

“AVEC HÉSITANCE”: LAVERGNE’S FOOTNOTES AND TRANSLATIONS OF *FINNEGANS WAKE*



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Abstract: Translation and annotation are comparable and often co-incidental or collaborative operations because they are share the same impetus and the same anxieties: the ethical, philosophical, and political assumptions, concerns, and constraints that shape the decision to annotate a given text are precisely those that shape the decisions made by a translator. In exploring this relationship, this essay takes as its focus Philippe Lavergne’s use of footnotes in his 1982 translation of *Finnegans Wake*. Working on the principle that an extreme case (as the *Wake* always is) makes for the most rigorous test of theoretical suppositions, the essay compares the purposes and methods of Lavergne’s footnotes and translation with the *Wake*’s own forms of auto-translation and auto-annotation to demonstrate that any given poetics of annotation is by definition as provisional, compromised, and discrepant as any poetics of translation.

Keywords: Annotation; Finnegans Wake; Lavergne.

Resumo: Tradução e anotação são atividades comparáveis, e frequentemente co-incidentais, ou operações colaborativas, porque compartilham do mesmo ímpeto e das mesmas ansiedades: as assunções, preocupações e restrições éticas, filosóficas e políticas que conformam a decisão de anotar um dado texto são precisamente aquelas que conformam as decisões que toma um tradutor. Neste ensaio, ao explorar essa relação, enfoca-se o uso de notas de rodapé de Philippe Lavergne em sua tradução do *Finnegans Wake* de 1982. Com base no princípio de que um caso extremo (como sempre é o do *Wake*) se mostra como o teste mais rigoroso de pressuposições teóricas, neste ensaio são comparados os propósitos e os métodos de Lavergne para suas notas de rodapé e para sua tradução com as formas próprias de auto-tradução e auto-anotação do *Wake*, com o fim de demonstrar que qualquer poética é, por definição, tão provisória, comprometida e discrepante quanto uma poética da tradução.

Palavras-chave: Anotação; Finnegans Wake; Lavergne.

Typically, a footnote in a translation is understood to be a white flag waved as discreetly as possible, sighted where the translator explicitly admits some degree of defeat. Perhaps “typically” ought to be underlined here, for of course there are not simply exceptions but a range or spectrum of exceptions, since the theory and practice of translation ought to be understood as always plural and, as I would like to argue here, because translation is the trafficking of exceptions rather than a set of or obeisance to traffic rules, the footnote is not only the symptom of a given translation’s failure –the flipside of Walter Benjamin’s titular “task” (*Aufgabe*) is, as Paul de Man pointed out, “surrender”– but also its opposite, a refusal to surrender, a mock-surrender, and is in effect the emblem of the inherently flawed process of translation itself.¹ In short, if you want to assess a translation, study the footnotes.

Perhaps the strongest of temptations faced by a translator is the temptation to explain – to explain some quality or meaning of the “original” text, or to explain the aims, philosophy, or method of his or her translation, though these both ultimately come to the same thing. The relationship –or the conceptual distance– between translation and annotation can be as difficult to fix or measure as the more acknowledged one between reading and translation, and as usual *Finnegans Wake* makes the point. The *Wake* is a text that is not “read” in the usual sense that one uses the word, or at least it requires that the reader be willing to “translate” as much as “read”; and yet, on the other hand, to speak of “translating” this book invites incredulity. In addition to these commonplaces we can add two curious facts. First, this book that merrily annotates itself (not just in II.2, with notes in both margins and at the foot of the page, but within its roundabout composition, wherein it rewrites itself and even other texts written about it) is itself probably one of those most annotated by readers (looking through used copies in bookstores finds a strikingly uneven ratio of the scribbled-upon to the virginal). Second, *mirabile dictu*, *Finnegans Wake* does get translated, and sometimes those translators are so shameless as to annotate.

Philippe Lavergne took only slightly less time to Frenchify Joyce’s text than Joyce did putting that text together: the first excerpt appeared (in the pages of *Tel Quel*) in 1967 and the completed book in 1982.² This feat, the first full translation of the *Wake*, accomplished by a single translator, should give anyone pause. Jacques Derrida in “Two Words for Joyce” nods to Lavergne –appropriately

¹ Vladimir Nabokov’s demand for “copious footnotes, footnotes reaching up like skyscrapers to the top of this or that page” for his translation of Pushkin’s *Onegin* is illustrative of this paradox (127). Resolutely abandoning (and condemning) any attempt to proximate Pushkin’s prosody or rhymes, Nabokov wants it both ways: it is impossible to translate *Onegin*, and his extensive, exhaustive commentary to his translation affirms that any other approach than his own fails.

² As is sadly usual in matters of Joycean texts, publisher delays tangle up this production timeline.

enough, as we shall see, in a footnote— by noting a specific effect lost in the French version, which version is “nonetheless very commendable,” and he then diplomatically adds: “But let us never malign translations, especially this one...” (159n10). There seems little danger of such maligning, since critical discussion of translations seems invariably to be a celebration of translation itself, of its very possibility, and this undoubtedly has much to do with the utopian impetus of translation, remarked upon by Ortega y Gasset, Lawrence Venuti, Emily Apter, and others. We do not *malign*, but this business of studying translations and comparing texts is ever a matter of continually *realigning*, for utopia is not and cannot be a fixed destination, and travellers must always be redrawing each others' maps, taking new bearings, and deciding where next to turn. Translation, like utopia, is always a work in progress.

