



LAS AULAS (DE TRADUCCIÓN) Y LAS LETRAS

Resumen: La utilización de textos literarios y de textos que ofrecen una diversidad de posibilidades estilísticas y formales constituye un excelente recurso en el desarrollo de las capacidades del traductor. Por un lado, sirven para intensificar su lectura y agudizar sus capacidades exegéticas. Por otro, en la medida en que lo obligan a analizar el modo en que están contruidos los textos y los recursos formales que utilizan, le permiten perfeccionar sus capacidades expresivas. El artículo ofrece ejemplos de preguntas que el traductor, en su lectura, puede plantear al texto y de rasgos formales que debe aprender a reconocer como relevantes. Asimismo presenta breves fragmentos de un grupo de textos pertenecientes a diversos formatos textuales con un mínimo comentario de sus problemas.

Palabras clave: traducción, traducción literaria, estilo, rasgos formales



(TRANSLATION) CLASSROOMS AND THE ARTS

Abstract: The use of "literary" and other sorts of texts with a variety of formal and stylistic possibilities is an excellent resource in order to develop the skills of future translators. On the one hand, they contribute to intensify the reading skills and to sharpen the exegetical abilities of the students. On the other, to the extent that these texts make it necessary to analyze how they are constructed and which formal resources are used in them, they are a useful tool for perfecting expressive skills. The article provides examples of questions that the translator, in his/her reading, can ask the text, as well as formal features that must be recognized as relevant. It also presents brief excerpts from a group of texts with various textual formats, along with brief observations about the problems that they pose to the translator.

Keywords: translation, literary translation, style, formal features.



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1.- INTRODUCCIÓN

Como la traducción de poesía o, en realidad, la propia traducción –temas sobre cuya posibilidad o imposibilidad se han dicho y escrito infinidad de tópicos–, la enseñanza de la traducción tiene a su favor la abrumadora evidencia de los hechos. El aprendizaje formal de la traducción en ámbitos académicos específicamente dedicados a ello no es otra cosa que un grado superior de dos aprendizajes básicos: el de la lectura y el de la escritura. En una época que prima lo superficial y lo inmediato (y, si es posible, en un máximo de 140 caracteres), la enseñanza de la traducción lucha en cierto modo contra la corriente de los tiempos en la medida en que se basa, por una parte, en enlentecer el proceso de lectura y hacer más compleja la interpretación y, por otra, en desautomatizar la escritura y permitir que nos convirtamos, en la medida de lo posible, en verdaderos dueños de lo que decimos.

La esencia de la enseñanza de la traducción no consiste tanto en analizar problemas textuales para encontrar su solución como en desarrollar la capacidad de hallar soluciones. Ello supone desmontar el término *traducción* y privilegiar uno de sus componentes; es decir, entender la traducción como camino en detrimento de la traducción como meta. Como dicen en alemán, «Der Weg ist das Ziel» (el camino es la meta). Lo verdaderamente formativo es demorarse, no seguir el camino recto, explorar los senderos laterales y las bifurcaciones, sin una prisa excesiva por llegar al cabo de la ruta, porque todo cuanto encontremos por el trayecto no sólo nos ayuda en nuestro impulso quimérico de convertirnos en lectores ideales (lo cual permite, es cierto, llegar a mejores soluciones en el caso de la traducción en curso), sino que aumenta el abanico de nuestras herramientas de traducción (lo cual permite, de modo más importante, mayor rapidez y fiabilidad en búsquedas y análisis futuros).

En las clases de traducción y sobre todo en los primeros niveles, una idea que debe corregirse es la de que el texto de partida no sólo tiene las dos dimensiones de su

soporte, ya sea el papel o la pantalla. Peter Newmark dijo en una ocasión que la labor de traducción es como un iceberg, que la parte más grande no se ve (1992:28). De acuerdo con esta idea, el énfasis más productivo es el que se puede hacer en todo aquello que precede a la fijación definitiva del texto traducido, el estar traduciendo.

La labor traductora es ante todo una labor interpretativa, y el primer peligro es realizar una lectura rápida y somera, orientada a unos resultados inmediatos. Por lo tanto, hay que desacelerar y agudizar la lectura, y ello en dos sentidos: por una parte, para desentrañar el cúmulo de afirmaciones, referencias, alusiones y silencios del texto, buscando la comprensión profunda y no simplemente la solución léxica; y, por otra, para detectar todos los rasgos formales que construyen el artefacto textual, unos rasgos más o menos marcados por la voluntad autoral (más o menos convencionales).

El entrenamiento de la mirada traductora depende de un modo fundamental del aprendizaje de la capacidad de detectar los rasgos formales que construyen un texto y sustentan su interpretación. Dichos recursos y figuras encuentran su máxima expresión en los textos literarios, donde el lenguaje se presenta en toda su versatilidad; pero son los que constituyen la trama y la urdimbre de todos los textos, incluso lo más rutinarios y estereotipados. Por ello, resulta esencial en la formación del traductor el contacto con textos que agudicen las aptitudes para discernir las sutilezas del pensamiento y de las formas. En las páginas que siguen se citará en diversas ocasiones la correspondencia de Gustave Flaubert, cuya concepción del arte literario como esfuerzo y «sudoración» es del todo pertinente en la práctica traductora. La primera cita da título a los dos principales apartados de este trabajo: «La forme est la chair même de la pensée, comme la pensée en est l'âme, la vie» (La forma es la carne misma del pensamiento, como el pensamiento es el alma, la vida) (Flaubert 1927b:141).

2.- EL PENSAMIENTO

Umberto Eco (1995) ha hablado de los peligros de la sobreinterpretación y de las formas de acotar el impulso exegético para evitar la inflación interpretativa. En las aulas no es difícil que surjan propuestas de traducción que reflejan un intento de dotar de coherencia una frase con un resultado final descabellado. La forma de demostrar que una conjetura acerca de la intención del texto es cierta, sostiene Eco, consiste en cotejarla con la totalidad del propio texto: «cualquier interpretación dada de cierto fragmento de un texto puede aceptarse si se ve confirmada –y debe rechazarse si se ve refutada– por otro fragmento de ese mismo texto» (1995: 69).



Ahora bien, junto con la Escala de la sobreinterpretación, también es posible encontrar la Caribdis de la subinterpretación, que equivale al desistimiento de la comprensión, donde el esbozo de traducción propuesto refleja el déficit exegético y sólo ofrece una articulación de significantes carentes de sentido. La subinterpretación, a diferencia de la sobreinterpretación, no siempre conduce de forma inevitable al fracaso traductor, pero sí que lo hace en la mayoría de las veces. Por ello, es importante el énfasis en la implicación del traductor con el texto de partida, del que debe realizar una interpretación coherente y profunda. Esta implicación supone todo un aprendizaje, porque la tendencia natural del estudiante de traducción ante alguna incomodidad semántica o conceptual generada por la lectura del texto suele dar lugar, de forma típica, a dos respuestas: por lado, considerar que una interpretación (por compleja e improbable que sea) es posible; y, por otro, que «eso» es lo que dice el texto (siendo «eso», en realidad, lo que lo entiende el intérprete que dice el texto). Esta última reacción se ve reforzada por lo que se podría llamar una noción «demediada» de la autoría en traducción: «eso» es lo que dice el texto, por más que no sea lo que «yo» diría, parece ser la implicatura.

