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POLYLINGUALISM AS REALITY AND TRANSLATION AS MIMESIS*

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I

Translators and theorists of translation naturally recall with gratitude the incident of the Tower of Babel — as the *felix culpa* responsible for the crisscross of interlingual chasms which they are constantly urged to survey and as far as possible to bridge. The attitude of writers to this sociolinguistic turning-point is, however, less uniform and certainly more ambivalent. True, it has widened their range of both materials and devices far beyond anything conceivable in a state where “the whole earth was of one language and of one speech.” But from another viewpoint, this very asset may be regarded as a liability or at least a mixed blessing. For the disruption of the state of world-wide linguistic homogeneity has made the profusion and confusion of tongues not only a verbal but also an existential fact, and, in addition to the basic tasks of referring to extraverbal reality and reporting verbal messages within the same code, it has laid on each language the burden of reporting messages originally encoded in other languages. This forms of course the common source of all translational problems. But what should be noted is that the complications arising are intratextual as well as intertextual and representational as well as communicative. These complications manifest themselves to some extent whenever we try not, as in standard translation, to substitute our own discourse for an utterance made in another language, but to incorporate this utterance *into* our own discourse. Such framing and juxtaposition of differently-encoded speech are, however, particularly common within the fictive worlds created in literature, with their variegated referential contexts, frequent shifts from milieu to milieu, abundance of dialogue scenes, and keen interest in the language of reality and the reality

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of language. Literary art thus finds itself confronted by a formidable mimetic challenge: how to represent the reality of polylingual discourse through a communicative medium which is normally unilingual.¹

The interlingual tension between language as represented object (within the original or reported speech-event) and language as representational means (within the reporting speech-event) is primarily mimetic rather than communicative. In this, object-sensitive reporting radically differs from the gratuitous alternation or arbitrary blending of linguistic vehicles in multilingual literature: it poses such communicative problems as intelligibility only in so far as some attempt is made to rise to the mimetic challenge. Since this tension between object and medium or inset and frame arises in principle regardless of the polyglot qualifications of the audience, it obviously could not be resolved even if the author were to communicate in a lingua franca, like Greek in ancient times, Latin in the Middle Ages, or the more recent Esperanto. For the *raison d'être* of these is not to bridge the gaps of representation but to remove the barriers to communication, often with a view to ultimately turning back the wheel of time to a pre-Babel state of universal unilingualism. But in the absence of a drastic leveling change in social reality, which Comrade Stalin indeed saw as a necessary condition for universal language, they all face the same exigencies as any other language in rendering heterolingual discourse.

Nor can this intratextual tension be resolved by the equally attractive but perhaps even more millennial vision of language as an abstract spirit rather than a concrete substance, put forward by Clemens, the monk serving as narrator in Thomas Mann's *Der Erwählte* (*The Holy Sinner*):

Es ist ganz ungewiss, in welcher Sprache ich schreibe, ob lateinisch, französisch, deutsch oder angelsächsisch, und es ist auch das gleiche, denn schreibe ich etwa auf thuidisch, wie die Helvetien bewohnenden Alamannen reden, so steht morgen Britisch auf dem Papier, und es ist ein britunsches Buch, das ich geschrieben habe. Keineswegs behaupte ich, dass ich die Sprachen alle beherrsche, aber sie rinnen mir ineinander in meinem Schreiben und werden eins, nämlich Sprache. Denn so verhält es sich, dass der Geist der Erzählung ein bis zur Abstraktheit ungebundener Geist ist, dessen Mittel die Sprache an sich und als solche, die Sprache selbst ist, welche sich als absolut setzt und nicht viel nach Idiomen und sprachlichen Landesgöttern fragt. Das wäre ja auch polytheistisch und heidnisch. Gott ist Geist, und über den Sprachen ist die Sprache (Chap. 1).

¹ Since I am concerned here with the linguistic diversity or uniformity of the utterances (usually made by different speakers) within the world of a single text, I deliberately avoid the sociolinguistic terms "multilingual" and "monolingual," which are (and should be) used to characterize the linguistic range of a single speaker or community. In contrast, a work may be said to represent a polylingual reality of discourse even though each individual speaker or milieu is strictly monolingual, and to represent a unilingual reality of discourse even though each speaker is potentially multilingual. The terms are thus complementary. I have also added the term "heterolingual" to denote a foreign language (or dialect) — usually a language other than that of the reporting speech-event.

[It is quite uncertain in what language I write, whether Latin, French, German or Anglo-Saxon, and indeed it is all the same; for say I write Thuidisch, such as the Germans speak who live in Helvetia, then tomorrow British stands on the paper and it is a Breton book I have written. By no means do I assert that I possess all the tongues; but they run all together in my writing and become one — in other words, language. For the thing is so, that the spirit of narration is free to the point of abstraction, whose medium is language in and for itself, language itself, which sets itself as absolute and does not greatly care about idioms and national linguistic gods. That indeed would be polytheistic and pagan. God is spirit, and above languages is language (trans. H. T. Lowe-Porter).]

Having enjoyed the irony of finding an original and a translated version of a tale that aspires to the condition of “language in and for itself,” we can go on to ask whether Clemens is really so innocent as he sounds. It is no doubt appropriate that Clemens, who emphatically introduces himself as the incarnation (“Inkarnation”) of the spirit of story-telling, should dream of communicating in a medium that incarnates the spirit of language. What is more, his vision of a language above languages derives not simply from his artistic and religious ideals of communication, but equally from the embarrassingly polylingual nature of his world. After all, this means of evading the mimetic pressures of “national linguistic gods” would not be such a bad solution for an Irish monk writing in a German monastery about a French duke brought up on an English island and finally exalted to the papacy of Rome. And since Clemens himself ultimately bows to the necessity of imprisoning the absolute spirit of language in the variable clay of languages, his lesson, including the clash between his (unilingual) theory and his (polylingual) practice, actually serves to sharpen and illuminate rather than eliminate the writer’s predicament.

