THE TRANSLATED TEXT AS RE-TEXTUALISATION

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The double face of equivalence

All texts seem to be, in one way or another, dependent upon other texts, but a translated text is dependent upon one particular text in a very peculiar way. When writing a normal text the writer is in principle free to organise a set of words, clauses and paragraphs, according to his or her intentions and abilities. Yet we all know that this liberty is more apparent than real, since our memory of previous texts, as well as the cultural norms we have internalised, restrict, as a rule, many of our textual movements. The translator, however, works under different conditions. The text he or she writes will be based on a message that already exists in a textual form in another language. The original text constrains the new text in a number of ways. The most inmediate one is that in order to be recognised as a translation, the translator's text must have a great degree of similarity with its original counterpart. In translation studies this similarity is currently labelled *equivalence.*

Many definitions of equivalence have been offered. One of the most comprehensive is that of the translation theorist Toury, who is

known for his insistence on considering TT (target text), not ST (source text), as the focus of investigations of translation:

> Translation equivalence occurs when a SI, and a TL text (or item) are relatable to (at least some of) the same relevant features. (Toury 1980: 37)

The above definition has lhe advantage over its predecessora of considering translation as a phenomenon involving not only isolated iteras but texts. However, Toury's emphasis on the target text (TT) leads him to an all-embracing concept of equivalence, which does not allow us to retain the useful distinction between translation and adaptation (that is, a text inspired but not governed by a source text). Mason restores lhe balance, offering a slight but essential correction to Toury's wording:

> I propose to amend Toury's definition of translation equivalence ... to the following:
> "Translation equivalence occurs when a SL and a TL text (or item) are relatable to (most of) the same relevant features." I ara aware that "most of" is a vague term, but I think that this is a vagueness we shall have to live with. (Mason 1984: 209)

Under this view, which I share, TT is thought of as an autonomous entity which at the same is intimately linked with its source. The dependem plane of the translated text has to do with its quality as translation and investigating it means examining lhe relationship between a given pair of languages at a systemic level. Inevitably this research involves scrutinising grammatical and lexical idiosyncrasies, as well as mismatches or incompatibilities between the two systems. On the other hand, the autonomous plane of the translated text has to do with its quality as text, that is, how units (words, clauses, paragraphs, chapters, etc.) are put together.

When we are dealing with equivalence, it is useful to distinguish two moments or facets: one, the equivalence of iteras up to a clausal

level, or equivalence proper, the other equivalence at a supraclausal level, or (macro)textual equivalence. Choices open to the translater are substantially restricted in the first case and almost infinite in the second.

The problem of equivalence proper is certainly central to any translation. However, a no less crucial aspect of the translation process is the construction of the new text. Following Coulthard (1987: 181) I will call this process, and the product thereof, textualisation.

First, let us recall briefly how textualisation words in a given language when an original writer sets out to produce a piece of text. He or she begins with some idea(s) and uses his or her store of words, idioms, grammatical rules, rhetorical patterns and his or her past experiences as reader and writer of texts. How to go from ideas experiences to actual texts remains largely a process that the individual controls only very partially. We always tend to say more and less than we consciously wish to or, at least, this is the perception of others. What we are able to mean seems to depend more often than not on our previous training, practice and actual ability - all factors which are not easily identifiable. So we naturally evaluate other people's talk as interesting, pedantic, cultivated, vulgar, witty, boring, etc. and identify those who show a greater ability to explain, to tell a story or a joke, make a speech, etc. If this is true for the spoken language, which in principle is a code mastered by all members of a speech community, it is perhaps truer for written language, an activity performed on a regular basis by only a relatively small number of people.