I come to Lavergne's *Wake*, then, neither to bury nor to praise.³ Where criticisms and questions appear in this discussion, they are part of the broader purpose: to observe how *qualified* even so ambitious a translation as this one is, and to consider, with this extraordinary example as a focus, how intimate and yet how vexed is the kinship of translation with annotation. Rosa Maria Bosinelli, an attentive reader of how Joyce is translated, has written that Joyce “invites us to overcome the frustration of obscurity and accept the universal truth that misunderstanding, equivocation, misinterpretation, and misreading are part of any attempt at communication” (407) – yet this is an invitation that annotation effectively rescinds and simultaneously accepts, as though to say, “I understand very well that I cannot fully or accurately convey this information or this sensation, but I nonetheless endeavour to do so by other means.” And this preposterous, delightful bit of sophistry is also recognizable as every translator's necessary working credo and *apologia pro vita sua*.

Lavergne's *Wake* includes a total of 621 notes, which might at first blush seem a large number, but ultimately it is not how *many* there are that startles, but how *few*, and too how *sporadic* they are. In the 924-page book –which dimensions themselves underscore how translation effectively amplifies and expands a text– there is an approximate average of three notes to every two pages. In any other book, this would signify little or nothing, but the density and pluralities of the *Wake* underscore what a singularly selective procedure this is. Annotation shares the same task of translation in having to balance the imagined reader's needs against the integrity of the text. The decision to annotate such and such a passage is no more fraught and questionable than the decision not to, and the network of ethical, philosophical, and political assumptions, concerns, and constraints that shapes such decisions are precisely those that shape the decisions made by a translator. Joyce brews a special headache on this point when he includes in his book a verbatim –

³ An apposite observation by Sidney Monas: “Too many learned articles on translation veer from the lurid tradition of the police memoir (‘Some Bad Translations I Have Known’) into the closely related and even more dismal atmosphere of the marriage manual (‘How to Make Your Translation an Aesthetic Success’)” (“Boian and Iaroslavna: Some Lyrical Assumptions in Russian Literature,” in *The Craft and Context of Translation*, ed. William Arrowsmith and Roger Shattuck (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 165).

and we might call it untranslated, in the sense that it is seemingly untransmogrified by the *Wake* effect, in the way so many partially recognizable idioms are— sentence from Edgar Quinet’s *Introduction à la philosophie de l’histoire de l’humanité* (1857), but appends five heterogeneous and conspicuously un-French glosses to it, from different sides of the page (281.04-13). The translator —and especially the French translator— faces a real dilemma here. While declining to alter the Quinet text might seem obvious, how then should this gesture be signalled, so as to alert the reader to the quality of the original? Since Joyce italicizes the quotation, unusually differentiating the passage with an indirect form of quotation marks, that popular ploy is unavailable to the poor translator, and Lavergne leaves the French and the typeface as they are. Moreover the proliferation of annotation here serves to block or at least seriously hamper any editorial effort either to explain the non-translation of a non-translation or to inform the reader about the source of the quotation. “Translout that gaswind into turfsh,” dares (gloats?) one of the footnotes.⁴ Joyce’s catch-22 here is not that this sentence cannot be translated —as we have acknowledged, and undoubtedly will again, every translation begins with the understanding that it cannot be done— but that the translator is denied this favourite plea, and cannot aver to the reader that it cannot be done, indeed *has not* been done.

That total number of Lavergne’s footnotes not only excludes (some might say naturally, but I am hesitant about such a claim) the various notes found in the “Nightletter” chapter but also Lavergne’s prefatory note to that chapter, in which he seeks to explain its unusual page layout. This note makes for as instructive a beginning as any for understanding how Lavergne annotates, and the relationship between the notes and the translation. That this note is itself announced with the kind of Latin shorthand that the *Wake* tends to parody (“N.B.”) and placed above rather than below the translated text may tempt readers to suppose at first glance that it is some device of Joyce’s, perhaps part of the generally strange spatial distribution of words in this chapter. This potential confusion is, if not remedied, promptly translated: “Dans ce chaipre les 2 jumeaux, depuis les rives opposées de la Liffey échantent des propos, arbitrés par notes en bas de page, de la main de Joyce” (402). The structural understanding conveyed here is not suggestive but assertive, definite: the who, what, and where of the entire chapter seem incontrovertibly laid out for the reader. Yet the comfort of these stage directions is short-lived, for the reader may well discern their ambiguities and ambivalences. For example, one might wonder *who* is doing this “arbitrating” at the foot of the page. The explanation —or is it an assurance?— of “de la main de Joyce” is surely intended, at the most immediate level of meaning, to distinguish Joyce’s text from Lavergne’s annotations (a distinction also made by the use of letters rather than numerals to signal the notes), but it oddly seems to place Joyce’s hand on the same plane of reality as “les 2 jumeaux” so likewise definitively identified. That Lavergne tells his reader —*avant*

⁴ Lavergne’s version of this is somewhat abstract, in part because it shifts an imperative into an infinitive, for reasons I don’t see (or hear): “Traduire ce chafouin en turc” (438nb); that is, roughly, “to translate this sly into Turkish.” Among other things, the interesting translation-as-bowel-movement motif in the original note is absent in Lavergne.

la lettre, as it were— who is writing the notes on the left and the right (he inserts the names “SHEM” and “SHAUN” above the respective “riverbanks” of the page) naturally shapes that reader’s interpretation; but what he declines to identify or situate likewise shapes that interpretation in the same way that it reveals how the translator approaches the original text. We can observe, for example, the implication that the text in the centre of the page is the Liffey flowing along (which suggestion may or may not be helpful) and too the omission of Issy (Lavergne calls her “Isabelle” (13)), whose voice many readers hear in this chapter’s footnotes.⁵ Lavergne also understands and frames the structure of the chapter in an altogether more fixed way than I read it – for example, he does not observe that the right and left commentators seem to change places.