To descend from the heights of utopia to the lowlands of reality, the problem of heterolingual or translational mimesis can in fact be variously circumvented by three drastic procedures: 1. referential restriction; 2. vehicular matching; 3. homogenizing convention.

Referential restriction consists in confining the scope of the represented world to the limits of a single, linguistically uniform community whose speech-patterns correspond to those of the implied audience, sometimes to the point of excluding interdialectal as well as interlingual tensions, as in the novels of Jane Austen. *Vehicular matching*, on the other hand, far from avoiding linguistic diversity or conflict, accepts them as a matter of course, as a fact of life and a factor of communication, and sometimes even deliberately seeks them out — suiting the variations in the representational medium to the variations in the represented object. Such consistent matching is quite common in scholarly works, the proceedings of international conferences or the daily operations of bilingual societies; but it may also be found in different varieties of polyglot art, whether Jean Renoir’s bilingual film *La grande illusion* or G. B. Shaw’s polydialectal *Pygmalion*. In

all these instances, the framed heterolingual or polylingual speech-events are replicated and in this sense given full communicative autonomy, while the overt role of the reporting speech-event is limited to the provision of bridging links, interscenic summary or possibly no more than the inverted commas of quotation. The recourse to the *homogenizing convention*, finally, retains the freedom of reference while dismissing the resultant variations in the language presumably spoken by the characters as an irrelevant, if not distracting, representational factor. Alice does not find it strange to hear the White Rabbit muttering to itself in English, and there is indeed no reason why she should. After all, doesn't Balaam's ass break into pure Biblical Hebrew and doesn't La Fontaine's fox bring to bear on the poor raven all the rhetorical resources of French? Even more extreme, such linguistic uniformity may be not simply a conventional measure of simplification but a vital basis for the work's overall structuring and functionality: in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, the development of the most complex figurative patterns known to literary art hinges on the anti-historical Englishing of the polylingual discourse held in the world of Romans and Egyptians. This principle of intratextual standardization is, then, diametrically opposed not so much to that of vehicular matching as to the *vehicular promiscuity* typical of macaronic writing — from the medieval *muwaššah* to Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* — where shifts of medium are mimetically gratuitous and polylingual means are often flagrantly summoned to represent a unilingual reality of discourse.²

What is common to the three diverse representational strategies is that each manages in its own way to eliminate the complications of imitating foreign ("heterolingual") speech. Vehicular matching substitutes the literalness and thoroughness of reproduction for the stylization and selectivity of mimesis, quoting each speech in its original wording so as to effect as perfect a correspondence as possible between the signified polylingualism of reality and the signifying polylingualism of the text. Whereas both referential restriction and homogenizing convention justify their adherence to unilingual communication by resorting to a simplifying device that enables them to preclude or neutralize one of two factors presupposed by each act of mimesis: the one, in realistic terms, by standardizing the imitated object; the other, in aesthetic terms, by standardizing the imitating medium.

Therefore, if these three primary theoretical possibilities

	referential restriction	vehicular matching	homogenizing convention	vehicular promiscuity
object	unilingual	polylingual	polylingual	variable, possibly unilingual
medium	unilingual	polylingual	unilingual	polylingual

² For an account of the latter phenomenon, which is outside my present concerns, see Forster, 1970.

indeed reflected the facts of literary practice, there would be hardly any room left for translational mimesis. In fact, however, the very extremity that renders these relationships such clear-cut theoretical categories very frequently also disqualifies them for serving as viable artistic strategies. Each of the three either demands or sacrifices too much. Referential restriction imposes such severe constraints on the selection of extraverbal as well as purely verbal material as must prove unacceptable to any artist interested in the development of certain polyvalent themes (say, Henry James's international conflict of manners) and/or in the interaction of language and culture (as in Swift or Nabokov) and/or in the mimetic effect of sociolinguistic variety (even by way of dialectal tensions, as in Fielding or Zola, or registerial shifts, as in Henry Cecil's novels of litigation). Large-scale vehicular matching, on the other hand, so inconsistent with the normal conditions of communication, may in some periods and genres be thought to divert attention from more important matters and to require too much polyglot expertise on the part of the author and his reading-public. While the adherence to the homogenizing convention, which may be thought to require too little, risks paying an even heavier realistic price than referential restriction, precisely because its unilingual vehicle is artificially and indiscriminately coupled with a polylingual tenor and the statics of the reporting speech glaringly contrast with the dynamics of the framed code-switching.

Literature, like politics, is the art of the possible. No wonder, then, that literary practice is marked, above all in referentially-oriented genres like fiction and drama, by the spirit of mimetic compromise, manifesting itself in various mixtures, combinations and contextual adjustments of the basic possibilities. The mixed representation of polylingual or heterolingual discourse may ultimately be reduced, however, to four distinct types or procedures of translational mimesis, lying between the polar extremes of vehicular matching and homogenizing convention.