The writer goes from the (macro)ideational to the (macro)textual. This ideational, however, is not the same as that defined by Halliday (1978: 128) at clausal level, where it covers experiential and logical representations. As Coulthard observes:

> We have long been accustomed to thinking of the "ideational" in terms of clause but have no real way of approaching the ideational content of a whole text except as a collection of the ideational contents of the constituent clauses. This, however,

is not useful or even possible for my purposes because what I ara interested in exploring is the possible textualisation of the ideational, of which the one we have here is merely one sample realisation. Looking at the communication process from the composer/writer's point of view, we can see the ideational as pre-textual. However, unless one focuses on oneself, which is a flattering redefinition of the label "ideal speaker/hearer", the only access one has to the writer's ideational is through his/her text (textualisation). (Coulthard 1987: 183)

Coulthard's doubts concerning the "collection of ideational contents of the constituent clauses" seem well-founded. It seems that in every text there are *ideational blocks* instead, some of them being more important than others for the global sense. So Hoey argues that:

The first sentence of a factual report often has a special status as a summarising sentence. It could therefore be argued that the ability of sentence 1 to make sense with other sentences in the text is the result of this special status. (Hoey 1991: 47)

Identifying the ideational block which summarises the general meaning of the text would be very useful since as Coulthard remarks:

What we need initially is a summary of the ideational content ... (Coulthard 1987: 183)

It is interesting to note, for instance, in Borges' story "La muerte y Ia brújula" that, because the first paragraph functions as a summary of the whole text, by comparing and contrasting the translators choices in the three English versions (see Appendix) we can predict their main textual decisions.

Unlike the original writer, the translator is that special sort of writer who creates his or her text not from his or her own ideational, but from

another text. Consequently he or she behaves very much like an editor or an original writer who decides to re-write his or her texts. The big difference lies in that the translator is not only constrained by the grammar, the lexical patterns of his or her language and his or her own ability as textualiser, but is also further restricted by the previous text, its content and tone with which he or she may not be in sympathy, as well as its textual organisation, albeit in another code.

The translation process is best understood when we recognise these two moments and their inherent problems. On the one hand, one has chiefly problems of equivalence proper, on the other, problems of textual equivalence or retextualisation. As the two appear necessarily intermingled it is no wonder that the most visible one - that of equivalence - has received the bulk of critical attention so far. Most of the specialised literature on translation is dedicated to problems of equivalence. Except for a tiny minority - whose best known representative is Toury - most theorists and critics tend to suggest or dictate how some items or sentences should be translated rather than to explain how and why they have actually been translated.

From text to texts

Every text can, in principle, be expanded into a series of new texts. In a sense every text is already many texts, since its interpretation varies according to the reader. Ás Mason points out:

> The notion of creating similar effects in different readers should be treated with the greatest caution. It is rarely the case that two SI, readers, even of a "difficult" poem, novel or play, will interpret it in the same way. (Mason 1982: 145)

Even the same reader will interpret a text differently each time he or she reads it, especially if the rereading takes place at distant intervals. Some texts achieve a very long life indeed, either in the language in which they were written or in other language(s). The extraordinary

longevity of some texts is due to a multitude of reasons, but it can be safely stated that it has to do with the value attached to their ideational or formal properties.

Sometimes, as Borges argues, a text or a stretch of text, may be improved by the passage of time and consequent change in the language:

> BORGES: Of course, poetry is very mysterious. Take the lines from Shakespeare in which, speaking of Christ in Israel, he says:

> Over whose acres walk'd those blessed feet, Which, fourteen hundred years ago, were nail'd, For our advantage, on the bitter cross.

> Now, 1 wonder whether the use of the word "advantage" for "salvation" was common in those days, or whether it was a personal gift of Shakespeare. It was the right word, yet a very unusual word - a word which, if translated, would be "a Ia ventaja nuestra." lt is the right word, however, if properly and logically defended.

> MAC SHANE: Isn't it the context that saves it? BORGES: Of course, but there's also something unexplainable and mysterious. You feel "advantage" is the right word here - a word which in a sense is not very beautiful but sounds like the right word. And in the seventeenth century, "advantage" may have been used that way.

> MAC SHANE: To mean "salvation"?

> BORGES: Yes, by the theologians. So that in those days, perhaps, the Tine wasn't as beautiful as it is today. Nowadays,

the word "advantage" comes with a sharp surprise. 1 am grateful to Shakespeare, but, for all we know, maybe time has bettered the text. (Di Giovanni 1974:160)

Through translation a given text acquires its maximum expansion since it transcends the narrow linguistic limits in which it was conceived. However, this very expansion means at the same time a moment of crisis; at this stage the question inevitably arises: is it the same passage or book that we read in translation and if so, to what extent?

