - even though in this specific case they have been more or less begged to do so!

And then there is even worse: A colleague sought her fellow practitioners' help with the Spanish phrase "*elegido mejor compañero*," which her client had entered in the CV he wanted translated into English¹¹. The client, a young Argentine economist who wanted to apply for a postgraduate course at an American university, had consigned as relevant background information that he had been "chosen best fellow student" by his fourth-year college classmates. As an American colleague with vast experience in this kind of translation privately remarked, a *curriculum vitae* is not a *résumé*: The latter must meet different acceptability criteria. Such information is not only totally irrelevant for a US university, but, which is worse, self-defeating, since the mere fact that the applicant considers it worth mentioning will most probably torpedo acceptability by the intended reader, as it seems too childish a claim. A truly professional

⁹*El Lenguaraz* Spanish translators' discussion forum (el_lenguaraz@yahoo.com) message #35084, 25.07.2001.

¹⁰*Uacinos* Spanish translators' discussion forum (uacinos@yahoo.com) message #19073, 3.02.2002..

¹¹*El Lenguaraz* Argentine translators' forum, message 39597, 24 January 2002.

mediator ought to alert her client to this fact and vigorously advise him to excise it and trust the expert in interlingual and intercultural mediation to decide which facts to mention, how and in what order.

Relevance is universal, and it applies lock, stock and barrel to documentary and authoritative texts and utterances. Do foreign authorities really care to process any information they do not really need? Not any more than the flesh-and-blood people, who are the ones who will have to do the work for their authorities in the first place. What they really need -as does everybody else, whether institutional or organic- is a relevant translation; except that they would hardly let a mediator decide for them. Even though only a truly competent mediator would be in a position to judge relevance of the translated text for the intended user. As we can see, so far the difference between the literary and the pragmatic translator's freedom lies squarely in the latter's lack of social power (and, as a frequent consequence, of individual assertiveness), based on an inherent mistrust of his own expert ability to determine and achieve relevance on the part of both the client and himself. Unfortunately, as we know, many mediators refuse even to try. More than a few simultaneous interpreters, as a case in point, aver that their task is to say all that the original speaker says, whatever the social context, whatever the metacommunicative stakes, however obviously irrelevant for the target interlocutors. Their specious disclaimer is: let the listener process all the information and decide on his own what is relevant and what is not. "Who are we to decide what is relevant and what is not? Who are we to "tamper" with the original? We are just translators: ours is not to reason why, ours but to do and bye!" quoth they. This question, I submit, reveals a biiiiiiig problem! A problem that ought to be prevented with healthy doses of (good) translation theory administered precociously at translation school. There are, indeed, situations where any form of active mediation is deontologically taboo, but they are the exception rather than the rule. In any event- the first thing a mediator must determine is, precisely, what his mediating duty *cum* leeway is.

Strictly speaking, of course, in the three cases above, the mediator would not be "translating": he would not be striving for total identity between meaning meant and meaning understood, but for *relevant identity*, actively manipulating his text on the basis of the specific metacommunicative purposes of his translation. In this, he would be "tampering" with the original in an way analogous to his literary counterpart - with a crucial difference: In the latter's case the metacommunicative *skopos* (to inform, to move, to make the reader comfortable by "domesticating" the translated text or to shake him out of his cultural doldrums by "foreignising" it) is normally established by the translator out of his own ideological agenda and artistic outlook (see, for instance, Venuti 1995 and 1998, Robinson 1991 and, most glaringly, Nabokov 1975). The pragmatic translator, on his part, is providing a professional service. His purpose is not really his, but his client's - except that often the client is not even aware that, as any human action, translation (as well as its reading by the intended and other addressees) is a purposeful activity and therefore purpose-dependent. Establishing the metacommunicative purpose of his commission and identifying the best means optimally to serve it is -or, rather, ought to be- **the** decisive component of any professional mediator's expertise. Fie the mediator who cannot or dare nor do anything but "translate"!