1) *Selective reproduction* takes the form of intermittent quotation of the original heterolingual discourse as uttered by the speaker(s), or in literature, as supposed to have been uttered by the fictive speaker(s). And from the functional viewpoint, it usually operates as a kind of mimetic synecdoche. The Biblical Book of Ezra, for instance, suddenly incorporates into the Hebrew narrative (4.6 ff) the correspondence ("written in Aramaic") between the enemies of Israel and Artaxerxes king of Persia: the reproduction of the documentary evidence in the original Aramaic heightens the tale's impression of historical authenticity, not with regard to the reproduced parts alone but also to other speech-events (including the famous proclamation by Cyrus, with which the book starts) that have been standardized by way of unilingual translation. And the same combination of selective matching and selective leveling devised in this ancient tale repeatedly shows itself in more modern works. Consider *War and Peace*, whose Russian text is interspersed with segments of reported speech

formulated (Tolstoy observes as early as his opening chapter) "in that refined French in which our grandfathers not only spoke but thought"; or Nabokov's *Pnin*, into whose flow of English the narrator intercalates (among many other things) a specimen of the execrable Russian verse produced by one of his less favorite characters; or Mann's *The Holy Sinner*, where the complex polylingual reality and the frequent geographical shifts correlate with the interlarding of the German narration with choice monologic and dialogic bits in Medieval French, English and Latin.

To illustrate the flexibility and many-sidedness of this *pars-pro-toto* principle, some of whose functional implications will be reserved for later treatment, let me just mention one or two suggestive variables. As concerns the quantitative variations (in overall extent or local continuity) of selective matching, there is an interesting minimal unit that may be called mimetic cliché — often an expressive interjection (like the French "Parbleu!", the English "Damn!" or the German "Donnerwetter!") that is conventionally regarded as typical of a certain sociolinguistic entity and therefore economically serves the purpose of mimetic gesture or synecdoche. Such ready-made locutions may have little intrinsic importance, merely functioning like the bundle of distinctive features within the phoneme: to denote otherness by way of opposition. The intratextual equivalent of the traditional mimetic cliché is the imputed tag, namely, a phrase that is constantly repeated in the original by a character or a group, so that it operates in a way similar to the (unilingual) mannerisms of speech in Dickens's world. A case in point is the Yiddish curse "May his bones rot!" recurring throughout the Hebrew version of Mendele Mokher-Seforim's *The Book of Beggars*. And the extent to which such devices are deliberately employed is demonstrated by Thomas Mann's distinction in *The Holy Sinner* between different uses or users of what is semantically the same phrase. The monkish narrator himself is as fond as his monk-bred hero of the colloquial appeal "Believe me!"; but in the interests of idiolectal mimesis, he uses in his own discourse the German locution "Glaubt mir," consistently reserving for Gregorius the Latin equivalent "Credemi."

Even more significant, what underlines the mimetic role of selective reproduction is the fact that, unlike vehicular matching on a large scale, it does not *necessarily* require or presuppose bilingual competence on the reader's part, certainly not beyond a minimal standard and not to an equal degree in all periods and genres. One measure of the variability of this standard is the wide range of actual heterolingual practice, leading from the uncompromising demands of unique dialogue and esoteric quotation (especially prevalent in minority culture and/or canonical literature) to the minimal reproductive gesture of mimetic cliché and imputed tag (current in mass media and modern and/or popular literature). A complementary measure is the suggestive difference in ordering between various instances of intratextual "dual-language" rendition, where either the heterolingual source or its narratorial translation is parenthetically superadded: the sequence

“source → translation” often implies a lower standard of bilingual competence than the sequence “translation → source,” though neither form is common in the strictly polyglot art of the past.

Reproduction, finally, does not necessarily mean accurate reproduction. It may turn out less than impeccable by linguistic standards: either unconsciously, as in many cases of anachronism or dialectal hotch-potch or other forms of authorial blundering, or deliberately, as when by a typical dual-language trick, Mr. Shandy mistranslates “Amicus Plato sed magis amica veritas” to equal “Dinah was my aunt but Truth is my sister” (*Tristram Shandy*, Vol. I, Chap. 21). And even when perfectly acceptable from the linguistic viewpoint, reproduction may still involve gross distortion or daring manipulation from the factual and compositional viewpoints. Thus, the intertextual allusions ostensibly signalled by Stendhal’s polylingual epigraphs, like the Aramaic sayings that color the Yiddish discourse of Scholem Aleichem’s famous dairyman, are often pure invention. Not to speak of less extreme varieties of deviant allusion and internal misquotation (cf. Sternberg, 1976). Which is to say that in dealing with translational mimesis in general and selective reproduction in particular, we must take into account the variables of implied literary, bi-literary and bi-cultural as well as purely bilingual competence.

2) A more oblique and varied type of translational mimesis is *verbal transposition* — the poetic or communicative twist given to what sociolinguists call bilingual interference. Transposition is mimetically more oblique than reproduction, since it suggests polylingual or heterolingual speech in and through an ostensibly unilingual medium rather than directly incorporates such speech into an openly mixed framework. And it is also more varied, since its polylingual or heterolingual suggestiveness derives from the narrator’s (the “translator’s”) superimposing on the translated quotation one or more of a variety of features and patterns distinctive of the source language but unacceptable in the target language — this montage accordingly producing an interlingual clash of the two codes within the transposed utterance.

The devised translational interference may relate to any verbal level or aspect at which the two languages involved are less than perfectly isomorphic. The jarring effect of transposed speech may for instance be due to the retention or imitation of what becomes in the target language:

- (a) phonic or orthographic idiosyncrasy (as with Swift’s word “Houyhnhnm,” which, however normal within the phonological structure of the language of horses, is simply beyond the articulatory power of mere Yahoos like us; or, to cite a more prevalent phenomenon, the carrying over of the “low” or foreign intonations of the original speaker into the fabric of the translated discourse); and/or
- (b) grammatical irregularity and ill-formedness (whether by way of discrepancies in concord or tense or aspect, unnatural or ambiguous word

- order, or the ruthlessly standardized morphology aimed at in the nightmarish world of George Orwell's *1984*); and/or
- (c) lexical deviance (as with the literally rendered Spanish idioms in Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*); and/or
 - (d) to move from the unacceptable to the infelicitous and from the specific to the general, even stylistic features that are contrary to the "spirit of the language" (as when the proverbial Russian emotionalism surfaces in the dialogues of Rebecca West's *The Birds Fall Down*, or when the unEnglish flourishes throughout Somerset Maugham's "The Man with the Scar" are at last explicitly ascribed by the narrator to his Guatemalecan informant: "I have translated what he told me as well as I could, but I have made not attempt to tone down his rather high-flown language").