In fact, translation just reveals more dramatically the puzzling feature which seems to characterise all texts: as soon as they are created they begin an independent life and their interpretation and consequently their value only partially depends on the original intentions of the author. So, for instance, a religious book can be read by many as a literary work and a literary piece intended primarily for an adult audience may become a children's book, as occurred with *Gulliver's Travels* and *Treasure Island.* Translation complicates things further, and not infrequently an author turns out to be better known and valued abroad than in his or her own native country; thus, as was already the case in the 19th century, Poe seems to be more highly rated in France than in his native United States.

The different interpretations which every text can provoke are to some extent concealed in the native language because normally once published the text remains unchanged, unless the author himself revises it or a great span of time brings important changes in language use and makes critical editions necessary. In translation, on the other hand, the indeterminacy of texts is more apparent and any debate on interpretation leads almost automatically to new versions. The history of Bible translation is most striking in this respect, but the same is true for works of literature, social sciences, and indeed for normal, mainly informative texts. Thus, according to Borges (1974:240) there are so many translations of the *Odyssey* in England that they would suffice to illustrate the evolution of the English language through the centuries.

A revision by an author of his or her own text is not entirely unlike the translation process itself in that he or she sets out to make a new text from an ideational already textualised. The main difference, of course, is that in the first case the operation occurs in the same language and is carried out by the same author. As critics do not fail to note, the result can be better (as in Borges the old correcting Borges the young) but it can also be worse (as, according to Bertrand Russell (1974: 634) was the case of Hume revising lhe first edition of *his Treatise on Human Nature).*

In translation the received wisdom is that the translator is always inferior to the translated author, as epitomised in the dictum "tradutore traditore". This prejudice naturally has a strong pragmatic basis, since one tends to choose good texts to translate but cannot always find or afford a good translator, let alone a translator with the skills or indeed the time of the original writer. Again, it is more visible in the areas of literature and the social sciences but it happens with technical or specialised texts as well. If we compare the translations which appear on the packets of industrial products in some countries it is not difficult to see that the problem of quality in translation is very widespread. On the other hand, that a translator can be a better textualiser than the original writer is shown by Baudelaire translating Poe. Only a close examination, using appropriate analytic tools, can locate the good and not so good solutions a translator has found to the problems posed by the original text. Some initial considerations can clear the ground for a better understanding of the translation process and its products. Most important are the relationships between ideational, intertextual and textual which pervade all sorts of texts in whatever language.

Ideational

There seems to be no other way to produce a text except setting off from the ideational to arrive at the textual, in other words, to begin with a set of meanings in order to be able to produce a text, which in turn constitutes a new set of meanings. From this difficulty stem most of the problems faced by machine translation and indeed by every translation.

Machine translation would work marvellously if a smooth passage from form to form were feasible, avoiding the troublesome meaning. By the same token translation in general would be far easier if it were possible to devise a system of one-to-one correspondences, enabling us to go from text to meaning and from meaning to new text without any complication.

A good example of how to go from text to ideational and from ideational to a new text in the same language is given in Coulthard (1987), where a clearly unsatisfactory textualisation of a series of recommendations to travelling diabetics is criticised and a new textualisation is proposed which would be more efficient for the purpose in question.

First, Coulthard gives a summary of the text, which could not be easily understood by its supposed target readers, diabetics:

> (1) Food abroau need not be a problem for the well-controlled diabetic. (Coulthard 1987: 184)

The next move is to expand the summary, which is done through "unpackaging lhe summary ideation into some of its component parts":

> (la) Food abroad consists at one level of analysis, like food at home, of combinations of fais, proteins and carbohydrates.

> (1b) A well-controlled diabetic has solved the problem of analysing food and balancing his diet at home.

> (1c) Therefore the problem is one of bringing already acquired skills to bear on unfamiliar food. (Ibid)

While arguing that expansion of this kind could continue endlessly, Coulthard remarks that the interpersonal element must come into play if one wishes expansions to make sense:

> ... the only useful expansions are audience-oriented. (lbid)

This view is fully confirmed by the study of different translations and especially by the study of adaptations, where parts of the ideational may be expanded or contracted according to the intended audience.

