TIS The Independent Scholar

A peer-reviewed interdisciplinary journal

ISSN 2381-2400

Volume 2 (September 2016)

OPEN ACCESS

CONTENTS FROM THE EDITOR

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

CRITICAL ESSAYS BOOK REVIEWS

NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

The Independent Scholar Vol. 2 (September 2016) ISSN 2381-2400

GETTING THE MESSAGE ACROSS:
TRANSLATING MEANING FOR AN ACADEMIC READERSHIP

Amanda Haste (Marseille, France)

Independent Scholar, NCIS
Adjunct Faculty, Aix-Marseille University

Correspondence should be addressed to: amanda.haste@ncis.org

Date submitted: 29 April 2016
Date accepted: 1 June 2016

Abstract

This paper, based on a presentation given at the 2015 NCIS Conference at Yale University, explores the transmission of meaning through the experience of researchers working in an Anglophone environment, but who need to use primary and secondary source materials which are, in their original form, in a language other than English.

Many researchers use foreign-language resources as the basis of their research, while others may use them only occasionally, but in all cases the scholar needs to ensure that, when writing for a cross-cultural academic audience, they communicate their message in its entirety. Ensuring that the full import of the source text is transmitted to the reader is particularly important when analysis hinges on double meanings, word-play, and implicit cultural references with which they may not be familiar. This paper therefore uses numerous examples of translation in academic work to illustrate the mechanics and best practice of translating meaning, and concludes by considering complex cultural references and multiple layers of meaning when writing for a cross-cultural academic audience.[1]

Keywords: Translation; meaning; linguistic; cultural.

INTRODUCTION

As academics, we encounter a wide range of primary and secondary sources, in which language of the source text (ST) can often present issues for our readers. Our research may involve exploring aspects of our own ethnicity, for which written sources and/or ethnographic data or oral histories are in our mother tongue, or at least in a language historically used to fulfil a cultural or religious function (e.g. Hebrew for a Jewish scholar). Alternatively we may be involved in researching different historical periods whose language we do not speak or read in our everyday lives. For instance, medieval scholars or those studying early Western Christianity, or indeed law, need Latin, and there are archaic forms of our own language (the Middle English of Chaucer is a very different animal from modern British English). Certain regions will also have their own indigenous or immigrant-borne languages: it would be challenging, to say the least, to research eighteenth-century Pennsylvania without encountering documents written in Pennsylvania Dutch,[2] or at least using Low German terminology, and we may even have to deal with indigenous languages which only exist in oral form.

Even if we do not consider ourselves to be linguists, our work is often enriched by using the literature in non-English languages, no matter what the discipline:

[1] NCIS members can access practical information on translation issues in academic work, including free resources such as on-line dictionaries and translators' forums. This resource "How not to lose it in translation" is currently to be found at http://ncis.org/members-only/2015-conference-resources but please note that, once the current website redevelopment is completed, all the 'how-to' resources relating to the 2015 conference will be moved to a dedicated 'Resources' page in the NCIS Members' Area of the website.

[2] A local variant of Low German or Deutsch.

on proof reading my own doctoral thesis, I realized that I had incorporated my own translations of texts in French, Italian, German, Greek and Latin...and this was not in linguistics, but in musicology. My work would have been the poorer without these references, as I felt I needed to refer to the European (and particularly German) literature on musicology, and to the medieval liturgical texts whose musical settings I was discussing. I was lucky in that my skills were just about equal to the task, but as scholars we cannot guarantee proficiency in all these fields.

As a professional translator specializing in translating and copy editing academic texts, I have recently been called upon to transcribe and translate seventeenth- and eighteenth-century convent diaries from an English convent in Bruges; correspondence between French mercenaries operating within Indian tribes in 1760s Louisiana; and letters between French merchants trading in New Orleans. All these assignments have been for scholars who, although knowledgeable in their own fields, were not confident in either their own linguistic skills or their ability to interpret the local variants, but who needed to access the information locked away in these documents.

But whether we have a full enough understanding of the grammar and syntax of a language to produce our own translations, or arrive at a full understanding by consulting friends and colleagues with the language skills we lack, or outsource this to a professional the most important consideration is how to get our message across. We may have a thorough, deep understanding of German, French, Polish, Chinese, Arabic or Yiddish, but when writing in English we must always negotiate our own level of understanding with that of our readers. Their cultural experience may differ widely from our own, so this poses the question of the level – and form – of explanation that the author needs to provide in order to ensure that the reader can comprehend the full weight of their message.