But whatever its modes and combinatory technique, transposition significantly differs from (overall and local) matching in that it is not so much a literal reproduction of substance as a stylized mimesis of form; or from the reader's viewpoint, not so much a heterolingual datum or directly observed fact as an interpretive hypothesis accounting for verbal tension, deviance and incompatibility within a given unilingual discourse in terms of the reporter's selective, mimetically-oriented (mis)rendering of an originally heterolingual utterance. The transpositional hypothesis is not only more attractive than the obvious genetic alternative but also presents a subtler communicative structure, due to its different distribution of linguistic features between the two speech-events — postulating a less drastic degree of reporting interference with the quoted material and correspondingly allowing the heterolingual speech greater autonomy of point of view. What a genetic hypothesis might dismiss as authorial error within an otherwise homogenized framework is as a rule much more satisfactorily explained as covert interlingual and interspectival montage on the part of a narrator (reporter, translator) deliberately mixing the codes of the frame (inhabited by himself and his audience) and the inset (inhabited by the fictive speaker and *his* addressee) in the interests of representational vividness and complexity.

However, just as a polylingual medium may be used (as in macaronic writing) in the absence of a corresponding polylingual object or shift within the projected reality, so every act of bilingual interference is not necessarily an instance of mimetic transposition. For both the reporter within the represented framework and certainly the reportee within the represented framework are as liable as the rest of humanity to sociolinguistic accidents. On the one hand, though what I have just called the genetic hypothesis is no doubt less integrative than the mimetic, it cannot be ruled out categorically — least of all, when we have to do with authors who (like Conrad or Nabokov) choose to write in a language other than their own or, what is more common, in dialects they do not fully command. Interestingly enough, these are among the writers most addicted to translational mimesis, so that one sometimes wonders where literary strategy ends and linguistic self-defense begins. But from time to time we come across verbal

peculiarities that must clearly be accounted for in terms of authorial slip rather than deliberate shift to the medium employed by the original speaker.

On the other hand, the original (real or fictive) speakers may themselves be responsible for imposing on a foreign language the various features and patterns peculiar to their native tongue, or even the other way round. Thus, in Conrad's *Lord Jim*, Stein's sentence structure ("To my small native town this my collection I shall bequeath," "One thing alone can us from being ourselves cure") is twisted into the verb-stopped word order favored by his native German; the same result is produced by a more complicated process of transmission in the speech of the Yugoslavian hotel-keeper in Oliver Bleek's *Protocol for a Kidnapping*:

"If you will wait until I my clothes put on, I will with your luggage help," he said, getting all the verbs nicely tucked away at the end of his phrase and sentence. Maybe he thought in Serbian, translated it into German, and then into English (Chap. 21).

Nabokov's *Pnin* superlatively exemplifies the ravages of foreign accent:

If his Russian was music, his English was murder. He had enormous difficulty ("dzeefeecooltsee" in Pninian English) with depalatization, never managing to remove the extra Russian moisture from *t*'s and *d*'s before the vowels he so quaintly softened. His explosive "hat" ("I never go in a hat even in winter") differed from the common American pronunciation of "hot" [...] only by its briefer duration, and thus sounded very much like the German verb *hat* (has). Long *o*'s with him inevitably became short ones: his "no" sounded positively Italian, and this was accentuated by his trick of triplicating the simple negative ("May I give you a lift, Mr. Pnin?" "No-no-no, I have only two paces from here" (*Pnin*, Chap. 3).

Pnin's "two paces from here" brings us to the level of lexis, variously deformed out of shape by Conrad's half-caste captain, "whose flowing English seemed to be derived from a dictionary compiled by a lunatic" (*Lord Jim*, Chap. 23); or by the doctoral candidate in Molière's *Le Malade imaginaire*, with his verbally as well as medically preposterous panacea "Clysterium donare,/Postea seignare./Ensuitta purgare": or by Henry James's M. Nioche, whose "vocabulary," the narrator of *The American* informs us, "was defective and capricious. He had repaired it with large patches of French, with words anglicized by a process of his own, and with native idioms literally translated." So it is not entirely in jest that Nioche is told by his prospective pupil, the American Christopher Newman, that "listening to your English [...] is almost a lesson in French" (Chap. 4).

Still, though James and Bleek actually describe their characters' speech as the product of translation, all these cases of mixed speech must nevertheless be sharply distinguished from our translational mimesis of heterolingual discourse. They may indeed be "translational" in the sense of resulting from interlingual operations; they may also be "mimetic" both as tokens of existing verbal models and as more or less verisimilar representations of discourse; and they are of course indicative of a polylingual reality. But these similarities in interlingual

montage serve to highlight the crucial difference between mimetic transposition and sociolinguistic interference. This difference may be broken down into the following complex of factors: (a) *communicative structure*: two distinct speech-events, that between the original speaker and his audience being set into the framework of the reporter and his addressee, as opposed to a single speech-event; (b) *locus of different codes*: distributed between the two speech-events, with the reported one possibly wholly unilingual, as opposed to co-existent within the bilingual speaker's mind; (c) *source of interlingual conflict*: the reporter's selective (and usually deliberate) substitution of the forms and features of his own code for those of the original utterance, as opposed to the bilingual's (usually involuntary) production of a double-coded utterance, whose genesis is sometimes described as the speaker's faulty mental "translation" of a message from his native into a foreign language; (d) *mode of existence of speaker's utterance as actually enunciated*: partly *in absentia* as opposed to fully *in praesentia*.