Interpersonal

The interpersonal aspect of texts appears to be paramount in every translation, not least because of the differences between the original audience and the new one. According to Coulthard:

> It is the "interpersonal", or sense of audience, which allows us as writers to keep the ideational within manageable limits and it is the ideational/interpersonal interface which causes most difficulties for writers of all ages and abilities. Without a clear sense of audience, it is impossible to make the right selections from the ideational. (Ibid: 184-5)

It is perhaps the interpersonal aspect which explains more fully the existence of so many versions of some highly valued texts like the *Bible* or the *Odyssey*. The history, so recent but so intricate, of the translations of Borges into English confirms this: it is precisely his most famous stories, like "La muerte y Ia brújula" and "Tema del traidor y del héroe", which have been translated most often. We could postulate that, as a society develops and creates a number of differentiated audiences, it is likely that these will be targeted by publishers with specially tailored translations of important foreign texts. So the different versions of lhe Bible (King James, Catholic, ecumenical, modernised, etc.) are consumed by different audiences. With Borges in English that is also the case, the anthology *Labyrinths* (see Borges 1970) being singled out as the most authoritative by Borges' specialists despite the fact that this volume is published in a popular collection.

Thus we may conclude that the number of possible variables in the textualisation of lhe ideational/interpersonal interface is great and in some long, complex texts probably infinite.

Textual

Textualising implies different difficulties, in different aspects. In the ideational (as noted by Coulthard ibid: 187), the main difficulties concern *sequencing* and *signalling.* In the interpersonal, we have to deal especially with *register* and *modality.*

Sequencing seems to be of paramount importance in translation, since it represents linguistically three basic elements of every human experience: time, space and causality. No wonder, then, that ST's sequencing partially survives even in *adaptations. So* a translation of a piece of fiction, free as it may be, will necessarily retain some basic features concerning the place and time of the narrated events, as well as some links between them. That has been well described by Mason, commenting on a backtranslation into English of an adaptation of Lewis Carroll's story especially made for Aborigines:

> A close comparison of the original *[Alice* in *Wonderland]* and the adaptation *[Alitji in the dreamtime] will* show that passages concerned with temporality and spatiality have undergone a minimum of adaptation to culture and environment. (Mason 1982: 147)

> This feature [notions of time and space] has been retained, and it has been possible to do so in a culturally and environmentally adapted text because time and space are, in Kantian idiom, the form of pure intuition, conditions underlying the possibility of all experiente whatsoever. (Ibid: 148)

An added complication is that these textual moves happen ai different levels: sequencing having to do with chronological ordering, signalling with grammar, register with lexical choice and modality with grammar. There seem to be some sequencing patterns which are universal, or at least widespread (like the ones found in Propp 1968) and olhers which are more culture-specific. By the same token there are also genre-

specific sequencing patternings, as in the modern novel and short story, for example. It must be stressed there is no need to have explicit rules for them to exist in texts.

Poetic texts deviate sharply in this respect and this seems to be confirmed in translated texts. The fact that in modern non-narrative European poetry the ideational does not appear as clearly as before, lies behind the numerous changes in sequencing it suffers when translated. Perhaps this is as responsible for the bad name of translated poetry as the non-reproduction of the aulhors' idiosyncratic effects of sense and sound. In fact, it seems that once sequencing is profoundly altered in a translation we no longer recognise it as "the same text" as the original. Sequencing of selected ideational blocks is often what remains in the adaptation of a written work to the lheatre, radio or cinema.

As he or she necessarily works in a sequènce, the translator naturally translates clause by clause, group by group and sometimes even word by word. But does he or she precede his or her writing by an effort to retrieve the ideational from lhe whole text or only from the sentence or clause? II seems that most translators do work directly with the smallest uniu of discourse and, as we shall see in due course, this strategy is not without consequentes, especially as regards macrotextual phenomena such as cohesion and matching relations.