The “Nightletter” poses an interesting problem for translators not much discussed, though it is strikingly emblematic of the more general problems of the *Wake*’s extreme heteroglossia: the concurrence of a specific site in a central text and a given footnote. In some respects this problem is similar to that of approximating a particular measure, like trying to match sentence for sentence in prose, without breaking up those sentences, or multiplying them as little as possible; or keeping equivalent (or proportional) points of enjambment in verse. These are obviously no easy tasks, since different languages do not agree on how many words and of what length and rhythm it takes to make even the most banal, simple, and universal sorts of statement, and (as I have already noted) translation most often has an expansive effect, which can likewise complicate locating the precise point of reference – the jumping-off place, as it were, where a note begins. A most pertinent example is one of the footnotes to the essay themes listed at the end of the chapter, each of which themes is also linked with a historical or mythological figure in the left annotations. “I’ve lost the place, where was I?” (307F4) has lost its place in Lavergne: in Joyce’s original, it’s attached to “Travelling in the Olden Times” (307.10-11); in the French, “J’ai perdu l’endroit, où en étais-je?” is attached to “Le Rêve le plus étrange qui fut jamais demi-rêvé” (479). Obviously such divergences between the texts generate incommensurable differences in interpretations of the two, and this example is not, alas, an isolated incident. Lavergne completely omits several of the chapter’s footnotes, such as “Making it up as we goes along” (268F2; see Lavergne 415),⁶ and others get transposed, the way 285F4 is with 285F5 (Lavergne 444-45). Many of these accidents are probably the effect of trans-syntactic displacement, though of course carelessness, either that of the translator or of the publisher, or even both, may well play a role, too.

Yet the problem of where the translation ends and the annotation begins

⁵ There is, I think, a compelling argument to be made that Lavergne is often deaf to Issy’s voice (an argument I am not at leisure to make here, but at least some of the substance of which can be gleaned from the following paragraph), and she has a significantly muted presence in his translation. This does not seem to be because he is unaware of her: for example, Lavergne’s translation of the phrase “I was so snug off in my aphilster’s creedle” (276F5) pointedly marks the speaker as female: “J’étais si enveloppée de ma croyance aux apôtres” (430Fa).

⁶ Other omissions include 291F8 (see Lavergne 454); 292F1 (see 454); 296F3 (see 461); 305F3 (see 477); 307F5 (see 479); and 307F6 (see 480).

becomes more and more apparent –even inevitable– and more and more difficult to solve the further one explores how Lavergne treats these notes within the text. When “Lawdy Dawdy Simperts” (FW 282F2) becomes “Lawdy Dawdy Simperts (Laus Dei Semper)” (439Fb), the translation, or the non-translation if you prefer, is parenthetically extended, but what exactly would we call what is found in those brackets – annotation (explication, clarification) or translation (retranslation, maybe reversion of the original)?⁷ If it is Latin, it is not quite the Latin of the Church tag (Laus *Deo* Semper; praise to God always) but a more selfish sort of translation thereof (Laus *Dei* Semper; praise from God always). To the confusion of referents is hereby added confusion between the agencies and purposes of footnotes, and of translation itself.

However drastic Lavergne’s situation is, translating and annotating a book that is itself an extreme process of perverted translation intertwined with digressive annotation, it is worth recalling Derek Attridge’s remark that the “enormous difference between *Finnegans Wake* and other literary works is, perhaps, a difference in degree, not in kind” (203). This difference ultimately lies in how readers react to and interact with the book, and so the daunting (or intimidating, maddening, impossible – choose your preferred adjective) task of translating and/or annotating the *Wake* seems, it too is “a difference in degree, not in kind.” The *Wake*’s specific, rather sizeable degree of difference serves to affirm, and will not let the reader ignore, that translation is always tempted to annotate, and vice versa: one is the secret impulse of the other.

Let us sketch a taxonomy that might usefully distinguish different functions served by Lavergne’s footnotes, and thereby discuss more specifically the uses of annotation in translation.

- *Notes that re-present the original, untranslated text.* In those places where his translation either does not convey to his satisfaction the full or possible meanings of the original, the translator apologetically shows that original text to his reader, and perhaps too some of his own interpretation of and thinking about that text. That translators generally prefer to avoid doing this –the equivalent of a magician nervously explaining why he cannot produce the six of diamonds that his audi-

⁷ And as *Finnegans Wake* makes painfully apparent, translation is not just a matter of determining what to “carry over,” but the subtler *a priori* problem of figuring out from and to what respective languages one is taking this message. There is, for example, the general conception of “French,” but from there one must become more specific: the French of France; the French of Tours in the nineteenth century; the French of Balzac; the Frenches of Balzac’s various characters. The skilful translator is always modulating to accommodate and approximate these shifting differences in the way that a pilot with a shifting, unwieldy, and quickly disintegrating cargo must modify his or her flight plan (changing as necessary not just speed and altitude but possible landing sites) at nearly every point along the voyage. But what, for the purposes of the translator, is the language of the *Wake*? “Wakese” is no more useful a designation than the general “French,” since neither is monolithic and absolutely circumscribed, and besides they are not both “languages” in equivalent functional terms (I can successfully order a pizza in French, but not in “Wakese”). Noam Chomsky offers a salutary reminder: “no individual speaks a well-defined language. The notion of language itself is on a very high order of abstraction” (54).

ence volunteer has assiduously envisioned in her mind: this sort of thing rather tends to kill the act— shows the persistent degree of commitment to translation as an act of illusion.