El traductor, en su abordaje del texto, pone en marcha un dispositivo de elaboración de hipótesis. Interroga al texto, postula hipótesis interpretativas y las comprueba. Debe trasladar una lectura que no menoscabe las posibilidades interpretativas que tiene la lectura en lengua original. Algunas hipótesis tienen correlato textual en la traducción y otras no, pero todas deben pasar por la prueba de la coherencia textual. A continuación se ofrecen dos ejemplos extraídos de *Alicia en el país de las maravillas* donde la verificación de las hipótesis interpretativas se busca, por así decirlo, en los confines del propio texto, en su intrahistoria. Se ofrecen con la voluntad deliberada de subrayar el hecho de que la tarea de documentación no es exclusiva de las traducciones consideradas más técnicas, menos «literarias».

El primer ejemplo, que podría considerarse en un principio carente de correlato textual en la traducción, pertenece al diálogo entre Alicia y el Ratón, justo después del famoso poema visual en forma de cola. Se trata de un poema maquetado de modo diferente en todas las ediciones del libro, pero siempre manteniendo su forma sinuosa. El Ratón se enfada porque Alicia, distraída con la cola (*tail*), no atiende a la historia (*tale*) que le está contando. Alicia responde que sigue perfectamente las vueltas y revueltas de la historia/cola y que el Ratón había llegado a la quinta vuelta (Carroll 2001:35-36):



"You are not attending!" said the Mouse to Alice, severely. "What are you thinking of?"

"I beg your pardon," said Alice very humbly: "you had got to the fifth bend, I think?"

"I had *not*!" cried the Mouse, sharply and very angrily.

"A knot!" said Alice, always ready to make herself useful, and looking anxiously about her. "Oh, do let me help you to undo it!"

El lector puede considerar este diálogo como una muestra más de los sinsentidos y los absurdos que pueblan el país de las maravillas, un mundo en el que todo «eso» es posible. O bien puede tomarse en serio la pregunta de si Alicia está en lo cierto o si tiene razón el Ratón en enfadarse (por la falta de atención de la niña o por una posible alusión a su falta de cordura: «round the bend» significa «loco, demente»). Se trata de una pregunta legítima, que un lector o, al menos, un lector perspicaz (como lo es un traductor) podría plantearse. La edición inglesa consultada probablemente no presente en su maquetación del poema ninguna posibilidad de responder que Alicia tiene en mente el referente «real» del poema que se acaba de leer. Sin embargo, el traductor podría preguntarse cómo estaba maquetado el poema en la primera edición de *Alicia*. Su búsqueda lo llevará a la conclusión de que su hipótesis de una relación entre la frase de Alicia y un correlato textual en la forma del poema no es productiva; y, por lo tanto, así deberá plasmarlo en tu traducción. Ahora bien, si a pesar de todo sigue confiando en Alicia y decide perseverar en su impulso investigador, puede entonces adentrarse en la intrahistoria de la obra y llegar a su primera versión manuscrita, *Alice's Adventures under Ground*, en la que el poema aparece dibujado por el propio Carroll del siguiente modo:



La respuesta es que Alicia no miente. Esta constatación no tiene una consecuencia directa en la traducción del diálogo, aunque nos sirve para reforzar la imagen de inocencia y franqueza de Alicia (Carroll 2002:26).

–¡No me estás haciendo ningún caso! –dijo con severidad el Ratón a Alicia–. ¿En qué estás pensando?

–Te pido perdón –contestó Alicia muy humildemente–, creo que estabas en la quinta vuelta, ¿verdad?

–¡Estoy tan indignado que se me hace un nudo...! – exclamó el Ratón muy tajante y enfadado.

–¿Un nudo? –dijo Alicia, dispuesta a echar una mano y mirando con inquietud a su alrededor–. Por favor deja que te ayude a deshacerlo.

Sí que es posible imaginar una sutil consecuencia textual en otro lugar, en el propio poema. Si el traductor decide considerar como original, no la edición contemporánea que tiene delante ni tampoco la primera edición inglesa, sino la versión

manuscrita por el propio Carroll, dará instrucciones para que se maquete el poema que precede al diálogo de modo que la historia se interrumpa en la quinta vuelta. Y, de hecho, ese cambio es introducido en la tercera y última edición anotada de Martin Gardner (2001) de las dos *Alicias*. Gardner siguió en un principio la maquetación de la primera edición de 1865; en cambio, en la última edición anotada, la cola tiene cinco curvas (Carroll 1971:51, Carroll 2001:35).

Otro fragmento de *Alicia en el país de las maravillas* puede servir como segundo ejemplo de interrogación del texto por parte del traductor y del modo en que intenta comprobar sus hipótesis interpretativas con la totalidad de la obra. Se trata de la exclamación del Conejo Blanco en el inicio del primer capítulo: el «Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be too late!». Además, creo que no es exagerado decir que constituye también un ejemplo del modo en que la traducción puede contribuir a iluminar el original. La traducción más inmediata de la exclamación «Oh dear!» y otras similares que aparecen a lo largo de la obra quizá sea «Dios mío», «Cielo santo» o alguna otra de connotaciones religiosas. Y aquí el traductor –más fácilmente que el simple lector en lengua original– puede preguntarse si existe Dios en el país de las maravillas. De su respuesta dependerá que otros obtener la misma respuesta que ofrece el original. De nuevo, la pregunta es legítima porque cabe preguntarse si una persona tan escrupulosa en términos religiosos como Carroll (tan escrupulosa que pedía a sus dibujantes que no trabajara en domingo) iba a permitir esa presencia en un cuento lleno de *nonsense*. Ahora bien, la respuesta tiene que ser textual. El primer paso es rastrear las dos *Alicias* en busca de la palabra *Dios* y alguna otra relacionada con la divinidad. La búsqueda es infructuosa, aunque puede permitir descubrir que en *Alicia a través del espejo* la única pieza de ajedrez omitida es el alfil, que en inglés es «bishop», como «obispo». Gardner aventura que la omisión quizá se deba a una muestra de respeto por el clero (Carroll 2001:154). No se trata de una prueba suficiente. Una mayor investigación descubre un cambio revelador: al parecer, Carroll pobló en un primer momento su jardín de flores temperamentales del segundo capítulo de *Alicia a través del espejo* con las flores que los misioneros españoles en América llamaron «pasionarias» por ver en ellas los emblemas de la Pasión de Cristo (cinco estambres-llagas, tres estigmas-clavos, la corona de espinas); cuando Carroll supo esa etimología les cambió el nombre en el acto y las transformó en lirios atigrados, como cuenta Stuart Dogson Collingwood en la biografía de su tío. Collingwood también añade que ante la pregunta de si el final de la segunda *Alicia* imitaba el final del *Progreso del peregrino*, obra clásica de la literatura inglesa que narra de forma alegórica el viaje del cristiano por la vida, Carroll rechazó con rotundidad esa insinuación diciendo que «consideraría de lo más irreverente



semejante invasión del terreno sagrado» (Collingwood 1898:150-151). Estas pruebas que apuntan con fuerza a la idea de que Dios está excluido deliberadamente del país de las maravillas y que, por lo tanto, así debe permanecer en traducción.

Valgan estos dos ejemplos de cómo el traductor busca en el texto (y en ocasiones en su intrahistoria) la comprobación o refutación de hipótesis con el objeto de dejar o no abiertas ciertas puertas interpretativas para los lectores que vendrán después de él.