Unlike sequencing, which is an ever-present feature of every textualisation, signalling varies widely according to the habits and abilities of a particular textualiser. As Coulthard points out:

> ... as Winter and Hoey have long ago demonstrated, the placing of clauses together in a text in itself creates relationships between clauses; but a secondary writer's decision is whether to signal these relationships by lexical realisation. If (s)he chooses not to, (s)he allows the possibility of ambiguity or misunderstanding. (Ibid: 187)

In oral language the context of situation usually provides the information necessary for speakers to carry out their exchanges without resorting to textual markers of sequencing. Moreover natural interaction develops in time but lacks the spatial representation specific to written language. Due to the reduced power of short-term memory, the management of the sequencing elements is severely restricted in casual conversation. Small wonder therefore that when they write inexperienced textualisers find it difficult to use signalling:

> It is not insignificant that a major problem in student essays is a lack of signalling. (Ibid: 188)

In fact, how could they transfer signalling features to written language, since most of them simply do not exist as a rule in normal spokenlanguage?

The other side of the coin is naturally oversignalling. It occurs in most writing, especially when the writer wishes to convey his or her message as clearly as possible, following received cultural norms. The result is often a more explicit relation between clauses, as we can see in the following example (italics indicate the added signalling):

> Subió por escaleras polvorientas a antecámaras circulares; infinitamente se multplieó en espejos opuestos ... (Borges 1974:505)

> He climbed dusty stairways to circular anterooms, *where* he was multiplied to infinity in facing mirrors. (Di Giovanni 1971:74)

The paradox in the texts above is that Di Giovanni chose to make lhe signalling explicit, but the result is less literary than Borges' text, which uses simple juxtaposition of the clauses. This fact seems to indicate that the *value* of signalling may change according to genre. Textualising

inevitably implies making choices at the interpersonal levei. The most obvious and immediately perceived, are the register-loaded choices. Typically, a text will show alongside the dominant register other, embedded register(s) besides. Sometimes a single grammatical-choice, a pronoun for instance, can denote the levei of relationship between writer and reader. So in "La muerte y Ia brújula" Borges make all the characters address each other using the pronoun "usted" (a formal "you", which in Argentinian Spanish contrasta with the informal "vos"). On other occasions lexical items convey the relative distance between writer and reader. As a rule we could say that there is a certain amount of lexis and grammatical elements that is more neutral, while other lexical and grammatical items are heavily marked. As both sets differ from language to language, mismatches seem a quite predictable phenomenon in translation. The successful solution to this challenge will basically depend on the translator's personal ability to reproduce a similar configuration in his or her text.

Compared to register, an all-embracing feature, modality seems more easily identifiable and manageable. However, cultural norma and personal preferences play a very important role, preventing many translators from reproducing modality accordingly. The following is a nice example of modality change in translation, where no systemic constraint is evident:

> Publica un libro dedicado a Ia gloria dei héroe; también eso, *tal* vez, estaba previsto. (Borges 1974: 498)

> He publishes a book dedicated to the glory of the hero; this, too, *no doubt* was foreseen. (Kerrigan 1965: 127)

Kerrigan's option for a bold shift from *tal* vez ("perhaps") to "no doubt" seems to be motivated by his particular interpretation of the text since the obvious choice would be "perhaps" which was the one taken by Irby, the other translator of the same story:

He publishes a book dedicated to the hero's glory; this too, *perhaps,* was foreseen. (Irby 1970: 105)

The idiom principle versus the open choice principle

Being by nature unstable, since there is always the possibility of another version, the transaated text illustrates particularly well the principles governing the writer's work. We do not know for sure precisely how much information, emotion or beauty conveyed in the actual text that was intended by the author. Even in very skilful writers the process seems to escape conscious control. In other words, lhe final text does convey the author's intentions, but it can convey more or lesa than was originally intended.

In every piece of writing there seems to be a fierce struggle between default options and creative options. As Sinclair puts it:

> A new perspective, and one which fits ira with the direction of current speculation, is the following: decisions about meaning are made initially at a very abstract level, and also ira very broad and general terms. At that point there is no distinction between meaning and strategy. A new-born communicative intent passes through various stages of realisation, during which decisions about expression begin to. be taken. These have lexical and grammatical ramifications, and are moved towards final form through a series of default options, unless a very specific effect is specified ira the design. The default options embody lhe rules of grammar (and the less explicit but very obvious rules of collocation). (Sinclair 1991: 8)

Probably the default options also include text types and rhetorical patterns. This is more visible ira certain genres, like commercial correspondence, but it is apparent also ira the creative area of literary writing. As critics and historiaras of literature often point out, most

writers of a given period a particular country tend to produce works with many shared textual features.