The problem, then, is not translational at all, but social and, by extension, psychological (*N.b.*: not the other way around). It is not that literary translation is inherently different from pragmatic translation, or authoritative or documentary translation from instrumental or literary translation: The problem lies in the originator's (and, alas!, many a theory-deficient practitioner's) a-critical concept of representativity, fidelity and, generally speaking, "similarity" between the original and the translated text's forms (including, most

notably, semantic form) - the root cause of which misconception lies in turn in a thorough ignorance of the workings of speech and relevance. Neither the originator nor all too often the mediator himself is aware that relevance is always *ad hoc*, and that the specific metacommunicative social purpose that a translation is meant to serve may advise for different kinds of similarity - i.e. for different kinds of formal and content relationships between original and translation. Prevented from using the original, the originator -more often than not unconsciously- expects, as unavoidable second best, **the** translation of **the** original, i.e. a translation that will be, in so far as possible, the mirror of the original. If most originators have come to realise the inadvisability -let alone the impossibility- of such an approach for instrumental texts, they do stick to their uncouth guns when it comes to what they perceive as authoritative or documentary originals. And since they pay the piper, they are adamant about the tune - which normally ends up in the mediator having to play tango on the bagpipe to jarring effect. Again, a most flagrant case in point is the simultaneous interpreter who is closely monitored by the speaker-turned-critic listening for the last cognate. As we know, the implacable speaker is normally a very poor judge of interpretation quality, and his suggested corrections tend to be at variance with actual functionality for the rest of the audience - or worse. Unless initially the mediator (and eventually the originator) has a clear notion of what makes the text relevantly authoritative or documentary for the target user, the intuition that a translation thereof ought to say all that is in the original, as closely as possible to the way it is said in the original, and nothing that is not in the original, whatever the metacommunicative consequences, will lead straight into less than optimum functionality, non-functionality or outright nonsense. We are, thus, back at the need to establish, uphold and promote truly scientific **professional norms** and to have them extrapolated as **expectancy norms** (see Viaggio 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2000)

If you find my apostrophising too uncomfortable for comfort, dear reader, pause and look around you: You would not deny that it is up to the physician to ascertain what is best for the patient, whether prince or pauper, and -if necessary, in consultation with and with the consent of the patient- proceed accordingly even if, as any human being in general or professional in particular, he can be wrong, and he assumes thereby social -and legal- responsibility for his analysis, his decisions and his actions. It should not be any less up to the mediator to ascertain what is best for the client (whether author, originator or end-user, whether flesh-and-blood or institutional) and -if necessary, in consultation with and with the consent of the client- proceed accordingly, assuming thereby social -and legal- responsibility for his analysis, his decisions and his actions. Nobody would suspect that a physician may “arbitrarily” amputate a limb: it is assumed that he is always exercising his deontologically accountable professional criteria (in other words, his professional freedom). Why are users of translation afraid of the mediator’s exercising his own equally deontological and equally accountable professional freedom? Worse still: why are so many mediators equally afraid of exercising it? The answer, I submit, is that the profession is not professionalised - i.e. that it is not socially recognised as such. There is, in other words, no institutionalised social recognition of and trust in the mediator’s extralingual, cultural and generally communicative and metacommunicative expertise, nor the consequent legal liability for the betrayal of such socially institutionalised trust.

The pragmatic Dr. Jekyll and the literary Mr. Hyde

We have thus entered the murky waters of power. I am sure that things are changing, and not always for the better: Most literary translation is now being performed by anonymous salaried mediators who are every bit at the mercy of originators as their pragmatic colleagues, which cannot but tend to blur the social divide. Be that as it may, a traditional literary translator (the

translator of literature *qua* literature) is moved by his quest for perfection; his *angst* is, always, “How do I reverbalise this in the target language so that my reader, upon understanding, feels what I felt as I understood?” not, “What will happen to me if I translate this or that other way, if I omit, adapt or add?” He needs no financial cajoling or blackmail to translate this way or that for the simple reason that he is not really doing it for money. As a matter of fact, most people who translate literature do it for fun and without even the shadow of a hope to be published (I know whereof I speak!). Theirs is mostly a labour both of **selfless** love and respect, of love and respect for literature, the original and the target languages and cultures, the author, his text and the potential readers. A literary masterpiece is, no doubt, both much more “authoritative” and much more important a “document” than any speech by any politician, than any marriage certificate or than any law, except that nobody decides unto the translator what to do about it in his translation. **That** is the difference, even though for his well-nigh absolute freedom, a literary translator pays a heavy price in blood, toil, sweat and tears invested and meagre profits reaped - if any.

The mediator who, come midnight, will grow literary fangs and hair not to be daunted by Shakespeare himself, wakes up, however, a pragmatic hypochondriac, all professional meekness and humility before the greedy translation agency or ill-tempered speaker, especially if he is called upon to translate authoritative or documentary texts.