This paper uses numerous examples of translation in academic work to illustrate the mechanics and best practice of translating meaning. These include consideration of the target audience, the presentation of source material such as quotations or ethnographic data (to translate or not to translate), and explaining the subtleties of meaning to non-native speakers. Ensuring that the full import of the source text is transmitted to the reader is particularly important when analysis hinges on double meanings, word-play, and implicit cultural references with which they may not be familiar. The paper concludes by considering complex cultural references and multiple layers of meaning when writing for a cross-cultural academic audience.

WRITING FOR YOUR AUDIENCE

When writing up or presenting our research, this consideration of our target audience is of crucial importance. While we ourselves must by definition have a certain level of linguistic competence, can we assume a similar level among our target audience? This is a similar problem to the one we face every time we present our work, in which there may be an asymmetrical relationship between the researcher's deep knowledge of their subject and its specialized terminology and that of the reader. For instance, I generally preface my work on monastic life with a brief outline of the daily monastic schedule, and will explain the basic terms pertaining to religious life. However, when I was honored with a keynote lecture for HWRBI (the History of Women Religious in Britain and Ireland) I was able to dispense with this in the sure knowledge that my listeners were all specialists in religious life. Similarly, when we use non-English sources, we need to think about how much information will be needed by the reader or listener for them to decode the meaning. This information can be broken down into several distinct linguistic and contextual elements: lexis (vocabulary), grammar, pronunciation, and historical and cultural context.

LEXIS

Lexis, or vocabulary, concerns the content: the words and phrases that make up a language. In some highly technical disciplines, such as the STEM fields, translating these terms into English is relatively straightforward process, and in fact can be considerably helped using CAT (computer-aided translation) tools, such as Trados, which are basically substitution software. The following extract, from a French article on using multifractals in calculating tropical rainfall, is a case in point, as many of the technical terms [here given in bold in both the source text (ST) and translation target text (TT)] can simply be replaced with the standard English mathematical terminology:

> *Les **processus monofractals et multifractals** sont ainsi apparus comme pertinents voire incontournables pour une **représentation stochastique multi-échelle** des **champs pluviométriques** […]*
> *Diminuer la résolution ne simplifie pas l'observation et souvent des **lois puissances** sur la **description du signal (probabilités, moments, coefficients d'ondelettes)** sont observées [….]* [3]

> **Fractal and multifractal processes** have also emerged as pertinent and even essential in terms of providing a **stochastic multi-scaling representation** of the **rain-fields** […]
> Reducing the resolution does not simplify the observation procedure, and one can often observe the effect of **power-laws (probability, moments, wavelet coefficients)** on the **wave description** [….] [4]

This particular article is destined to be published in a geophysical journal, for which one can assume a specialist readership fluent in the language of mathematics. However, this is not always the case and key terms will need to be defined. For example, here is an extract from a paper, also in French, which describes bilingual learning on the island of St Martin in the West Indies. Although this article is now published in a linguistics journal, the destination journal has an international readership who will not necessarily be familiar with the French education system. The original source text (ST),[5] in which I have picked out certain characteristic terms (given in bold), reads:

> *L'île franco-néerlandaise de Saint-Martin, **COM depuis 2007**, se caractérise par une situation de multilinguisme (français-anglais-espagnol-créole) et pose la question des stratégies pédagogiques et didactiques à adopter dans le cadre de l'enseignement du français. Le seul **lycée** public de la partie française applique non sans difficulté les réformes de **l'Hexagone** dont celle du **«Nouveau Lycée»** de la **rentrée** 2010. Ces mesures visent à mettre en place de nouveaux dispositifs pédagogiques d'accompagnement de l'élève par les équipes éducatives recouvrant **l'AP et le tutorat**.*

However, these key terms (my bold text) are not easily deciphered by the non-French reader in a straight translation such as this:

> The French-Dutch island of Saint-Martin, COM since 2007, is characterized by a multilingual environment (French-English-Spanish-Creole) and presents the question of which educational and didactic strategies to adopt for French language teaching in these linguistic circumstances. The only *lycée* on the French part of the island has struggled with the reforms in the Hexagon including the "*Nouveau Lycée*" of the *rentrée* 2010, which introduces new educational measures such as AP and *tutorat*.[6]