The mismatch between intention, textual realisation and perception by different readers typifies every textualisation. One likely explanation is given by Sinclair:

> Now it is manifest that the nature of text is not to follow clear-cut rides, but to enjoy great flexibility and innovation. (Sinclair 1991: 6)

In reality, textual flexibility seems to defy not only the general rules of grammar and collocalion, but also the self-imposed rules of the writer himself. I have found a fine example of this phenomenon ira Borges' story "Hombre de Ia esquina rosada" (Borges 1974: 329-334), which, despite the author's declared intention, and much to his annoyance, has been persistently perceived by readers as a typical Argentinian story.

If we look at the surface of the text, especially at two or more translations of the same source text, we cara distinguish a real competition between two principles labelled by Sinclair respectively the opera *choice principle* and the *idiom principle. As* Sinclair explains:

> It is contended here that in order to explain the way in which meaning arises from language text, we have to advance two different principles of interpretation. One is not enough. No single principle has been advanced which accounts for the evidence in a satisfactory way. The two principles are.

The open choice principle

This is a way of seeing language text as the result of a very large number of complex choices. At each point where a unit

is completed (a word or a phrase or a clause), a large range of choices opens up, and the only restraint is grammaticalness....

The idiom principle

It is clear that words do not occur at random in a text, and that the open choice principle does not provide substantial enough restraints. We would not produce normal text simply by operating the open choice principle. ...
The principle of idiom is that a language user has available to him or her a large number of semi-preconstructed phrases that constitute single choices, even though they might appear to be analysable into segments. (Ibid: 109-10)

It is important to note that Sinclair speaks here of language text. There seems to be an essential difference when we see language on the one hand as an abstract system, where there is room for a sort of ideal and separated grammar and lexis and, on the other hand, when we see language actualised in text, where there seems to be room only for lexicogrammar.

So, according to the open choice principle the famous Chomskyan sentence:

Colourless green ideas sleep furiously. (Chomsky 1965: 149)

would be possible, since it obeys the tales of grammaticalness and lexicalness, that is to say, the words exist in English and are put together following some established rules of the English language. Nevertheless, it would fail the test of the idiom principle because lhe two strings "colourless green ideas" and "sleep furiously" would be *unlexicogrammatical* (see Halliday 1966: 161). There is, of course, a possibility that those sets do occur in real texts, but then of a very special kind, such as in poetry (for instance, in Gerard Manley Hopkins). Indeed

some "difficult" poets, like Mallarmé or Browning, make considerable use of unlexicogrammaticalness as a stylistic device.

According to Sinclair (1991: 112) the idiom principle is "at least as important as grammar in the explanation of how meaning arises in text". This is crucial in the study of translations, since one of the main features of so-called *translationese* seems to be exactly its lack of idiomaticity. In fact, if we consider the idiom principle alongside the open choice principle we can come to a clearer linguistic classification of the different types of translation.

In a *literal translation* the idiom principle will tend to be absent or to play a minor role, idioms and natural collocations occurring only when there is a one-to-one correspondence between the two languages involved. The open choice principle at work in ST as a rule will be superimposed on TT. A typical example can be found in Kerrigan's translation of "La muerte y la brújula":

> The afternoon *dailies* did not neglect this series of disappearances. (Kerrigan 1965: 122)

> Los *diarios* de Ia tarde no descuidaron esas desapariciones periódicas. (Borges 1974: 503)

"Diarios de Ia tarde" is a common collocation in Spanish but "afternoon dailies" is not in English.