3.- LAS FORMAS

En lo que se refiere al aspecto formal, la desaceleración y la intensificación de la lectura implica la detección y el aprendizaje del reconocimiento de las marcas textuales que permiten al texto decir lo que dice (y lo que no dice), así como decirlo (o no) en cierto modo. Es importante ser conscientes de la variedad de posibilidades textuales, cómo los géneros y subgéneros pueden condicionar la escritura y cómo a partir de esos condicionantes generales ésta puede alterarse o «personalizarse», como comentan Fortea y Santana (2012) a propósito de las nociones de estilo y tono en la presentación de este monográfico. Lo cierto es que, en ocasiones, se hace hincapié en el qué en detrimento del cómo y es sólo en las clases específicamente dedicadas a la traducción literaria donde la forma recibe una atención debida. Puede ocurrir que se preste menos atención a ella o se considere subsidiaria y prescindible en los espacios docentes dedicados a la traducción general y, sobre todo, especializada, donde se prima la comunicación. Sin embargo, la forma es importante en toda traducción, como lo es en todo texto, bien porque se siguen de modo rutinario o convencional modelos existentes, bien porque se transgreden, se fuerzan y se amplían. En su influyente manual de 1984, *L'analyse du discours comme méthode de traduction*, Jean Delisle dedicaba una quincena de páginas al análisis de cómo funciona el cerebro del traductor para encontrar la llamada equivalencia traductora del enunciado «The Icy Grip Tightens», título de un artículo periodístico sobre una ola de frío (Delisle 1984:69-86). En ningún momento se mencionaban las particulares características sonoras del sintagma (compuesto de sonidos /i/ y /ai/), ni las convenciones periodísticas que pueden regir la creación de títulos en la cultura de partida ni las pautas al respecto –coincidentes o no– esperadas por los lectores en la cultura de llegada. El riesgo real, pues, es que la forma se convierta en las clases de traducción en un elemento no marcado, invisible.

Por otra parte, en los contenidos implícitos en el término «traducción literaria» suele pesar de modo excesivo la noción de «alta literatura», con lo que puede quedar

desatendido el vastísimo terreno de la traducción de libros. Sin duda, los textos de alta literatura, dotados del mayor grado de cuidado formal, son extremadamente útiles para agudizar las capacidades exegéticas y analizar las potencialidades del lenguaje cuando éste puede actuar –por así decirlo– sin rendir cuentas a nadie (salvo a sí mismo), así como para entrenar la mirada traductora en el ámbito de la forma. El siguiente ejemplo, extraído de *Los hijos de la medianoche* de Salman Rushdie, permite calibrar la importancia de una simple anáfora. El inicio de la obra prefigura todo el desarrollo de la novela, con su mezcla de hechos históricos y ficticios. Esa fusión de historia y relato se basa en los paralelismos entre las peripecias vitales de los personajes y los acontecimientos nacionales de la antigua colonia británica. Desde la primera página, los destinos del protagonista, Saleem Sinai, y la India se presentan como indisociables; y es lo que refleja el hecho de que ambos nazcan simultáneamente en la medianoche del 15 de agosto de 1947 (Rushdie 1982:9).

I was born in the city of Bombay... once upon a time. No, that won't do, there's no getting away from the date: I was born in Doctor Narlikar's Nursing Home on August 15th, 1947. And the time? The time matters, too. Well then: at night. No, it's important to be more... On the stroke of midnight, as a matter of fact. Clock-hands joined palms in respectful greeting as I came. Oh, spell it out, spell it out: at the precise instant of India's arrival at independence, I tumbled forth into the world. There were gasps. And, outside the window, fireworks and crowds. A few seconds later, my father broke his big toe; but this accident was a mere trifle when set beside what had befallen me in that benighted moment, because thanks to the occult tyrannies of those blandly saluting_clocks I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country.

Miguel Sáenz (Rushdie 1984:17) resolvió así el fragmento:

Nací en la ciudad de Bombay... hace mucho tiempo. No, no vale, no se puede esquivar la fecha: nací en la Clínica Particular del Dr. Narlikar el 15 de agosto de 1947. ¿Y la hora? La hora es también importante. Bueno, pues de noche. No, hay que ser más... Al dar la medianoche, para ser exactos. Las manecillas



del reloj juntaron sus palmas en respetuoso saludo cuando yo llegué. Vamos, explícate, explícate: en el momento mismo en que la India alcanzaba su independencia, yo entré dando tumbos en el mundo. Hubo boqueadas de asombro. Y, al otro lado de la ventana, cohetes y multitudes. Unos segundos más tarde, mi padre se rompió el dedo gordo del pie, pero su accidente fue una simple bagatela comparado con lo que había caído sobre mí en ese momento tenebroso, porque, gracias a la oculta tiranía de aquellos relojes que se saludaban con suavidad, había quedado misteriosamente maniatado a la Historia, y mi destino indisolublemente encadenado al de mi país.

La vinculación entre los destinos del protagonista y del país (y la explicación de todo cuanto encierra el título) queda establecida en este principio por unas minúsculas elecciones léxicas que remiten a la temporalidad y la historia, y que transforman el saludo inicial en condena: «Clock-hands joined palms in respectful greeting» («Las manecillas del reloj juntaron sus palmas en respetuoso saludo»), «blandly saluting clocks» («relojes que se saludaban con suavidad»), «hand-cuffed to history» («maniatado a la Historia»), «chained» («encadenado»). La imagen es poderosa, y queda reforzada por la repetición de la palabra *hand* («mano») en «clock-hands» y «handcuffed». Esa crucial repetición puede pasar fácilmente inadvertida al lector corriente, pero un lector intenso –y eso es el traductor– la reconoce en el acto. Y la consecuencia del reconocimiento es el esfuerzo por la replicación.

Los textos literarios canónicos permiten analizar el modo en que los grandes autores moldean el lenguaje en la expresión de sentimientos o la creación de mundos y, al mismo tiempo, ofrecen una excelente oportunidad para ejercitarse en el dominio de las formas lingüísticas. Los cuentos y narraciones breves, en particular, proporcionan un variado banco de pruebas en el que practicar la traducción entendida como un sofisticado ejercicio de escritura trabada; un ejercicio que consiste en replicar, conservando coherencias y equilibrios internos, el control sobre la frase de que se hace gala el original. El relato «The Gardener» de Rudyard Kipling es un ejemplo de escritura milimetrada, que podría servir para ilustrar la afirmación de Flaubert: «La forme est comme la sueur de la pensée» (La forma es como el sudor del pensamiento) (Flaubert 1927a:8). Éste es el primer párrafo:

Every one in the village knew that Helen Turrell did her duty by



all her world, and by none more honourably than by her only brother's unfortunate child. The village knew, too, that George Turrell had tried his family severely since early youth, and were not surprised to be told that, after many fresh starts given and thrown away, he, an Inspector of Indian Police, had entangled himself with the daughter of a retired non-commissioned officer, and had died of a fall from a horse a few weeks before his child was born. Mercifully, George's father and mother were both dead, and though Helen, thirty-five and independent, might well have washed her hands of the whole disgraceful affair, she most nobly took charge, though she was, at the' time, under threat of lung trouble which had driven her to the South of France. She arranged for the passage of the child and a nurse from Bombay, met them at Marseilles, nursed the baby through an attack of infantile dysentery due to the carelessness of the nurse, whom she had had to dismiss, and at last, thin and worn but triumphant, brought the boy late in the autumn, wholly restored, to her Hampshire home.