Such a translation does not provide the reader with the context they need to understand the educational environment on St Martin, and unless they happen to be already familiar with the vagaries of the French *Éducation nationale* [national education system] on which the schooling on St Martin is based, much of this introduction is lost. In order to communicate the full meaning, some extension and elaboration is necessary:

- acronyms need to be expanded,[7] and the context glossed where necessary.
- terms understood in France need to be clarified. These include *lycee* (school for 16–18-yr-olds),

[3] Didier Bernard, "Multiscaling properties of tropical rainfall: Analysis of rain gauge datasets in the Lesser Antilles island environment" (work in progress).
[4] Transl. Haste.
[5] Olivier-Serge Candau, "Les enjeux de la Réforme française du Nouveau Lycée à St Martin: Effets de contextualisation sur les enjeux didactiques en milieu plurilingue." *(Se) construire dans l'interlangue: perspectives transatlantiques sur le multilinguisme*, ed. F. Bonet, Falandry, S. Durrans and M. Jones (Lille, France: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2015) 25-34.

[6] Transl. Haste.
[7] It should be noted that an acronym must match the translation, so that 'French Overseas Collectivity' would become FOC if restated as an acronym. Alternatively, the original can be given and explained, as in 'COM (*collectivité d'outre mer*) [French Overseas Collectivity]' after which the acronym COM could be used throughout without further explanation.

l'Hexagone (a commonly used term for the roughly hexagonal mainland France) and *rentrée* (the start of the school year).

- the term AP appears throughout the article and, as *tutorat* is part of AP the relationship needs to be explained. AP and *tutorat* have thus been conflated, as there is overlap between them.

All this information needs to be conveyed in terms which will be understood by the target audience, in American English as required by the journal. This means using appropriate equivalents: for example, *lycée* is thus equated to 'public high school,' which exists in the USA but not in England; I would use the term 'sixth form college' for a British audience, or simply refer to a 'state school for 16- to 18-yr-olds' as the age range of the pupils is important to this study. The full translation (below) provided for the Anglophone reader therefore gives us a clear picture of all these elements, so there are no gaps in the reader's understanding of the situation:

> The French-Dutch island of Saint-Martin, **which became a French Overseas Collectivity in 2007** [...]
> [...] The only **public high school** of the French part of the island has struggled with **French national reforms**, especially that of **the "*Nouveau Lycée*" [New High School]** introduced in **September 2010** [...]
> [...] new educational measures such as ***accompagnement personnalisé* [AP], which provides a personalized program for the pupils through individual support and mentoring**.[8]

If this linguistics article had been published in France, terms such as *lycée*, *Hexagone* and *rentrée* could have been left intact (although of course, in those circumstances, it is unlikely that it would have needed to be translated out of French in the first place!). Likewise, an author of an article on French literature destined for a journal such as *The French Review* can safely assume that the readership will be familiar with the French language, so only regional variants or dialects need be explained. This explains why, in the following extract from an excellent article by Amy Lynelle on "Choucoune," a poem in Haitian Creole by Oswald Durand, the standard French lexis is not translated. Even so, the Creole terms are translated and/or explained (glossed), because the readership is presumed to be familiar with the lexis of standard French, but not with that of Creole:

> This contention, which is partly based on the placement of "Choucoune" within *Rires et pleurs*, does not diminish Durand's creativity. Located in the second book of the collection subtitled *Fleurs des mornes*, *Refrains*, *Nos payses*, *Contes créoles*, "Choucoune" is only one of two poems written in Haitian Creole [...]. Although other poems surrounding "Choucoune" are written in French, they likely originated in the oral Creole tradition before Durand appropriated them in his own poetry [....] Moreover, Durand's "La guêpe et le maringouin," in French in *Rires et pleurs*, is also found in his journal *Les Bigailles*, but in Creole, preceded by "Cric! Crac!" – traditionally associated with storytelling.[9]

If that same article were to be published for a general audience, however, a higher degree of translation would be needed if the readership were to understand the thrust of the argument. If you, the reader happens to understand French, so much the better, but if you do not, this lack of comprehension of the lexical content means you would have little chance of a nuanced reading.