Sociolinguistic interference, therefore, just like the code-switching of equilingual or diglossic speakers, is not an instance but an object of translational mimesis — amenable to all the modes of heterolingual manipulation, from vehicular matching to homogenizing convention. This practice, variously manifested in all the works I have just cited, is overtly pointed out by James's narrator: "The language spoken by M. Nioche was a singular compound, which I shrink from the attempt to reproduce in its integrity," since "the result, in the form in which he in all humility presented it, would be scarcely comprehensible to the reader, so that I have ventured to trim and sift it."

3) *Conceptual reflection* is even further removed than transposition from the concrete texture of the original discourse: what it retains is not so much the verbal forms of the foreign code as the underlying socio-cultural norms, semantic mapping of reality, and distinctive referential range, segmentations and hierarchies. Conceptual reflection thus lies at the crossroads of language and reality. Qua mimetic hypothesis, therefore — and it is important to note that reflection, like transposition and unlike matching, is an hypothesis that explains verbal idiosyncrasy within an ostensibly unilingual message in terms of perspectival diversity and communicative montage — its discovery and validation may require various kinds, degrees and combinations of reading-competence.

Sometimes the conceptual clash has a precise linguistic focus or grammatical realization. Thus, when the holy ark of the covenant is brought into the camp of Israel, the Biblical narrator quotes the shouting of the frightened Philistines:

Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty gods [Elohim]? these *are* the gods [Elohim] that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness. (II Samuel, 4.8: the King James version is here accurate, almost literal)

At first glance, the heterolingualism of the original speech seems to have been homogenized out of existence by way of narratorial intrusion. The only linguistic

clue of translational mimesis here is the jarring note sounded by the Philistines' repeated reference to the God of Israel through the plural form (= gods) of that very word (*Elohim*) which a Jew would use as singular (= God). But this deviance in nominal categorization reflects a conceptually and perspectively charged distinctive feature, the foreignness of the utterance being thus foregrounded through a twofold tension between the Jewish audience within the narrative frame and the Philistine speakers within the narrative inset: the informational discrepancy between the enlightened and the ignorant (the plagues were actually inflicted in Egypt, not in the wilderness) and the normative discrepancy between the monotheistic and the polytheistic.

In other cases, the mimetic discrepancy is reflected in terms of the semantic structure or limits of the two languages in which the reported and the reporting speech-events are encoded, as when the Lilliputians, wholly unacquainted with many phenomena which Western culture takes for granted, have to fall back on ingenious guessing and lengthy circumlocution in order to refer to Gulliver's watch:

A globe, half silver, and half of some transparent metal: for on the transparent side we saw certain strange figures circularly drawn, and thought we could touch them, until we found our fingers stopped with that lucid substance. He put this engine to our ears, which made an incessant noise like that of a water-mill: and we conjecture it is either some unknown animal, or the god that he worships: but we are more inclined to the latter opinion, because he assured us, (if we understand him right, for he expressed himself very imperfectly) that he seldom did anything without consulting it (Part I, Chap. 2).

Elsewhere, the conceptual reflection is based on the lexical or referential deficiency of the target rather than the source language, as when the half-Russian heroine of *The Birds Fall Down* mentions the many loving names conferred on oil by the Orthodox Church: "the holy oil, the oil of gladness, the oil of sanctification, a royal robe, a seal of safety, the delight of the heart, an eternal joy, the oil of salvation" (Chap. 9).

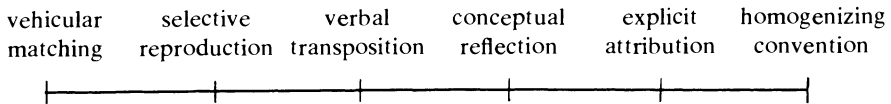
Most often, however, this mode of intratextual translation implements indicators that are verbally much less definite or codified, producing the impression of heterolingualism through culturally typical (or typified) topics, interests, attitudes, realia, forms of address, fields of allusion, or paralinguistic features like gesticulation.

4) *Explicit attribution*, finally, is a direct statement on the reporter's (or even the reportee's) part concerning the language (or some aspect of the language) in which the reported speech was originally made. We have already seen more than one instance of it conjoined, in the form of generalization, with other translational types: for example, in the narrator's comments on Pnin's phonetic or Nioche's lexical aberrations. But attribution may also appear by itself, unsupported and unexemplified by even the faintest shade of mimetic "showing" and consisting in pure narratorial "telling" — whether about the heterolingual nature of the discourse as a whole (e.g., "He spoke in French") or,

more specifically, about the standardization of some heterolingual component (as when Shaw notes in *Pygmalion* that “this desperate attempt to represent [Liza’s] dialect without a phonetic alphabet must be abandoned as unintelligible outside London”). A typical result of its thoroughgoing application is that, when the quoted speakers within the represented reality are themselves bilingual (as in Eric Ambler’s *A Kind of Anger*), the omission of an overt notice makes it impossible to determine in which of the possible languages a certain dialogue is conducted. Another is what may be called standardization at a second remove, usually due to a double communicative framing: a narrator’s standardized quotation (in his language) of a character’s standardized quotation (in his own language) of another character’s speech (in a third language). In extreme cases, therefore, attribution merges into the pole of homogenizing convention in all that concerns the uncontested unilingualism of the representational medium and is distinguished from this pole only in the “mimetic” awareness of the poly- or heterolingualism of the represented object, signalled through the occasional references to linguistic diversity.