To begin with, in present day society, we, translators -or interpreters- of pragmatic texts are hacks who have, for all practical purposes, no social power whatsoever (so much so that good old Schleiermacher did not even bother calling us translators at all!) We are, by definition, hired hands working willy-nilly and against time at understanding things we do not give a hoot about, from people we do not give a hoot about, in order to say things we do not give a hoot about to people we do not give a hoot about. Indeed, the first thing that we ask ourselves is, “How do I reverbalise this in the target language so that my client, upon understanding, is not affected too negatively, so that he may then trust me with my next commission?” And next, “How do I go about it without spending too much time and effort so as to be able to tackle the next job or have that drink?” As any worker who is not going to be the direct beneficiary of his own labour and has no emotional stake in its usefulness to others, he may well fall into the assembly-line mentality or take undue liberties, always with the secret purpose of working less! Such a mercenary is best closely watched, his words counted and his punctuality monitored. Such a mercenary hand is, thus, wisely mistrusted and closely watched! A pragmatic translator then, is objectively dependent on his users or, at worst, a client who simply pockets the difference between what he pays the mediator and what he bilks out of the commissioner. He is objectively bereft of the relevant social power to exercise his deontologically responsible expert freedom (the “freedom” that a physician has to amputate) that can only come with the socially acknowledged status of the profession. (It stands to reason: if anybody can claim to be a translator or deign to translate, if there is no socially regulated access to the profession, then there is simply no such profession.)

This does not mean that a truly professional mediator has no ethics. He does, of course. He makes his best effort out of genuine love for the profession and the target language and culture (and, perhaps to a lesser extent, for the source language and culture), and mostly out of strictly **professional** respect for the author, his text, the client or the potential reader. In this, the pragmatic translator is akin to a lawyer who knows that his client is a crook or to a physician who is aware that his recovered patient will resume beating his wife. As other professionals, thus, the pragmatic translator is moved by professional pride, by love for the profession itself, not necessarily for its *ad hoc* beneficiaries. His ethics are deontological. Except, of course, that since the profession is not socially acknowledged, neither is its deontology. In many countries, most

people who translate for money are not truly professional mediators, and clients are not about to give them or anybody else the benefit of the doubt. The situation will persist until such time as truly professional mediators succeed at separating the wheat from the chaff - exactly as other liberal professionals have done before them.

Paradoxically, literary translation is, if anything, definitely much less of a profession, but since it is as difficult as it is ill-paid, the social controls on a literary translator are much less strict. As a rule, a “professional” literary translator’s only “superior” is the editor -no longer an ignorant client, for starters- whom he will normally feel less intimidated to convince of his choices, or eventually send packing. A literary translator does not have a professional deontology: he has ethics, pure and simple, and needs no one to acknowledge it for him. He has the socially recognised power to exercise the same expert judgement that is normally accorded authors themselves. As is normally the case with authors, moreover, his judgement is acknowledged as expert, but **not** as professional: it is not considered to be subject to a deontology. Again, a literary translator is bound by general humanistic and intellectual ethics alone. As a matter of fact, he is almost totally free precisely because his ethics are both trustworthy - and cheap. Here we have the psycho-social combo that explains the literary translator’s “freedom to manipulate.” The mystery, then, lies not so much in texts, but in the psychological profile of the mediator, itself a consequence of the social context of his craft. So much so that excellent literary translators have often proven poor pragmatic ones. Indeed, unless he has become internationally recognised (and works for editors who can pay him accordingly), the literary priest must make his living as a pragmatic peddler. Rumour has it that the great Julio Cortázar -not only a master of XXth century literature, but also an excellent translator of Poe- was rather mediocre when chained to the UNESCO assembly line (a job more rewarding financially, withal, than his royalties at that time). I know personally quite a few talented writers who churn out execrable pragmatic translations. I think that my analysis explains why.

Literary and pragmatic translation

And then, of course, there is the literary component of literary translation. Most pragmatic texts - even appellative and expressive ones- can be relevantly reduced to the comprehension of their noetic or propositional content. Qualitative effects count only negatively, i.e. a mediator strives **not** to produce unwanted ones - which is all that the new reader expects. Let the instructions be clear, simple and short enough; let the birth certificate be translated functionally enough; let the speech by President Chirac sound presidential enough. In pragmatic translation, any competent mediator manages to produce without much difficulty texts that are good -i.e. functional, i.e. relevant- enough for the purposes in hand. A literary translation, on the other hand, is never good enough - that, in the end, is the **only** reason that literary texts are more difficult to translate. As the original itself, its translation is never really finished - it is abandoned.