A pesar de su brevedad, la cita permite vislumbrar lo que espera al traductor del relato: tiempo y esfuerzo. El estilo de estas cuatro frases –y otras similares– puede servir, de pasada, para poner en entredicho algunas de nociones preconcebidas que equiparan «frase larga» y «frase defectuosa». La precisión de la escritura, esa «précision de résultat d'une science exacte» a la que aspiraba Flaubert (Flaubert 1927b:286), exige que la identificación y el traslado de los rasgos considerados relevantes se realicen con el máximo rigor. Por supuesto, no existe una solución única, pero las traducciones más logradas comparten todas ellas dos características. Por un lado, han exigido tiempo, y de nuevo resuenan aquí las palabras de otra carta Flaubert: «*se hâter* c'est pour moi, en littérature, *se tuer*» (apresurarse para mí, en literatura, es matarse) (Flaubert 1927c:167); por otro, desprenden en el cotejo una sensación aparente de naturalidad, de sencillez.

Todos en el pueblo sabían que Helen Turrell cumplía su deber con cuantos formaban su mundo, y con nadie de un modo más ejemplar que con el desdichado hijo de su único hermano. El pueblo también sabía que George Turrell había sido desde la adolescencia una fuente permanente de disgustos para su familia, y nadie se sorprendió al enterarse de que, tras muchas



oportunidades concedidas y desaprovechadas, convertido en inspector de la Policía India, se había enredado con la hija de un suboficial retirado y había fallecido al caer de un caballo pocas semanas antes del nacimiento de su hijo. Por suerte, los padres de George ya no estaban vivos para verlo; y Helen, que con treinta y cinco años y dueña de su propia vida bien habría podido lavarse las manos en aquel escandaloso asunto, se encargó con toda nobleza del caso a pesar de que en aquella época luchaba contra la amenaza de una afección pulmonar que la había llevado hasta el sur de Francia. Concertó del viaje del niño y una niñera desde Bombay, se reunió con ellos en Marsella, cuidó al niño durante un ataque de disentería provocado por la negligencia de la niñera, a la que tuvo que despedir, y por último, flaca y agotada pero triunfal, regresó a finales de otoño con el niño completamente restablecido a su casa de Hampshire.

Textos como éste de Kipling, con un elevado grado de complejidad, pueden servir en el aula como aliciente para un debate profundo sobre las lecturas posibles, los rasgos retóricamente relevantes y las opciones de traducción más adecuadas. Puede ser un trabajo lento, pero es una lentitud que se vuelve productiva porque constituye un aprendizaje de las dotes exegéticas del traductor, de su capacidad de formular al texto preguntas, desmontarlo en tanto que artefacto, volver a armarlo y conseguir que funcione de nuevo.

Ahora bien, en la práctica de su oficio el llamado traductor literario es un traductor de todo tipo de libros y de textos y se enfrenta a una variadísima gama de posibilidades que, en lo que respecta al ámbito de la forma, van desde la sencillez hasta la complejidad, pero también desde el cuidado hasta el descuido. Su traducción constituye, en última instancia, un juicio sobre el valor que concede a los aspectos formales del texto y sobre el modo en que éste cumple las pautas y convenciones de la escritura. No todos los textos son óptimos (no todos presentan el mismo grado de cuidado formal), y el traductor debe decidir en cada caso el grado de «sacralidad» que es adecuado atribuir a su texto y hasta qué punto resulta pertinente adecuarlo a lo que esperan los lectores de la traducción. El espacio de lo «literario» exige al traductor sutileza y creatividad, una creatividad que se alcanza desde la plena conciencia de las limitaciones formales.

Un recurso que puede ser útil en las aulas para profundizar en la conciencia de la forma es la realización de una serie de traducciones de textos que abordan un mismo tema desde perspectivas textuales diferentes. El qué se sigue tratando, claro está, pero el énfasis en el cómo ayuda a reconocer y apreciar el modo en que funcionan los textos y los diferentes tipos de problemas que plantean. A modo de ejemplo, se presentan a continuación diversos fragmentos de textos que tratan de Noé y el diluvio. Casi todos ellos se encuentran en Internet. Permiten la reflexión sobre muchos aspectos textuales, además a continuación de los citados explícitamente.

La entrada de la *Encyclopædia Britannica* puede servir de ejemplo de comunicación que pretende ser denotativa y neutra. No hay problemas sintácticos, y las dificultades de comprensión se resuelven con la labor de documentación (que debe impedir la transformación de Noé en noveno hijo de Adán). Las citas textuales contenidas permiten la reflexión sobre la existencia de diferentes traducciones bíblicas.

Noah appears in Gen. 5:29 as the son of Lamech and ninth in descent from Adam. In the story of the Deluge (Gen. 6:11-9:19), he is represented as the patriarch who, because of his blameless piety, was chosen by God to perpetuate the human race after his wicked contemporaries had perished in the Flood. A righteous man, Noah "found favour in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen. 6:8). Thus, when God beheld the corruption of the earth and determined to destroy it, he gave Noah divine warning of the impending disaster and made a covenant with him, promising to save him and his family.

También con carácter informativo y sencillez sintáctica, el siguiente texto, extraído del sitio web www.islam101.com y cuyo inicio se cita a continuación, permite introducir las nociones del punto de vista y la ideología. Como el ejemplo anterior, pone de manifiesto la importancia de la documentación. Los problemas de comprensión relacionados con la palabra «oven» exigen la consulta de un Corán anotado o alguna obra de exégesis. En algún pasaje, la reformulación exige ciertas modificaciones con respecto al texto de partida.

In recent years there have been some renewed attempts to locate the Ark. These attempts will perhaps continue until we have the answers we wish to have. Among the researchers is an American



who is obtaining aerial photos of Mt. Ararat from the CIA collection. The Holy Quran describes the story of Prophet Noah (peace be on him), his building of the Ark, the people who joined him and the Flood in detail. The water started gushing out from a particular oven, followed by a large number of other springs as well as a heavy downpour from the sky.

El siguiente fragmento pertenece a una reseña periodística del libro *Noah's Flood*, una investigación científica llevada a cabo por dos geólogos marinos. Entre otras cosas, exige búsquedas terminológicas en diferentes disciplinas, presenta algún problema de reformulación que exige el alejamiento con respecto a la construcción de la frase inglesa y, en el primer párrafo, permite identificar y abordar los problemas de la traducción de una metáfora sostenida.

The enjoyment of detective stories comes not so much from discovering who done it, but in following the layers of events, accidents and coincidences that lead up to a satisfying conclusion. At best the story will not be a straightforward narrative, but will interweave disparate, sometimes apparently unconnected, strands into a pleasing multitextured piece.

Such a detective story is *Noah's Flood* (Simon & Schuster, 319 pages). The authors, marine geologists William Ryan and Walter Pitman, plot the events, ideas and discoveries that lead them to conclude that Noah's biblical flood was a real event in comparatively recent history. They believe that it took place not in the Middle East, as might be assumed from reading the Bible, but in the area around the Black Sea.