Near the end of I.6, we find the short sentence “I’ll beat you so lon” (167.27). Lavergne offers, “Je te crache mon adieu” (265); “I spit you my farewell.” How did the threat of a beating or defeat of some kind become an act of spitting and leavetaking? Lavergne’s note reverts to discussing the original: “*I’ll beat you so lon.*, a écrit Joyce. Le sens superposé est: je t’ai bien eu Solon” (265n126). But whose sense does this last sentence refer to? “Superposé” would seem to suggest that Lavergne is identifying what meaning he privileges —what, to use the etymology of translation, he has decided to carry across to the reader— in his French version. This explanation is not altogether satisfactory, however, for the name of Solon is nowhere to be found in “Je te crache mon adieu” (though “adieu” echoes a discernible “bid you so long”), and the translation of this particular *Wake* passage makes for an interesting paradox, since Joyce’s reference to Solon, who decreed that the words of Homer were not to be changed, is interwoven with a muddled and ironic discussion of imperial law and divine logos: “My unchanging Word is sacred” (*FW* 167.28). The reader of the *Wake* is compelled to be both its translator and annotator, even as the *Wake* issues garbled warnings against such desecrations. The translator of the *Wake* must come up with a similarly contradictory admonishment, and thereby disregard the original — *traduttore, traditore* in a nutshell.

This use of annotation sometimes effectively acts as a transpositioning of annotation and translation. That is —this quickly gets confusing!— the translated text functions as an annotation of the original text, and the annotation to the translated text functions as a translation of that annotation. The reader of Lavergne’s text might well blink at the phrase “le Saturday Evening Post” (160) and wonder whether this is an English phrase found in the original and left un-Frenchified because it is a proper name (of a newspaper). Lavergne’s footnote to the phrase, surely inspiring a few more blinks, squelches these hypotheses: “Orthographié par Joyce: *Scatterbrains’ Aftening Posht*” (160n13; see *FW* 99.34-35). The difference, it seems, is one of spelling (*orthographie*), but what Lavergne has done in the body of his text (the alleged translation) is correct Joyce’s spelling, and thereby present an editorial interpretation not as a footnote but as the text itself, while adding a footnote to translate or retranslate Lavergne’s puzzling English back into Joyce’s language. Here we have the problem of “Lawdy Dawdy Simpers (Laus Dei Semper)” in stereo.

- *Notes that draw attention to a specific pattern, trope, or structural feature of the original text (perhaps understated or not reproduced in the translation).* Where the first type of note is generally site-specific, offering focussed commentary on the translation difficulties that a given word or phrase poses, this type of note will have a broader frame of reference, taking in the whole work being translated. Thus the translator/annotator can highlight either or both how the original text as a whole operates or how the translation strategy as a whole operates (or, as

the case may be, doesn't operate).

A newcomer to *Finnegans Wake* can find assurance of some sort of method to the muchness of madness in the recurrence of certain clusters of letters, most noticeably HCE and ALP, and simply recognizing (and often underlining, a first gesture of annotation) those patterns where they appear can be heartening. Alas, the translator not only has to recognize such patterns but try to preserve them – an utterly impossible task in languages with completely different alphabets, such as Korean and Japanese,⁸ but only slightly less impossible in French.

Lavergne sometimes –with no detectable pattern of his own– points out these patterns in his notes. For instance, in “*Edwin Hamilton's Christmas*” readers are instructed to remark upon “HCE, dans le désordre” (761n35). The note also serves to explain why these three words have not been translated, apart from their being italicized, which may seem to signal that they remain untranslated (unlike the Quinet case discussed above) but at the same time introduces some confusion. The matter of who performed what and where in “*Edwin Hamilton's Christmas pantaloonaade, Oropos Roxy and Pantharhea at the Gaiety*” (FW 513.21-22) is rearranged in “d'un drôle de pante *Edwin Hamilton's Christmas*, issu tout droit d'une pantaloonaade, Le Roi Europe et Pantharée à la Gaité” (761-62), leaving the reader of the first to infer that *Oropos Roxy and Pantharhea* is the title of the “pantaloonaade,” and the reader of the second to infer that its title is *Edwin Hamilton's Christmas*. Moreover, there is no apparent reason why Lavergne should want to draw attention to the “HCE” convention here, almost eight hundred pages into the book, when he does not do so elsewhere, at least in no consistent fashion. “*Et Cur Heli!*” (FW 73.19), for example, retains its original form, italics included, in Lavergne's translation, but no note lurks below to reveal “HCE, dans le désordre.” A more puzzling instance occurs a couple of chapters later, in I.5's list of titles for the “mamafesta” (disappointingly masculinized by Lavergne as “son manifeste” (166)). “*Amy Licks Porter While Huffy Chops Eads*” (106.32) undergoes only a very slight transformation to become “*Amy Licks Porter quand Huffy Chops Eads*” (169), with the effect that the italics trace the constellation of HCE (Lavergne otherwise expels Joyce's italics for these collected phrases) while the ALP constellation warrants no notice.⁹