There are also languages such as German in which composite nouns are often used to describe complex abstract ideas. These may be crucial to your own research, as in this text in which the beneficial effects of music are explored by the German music therapist Isabelle Frohne-Hagemann,[10] as summarized by Brynjulf Stige:

> [...] according to Frohne-Hagemann, this third road to growth, health, and healing is situated on the borderline between education and

---

[8] Transl. Haste.

[9] Amy Lynelle, "The Chains of Pitit Pierr': Colonial Legacies and Character Linkage in Oswald Durand's *Rires et pleurs*," *The French Review* Vol. 88, No. 3 (March 2015): 165.

[10] Isabelle Frohne-Hagemann, *Fenster zur Musiktherapie: Musik-therapie-theorie 1976–2001* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2001) 109-111.

> therapy, and could aim at counteracting the experience of "Entfremdung" (estrangement) that life in society may have created in the individual [...] The fourth road described by Frohne-Hagemann is the experience of solidarity, metaperspective, and engagement. She stresses quite clearly the danger of becoming "ignoranten Weltverbesserer" ('ignorant menders of the world'), and advocates that determined attempts of developing metaperspectives are necessary in order to counteract this.[11]

Stige recognises that *Entfremdung* is a key concept in Frohne-Hagemann's work, so offers a translation (estrangement) to ensure that the reader understands it. He also offers an explanation of the phrase *ignoranten Weltverbesserer* ('ignorant menders of the world'); however this is a 'calque' or word-for-word translation which the reader must interpret into an idiomatic definition before continuing. The options might include "ignorant do-gooders," "ignorant world savers" (apparently often used in comics) or "starry-eyed idealist," all of which carry very different inflections of meaning and (short of asking the originator of a phrase) there is no certainty that your solution has not added an additional layer of unintended meaning. So maybe Stige's *calque* – a literal word-for-word 'loan translation' – provides an escape clause which does not run the risk of overtranslating, in other words adding information which was not implicit in the original.

There is also another element at play here, and that is the paradox of 'foreign-soundingness'.[12] David Bellos reminds us that removing all traces of 'foreignness' has been criticized by some critics as "ethnocentric violence"[13] and that "an ethics of translation [...] should restrain translators from erasing all that is foreign." He asks: how can "the foreignness of the foreign best be represented in the receiving language?"[14] and cites the response of Jean d'Alembert, mathematician, philosopher, and co-editor of Diderot's *Enclopedie*, in 1763:

> The original should speak our language [...] with a noble freedom that allows features of one language to be borrowed in order to embellish another. Done this way, a translation may possess [...] a natural and easy manner, marked by the genius of the original [with] the added flavour of a homeland created by its foreign colouring.[15]

To return to two of the previous examples, the flavor of the francophone environment of Durand's poetry can be preserved in Lynelle's article by retaining French terms, and Frohne-Hagemann's Germanness can be recalled by referring to her key concepts in the original German form, with the proviso that the original (non-English) terms are explained on the first appearance.

There are however some words or phrases which are difficult, if not impossible to translate economically. Of these, many have crossed linguistic boundaries and become absorbed into English, such as the German concepts of *Schadenfreude* and *Zeitgeist*, the Italian *sonata* and *scenario,* the French *savoir faire* and *raison d'être*, and the Yiddish *klutz* and *chutzpah.* In cases such as these one has to ask whether a translation or gloss is necessary, or whether a necessarily laborious explanation of an otherwise succinct term will disrupt the flow of the argument. Likewise, should any such explanation be incorporated into the text, or should it be relegated to a footnote?

GRAMMATICAL ACCURACY V. ELEGANCE

While we strive for grammatical correctness and comprehensibility for our readers, our aim should also be to produce elegant prose. We do not want the reader to be constantly tripped up with ugly prose which does not flow smoothly. Here is a beautiful Latin text describing the expectations of a nun as a 'Bride of Christ,' followed by a completely grammatically correct translation given by Yardley:

[11] Brynjulf Stige, "The Relentless Roots of Community Music Therapy," in *Voices: A World Forum for Music Therapy* Vol. 2. No.3 (2002) http://dx.doi.org/10.15845/voices.v2i3.

[12] David Bellos, *Is That a Fish in Your Ear? The Amazing Adventure of Translation* (London: Penguin, 2011) 41.

[13] Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London: Routledge, 1995) 20 *et passim.*

[14] Bellos 41.

[15] Jean Rond d'Alembert, "Observations sur l'art de traduire, in *Mélanges de littérature...*, Amsterdam: Chatelain, 1763, Vol. III, p.18. Translation by David Bellos.