El fragmento presentado a continuación pertenece al libro *God: A Biography*, con el que Jack Miles obtuvo un premio Pulitzer en 1996. Además de las exigencias exegéticas planteadas por una obra de pensamiento, este ensayo presenta una prosa muy cuidada donde la argumentación se despliega con fluidez. El pasaje citado permite, por ejemplo, reflexionar sobre las repeticiones y su función en la construcción discursiva. Considerada por los estudiantes como un elemento negativo, la repetición se convierte aquí en paralelismo y anáfora; ello obliga a decidir si tienen o no valor retórico y si sirven a la causa de la argumentación. Además, al utilizar el autor en su exégesis una versión inglesa de la Biblia hebrea, se hace imprescindible tomar una decisión respecto

a la traducción de las citas bíblicas. Los textos ensayísticos son valiosos, además, porque presentan dificultades exegéticas situadas más allá de lo léxico y lo sintáctico; en esos pasajes, el análisis de las estructuras discursivas puede ayudar a establecer un terreno firme en el que levantar una hipótesis interpretativa.

The story of the flood, like the story of creation, is told twice; but, unlike the two creation stories, the two flood stories are interwoven. This is the more easily possible because the two versions are structurally identical. In both, the deity decides to destroy all human and animal life by drowning it in a great flood. In both, Noah and his family are spared, being warned to prepare an ark in which to ride out the flood. In both, after the flood recedes, there is a new divine-human beginning. The inconsistencies lie in the details. How many animals is Noah to take on the ark? The "God" version says two of every kind (6:19); the "Lord" version says seven pairs of the clean, one pair of the unclean (7:2). These "doublets" fatten up and slow down the typically lean and swift style that otherwise characterizes the Book of Genesis, but they do not obscure the common plot.

La frase inicial de *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters* de Julian Barnes es un modelo de lo que debe ser la primera frase de una novela. Se dirige a un lector con determinados conocimientos y que es capaz de apreciar la sorpresa de la elección léxica y la ironía de lo que viene a continuación. El traductor debe ser capaz de reconocer los guiños irónicos y mantenerlos. Para ello, por supuesto, se hace imprescindible un conocimiento del texto bíblico tan preciso como el exigido en el caso del texto anterior. La reformulación presenta en ocasiones importantes problemas. Además, resulta ineludible identificar no sólo al narrador sino también al narratario, ese *you* que aparece en la segunda frase (lo cual puede dar pie a una reflexión sobre las múltiples posibilidades de traducción de ese pronombre personal cuando desempeña dicha función textual).

They put the behemoths in the hold along with the rhinos, the hippos and the elephants. It was a sensible decision to use them as ballast; but you can imagine the stench. And there was no-one to muck out. The men were overburdened with the feeding rota, and their women, who beneath those leaping fire-tongues of



scent no doubt reeked as badly as we did, were far too delicate.
So if any mucking-out was to happen, we had to do it ourselves.

Un texto muy útil por su forma y su brevedad es el monólogo teatral de Michael Frayn, «Never Mind the Weather», que se presenta a continuación en su integridad. Como el texto anterior, permite tratar los problemas planteados por la traducción de la ironía y el humor. De un modo más perentorio si cabe que en Barnes, también exige la dilucidación de narrador y narratario. A diferencia del relato de Barnes, aquí la oralidad es mucho más pronunciada. La sencilla apariencia sintáctica, provocada por la voluntad de reproducir el lenguaje oral, oculta un tesoro de alusión cultural.

We've just been on our first cruise! Yes, our first one ever! Oh, we had a lovely time! We're quite converted! Beautiful boat, it was. Oh, an absolutely first-class. Not one of those big luxury liners where you have to change for dinner. We shouldn't fancy that. That's not our style. No, nice little boat. Well, about 300 cubits long. Made of gopher wood, which I believe is very good for making boats out of. And a nice homey atmosphere. In fact it was more for cargo than passengers, really. Cattle, and pigs, and sheep, and that type of thing. Oh, we're all very fond of animals so it didn't worry us! The weather was a bit, you know, *mixed*. But it didn't matter, you felt you were seeing the world. Don't ask me where we went exactly—we went all over the place! All round the Holy Land, all round there. And we finished up by putting in at that famous mountain they've got out there. What's it called? Not Vesuvius. It'll come to me in a minute. We were rather pleased to see it, actually! We'd had one or two days quite bad weather, you see. Oh yes, it was quite bad at times. But it didn't worry us.

That's the wonderful thing about a cruise. You don't have to go out. You've got all the entertainment provided. So we didn't care if it rained all the time. Well, you make your own fun, don't you? The whole family was there, after all. Oh, yes! We all went! My husband and I—his brother Shem and his wife—Ham and his wife. And the boys brought their Mum and Dad! You should have seen us all! You'd have thought we owned the ship! In fact, we were the only passengers. So we had the run of it.

Which was nice. Talk about fun and games! Particularly when the weather was bad! Oh, they all said the same thing, they all said they'd never seen anything like it before. Half the time we really and truly didn't know whether we were ever going to see land again. I said to Dad, I said, "At least the rats haven't deserted us!" Because we had rats on board. Not many. You'd see one or two from time to time. Yes, the storm lasted forty days, non-stop! They sent off a pigeon at one point, to see if it could get a message through. It was as bad as that. Still, it was a holiday, that's the main thing. And I took a lovely picture of the rainbow—I've got it here somewhere. Well it's lovely of Japheth—the rainbow didn't come out.

Este texto puede servir para realizar un experimento didáctico sumamente ilustrativo. Dado a un grupo de estudiantes al principio de la serie, puede ser leído sin que una parte de la clase capte las referencias sobre las que se sustenta todo el monólogo. Si ese es el caso, se trataría de un buen ejemplo de subinterpretación, susceptible de permitir un debate sobre la responsabilidad del traductor. Leído nuevamente con el dominio de todos los referentes, contribuye a que el estudiante viva la experiencia de que la traducción es mucho más que un fenómeno lingüístico.

4.- CONCLUSIÓN

Por encima de todo, el aprendizaje de la traducción pasa por el aprendizaje del salir de sí. La tendencia natural del principiante es utilizar exclusivamente los recursos propios. Esa tendencia se nutre del mito romántico del creador como demiurgo, cuya imagen simbólica es la lucha de Jacob contra el ángel, y se subraya con algunas teorías y concepciones de la traducción que refuerzan la primacía del sentido. Del decir lo que dice el texto como lo diría uno mismo. Uno de los problemas de este enfoque es que supone en la práctica pasar el otro por el filtro del yo sin una conciencia adecuada de los límites propios. Puede ocurrir, para empezar, que el texto no diga o no sólo diga lo que uno cree que dice y, en segundo lugar, que lo diga mejor. De modo típico, a la hora de elegir entre diferentes soluciones para un problema, la opción se decantará por lo conocido y familiar, en detrimento muchas veces de lo desconocido y más adecuado. En consecuencia, el resultado final es que se habrá pasado el texto ajeno por el filtro de los desconocimientos personales, y los lectores verán cercenado su acceso a él a causa de ese límite impuesto por las carencias interpretativas o expresivas del intermediario.



El trabajo de las clases de traducción, sobre todo en los primeros niveles, consiste en lograr romper esa fijeza y lograr que los alumnos venzan la inercia que los hace preferir lo familiar y conocido a lo nuevo y desconocido. La tarea del docente es fomentar el impulso en favor de la curiosidad y del abandono de lo acomodaticio. El traductor habita en una *wonderland*: una tierra de maravillas, sí, pero ante todo una tierra del preguntarse. Por ello debemos instalar en el centro de nuestra pesquisa una interrogación radical ensanchadora de las perspectivas y adentrarnos constantemente en la vasta *terra incognita* de lo que no sabemos. Eso exige tiempo y esfuerzo intelectual.