The reverse of a literal translation is what has been called a *dynamic translation.* In it the idiom principle of TL (target language) is imposed, idioms and collocations are adapted to Ws norms and instances of ST where the open choice principle was at work are cut down to size. Di Giovanni has largely taken this option and examples abound on every page of Borges he has translated. A representative example is:

> His ninth attribute, Eternity, may be found - that is to say, the immediate knowledge of everything *under the sun* that will be, that is, and that was. (Di Giovanni 1971: 68)

> Su noveno atributo, Ia Eternidad-es decir, el conocimiento inmediato - de todas Ias cosas que serán, que son y que han sido en el universo. (Borges 1974: 501)

The string "under the sun", which undoubtedly renders Di Giovanni's text very idiomatic, simply does not appear in ST. On the contrary, Borges uses the finite verb "serán" without attribute, an unusual choice which evokes biblical language in Spanish.

In an *adequate translation* the ST balance of open choice principle and idiom principle is largely preserved. Yates' translations of Borges can be described, most of the time, as adequate, as the following extract will show:

> Lönnrot *abstained from smiling. Suddenly* become a bibliophile or Hebraist, he ordered a package made of the dead man's books and carried them off to his apartment. (Yates 1970: 108)

> Lönnrot *se abstuvo de sonreír. Bruscamente* bibliófilo o hebraísta, ordenó que le hicieran un paquete con los libros del muerto y los llevó a su departamento. (Borges 1974: 500)

The highlighted collocations, which are odd already in Spanish have been thoroughly carried over into English.

Finally, *over-adequate translation* may be characterised as the one where the open choice principle is present in a much higher proportion than is the case in the source text. It is less infrequent than one might expect and when it happens we usually hear the following comment from perceptive readers: "It is better than the original". Borges' poems

in English read sometimes as overadequate translations, as in this instance:

> My life in the same way weaves and unweaves its *weary history.* (Reid in Borges 1967: 202)

> y es así como mi vida teje y desteje su *cansada historia.* (Borges 1969: 233)

The string *weary history* seems to be a more efficient poetical choice than *cansada historia,* since TT reproduces ST's ideational and shows a supporting sound patterning besides.

One central point is to identify the stretches of text which are governed by one or other principle, an operation thal the reader carries out automatically according to his or her ability to decode a particular type of text, but decisive for every translator who must reproduce il in another language. As we shall see in the course of this study, the translator's interpretation and consequent choices will colour his or her lext, placing it from the beginning in one of the calegories referred to above. In other words, further local choices will be strongly conditioned by the initial stance (see in this respect Toury 1980). Sinclair (1991: 114) thinks that lhe "boundaries between stretches constructed on different principles will not normally be clear-cut" but that "it should be recognised that the two models that are in use are incompatible" and that "there is no shading of one into another" because "the models are diametrically opposed". One way to tackle this difficulty is to introduce a further subdivision of the two general principles.

In order to unveil the two principles at work in a given stretch it seems necessary to consider the open choice principle as being formed by two kinds of choice: a) lexical; b) grammatical; and the idiom principle as being constituted by three different sets of wider choices: a) idioms; b) collocations; c) ready-made lexicogrammatical strings. The two principles are indeed opposite while having to do with the

same linguistic categories, namely lexis and grammar. The essential difference lies in the fact that in the open choice principle the choice, as the name indicates, is multiple, whereas in the idiom principle the choice is single. In the following paragraphs I will give examples of each category in Borges' texts and show how his translators have opled for different solutions.

la) Lexical choice:

> Los diarios de Ia tarde *no descuidaron* esas desapariciones periódicas. (Borges 1974: 503)

> The afternoon dailies *did not neglect* this series of disappearances. (Kerrigan 1965: 122)

> The afternoon papers *did not overlook* the periodic disappearances. (Yates 1970: 111)

> The evening papers *made a great deal of* lhese recurrent disappearances. (Di Giovanni 1971: 71)

Borges' marked lexical choice has been carried over into English by all the translators except Di Giovanni, who selected an idiom instead.

lb) Grammatical choice:

> Un invencible ejército de guerreros parte de un castillo infinito, sojuzga reinos y ve monstruos y *fatiga los desiertos y* Ias montaras, pero nunca llegan a Carcasona, aunque alguna vez Ia divisar. (Borges 1974: 711)

> An invincible army of warriors departs from an enormous castle, subjugates kingdoms, sees monsters, *conquers deserts*