> *Amo Christum in cuius thalamum introibo, cuius Mater virgo est, cuius pater feminam nescit, cuius mihi organa modulatis vocibus cantant, quem cum amavero casta sum, cum tetigero munda sum, eum acceptero virgo sum; annulo suo subarrhavit me, et immensis monilibus ornavit me, et tanquam sponsam decoravit me corona. Alleluia.*[16]
>
> I love Christ, whose bedchamber I shall enter, whose mother is a virgin, whose father knows not woman, whose instruments sing to me with harmonious voices, whom when I shall have loved I shall be chaste, when I shall have touched I shall be clean, when I shall have received him I shall be a virgin; with his ring he has betrothed me, and adorned me with countless gems, and with a crown he has adorned me with a spouse. Alleluia.

One can see that, although perfectly correct, the repeated use of the future perfect ("whom when I shall have loved I shall be chaste, when I shall have touched I shall be clean, when I shall have received him I shall be a virgin") disrupts the flow and rhythm of the text. In fact, English allows for the simpler adverbial use of a temporal clause ("having loved him I shall be pure, having touched him I shall be clean, having received him I shall be a virgin"), the use of which is still grammatically correct but produces a much more natural interpretation.

PRONUNCIATION

Good academic writing – and good writing in general – should draw the reader in, and carry them along in a way which feels natural to them. I have already spoken of flow and rhythm, but when we are treating foreign-language material we also need to consider the sound of the words. In a recent article, field linguist Jeanette Sakel described her research project which involves documenting and trying to discover the syntax and grammar of Mosetén, an oral language spoken by an Amazonian people.[17] Writing for an audience of linguists (language professionals such as translators and interpreters) Sakel relates that she uses either transliteration or the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to record the sounds of Mosetén.[18]

However, not all linguists are conversant with IPA so, even though IPA would have coped with all the sounds she is describing, she confines herself to transliteration to ensure a complete understanding by her audience:[19] "My first Mosetén recording started yäe yäera´ yoshropaiyeyak [...] The word-by-word was given as follows: yäe [I] yäera´ [I will] yoshropaiyeyak [I will thank you]." Here the sounds involved in this language are clearly demonstrated, because the researcher can be sure that none of her audience will have any knowledge of this language, which spoken by only about 800 people in Bolivia.

Your own research languages may however be spoken by thousands, if not millions of people, so how much can you assume of your readers' ability to pronounce them? I have recently been frustrated by several articles in which important content has effectively been withheld from me, because I am unable to pronounce certain foreign-language words, and thus cannot relate them semantically to the rest of the text. This is particularly true of languages which use other alphabets: although I can pronounce Greek, and read a certain amount of Cyrillic, other languages such as Hebrew or Chinese are totally beyond me.

An author publishing in the Journal of Jewish Studies can safely assume a Hebrew-literate readership, but is it realistic to expect an audience of all nationalities and faiths (or none) to be familiar with the Hebrew characters? In a recent issue of *The Linguist* an article on Biblical translation explained that:

> when Jesus said 'I am the light of the world, he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life' (John 8:12)' we have to consider that it was said during the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles (from the Hebrew חֲנֻכָּה) – the Festival of Lights – in which all the 400 lights in the women's quarters of the temple were lit and men waved torches to emphasize light.[20]

---

[16] Qtd in Anne Bagnall Yardley, "The Marriage of Heaven and Earth: A Late Medieval Source of the *Consecratio virginum*," *Current Musicology* 45-47 (1990): 305.

[17] Jeanette Sakel, "From the field: Linguistic puzzles," *The Linguist* 55.2 (April/May 2016): 14-15.

[18] IPA is a method of providing graphemes to represent phonemes, the relatively restricted range of sounds used in language production. IPA is frequently used in dictionaries, following the word entry (/aɪ.piːˈeɪ/ reproduces the sounds of 'IPA').

[19] Sakel 14.

[20] Andrew Díaz Russell, "The Gospel Truth? Why we should care about mistranslations in the Bible," *The Linguist* 55.2 (April/May 2016): 28.