It needs to be emphasized that this second kind of note depends no less than the previous kind on the interpretation(s) that the translator-annotator chooses to privilege, despite the fact that such and such a feature of the whole original might seem obvious or important to any one reader, and precisely because it might not to another reader. Here again we can see how translation and annotation share mutual anxieties, and Lavergne presents a good example in how he approaches Joyce's sentence, “In the Dee dips a dame and the dame desires a demselle but the demselle dresses dolly and the dolly does a dulcydamble” (FW 226.15-17). The French text reads: “Vers le Lough Dee descend une dame et la dame désire être demoiselle mais la demoiselle fait un dressoir à sa poupée dorée et la poupée dorée dort un

⁸ Though the *Wake* has been translated into both of these languages.

⁹ On page 233, Lavergne does take notice of her: in “ce bras d'eau alpin” (“this alpin armlet” (FW 148.22) he observes “A.L.P., symbole féminin., pour Joyce” (233n56).

doux sommeil" (350). The alliteration remains, though it is slightly diffused, and Lavergne succinctly notes: "Douze mots commençant par la lettre 'd'" (350n27). For reasons not given, Lavergne draws specific attention to the number of words that begin with "d." This might have something to do with his preceding footnote, which recounts, in the manner of the first kind of note discussed above, Joyce's own text (though not exactly), because in that instance Lavergne was unable to keep the "d"-alliteration: "Still we know how Day the Dyer works, in dims and deeps and dusks and darks" (*FW* 226.12-13) becomes "Cependant nous savons comment opère Day Dyer, dans le vague, profond, crépuscule, sombre" (Lavergne 350). Yet this note also functions as the second kind being considered here, for it too accentuates number as an ordering principle: "Défilé des quatre: *dim, deep, dusk, dark*" (350n26). Lavergne effectively informs his reader that these configurations of four and twelve are important, but gives no hint about how or why. In a sense, both the translation and the annotation are incomplete, and each begs questions the other does not fully answer. It is useful to compare Lavergne's text on this question with Endre Bíró's [partial] Hungarian translation, which renders the sentence beginning "In the Dee dips a dame" as "Az M mélyén egy madonna, a madonnát mardossa a manci, de manci mindig maskarázik, s a makara maga mákonymézes" (80-81), and the earlier "dims and deeps and dusks and darks" as "mély, méla, mályvaszín matricákkal" (80). Bíró appears to agree with Lavergne that the number of alliterative words ought to be retained, but esteems the number over the particular sound, taking the liberty of replacing "d" with "m." Though not altogether averse to annotation and commentary, Bíró declines to remark on this change.¹⁰ One might just as readily imagine a translator who would retain the "d" sounds without, for whatever reason, having exactly twelve of them; or a translator who insists that the monosyllables of "dims and deeps and dusks and darks" is of equal importance to their number. And one can thereafter imagine further variations on these possible translators by imagining with what styles and extents of argumentation or apologetics they might expound on these respective foci in footnotes – or not.

These inconsistencies, idiosyncrasies, and uncertainties, while troubling, bespeak the annotator's dilemma in general: how to match the design of the text (again, as he or she perceives it) with a workable, coherent design of explication that does not needlessly interfere with or occlude the reader's own perception of that text's design (presuming, of course, that one cares about such things). What is the right or best incident of "HCE" at which to inform the reader of its larger importance within the book? To thus tag "Howth Castle and Environs" (*FW* 3.03) on the first page would be to peremptorily rob the reader of the satisfaction of determining for herself that these three letters significantly travel together. (Imagine an annotated murder mystery in which a footnote identified the guilty party at the moment of his first appearance in the text.) Lavergne declines to be such a killjoy to

¹⁰ Bíró's translation is less inhibited than Lavergne's, but it is not easy to say whether his refusal to annotate (to observe in a footnote, for example, that he has swapped Joyce's d's for m's) is part of that greater liberty, a more or less necessary effect of it, or even a cause of it.

his “Howth Castle et Environs” (though he identifies HCE as a character in his introduction – but the marvellous thing about introductions is that they can be –and often ought to be– skipped). On the other hand, he does annotate the very first word (the rather nice “erre-revie”) so as to delineate nothing less than “la nature de *Finnegans Wake*” (its musicality, its memories, the way the final sentence loops around to rejoin the beginning).

- *Notes that explain allusions within or provide extratextual glosses of the original text.* Unlike the first two kinds of note, these notes do not refer to the original text as a material object with specific, intrinsic properties that can or cannot be reproduced or approximated in translation. They are more intertextual and less infratextual, though an absolute distinction on this point is untenable and the slippery “more” and “less” qualifiers are not to be elided. They also perforce serve a generally more didactic purpose by constructing (or, if you prefer, illuminating) *selective* contexts in which to read and understand the original text.