II

What is common to the different types or categories of intratextual translation is, then, that the interference with the reported heterolingual speech-event produces a verbally and communicatively mixed quotation, combining the perspectives of the intrusive narrator within the frame and the original speaker within the inset. But in view of the differences in the degree of quotational interference, it is tempting to range the four categories we have just distinguished along a scale flanked by the two limiting cases:



Such gradation looks straightforward enough, but it may prove misleadingly static and simplified vis-à-vis the variables of communication and above all the intricacies of poetic licence and mimetic modeling.

First, it goes without saying that the scale classifies types or aspects of translational mimesis rather than texts or textual segments. It is not only that each of the intermediate devices is in itself necessarily mixed in that it forms a selective or stylized combination of the two poles, but that it may variously coexist or interact with the others within a given textual framework. Nabokov’s *Pnin*, for instance, runs up and down the gamut according to its variable aims and needs, in complete disregard for the decorums of consistency.

Moreover, it is by no means necessarily true that the movement from right to left coincides with an increasing approximation to the original utterance, or with an increasing sense or expectation of reconstructability, or with an increasing complex of re-translational prerequisites. Apart from the textual factors of quantitative scope and presentational continuity, it is worth noting that the wide

variability in the kind and degree of implied (i.e., required) reading-competence, which we have already seen to operate within a single type of translational mimesis, applies with at least equal force to the relations between different types. Conceptual reflection, when implemented on the scale of science fiction or James's international novels, certainly implies a higher standard of bicultural competence on the reader's part than the transposition or reproduction of interspersed cliché or allusion. And while minimal bilingual competence may suffice to follow a reproduced speech, its reconstruction in the light of transposed clues may require a fuller, because more active, command of the implied source language.

More generally, since literary studies, notably including the study of the artistic representation of reality, seriously suffer from the failure to distinguish formal mode and functional system. I want to emphasize that this scale is gradated in purely formal terms. What such a scale can reasonably be expected to do is to arrange a set of mimetic devices according to their distance from the concrete verbal texture of the heterolingual discourse taking place (or supposed to have taken place) within the represented reality — or, in terms of narrative point of view, according to their position between “showing” and “telling.” As such, it may afford a fairly useful descriptive and typological tool, enabling us to establish the inventory of representational devices available to a given writer or period or style or tradition, to compare different corpora in selectional and combinatory range (e.g., formulaic narrative vs. modern novel, journalistic vs. scholarly writing, verbal art vs. the syncretic medium of the cinema), or to trace historical developments in terms of shifts in translational repertoire. The point is, however, that the absolute location of a device (or for that matter the text's whole gamut of devices) can in itself tell us very little about its actual mimetic effect or force or function, which can never be determined *a priori* but turns in each case on a large complex of variables and constraints — general and specific, historical and poetic, sociolinguistic and generic, textual and contextual. In different contexts, the same translational form may serve different functions and the same function may be served by different forms.

Accordingly, when we pass from the typology to the functionality of translational mimesis, we pass from its characterization as a set of local reporting devices placed in a static and autotelic hierarchy to its integration as a textual component and in terms of a fluid system of intratextual relations. In literary art, this interdependence of elements indicates above all the recognition that the realism of polylingual discourse — like the realism of discourse in general and of all nonverbal objects within the represented framework — cannot be understood apart from the text's overall referential strategy, of which it is both a miniature and a part or means.

Translational mimesis being a miniature means that, just like the fictive world as a whole, its realism must be judged not by some absolute norm of “reality” but in close reference to the reality-models suggested by the generico-historical context and built into the work itself. One of the many implications of this parallel is that to classify (or even worse, condemn) a work as unrealistic for

failing to resort to translational forms that are in fact historically inaccessible or functionally irrelevant (if not detrimental) to it would be as absurd as the common practice of raising the stick of "realism" against a work whose whole sin actually consists in leaving out certain areas of reality that are beneath its notice, outside its existential ken or beyond its artistic bounds. On the other hand, it would be just as absurd to praise a work as realistic for employing translational devices that are in fact automatic within its tradition or forced on it by the mimetic and expressive inadequacies of its target language. Each work inherits and establishes a certain range of heterolingual or heterodialectal representation; and it is the interplay of possible and actual, conventional and innovative forms that determines its realistic effect, not the distribution of those forms along some external and eternal scale.

In extreme cases, especially that of works adhering to the homogenizing convention, there may be no more than a single device at work. But even then, despite the seemingly common repertorial limitation, one must not lose sight of the marked differences in effect between *representational restrictedness* (where polylingualism is not conceived of as a constitutive or distinctive dimension of reality, as in many ancient and medieval narratives), *communicative restrictedness* (as when the two languages are far removed in structure or resources), and *self-imposed restriction* (poetic constraints, generic considerations, rhetorical tactics or individual preference, as in journalistic writing or children's literature). The same is essentially true of works with an enlarged or more densely populated scale. Biblical narrative, for example, though quantitatively less developed than modern literature both in range of translational devices and in the frequency of their implementation, often produces in this respect a sharper sense of realism when its performance is properly viewed against the background of the homogenized discourse in the Canaanite tradition. And when coupled with the factors that have already been discussed, like the implied standard of bilingual competence, the variability of literary and communicative contexts forcefully establishes that there is no necessary correspondence between mimetic form and mimetic function.