> and mountains, but rever arrives at Carcassonne, although the men catch sight of the city once from afar. (Simms 1973: 108) -

> An invincible army of warriors leaves an infinite castle, conquers kingdoms and sees monsters and *exhausts the deserts* and the mountains, but rever reach Carcassonne, though once they glimpse it from afar. (Irby 1970: 236)

In this passage Borges changes the usual transitivity of the verb "fatigar" ("to exhaust"), normaily intransitive, making it transitive, with an unusual complement besides. Irby reproduces Borges' marked grammatical choice whereas Simms avoids the difficulty by choosing another, more predictable equivalent ("conquers").

2a) Idioms

> No hay que *buscarle tres pies al gato* -decía Treviranus, blandiendo un imperioso cigarro-. (Borges 1974: 500)

> There is no need *to look for a Chimera, or a cat with three legs,* Treviranus was saying as he brandished an imperious cigar. (Kerrigan 1965: 118)

> 'No need *to look for a three-legged cat here,'* Treviranus was saying as he brandished an imperious cigar. (Yates 1970: 107)

> "We needn't *lose any time here looking for three-legged cats,"* Treviranus said, brandishing an imperious cigar. (Di Giovanni 1971: 66)

All three translations attempted, with varying success, to reproduce ST's idiom. This unanimity seems to indicate a high degree of awareness

of idioms by the translators, as well as a consciousness of the importante of reproducing them in TT. The idiom above did not, however, present the sort of difficulty that Baker & McCarthy rightly draw our attention to:

> One thing that should strike any linguistically curious native speaker on opening a British newspaper or magazine, or listening to media broadcasts, or just participating in casual talk, is how frequently knowledge of MWUs [multi-word units] is taken for granted and is used as basis of humour, irony, or creativity, or is used to catch the eye or ear in order to inform, persuade or direct the receiver. ... Manipulation of MWUs may occur along any, or several, of the scales of syntactic, phonological, lexical, semantic and orthographic fixedness ... (Baker & McCarthy 1988: 23)

2b) Collocations

> La acción *transcurre* en un país oprimido y tenaz: Polonia, Irlanda, Ia república de Venecia, algún estado sudamericano o balcánico... (Borges 1974: 496)

> The action *transpires* in some oppressed and stubborn country: Poland, Ireland, the Republic of Venice, some state in South America or the Balkans... (Kerrigan 1965: 123)

> The action *takes place in* an oppressed and tenacious country: Poland, Ireland, the Venetian Republic, some South American or Balkan state.... (Irby 1970: 102)

"Transcurre" collocates normally with "acción" as in Irby's translation "takes place" collocates with "action". Kerrigan, however, makes a marked choice putting "transpire", which usually does not collocate with "action".

2c) Ready-made strings

> Lönnrot se creía un puro razonador, un Auguste Dupin, pero *algo habla en* él de aventurero y hasta de tahur. (Borges 1974: 499)

> Lönnrot thought of himself as a pure thinker, an Auguste Dupin, but *there was something* of lhe adventurer *in him;* even of the gamester. (Kerrigan 1965: 117)

> Lönnrot believed himself a pure reasoner, an Auguste Dupin, but *there was something* of the adventurer *in him,* and even of the gambler. (Yates 1970: 106)

> Lönnrot thought of himself as a pure logician, a kind of Auguste Dupin, but *there was* also *a streak* of the adventurer and even of the gambler *in him.* (Di Giovanni 1971: 65)

The ST's ready-made string is surprisingly reproduced by all translators, even if with a minor variation in the case of Di Giovanni.

As we can see from the examples above translations often present divergent configurations of the open choice principle and the idiom principle. A careful description and analysis of the two principles in action may help us to refine translation assessment and perhaps develop a more efficient translation pedagogy. A potential by product of such an investigation is a fresh view of the properties which cause some texts to be perceived as more valuable than others.

Note

This article is a slightly modified version of Chapter 2 of my Ph.D. *thesis A Linguistic Approach to the Analysis and Evaluation of Translated Texts with special reference to selected texts by J. L. Borges* (University of Birmingham, England,

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