Perhaps not surprisingly –since the *Wake* continually has all of us guessing, not always safely– some of these ventures are less plausible than others. “Maggy” in the phrase “veuille penser toujours et encore à ce Galway, ne l’oublier jamais, et à cette envoyée sœur de Maggy” (“please kindly think galways again or again, never forget, of one absendee not sester Maggy” (458.08-10)) is matter-of-factly identified as “Nora, la femme de Joyce” (682n6). Lavergne was presumably remembering that Nora was from Galway, though he does not say so, and indeed gives no explanation for or evidence to support his claim – an otherwise uninformed reader presumably just has to trust his word on this. Looking elsewhere in the texts at other appearances by “Maggy,” we find no similar identifications: for example, Lavergne renders “Muggy well how are you Maggy” (111.15-16) as “Muggy comment vas-tu cher Maggy” (176) without comment, and, a few pages later, “Maggy’s tea” (116.24) is readily strained into “thé chez Maggy” (184), again without any footnote. Perhaps the translation of the question “And how war yore maggies?” (142.30) to “Et que faisaient les Maggies, tes Marionnettes?” (224) invokes Molly (Marion) Bloom, and so Nora by crude association; but this is hardly explicit or even definite.

The absence of a clear system or policy of annotation in Lavergne is in some respects hard to fathom. While selectivity in annotation is, as it is in translation, the unavoidable nature of the exercise, a coherent, articulated, or at least deducible organization –governing what fields of allusion are to be surveyed by what I have already observed is actually a small number of annotations for such a large and densely referential text– is of no small assistance (and assurance) to a reader. Recall the aforementioned lack of any annotation to the untranslated phrase “*Et Cur Heli!*” (*FW* 73.19) in Lavergne’s *Wake*: in this instance, Lavergne not only declines to identify HCE for his reader, he does not point out the allusion to Joyce’s earliest published poem, “Et tu, Healy,” and its historical background. This might not seem odd if he did not make such gestures elsewhere, such as notes about *Stephen Hero* (200n1), Lucia Joyce (248n88 and 249n89), and the identification of “Maggy” as

Nora Joyce. So it seems that biographical data and earlier writings by the author fall within the range and kind of allusions about which Lavergne will (curtly) notify his reader, but “Et tu, Healy” somehow flies under the radar, as do many other, similar references.

Deciding what allusions to identify and explain is only half of the job; the other half is deciding how to do it. Put another way – a way which will resonate with translators, who face the same pair of problems – one has to decide when to begin annotating, and when to stop. The majority of Lavergne's notes are, as we have seen, brief, and imply a metonymy that is seldom justified. In one of Issy's footnotes in II.2, she refers to “white mate” (270F2). Lavergne has “la chemille blanche (Wilde)” (419Fa). The *translational* connection between “mate” and “chemille” is no more obvious than the *allusive* one between a caterpillar and Oscar Wilde.¹¹ Both the translation the annotation decisions seem arbitrary (though perhaps they corroborate each other, a possibility to which I'll return). But the length of the note ought not to be directly associated with depth, or the lack thereof. Lavergne can sometimes be more expansive in his notes, as he is in this one introducing the Butt and Taff exchange in II.3:

Dans tout le dialogue qui suit, Butt et Taff jouent la scène du tableau pendu au mur du cabaret d'Earwicker: pendant la guerre de Crimée, un cadet tire sur son général. Pour saisir toute l'implication de l'incident il faut se reporter à la confession de Stavroguine dans *Les Démons* de Dostoïevski. (519n1)

Throughout the following dialogue, Butt and Taff enact the scene depicted on a tableau hanging on the wall of Earwicker's cabaret: during the Crimean war, a cadet shoots his general. To fully understand the meaning of this incident one must refer to Stavrogin's confession in Dostoyevsky's *Demons*.

My own translation here of Lavergne's note flattens out some of the original's ambiguous wrinkles. At the very least, these two sentences seem a pile of non-sequiturs – but then, so does so much *Wake* commentary, so perhaps that should be taken in stride. Yet there is also the determinism of “saisir toute l'implication” (singular, take heed, and not plural), the direct instruction. Did Joyce read this work of Dostoyevsky's, or is this just some sort of affinity detected by the translator? What exactly should I, the hungry reader, be looking for in Stavrogin's confession? Is *all* of this dialogue's meaning (“toute l'implication”) in Dostoyevsky?¹²

As these examples show, Lavergne's referential contexts are biographical

¹¹ Sam Slote, plumbing the *Scribbledehobble* text, offers the kind of context that Lavergne does not. “Wilde,” Slote writes, “had been called a ‘great white caterpillar’ by Lady Colin Campbell . . . A caterpillar is also a soldier, according to Francis Grose's *Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* (Joyce owned a copy of this volume). This suggests an early conceptual link between Wilde and Wellington . . . and ‘Great White Caterpillar’ is deployed frequently in the *Wake* as a reference to both Wilde and Wellington” (“Wilde Thing: Concerning the Eccentricities of a Figure of Decadence in *Finnegans Wake*,” *Probes: Genetic Studies*, ed. David Hayman and Sam Slote (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995), 101-122 (text available online at <http://antwerpjamesjoycecenter.com/wilde.html>)).

¹² And is it specifically in the *French* Dostoyevsky?

and literary/intertextual, though the relationships or even the distinctions between these contexts remain as occluded as the sources for such information as why Nora is called Maggy and Oscar Wilde is a caterpillar. Moreover, his notes simply point rather than explain or discuss, though this is not because (or at any rate not entirely because) he wants to resist or avoid circumscribing the field of interpretation available to a reader, for the preamble to Butt and Taff's dialogue unapologetically does just that.