The problem here is that, although the metaphor of light is clear, I (as a non-Hebrew speaker) have no way of knowing how to pronounce the Hebrew חֲנֻכָּה, and instead of experiencing the sound of the word I am left with this nagging void. I know that Hebrew is a phonetic language, but without knowledge of the sound represented by each symbol, I am none the wiser. A simple phonetic version in the English alphabet would have given me (and all the other non-Hebrew-speaking linguists) a satisfying rather than frustrating experience, and of course that explanation would have been 'Chanukah,' which I would instantly recognize. Ironically, even though not Jewish myself I was brought up in North London, with a high proportion of Jewish friends with whom I would exchange 'Happy Chanukah' cards instead of Christmas cards; notwithstanding this, I had not realized that Chanukah was the 'Festival of Lights' (even though, paradoxically, I know that this is also the meaning of the Hindu festival of Diwali). The inability to read and pronounce חֲנֻכָּה has therefore prevented me from making a connection that I would otherwise have had no trouble making.

Sometimes the linguistic context is even more complex, because the author needs to convey both pronunciation and the visual aspect of the language. In "Arabazi: From Techno-lution to Revolution," Lelania Sperrazza sets out to explain the Latinizing of the Arabic alphabet in order to communicate in an anglophone internet age. She neatly covers both the visual and aural aspects:[21]

> Before the mid-1990s, English was the predominant language available over the internet and on cell phones [...]. Since Arabic was not accessible through this technology, [...a]ny Arabic letter that resembled the shape of an English letter or numeral was substituted. For example, the word "Arabizi" written in Arabic looks like this: العربيزي . If one wanted to latinize the text while maintaining the same pronunciation as Arabic, the first letter of the Arabic word (ع) would be represented by the similar-looking number "3." Therefore, the word "Arabizi" written in a latinized, Arabizi script would be spelled like this: "3arabizi." Also, any Arabic phoneme that sounded like an English phoneme would be substituted. For example, the glottal Arabic letter ق (which sounds like "kong," as in King Kong) could be replaced by the English letter "q" or "k." To spell "coffee" in Arabic with a latinized text, it would look like this: "qawa" or "kawa," depending on the writer's preference.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In terms of primary data, our interpretations must always take full account of the prevailing culture in which the text was written. If we are using modern sources, we can apply our own cultural norms and our innate understanding of the register (the level of formality) of the source text. But when we use archival sources it would be anachronistic to apply our twenty-first-century sensibilities and cultural expectations to our reading and interpretation. This can be illustrated by an official French Revolutionary report dating back to 1790, concerning the nuns of an English convent in Paris.[22] As France sought to reinvent herself as a secular republic following the French Revolution, the new National Constituent Assembly 'liberated' a huge amount of property assets belonging to the church, declaring them *biens nationaux* [national property], and the vowed religious life was outlawed. In this *procès verbal* [official report], meticulously recorded by Revolutionary officers, we find details of the sisters' ages and occupations within the order. One of these evidently had health problems (in bold), but the translation needs to take account of the late eighteenth-century medical understanding:

> *Il nous a été observé qu'il y a actuellement à Ruelle dans la maison des Dames de la Croix, une sœur couverse, nommée Catherine Edmonds, agée de trente huit ans,* ***hors de la maison pour cause de santé, et aliénation d'esprit***.

In this context, *santé* refers to physical health, and the rather poetic *aliénation d'esprit* would nowadays be translated (in a very politically correct way) as 'mental health problems'. However, it would be anachronistic

[21] Lelania Sperrazza, "Arabazi: From Techno-lution to Revolution," in *Constructing Identity in an Age of Globalization*, ed. James Block & Amanda Haste (Paris: Ex Modio, 2015) 94.

[22] Religious life was outlawed in England after Henry VIII's break with Rome and establishment of the Anglican Church in the fifteenth century, and this was one of the English Catholic convents who, when had chosen to relocate to northern Europe rather than renounce their faith.

to use the modern translation, and so I have therefore opted for an expression more appropriate to eighteenth-century thought, 'not in her right mind':

> We have been told that there is currently at Ruelle in the house of the Ladies of the Cross a lay sister by the name of Catherine Edmonds, aged thirty-eight, who is **away from the house as she has problems with her health and is not in her right mind**.[23]

In the same *procès verbal*[24] we also find some very enlightening statements from each of the sisters as they were asked to state whether they wished to stay in the house or leave the religious life. Most of the nuns' statements comprise a formulaic set of responses, but the superiors in these monastic houses were very often aristocratic women of great intelligence, and they clearly outwitted their interrogators on more than one occasion. A close reading of the Mother Superior's statement reveals a clear subtext, evidenced through a subtle wordplay (in bold), which I have tried to preserve in the translation which follows:

> *Madame Francoise Louise Lancaster, Supérieure […] a déclaré que l'état qu'elle a embrassé est celui de son choix qu'elle a vécu heureuse […] Son* ***voeu*** *suivant son gout l['a] appellée dans la maison, son* ***voeu*** *suivant la religion sy fixe, son* ***voeu*** *suivant son devoir est d'y vivre, et d'y mourir […] au millieu d'une communauté, qui n'aime, ne veut, et ne cherche que le véritable* ***bien*** *fondé sur la vertu.*
>
> Madame Francoise Louise Lancaster, Superior […] has declared that the state which she has embraced is the one she has chosen and which she has lived happily […]. Her **wish** and preference drew her to the house, her **wish** to become a religious[25] was decided there, and according to her duty her **wish** is that she lives there and dies there […] at the heart of a community, which only loves, wants and seeks the **property of true goodness** based on virtue.

In this instance, I find the repetition of '*voeu*' particularly telling: '*Voeu*' can mean a simple wish (as she is saying here) but it also means a 'vow'. While I feel that a politically-astute superior would have refrained from referring to the religious vows which were being outlawed, her repeated use of the word with its double meaning is interesting…and possibly a little mischievous. Likewise, there is a strong sense here that '*bien*' is a play on the dual meaning of 'property' and 'good' so I have tried to preserve that. The Superior is making the point that the community is not concerned with physical property but only spiritual '*bien*'.

CULTURAL CONTEXT

The cultural context of a source text is an important factor in interpreting your sources. However, there are sometimes complex cultural references which themselves constitute the meaning implicit in the words. For instance, a brief glance at the 'language' section of my own bookshelves will reveal titles such as *Comparative Stylistics of French and English*, *Translation, Linguistics, Culture*, and *Culture Bumps: Empirical Approach to Translation of Allusions*[26] ….but nestled among them is another wonderful book, also on translation, entitled *Is That a Fish in Your Ear?*[27] from which I have already quoted in this article. But what on earth has a fish to do with translation, and why would an aquatic creature be living in a human ear?

If you have already recognized this phrase, you may well have made the connection, and have realized that this is in fact an excellent title for a book on translation. "Is That a Fish in Your Ear?" is a reference to a line from *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*,[28] a 1979 science-fiction book by British author Douglas

[23] Author's translation.

[24] *Procès verbal des religieuses anglaises, Rue des Fossés St Victor, 23 June 1790.* Transl. Amanda Haste. Published in *Convents in Exile 1600-1800*, ed. C. Bowden. Vol. 1 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012).

[25] 'Religious' is used here as a noun denoting a monk or nun, who are collectively known as 'the religious'. Had this not been destined for publication in a book on convents, I may have opted for a more widely understood term such as 'nun'.

[26] Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet, *Comparative Stylistics of French and English: A Methodology for Translation* (Benjamins Translation Library, 1995); Nigel Armstrong, *Translation, Linguistics, Culture: A French - English Handbook*, Topics in Translation (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2005); and Ritva Leppihalme, *Culture Bumps: Empirical Approach to Translation of Allusions, Topics in Translation* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1997).

[27] Bellos, *Is That a Fish in Your Ear?*

[28] Douglas Adams, The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy (London: Pan, 1979).

Adams which spawned film, radio and TV adaptations and became a cult phenomenon affectionately known as H2G2.[29] The question is uttered by Arthur Dent, whose companion Ford Prefect (actually an intergalactic researcher for the eponymous book *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*) has just inserted a small yellow fish into Arthur's ear, at which point the following conversation ensues:[30]

> 'What's this fish doing in my ear?'
>
> 'It's translating for you. It's a Babel fish. Look it up in the book if you like.'

[the *Hitchhiker's Guide* book voices its own text quietly, saying:]

> *'...if you stick a Babel fish in your ear you can instantly understand anything said to you in any form of language."*

But why is this magical creature called a Babel fish? This is another culturally specific reference, this time to the Tower of Babel (מִגְדַּל בָּבֶל [Migdal Bavel]), the etiological myth in the Old Testament of the Bible which is intended to explain the existence of many languages.[31] This myth maintains that, after the Great Flood, the human race was united in a single language, until they arrived in the land of Shinar where they built a city, and a tower. God, displeased, scattered the people, and their languages, so they could no longer understand each other. Adams' ironically named 'Babel fish' therefore serves to temporarily remedy this 'Babel' (babble) of languages, and the relevance to translation becomes crystal clear. However, it can be seen that for the reader to decode the significance of this single phrase "Is that a fish in your ear?" they will need to be in possession of all the cultural references at play.