En el aprendizaje de la traducción es fundamental fomentar este impulso en favor de la «sudoración». Quienes se inician en la traducción deben aprender a resistir los cantos de sirena de la comodidad, las búsquedas limitadas y acrílicas en la Wikipedia, el WordReference o el DRAE, y ser conscientes de que detrás de cada palabra tiene que haber una decisión lo más objetiva y documentada posible. Para ello deben atreverse a salir del ámbito de la necesidad, entendiendo lo necesario en el sentido aristotélico de lo que no puede ser de otro modo; es decir, no deben conformarse con elegir, por ejemplo, entre las dos únicas opciones que ofrezca el bilingüe que estén consultando en ese momento. Y deben adentrarse sin miedo, aunque con algo más de esfuerzo, en el ámbito de la libertad, entendida como el poder tomar una decisión consciente entre un abanico de opciones meticulosamente seleccionadas. Es evidente que seremos más libres cuanto más libertad de elección tengamos. Como también lo es que para traducir mejor es mejor saber más que menos.

La utilización de textos literarios y de textos donde se pueden hacer evidentes las posibilidades formales constituye un excelente instrumento para ejercitar las habilidades traductoras. De nuevo Flaubert ofrece su consejo: «Plus les muscles de votre poitrine seront larges, plus vous respirerez à l'aise» (Cuanto más grandes sean los músculos de nuestro pecho, con más facilidad respiraremos) (Flaubert 1927b:141). Más que escribir al otro como si fuera él mismo, quien se inicia en la traducción debe considerar que hay que escribir al otro como si él mismo fuera otro (de lo contrario, sus traducciones siempre serán similares). Y es que para los traductores tiene un significado literal la máxima contenida en otra carta de otro de los grandes del siglo XIX francés «Je est un autre» (Yo es otro).

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(TRANSLATION) CLASSROOMS AND THE ARTS

1. INTRODUCTION

A great deal has been said and written about the possibility or impossibility of poetry translation and, for that matter, of translation itself. Yet, as with these two disciplines, when it comes to translation teaching the facts speak for themselves. The formal learning of translation within an academic setting conceived for that purpose is simply a more advanced level in the development of two basic skills: reading and writing. In an era where the superficial and the immediate are valued above all (and, if possible, within a maximum of 140 characters), the teaching of translation goes somewhat against the grain, in that it is based, on the one hand, on slowing down the reading process and increasing the complexity of the interpretation, and on the other, on deautomatising the writing process and allowing us to become, insofar as is possible, true masters of what we say.

The essence of teaching translation is not so much the analysis and resolution of textual problems, as it is the development of the capacity to find solutions. This involves dismantling the term ‘translation’ and according privilege to one of its components; in other words, an understanding of translation as a process at the expense of translation as a goal. As they say in German ‘Der Weg ist das Ziel.’ (the path is the goal). We truly learn when we take our time; when instead of following the straight path, we explore its side-tracks and bifurcations, without feeling anxious to arrive at our destination, because everything that we encounter along the way not only nurtures our chimerical impulse to make ourselves ideal readers (which undeniably helps us to find better solutions for the text being translated), but it is also adds another string to our translational bow (which, more importantly, increases our speed and reliability in future searches and analyses).

In translation classes, and especially at the initial levels, an idea which must be grasped is that the source text possesses more than simply the two dimensions of its physical support, whether it is on paper or on-screen. Peter Newmark said on one occasion that the task of translation is akin to an iceberg, in that the greatest part of it cannot be seen (1992:28). In line with this idea, emphasis is best placed on everything which precedes the definitive fixation of the translated text i.e. the act of translating.



Translation is primarily an interpretative task, and as such, a quick, superficial reading, orientated towards immediate results, is the foremost danger. Consequently, the reading must be slowed down and sharpened, and in two ways: on the one hand, to decipher the mass of statements, references, allusions and silences that the text contains, in pursuit of a deep understanding and not simply the lexical solution; and, on the other, to detect all the formal features that make up the textual artefact, (mostly conventional) features which are marked to a greater or lesser degree by the author's will.

The development of a translational sensibility fundamentally depends upon acquiring the ability to detect the formal aspects which construct a text and form the basis of its interpretation. These devices and features attain their maximum expression in literary texts, where language is presented in all its multitudinous forms. However, these very same resources constitute, to a considerable degree, the backbone of all texts, even the most commonplace and hackneyed examples. For this reason, contact with texts which sharpen the skills needed to discern nuances of thought and form is an essential part of any translator's training. In the pages which follow, the correspondence of Gustave Flaubert will be quoted on various occasions, as his conception of the literary art in terms of effort and 'perspiration' is especially germane to the practise of translation. The first quote provides the titles of the two main sections of this article: 'La forme est la chair même de la pensée, comme la pensée est l'âme de la vie' (Form is the very flesh of thought; just as thought is the soul of life) (Flaubert 1927b:141).

2. THOUGHT

Umberto Eco (1995) speaks of the dangers of overinterpretation and of the ways in which the exegetical impulse may be reined in, thus avoiding interpretative inflation. In the classroom, it is not uncommon for students, fixated with bringing coherence to a sentence, to propose translations which create a nonsensical final result in the text as a whole. The way to demonstrate that a conjecture about the intention of a text is correct, maintains Eco, is for it to be compared alongside the rest of the text: 'Any interpretation of a particular fragment of a text may be accepted if it is seen to be confirmed — and should be rejected, if refuted — by another fragment of the text.' (1995:69).

However, alongside the Scylla of overinterpretation, there lies the Charybdis of underinterpretation. It is the equivalent of a comprehension failure, in which the draft translation proposed reflects the exegetical shortfall and merely offers an articulation of meaningless signifiers. Underinterpretation, unlike overinterpretation, does not



invariably lead to a translational failure, but it does in the majority of cases. It is therefore important to emphasise the translator's engagement with the source text, from which they must obtain a thorough and coherent interpretation. This engagement involves a great deal of learning, as the student's natural inclination, when faced with any semantic or conceptual difficulty generated when reading the text, typically gives rise to two responses: Firstly, they consider that a particular interpretation (regardless of its complexity or improbability) is possible; and, secondly, that 'this' is what the text says ('this' being, in fact, what they interpret the text to say). This latter reaction is reinforced by what could be termed a 'disproportionate' conception of authorship in translation: 'this' is what the text says, even though it is not what 'I' would say, being the apparent implicature.

The translator, when approaching a text, sets in motion a hypothesis-generating mechanism. They ask questions of the text, postulate interpretive hypotheses and verify them. They must transmit a reading which does not diminish the interpretive possibilities offered by reading the original version. Some hypotheses have a textual correlative in translation and others do not, but all must pass the test of textual coherency. In what follows, two examples taken from *Alice in Wonderland* are presented where the verification of the interpretative hypothesis is sought, so to speak, within the confines of the text itself, in the story of its composition. They are presented with the deliberate intention of underlining the fact that research does not apply exclusively to technical, less 'literary' translations.