This conclusion is further reinforced by a second parallel between the microcosm of translational mimesis and the macrocosm of overall referential strategy, namely, the significance of the internal structuring of the elements composing each system. Thus, in order to determine the function or force or centrality of translational mimesis it is as important to trace the distribution of heterolingual elements along the textual sequence as to analyze their representational forms or their overall statistical distribution among the different formal modes. The latter procedures may by themselves prove misleading, since there is often a notable similarity between the tendency to open the work with a circumstantial evocation of fictive reality, with a view to producing a first impression of realism, and the tendency to introduce at an early stage a heavy and particularized concentration of translational devices (see Sternberg, 1978: 217ff.). Moreover, the importance of tracing the internal ordering and distribution of these devices shows itself in the treatment of local

instances as well as the work's whole heterolingual corpus. In Book III, Chapter 11 of *Tristram Shandy*, for example, Tristram quotes and translates, in a dual-language text, Bishop Ernulphus's twelfth-century formula of excommunication, containing such horrible and preposterous curses as:

Maledictus sit vivendo, moriendo . . . manducando, bibendo, esuriendo, sitiendo, jejunando, dormitando, dormiendo, vigilando, ambulando, stando, sedendo, jacendo, operando, quiescendo, mingendo, cacando, flebotomando.

May he be cursed in living, in dying . . . in eating and drinking, in being hungry, in being thirsty, in fasting, in sleeping, in slumbering, in walking, in standing, in sitting, in lying, in working, in resting, in pissing, in shitting, and in blood-letting.

The sceptical reader may convince himself of the literal authenticity of this fantastic-looking document through independent research, while the less sceptical will be satisfied with Sterne's cunning note that "As the genuineness of the consultation of the *Sorbonne* upon the question of baptism, was doubted by some, and denied by others, — 'twas thought proper to print the original of this excommunication: for the copy of which Mr. *Shandy* returns thanks to the chapter clerk of the dean and chapter of *Rochester*." But once convinced, it becomes much easier in the sequel to trick the reader into believing (or at least suspending disbelief) in the genuineness of the equally preposterous and similarly quoted-and-translated "Tale of the Nose" by Slawkenbergius, which is in fact entirely apocryphal. The moral pointed by such temporal manipulations consists, then, in the extent to which mimesis may be a matter of distributive pattern rather than distributional statistics, of rhetorical structure rather than material reproduction, of contrived effect rather than authenticated fact.

Mimesis as structured effect and impression brings us to a third aspect of the parallel. The realistic force of polylingual representation, like that of the text's simulacrum of reality as a whole, is relatively independent of the objective (verbal and extraverbal) facts as viewed and established by scientific inquiry. What is artistically more crucial than linguistic reality is the model(s) of that reality as internally patterned or invoked by the individual work and/or conventionally fashioned by the literary tradition and/or conceived of by the reader within the given cultural framework. The most extreme case of subordination of external factuality to internal modeling, often a concomitant of a fictive world regulated by a logic that sharply deviates from that of everyday life, is the fabrication of languages that have never been known to man: the languages of Lilliput, Brobdingnag or Houyhnhnmland in *Gulliver's Travels* or George Orwell's Newspeak are elaborately differentiated from standard English ("Oldspeak") by its three registers and its phonetic, phonological, grammatical, lexical and semantic structure. However fantastic, these fictive languages are invested with such existential rightness and internal coherence as cannot but give their various modes of "translation" an eerie mimetic power within the framework of the "polylingual" reality-model. Much more often, the internalized orientation of literary mimesis assumes the less extreme form of manipulating the actual rather than postulating the nonexistent. A typical

example is Ian Fleming's representation of Negro dialect in the James Bond saga. To dismiss his rendering as grossly inaccurate is to miss the whole point, and not simply because we have to do here with a genre of popular literature. To Fleming, such foreign speech is not a dialectological problem but a rhetorical tool — a possible source of local color and picturesque effect. As in all other cases where he scandalized his critics by dragging in bits and pieces of *realia* with a show of expertise, Fleming envisages a reader who cannot pick holes in this façade of *vraisemblance*, and even if he could, would know better than to make a fuss about them as long as he got his money's worth in other ways.

As textual component, however, translational mimesis stands to the text and particularly the text's overall referential strategy not only as microcosm to macrocosm but also as part to whole or as means to end. And this further diversifies and complicates its functional variability. The interplay of translational and extraverbal mimesis may yield a variety of means-end combinations, all of them indeed bidirectional in principle but with widely different goals and dominants. Here I can only mention two typical limiting cases and some intermediate possibilities. Polylingual representation is sometimes more or less strictly subordinated to the dramatic and rhetorical needs of the overall fictive action: it may then serve, for instance, to lay the ground for a comedy of errors, to characterize or just label a person or a milieu, to sharpen or on the contrary attenuate the reader's sense of existential otherness or foreignness or multifariousness, etc. And the need to implement a certain function in a certain context frequently explains even the recourse to a particular form out of the available repertoire. The opposite extreme, the subordination of extraverbal reality to the development of polylingual play, is not so common on a large scale — certainly not in drama and the novel, for fairly obvious generic reasons. Still, speaking of his *Lord of the Rings*, J. R. R. Tolkien revealed that "he long ago invented some languages out of pure philological enthusiasm; as they seemed to work, he thought it would be interesting to invent people who spoke them. The result was the whole thrilling world of dwarves, elves and hobbits" (quoted by Forster, 1970: 88). And there is no doubt that the same principle has a wealth of local and sporadic manifestations: a milieu is invoked, a situation is staged, a speech is developed beyond the requirements of the action or fully quoted rather than summarized, a character is introduced or invested with certain verbal and psychological features, primarily in order to motivate the play of interlingual tensions.

In between these poles, we have a spectrum of more actively bidirectional relationships, where each dimension of mimesis operates (simultaneously or successively) as means and end, in the service of the text's overall referential strategy. For example, Homer's practice of homogenizing the language of his *dramatis personae* correlates with his practice of homogenizing their culture: the Greeks and the Trojans have the same gods, arms, customs, codes of honor. And these two dimensions of his poetic modeling of reality complement and reinforce each other with considerable thematic gain — yielding a world-picture of universal validity, projecting the common aspirations of humans against the

background of mortal fate and immortal fun, and marking oppositions in terms of the essentials of character rather than the accidentals of race. The worlds of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and Orwell's *1984*, on the other hand, are characterized not by sociolinguistic homogeneity but by diversity, and it is on this basis that language and culture variously interact in the interests of the overall, normatively-charged picture of life. Here the invention of special languages and the different modes of translational mimesis serve to bring out the polyvalence of culture, while at the same time the structuring and unfolding of the (equally invented) extraverbal reality are influenced by the desire to enhance the effect of the polylingualism of discourse.