CONCLUSION

This exploration of the translation issues which so many of us face during the course of our research has shown that the transmission of meaning occurs on several levels, and we need to be ever conscious of the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of our audience. Accurate grammar is important, but we may need to employ some poetic license in order to balance accuracy with a regard for elegance, and consider the flow and rhythm of our writing so that our work reads well. When we deal with archival resources, we need to consider their historical context, and our language should reflect the philosophy, schools of thought and political circumstances within which those texts would have been written. Unless we are writing for fellow scholars in our discipline, we cannot assume that our readers share our cultural background and references within that field, and if writing for a non-specialist reader we need to offer translations of key words and concepts, and provide a gloss if the meaning is essential to our argument. And if that will disrupt the flow of our text, then that is why we have footnotes.

[29] Nearly forty years later, there are even websites dedicated to quotes from the book.

[30] Adams 49-50.

[31] Genesis 11: 1-9.

WORKS CITED

Adams, Douglas. *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. London: Pan Book, 1979.

Armstrong, Nigel. *Translation, Linguistics, Culture: A French-English Handbook*. Topics in Translation. Clevedon: Multilingu al Matters, 2005.

Bellos, David. *Is That a Fish in Your Ear? The Amazing Adventure of Translation*. London: Penguin, 2011.

Bernard, Didier. "Multiscaling properties of tropical rainfall: Analysis of rain gauge datasets in the Lesser Antilles island environment". Transl. Amanda Haste. Forthcoming.

Bowden, Caroline, ed. *Convents in Exile 1600-1800*. Vol.1. London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012.

Candau, Olivier-Serge. "Les enjeux de la Réforme française du Nouveau Lycée à St Martin : Effets de contextualisation sur les enjeux didactiques en milieu plurilingue." Transl. Amanda Haste. *(Se) construire dans l'interlangue: perspectives transatlantiques sur le multilinguisme*. Ed. F. Bonet, Falandry, S. Durrans and M. Jones. Lille, France: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2015. 25-34.

D'Alembert, Jean Rond. "Observations sur l'art de traduire." *Mélanges de littérature, d'histoire et de philosophie*. Vol. 4. Amsterdam: Chatelain, 1763.

Frohne-Hagemann, Isabelle. *Fenster zur Musiktherapie: Musik-therapie-theorie 1976–2001.* Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2001.

Leppihalme, Ritva. *Culture Bumps: Empirical Approach to Translation of Allusions*. Topics in Translation. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1997.

Lynelle, Amy. "The Chains of Pitit Pierr': Colonial Legacies and Character Linkage in Oswald Durand's Rires et pleurs." *The French Review* Vol. 88, No. 3 (March 2015). 163-175.

Russell, Andrew Díaz. "The Gospel Truth? Why we should care about mistranslations in the Bible." *The Linguist* 55.2 (April/May 2016): 27-28.

Sakel, Jeanette. "From the field: Linguistic puzzles." *The Linguist* 55.2 (April/May 2016): 14-15.

Sperrazza, Lelania. "Arabazi: From techno-lution to revolution." *Constructing Identity in an Age of Globalization*. Ed. James Block & Amanda Haste. Paris: Ex Modio, 2015. 93-100.

Stige, Brynjulf. "The relentless roots of community music therapy." *Voices: A World Forum for Music Therapy* Vol.2. No.3 (2002). Accessed from http://dx.doi.org/10.15845/voices.v2i3, 20 April 2016.

Venuti, Lawrence. *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. London: Routledge, 1995.

Vinay, Jean-Paul, and Jean Darbelnet. *Comparative Stylistics of French and English: A Methodology for Translation*. Translated and edited by Juan C. Sager and M.-J. Hamel. Benjamins Translation Library 11. Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 1995.

Yardley, Anne Bagnall. "The Marriage of Heaven and Earth: A Late Medieval Source of the Consecratio virginum," *Current Musicology* 45-47 (1990): 305-24.