The first example, which could, at first, be considered to be lacking a textual correlate in translation, is taken from the dialogue between Alice and the mouse, just after the famous visual poem in the form of a tail. It is a poem which has a different layout in each edition of the book, but which always maintains its sinuous form. The mouse becomes angry because Alice, distracted by the 'tail', isn't paying attention to the 'tale' he is telling her. Alice replies that she is following the twists and turns of the tale/tail perfectly and that the mouse had arrived at the fifth bend (Carroll 2001: 35-36):

"You are not attending!" said the Mouse to Alice, severely. "What are you thinking of?"

"I beg your pardon," said Alice very humbly: "you had got to the fifth bend, I think?"

"I had *not*!" cried the Mouse, sharply and very angrily.



"A knot!" said Alice, always ready to make herself useful, and looking anxiously about her. "Oh, do let me help you to undo it!"

The reader may consider this dialogue as further evidence of the nonsense and absurdities that populate Wonderland, a world in which all of 'this' is possible. Alternatively, they can seriously consider the question of whether Alice is right or whether the mouse is entitled to get angry (due to the girl's inattentiveness or the possible allusion made to his lack of sanity: 'round the bend'). It is a legitimate question, one which the reader or, at least, the perspicacious reader (such as the translator) could ask themselves. If they consult an ordinary English edition, the layout of the poem probably won't offer the possibility of inferring that Alice had the poem's "true" referent in mind. However, the translator may wonder how the poem was laid out in the original edition of the book. Their search will lead them to conclude that the hypothesis linking Alice's sentence and a textual correlate in the form of the poem isn't productive, and, as a result, they will have to express it thus in their translation. However, if, in spite of everything, they continue to trust in Alice and decide to pursue their investigative impulse, they may then enter into the story of the book's composition and stumble upon its original manuscript, *Alice's Adventures Under Ground*, in which the poem appears drawn by Carroll in the following manner:



The answer is that Alice isn't lying. This discovery has no direct consequence on the translation of the dialogue, but it serves as a reinforcement of the image of Alice's innocence and honesty. (Carroll 2002:26).

–¡No me estás haciendo ningún caso! –dijo con severidad el Ratón a Alicia–. ¿En qué estás pensando?

–Te pido perdón –contestó Alicia muy humildemente–, creo que estabas en la quinta vuelta, ¿verdad?

–¡Estoy tan indignado que se me hace un nudo...! – exclamó el Ratón muy tajante y enfadado.

–¿Un nudo? –dijo Alicia, dispuesta a echar una mano y mirando con inquietud a su alrededor–. Por favor deja que te ayude a deshacerlo. [‘You are not paying any attention to me!’ said the mouse severely to Alice. ‘What are you thinking about?’

‘I beg your pardon,’ answered Alice very humbly. ‘I think you were on the fifth bend, right?’

‘I am so indignant that I’m getting a knot...!’ exclaimed the mouse very sharply and angrily.

‘A knot?’ Said Alice, disposed to give a hand and looking worriedly around herself. ‘Please let me help you undo it.’]

It is also possible to imagine a subtle textual consequence in another area, in the poem itself. If the translator decides to consider the true original to be neither the contemporary edition that they have in front of them, nor the first English edition, but rather the manuscript version written by Carroll himself, they will give instructions for the poem that precedes the dialogue to be laid out in a such a way that the story is interrupted in the fifth bend. And, in fact, this change is introduced in the third and final edition, of the two *Alices*, annotated by Martin Gardner (2001). At first, Gardner followed the layout of the first 1865 edition; in the latest annotated edition, however, the tail has five bends. (Carroll 1971:51, Carroll 2001:35).

Another fragment of *Alice in Wonderland* provides a second example of the translator's interrogation of the text and of the way in which the overall context of the work acts as an acid test for their interpretative hypotheses. It involves the exclamation made by the white rabbit at the beginning of the first chapter: ‘Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall

be too late!’ Moreover, it is no exaggeration, in my opinion, to say that this also represents an example of the way in which the translation can help illuminate the original. The most immediate translation of the exclamation ‘oh dear’, and other similar utterances which appear throughout the book, might be ‘dios mío’ (my God), ‘cielo santo’ (good heavens) or any other variation endowed with religious connotations. Here the translator — more readily than the average source language reader — may ask themselves if God exists in Wonderland. Their answer will determine whether the answer obtained by others matches that offered by the original. Once again, the question is justified, as one might well ask whether a person as religiously scrupulous as Carroll (so scrupulous that he asked his illustrators not to work on Sundays) would permit the presence of God in a story filled with ‘nonsense’. In any event, the response must be textual. The first step is to comb the two *Alices* in search of the word ‘God’ as well as any other word related to divinity. The search is fruitless, although it may lead to the discovery that in *Alice Through the Looking-Glass* the only chess piece to be omitted is the bishop¹. Gardner ventures that this omission may signify a mark of respect for the clergy (Carroll 2001:154). This evidence alone is insufficient but further investigation uncovers a revealing change: it appears that Carroll first populated his garden of temperamental flowers, in the second chapter of *Alice Through the Looking-Glass*, with the flowers that the Spanish missionaries in America called ‘pasionarias’ (passion flowers), seeing in them an emblem of the passion of Christ (five wound-stamen, 3 nail-stigma, the heart of thorns). When Carroll became aware of this etymology he changed their name immediately, transforming them into tiger lilies, as recounted by Stuart Dogson Collingwood in his biography of his uncle. Collingwood also adds that when asked whether the ending of the second *Alice* echoed the conclusion of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, a classic work of English literature which narrates a Christian’s journey through life in allegorical form, Carroll repudiated the insinuation, declaring that ‘I would consider such trespassing on holy ground as highly irreverent’ (Collingwood 1898:150-151). This evidence strongly supports the idea that God is deliberately excluded from Wonderland, and thus, should remain that way in any translation.

These two examples provide proof of how the translator seeks the confirmation or refutation of his hypotheses in the text (or sometimes in the story of its composition), so as to leave certain interpretative doors either open or closed for the readers who will come after them.

¹ This piece is known as *el alfil* in Spanish and has no religious connotations.



3. FORMS

With regard to matters of form, the deceleration and intensification of the reading process requires the ability to detect and recognise the textual features which allow the text to say what it says (as well as what it doesn't say), and say it (or not) in a certain manner. It is important to be aware of the variety of possible forms a text may take, of how genres and subgenres can have a bearing on the way the text is written, and how, beyond these general determining factors, the text can then be altered or 'personalised', as Fortea and Santana (2012) discuss with regard to notions of style and tone in the presentation of this monograph. It is certainly true that, at times, emphasis is placed on the 'what' at the expense of the 'how', and it is only in classes specifically dedicated to literary translation that form receives the attention it is due. It sometimes receives less attention or is considered subsidiary or dispensable in teaching settings designed for general translation and, especially, in specialized translation, where priority is given to communication. Yet form is important in any translation, as it is in any text, either because existing models are adhered to in a routine or conventional way, or because they are transgressed, moulded or broadened. In his influential 1984 manual, *L'analyse du discours comme méthode de traduction*, (Discourse analysis as a method of translation) Jean Delisle dedicated 15 pages to an analysis of how the brain of the translator functions when trying to find the so-called translational equivalence of the phrase 'the icy grip tightens', the title of a journalistic article about a cold wave (Delisle 1984:69-86). At no point is reference made to the phrase's distinctive sonorous qualities (the sounds /i/ and /ai/), nor the journalistic conventions that dictate the composition of headlines in the source culture, nor the corresponding practises —whether they coincide or not— expected by the readers in the target culture. Thus, in translation classes, there is a genuine risk of form becoming an unremarked, invisible element of the text.