Both the formal and the functional variability of translational mimesis thus underline the need for a careful handling of the notion of mimesis, which after two thousand years of currency is now more than ever surrounded by confusion. The trouble is that, unlike the proverbial old dog, mimesis has been taught so many tricks and has such an aptitude for learning new ones, that its performance can hardly be reduced to a single univocal bark. However, it is still possible to turn this terminological burden to theoretical account. For what I have shown by focusing on one multiform aspect of mimesis in relation to overall referential strategy applies in principle to all other aspects and to mimesis as a whole in relation to the work's hierarchy of means and ends. We may retain mimesis as the most comprehensive term for the relationship between reality and its modeled representation, insisting precisely on the flexibility, mobility and protean changes it exhibits in its movement up, down and across a set of closely interrelated scales, which for convenience I shall summarize as oppositions: (1) selectivity vs. reproduction; (2) referential or fictional patterning vs. verisimilar effect; (3) artful impression vs. authenticated factuality; (4) (im)possibility vs. (im)probability; (5) internal coherence vs. external validity; (6) implied vs. imported, (7) artistic vs. pragmatic, and (8) conventional vs. unique modeling; (9) instrumental form vs. terminal function.

III

Finally, I want to outline some of the implications of the foregoing argument for some issues related to mimesis. To start with, there is a widespread misconception in poetics (and a number of other disciplines concerned with language and communication) that consists in what I would call the reproductive fallacy: the belief that direct speech presents an exact replication of the original message. What the argument reveals is the stylized and subordinate status of seemingly intact and autonomous literary quotation, showing itself particularly in the extent of authorial or narratorial interference with the so-called direct discourse of the characters — or in other words, the range and variety of intrusive “telling” even within the framework of what is traditionally regarded as pure “showing” in the theory of narrative point of view.

To proceed to the relationship between poetics and translation, translational mimesis reveals still another aspect or dimension of this fascinating subject. Generally speaking, then, this relationship may assume four basic forms:

- 1) the inquiry into the role played by translation and translations in some literary genre, trend, period or environment — say, the view of the translation of the classics throughout the Renaissance as a source of verbal plunder, thematic inspiration and formal discipline for the new developing poetics — with its focus on the part-whole relations between translated corpus and the literary system;
- 2) in a related but distinct sense: the explanation of the choices made in a translation in terms of the translator's (reconstructed or explicit) conception of literature, with its focus on the part-whole relations between translated text and translating logic;
- 3) the study of the validity or acceptability of a translation in terms of the poetic principles informing the original — with its focus on the part-whole relations between translated units and overall poetic structure or functional constraints, or in other words, on the comparison of the part-whole relations in the translated and the original text; and finally, I would suggest,
- 4) the study of translational mimesis, with its focus on the intratextual part-whole relations between the (variably, selectively and tendentiously) translated units and the poetics of the work incorporating them.

I have deliberately presented the four types of relationship in a manner that will both indicate the position of translational mimesis as a legitimate and necessary concern of any poetically-oriented theory of translation and bring out some revealing points of contact with the other, complementary concerns. When the field of translation studies is viewed in this broad perspective, it emerges for instance that judging translational practice primarily by the “external” and absolute standard of the source corpus rather than by the internal aims and variable needs of the target is far from being the rule: it actually dominates in no more than one (No. 3) of the four frameworks. And this suggests that any monistic conception of translational adequacy and translational competence is simply unacceptable, since even the basic criteria must vary from framework to framework in nature, cogency and certainly hierarchical structure. What is in one framework of inquiry a perfectly adequate rendering may be condemned in another as gross infidelity, tendentious tailoring, or even plain ignorance. Hence, among other things, the need for a broad concept or conception, comparable to mimesis as presented above, that will accommodate the whole range of correspondence between translation and source — e.g., from formal to contextual replication or from minimal to maximal analogy — and will then enable us to relate in more specific terms the variations in translational practice to the variations in translational ends.

Within such a conception, standard or approximative literary translation (No. 3) and translational mimesis (No. 4) will evidently be found to be widely separated in more than one respect. In one, the relations between source and rendering are in principle intertextual; in the other, intratextual. In one, the source alone is initially present and the translation attempts to re-construct it; in the other, the translation alone is initially present and the source is reconstructible only through its mediation. And of course, the Seven Deadly

Sins of one — whether cliché, literalism or anachronism — are cardinal virtues in the decalogue of the other. Still, their juxtaposition is not uninformative. First, it draws attention to a highly intricate problem: what happens to translational mimesis in translation, especially when the new target language is none other than the heterolingual source imitated by the original text? Second, it raises the equally complex problem of the correspondence and interaction between the translational practice of the two within the context of a certain period, or genre, or writer. To give a single example: to what extent should translation (and by what means do translations) reflect as well as replace the actual verbal features and distinctions of the original? Third, the very disparity of the two throws into special relief the common denominator of part-whole relations as the regulative logic informing all translational activities. To insist that, within the constrained scope of standard translation as well as within the apparently happy-go-lucky performance of translational mimesis, the material and formal analogy of the parts may be sacrificed to the functional demands of the whole, is not of course to make life easier for anybody. My purpose has been to demonstrate the power and range of translation, not to legitimate the vagaries of translators.

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