The great practical difference between literary and pragmatic translation is, in other words, the same obtaining between literary and pragmatic speech; to wit that in the latter noetic content tends to weigh much more heavily than qualitative effects, (which explains why the translation of advertisements and, generally speaking, appellative and expressive pragmatic texts tends to shift toward the literary end of the spectrum): All I care to find out of my owner’s manual is how to use my camera, but I expect more of Dostoevski’s masterpiece than finding out who actually killed that old bastard Karamazov. The threshold of quality, the sum total of attributes and their articulation that counts as a socially relevant -i.e. functional- text in one case and in the other is different. That is also the difference in translation. The translation of literature is not inherently more difficult (more difficult for whom?). If I am exonerated from producing

anything remotely resembling similarity of qualitative effects, I'll take a sonnet of Shakespeare any time if the alternative is a piece on nuclear energy!

As I said, the problem is that literary translation -as literary writing itself- is never good enough. In other words, pragmatic texts are "easier" because by the very nature of their readers' interest in them, they are subject to less strict aesthetic criteria. Translating homoscopically and homofunctionally a literary piece, on the other hand demands literary acumen. A translator does not have to be a dentist to translate -and most aptly, at that- an article on root canal therapy, but he cannot hope functionally to translate a poem if there is no trace of the poet in him... and there most people -including most mediators- cannot but fail. Literary translation is "more difficult" or "complex" only inasmuch and insofar as literary writing itself is "more difficult" or "complex" than other forms of speech. This outright artistic side of the craft is the heuristic counterpart of the psycho-social translational divide. What would be left of the artist if he were not allowed to "manipulate" his material - even if such material is none other than a great masterpiece by a great master? In the end, however, a literary translator manages "manipulation" not by virtue of the kinds of texts he is translating, but, mostly, because, psychologically, he dares tamper with the original and, socially, he can "get away" with it.

REFERENCES

- GARCÍA LANDA, Mariano: (1998) "A theoretical framework for oral and written translation research", *The Interpreters' Newsletter* 8, pp. 5-42.
- (2001) *Teoría general de la traducción*, Vertere, Monográficos de la Revista Hermeneus, núm. 3-2001, Soria.
- NABOKOV, V.: (1975) *A. Pushkin. Eugene Onegin, translated from the Russian with a commentary*, Princeton University Press.
- ROBINSON, Douglas: (1991) *The Translator's Turn*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1991.
- ROSS, Stephen David: (1981) "Translation and Similarity", in ROSE, Marilyn Gaddis (ed): *Translation Spectrum. Essays in Theory and Practice*, State University of New York Press, Albany, pp. 8-22.
- SEARLE, John: (1995) *The Construction of Social Reality*, The Penguin Press, London-New York.
- TOOLAN, Michael: (1996) *Total Speech. An Integrational Linguistic Approach to Language*, Duke University Press, Durham & London.
- VENUTI, Lawrence: (1995) *The Translator's Invisibility. A History of Translation*, Routledge, London and New York.
- VIAGGIO, Sergio: (1997) "Do Interpreters Have the Right to Improve Upon the Original? The Eternal Tug-of-War Between Professional and Expectancy Norms", *The IIIrd Meeting of Interpreters and Translators from the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Budmerice [Slovakia] 97*, JTP, Prag, pp. 69-73.
- (1998) "The Limitations of the Strictly Socio-Historical Description of Norms: A Response to Theo Hermans and Gideon Toury", *Current Issues in Language and Society* Vol.5:1&2, pp. 124-130.
- (1999) "The Teacher As Setter of Professional Norms. Some Thoughts on Quality in Simultaneous Interpretation", in VIEZZI, Maurizio (ed.) *Quality Forum 1997. Esperienze, problemi, prospettive. Atti della giornata di studi sulla qualità in interpretazione, Trieste, 14 novembre 1997*. Scuola Superiore di Lingue Moderne per Interpreti e Traduttori, Università degli Studi di Trieste, pp.101-119.
- (2000) "Peter Newmark rides again", *Rivista Internazionale di Tecnica della Traduzione* 5:2000, pp. 75-79.
- (Forthcoming?) *A General Theory of Interlingual Mediation*.