Ambiguity is often thought to be the nemesis of both translation (think of idiomatic uncertainties and polyvalencies, the very stuff of *Finnegans Wake*) and annotation (driven by the need to be definite and authoritative). The dangers but also possible values and uses of ambiguity in translation and annotation themselves constitute too large and deep a subject for this essay, but it is worth remarking here how annotation can simultaneously narrow the reader's focus (and thus the meaning of the text) and be itself so ambiguous as to engender new puzzles and doubts. As often as not one has this experience in consulting Roland McHugh's *Annotations*, in which this or that expression is called "slang" but its provenance (whose slang, where?) and on what authority it is thus identified remain gaping questions. The footnote to the word "Flumen" in Lavergne's phrase "C'était un Flumen dans son genre" (313), a translation of Joyce's "She had a flewmen of her owen" (*FW* 202.05-6), reads: "Un phénomène." It is hard to dispute that, even if the reader feels none the wiser. Such a gesture is comparable to Eliot's tongue-in-cheek footnote to his line "a dead sound on the final stroke of nine" in *The Waste Land*: "a phenomenon which I have often noticed" (141). Perhaps all glosses are eccentric, or at least more elliptical than they are commonly supposed to be.

- *Notes that explain the translator's own allusions (understood to differ in some respect or degree from those of the original text).* This function would seem the most obvious to recognize, when in practice it can be the opposite – especially, of course, for a reader unfamiliar with the original.

To the sentence "Arrête-toi et baisse-toi pour conquérir" is appended this reference: "*She stoops to conquer*, de Goldsmith" (360n54). This seems a straightforward sort of identification of a literary allusion, exactly like what is found in McHugh's *Annotations*. The inference (or assumption) that Lavergne has neatly managed to carry a reference by Joyce to Goldsmith's play, but a comparison of the original passage with the translated one reveals both a different set of operations in the translation and a different purpose for the footnote:

He's your change, thinkyou mehim. Go daft noon, madden, mind the step. Please stoop O to please. Stop. What saying? I have soreunder from to him now, dearmate ashore, so, so compleasely till I can get redressed, which means the end of my stays in the languish of Tintangle. (*FW* 232.17-21)

Voici votre monnaie, merci madame. Bonsoir, jeune-fille, attention à la marche. Stoppe je t'en prie. Arrête-toi et baisse-toi pour conquérir. Je me suis rendue à lui maintenant, chère Astoreth, si complètement que je puis aller me rhabiller, se qui signifie la fin de mes stations dans le langage de Tintagel. (360)

Demonstrated here –especially in the first three sentences– is Lavergne's custom of double-translating the text: from the original to functional English, and from that to an idiosyncratic French. And again, as we noted he does with some of Issy's notes in II.2, Lavergne omits items: the two sentences "Stop. What saying?" mysteriously fall by the wayside. Even more extraordinary than what is left out is what is added. "Dearmate ashore," which to my ear sounds like a fond salutation from one at sea to a beloved on terra firma (McHugh points very plausibly to a song, "Dermot Asthore"), has been magnified to nothing less than the queen of the heavens, "Astoreth." "Please stoop O to please," part of a telegraphic refrain that echoes at different points in the *Wake*, is even more dramatically embellished: "Stoppe je t'en prie. Arrête-toi et baisse-toi pour conquérir." In the single word "stoop," Lavergne apparently detects a nod to Goldsmith, and not only does his translation exaggerate the allusion, he adds a footnote to underline it. In effect this note highlights an allusion that is pronounced in Lavergne but far less definite in Joyce.

Similar notes on Goldsmith allusions, to follow this one patterned example, test the reader's credulity while they suggest that Goldsmith is something of a touchstone for Lavergne. No fewer than three such footnotes are dedicated to a single paragraph in I.6 (262; *FW* 166.03-19), and both their claims and the translation they refer to, though they reinforce one another, strike this reader as being at least as questionable as the "stoop" instance discussed above. Lavergne metamorphoses "THREE male ones" (166.17) into "TROIS d'espèce femelle" and explains that "The Three jolly pigeons" is the name of the ale-house in *She Stoops to Conquer* (which he repeatedly calls a *novel* (262n116)). The phrase "babyma's toddler" becomes "l'enfant de Ballymahon" and the name of this Irish town begets a footnote that informs the reader that none other than Oliver Goldsmith used to live in Ballymahon (262n115).¹³ There is something uncanny about all of this.

When Lavergne does carry over and amplify these sorts of disputable allusion, his reader is left to wonder whether they are warranted precisely *because* the translator has found a clever means of approximating what otherwise might be just a faint or fanciful impression, and to what extent the annotations that accompany those translations (apt as they are to blur which allusions are in the original text, which is not represented in these instances) act as a cue for admiration. Sometimes Lavergne does seem pleased –and why begrudge the translator of *Finnegans Wake*

¹³ In their 1985 review of Lavergne's *Wake*, Shari and Bernard Benstock belittle how "erudition in the form a footnote" fails to highlight certain allusions. Lavergne renders "the Ballmooney Bloodriddon Murther" (*FW* 219.19-20) as "de Murther Bloodriddon de Ballymooney" (340) and adds this footnote: "Master *Blottet*. Mr le démuni de Ballymoney. Le jeu de mot porte sur le norvégien" (340n3). The Benstocks ask: "Whatever became of the Ballyhooley Blueribbon Army or Der Bestrafte Brudermord, or are they of no importance or incapable of being rendered in the language of La Plume de ma Tante? How did money (a rare item in Ireland) come to replace mooney (as common in Ireland as murphies)?" (232-33). While everyone looks for their own favourite allusions, I think the Benstocks should rein back the rhetorical questions and appreciate that *Ballymoney* might be closer than *Ballymooney* to *Ballymahon* – where *Oliver Goldsmith* used to live!

such small pleasures— by his own paronomasia. For Joyce’s sentence “We calls him the journeyall Buggaloffs since he went Jerusalemfaring in Arssia Manor” (*FW* 26.03-04), Lavergne produces: “Nous on l’appelle le Va-toujours Bœuf-à-l’eau depuis qu’il alla chercher Jérusalem en Anusie Mineure” (52). A footnote on “Bœuf-à-l’eau” smirks: “Buffalo.” If there are buffalo grazing in “Buggaloffs,” I don’t see them, but thanks to this note I cannot miss Lavergne’s pun.¹⁴

The function of this footnote is ostensibly to explain the translation as such (rather than explain the text being translated), but the crucial question is whether “translation” is understood in this context as a process or as a product: if the latter, as in these Goldsmith and Buffalo notes, the original is not only not acknowledged but the translated text is addressed as an object with relationships to any other text or referent *except* that original. This is the “finished” translation dressed up and out for drinks, with its spouse and wedding ring left at home.

It quickly becomes apparent, as we review the functions outlined above, that the distinctions between them are very hazy and that not only may a given annotation serve more than one function, it is sometimes no easy matter to extricate one function from the other. In fact, all of these functions are inextricable from a kind of metafunction —the justification of specific translation decisions— even though it is quite possible that this metafunction is as much an illusion (even as a utopian an illusion) as the achievement of complete translation. Every translator’s note is, as I said at the beginning of this essay, a gesture of surrender and a vow to fight on, a most sincere apology and yet an act of bad faith, too.

The system or policy by which one decides to supplement a text could be called a poetics of annotation. Like a poetics of translation, whether it is outlined for the reader or left for the reader to make out for herself, any operative poetics is going to be entirely (and rightly) open to criticism, and satisfaction is likely to be in short supply.¹⁵ And yet again *Finnegans Wake* makes for an extreme case, even if it is a “difference in degree, not in kind” (which point is not much comfort to the translator-annotator at work with Joyce’s text). One of the most disarming characteristics of the *Wake* is its “sehm asnuh” (620.16) principle: it is bad enough that a recurrent phrase such as “same anew” should be perpetually metamorphosing, but to make matters worse (especially for a translator and annotator), even when a given word reappears later in the text, looking just like it did the last time we saw it, it may not “mean” the same thing it did then. Contexts are always shifting in the *Wake*, and this distressing fact should arouse even greater sympathy for Lavergne. The identification of one instance of “Maggy” as Nora without similar identifica-

¹⁴ Indeed, Lavergne seems a bit gone on the many meanings of buffalo: he notes of “bafflelost bull” (*FW* 118.07; rendered as “Baie-falot-bulle”): “Buffalo Bill, semble être une allusion à l’esprit balour américain de Pound, qui avouait ne rien comprendre à *Finnegans Wake*” (187n17).

¹⁵ It would be interesting to compare the kinds of adjectives and adverbs habitually affixed to translations by reviewers (the predictable and narrow range of which many translators and theorists of translation have wryly taken notice of: “readable,” “elegant,” and “smooth” and so on) to those used to characterize annotations.

tions posited for other such instances is not inconsistent if the valences of "Maggy" vary depending on context. The *Wake* makes all annotations inconsistent, in that it reveals that they always are. Any poetics of annotation is by definition as provisional, compromised, and discrepant as any poetics of translation.

Fritz Senn's remark that "everything Joyce wrote has to do with translation, is transferential" (39) can be extended and modified in light of the corollary that everything Joyce wrote also has to do with annotation, and so that body of work can be called *transreferential*. Lavergne's footnotes may seem irregular, capricious, futile, or by some degree all of the above, but they simply anticipate the reader's own back-and-forth reading of the self-translating, auto-annotating text of the *Wake*, not only acknowledging these same qualities in the translation, but offering (however inadvertently this may be) ways of talking back to the translation and the original text. Put another way, they give us pause, and this is a generous and useful gift. One of the shortest of the footnotes in II.2 is the question "Hasitatense?" (296F4). Lavergne's translation answers: "Avec hésitance" (462Fa). The former might be read as a question of translation, and the latter, by way of understatement, the uncertain reply of annotation. The translator, who must commit to some more or less satisfactory formulation, may look to the footnote as a space for qualification, variation, digression – a place where hesitation is possible. This may be a sustaining fantasy when one is cracking one's forehead against the desk trying to find *le mot juste* for "mirthprovoker" (466.22) or "owlglassy" (208.09), but it is an illusion nonetheless. The annotator, even the most garrulous or digressive, can likewise complain of the restrictive constraints of the note as a form, while the imperfections of the translation seem so much more liberated by comparison. And it would be unjust to exclude the translator him- or herself from the genuine, constructive pleasures to be found in hesitating at this or that move in the translation – and complaining about it.

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