In addition, there is usually an excessive weight accorded to the notion of 'high-brow literature', a notion implicitly contained within the term 'literary translation', which leaves the vast terrain of book translation untended. Undoubtedly, texts of high-brow literature, where form receives greatest care, are extremely useful as a means of refining student's exegetical capacities. They also allow students to analyse the possibilities of language when it can act, so to speak, without being held accountable to anyone (except to itself), as well as engendering a translational sensibility in matters of form. The following example, taken from *Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie, helps us appreciate the importance of a simple anaphor. The beginning of this book foreshadows the development of the whole novel, with its blend of fiction and historical



fact. This fusion of storytelling and history resides in the parallels that exist between the vicissitudes of the characters and the events that occur on a national scale in the former British colony. From the first page, the destinies of the protagonist, Saleem Sinai, and India are portrayed as inextricable; and it is this idea that is reflected in the fact that both are born simultaneously at midnight on the 15th August 1947 (Rushdie 1982:9).

I was born in the city of Bombay... once upon a time. No, that won't do, there's no getting away from the date: I was born in Doctor Narlikar's Nursing Home on August 15th, 1947. And the time? The time matters, too. Well then: at night. No, it's important to be more... On the stroke of midnight, as a matter of fact. Clock-hands joined palms in respectful greeting as I came. Oh, spell it out, spell it out: at the precise instant of India's arrival at independence, I tumbled forth into the world. There were gasps. And, outside the window, fireworks and crowds. A few seconds later, my father broke his big toe; but this accident was a mere trifle when set beside what had befallen me in that benighted moment, because thanks to the occult tyrannies of those blandly saluting_clocks I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country.

Miguel Sáenz (Rushdie 1984:17) resolved this fragment as follows:

Nací en la ciudad de Bombay... hace mucho tiempo. No, no vale, no se puede esquivar la fecha: nací en la Clínica Particular del Dr. Narlikar el 15 de agosto de 1947. ¿Y la hora? La hora es también importante. Bueno, pues de noche. No, hay que ser más... Al dar la medianoche, para ser exactos. Las manecillas del reloj juntaron sus palmas en respetuoso saludo cuando yo llegué. Vamos, explícate, explícate: en el momento mismo en que la India alcanzaba su independencia, yo entré dando tumbos en el mundo. Hubo boqueadas de asombro. Y, al otro lado de la ventana, cohetes y multitudes. Unos segundos más tarde, mi padre se rompió el dedo gordo del pie, pero su accidente fue una simple bagatela comparado con lo que había caído sobre mí en

ese momento tenebroso, porque, gracias a la oculta tiranía de aquellos relojes que se saludaban con suavidad, había quedado misteriosamente maniatado a la Historia, y mi destino indisolublemente encadenado al de mi país. [I was born in the city of Bombay...a long time ago. No, that's not right, the date cannot be avoided: I was born in Mr. Narlikar's private clinic on the 15th August 1947. And the time? The time is also important. Well, then, at night. No, I must be more...on the stroke of midnight, to be exact. The clock's little hands joined their palms in respectful greeting when I arrived. Come on, explain yourself, explain yourself: at the same time as India was gaining her independence, I entered rolling into the world. There were gasps of astonishment. And, on the other side of the window, rockets and crowds. A few seconds later, my father broke his big toe, but his accident was a mere bagatelle compared to what had befallen me in that shadowy moment, because thanks to the hidden tyranny of those clocks which were gently greeting one another, I had ended up with my hands mysteriously tied to history, and my destiny indissolubly chained to that of my country.]

The connection between the destinies of the protagonist and his country (and the explanation of all that is encompassed by the title) is established in this opening with a few minute lexical choices which evoke temporality and history, thus transforming the initial greeting into a condemnation: 'Clock-hands joined palms in respectful greeting', 'blandly saluting clocks', 'hand-cuffed to history', 'chained'. The image is powerful, and is reinforced by the repetition of the word 'hand' in 'clock-hands' and 'handcuffed'. This crucial repetition can easily pass unnoticed by the average reader, but an intensive reader — such as the translator — recognises it as they read. And the consequence of this recognition is the effort made to replicate it.

Canonical literary texts provide us with the basis for an analysis of the way in which great authors mould language in the expression of feeling and the creation of worlds while, at the same time, offering an excellent opportunity to perfect our command of linguistic forms. Short stories and brief narratives, in particular, provide a

varied testing-ground on which to practise translation understood as a sophisticated exercise in collaborative writing; an exercise which involves replicating the sentence control which the original displays, without disrupting the text's internal coherence and balance. The short story 'The Gardener' by Rudyard Kipling is an example of writing at its most meticulously precise, which could serve as an illustration of Flaubert's dictum: 'La forme est comme la sueur de la pensée.' (Form is like the sweat of thought). This is the first paragraph:

Everyone in the village knew that Helen Turrell did her duty by all her world, and by none more honourably than by her only brother's unfortunate child. The village knew, too, that George Turrell had tried his family severely since early youth, and were not surprised to be told that, after many fresh starts given and thrown away, he, an Inspector of Indian Police, had entangled himself with the daughter of a retired non-commissioned officer, and had died of a fall from a horse a few weeks before his child was born. Mercifully, George's father and mother were both dead, and though Helen, thirty-five and independent, might well have washed her hands of the whole disgraceful affair, she most nobly took charge, though she was, at the' time, under threat of lung trouble which had driven her to the South of France. She arranged for the passage of the child and a nurse from Bombay, met them at Marseilles, nursed the baby through an attack of infantile dysentery due to the carelessness of the nurse, whom she had had to dismiss, and at last, thin and worn but triumphant, brought the boy late in the autumn, wholly restored, to her Hampshire home.

In spite of its brevity, this extract affords us a glimpse of what awaits the translator of this story: time and effort. The style of these four sentences, and other similar ones, can help, incidentally, challenge the validity of certain preconceived ideas that conflate 'long sentence' with 'defective sentence'. The precision of the writing, that 'precision de résultat d'une science exacte' (precise result of an exact science) which Flaubert aspired towards (Flaubert 1927b:286), makes it necessary to identify and transfer the textual features considered relevant as rigorously as possible. Of course, there isn't merely one solution, but the most accomplished translations all share two common characteristics: Firstly, they have taken time to compose, a sentiment which



resonates in the words of another of Flaubert's letters: 'se hâter c'est pour moi, en littérature, se tuer' (To be hasty for me, in literature, is suicide) (Flaubert 1927c:167); and secondly, they exude an air of apparent naturalness, of simplicity.

Todos en el pueblo sabían que Helen Turrell cumplía su deber con cuantos formaban su mundo, y con nadie de un modo más ejemplar que con el desdichado hijo de su único hermano. El pueblo también sabía que George Turrell había sido desde la adolescencia una fuente permanente de disgustos para su familia, y nadie se sorprendió al enterarse de que, tras muchas oportunidades concedidas y desaprovechadas, convertido en inspector de la Policía India, se había enredado con la hija de un suboficial retirado y había fallecido al caer de un caballo pocas semanas antes del nacimiento de su hijo. Por suerte, los padres de George ya no estaban vivos para verlo; y Helen, que con treinta y cinco años y dueña de su propia vida bien habría podido lavarse las manos en aquel escandaloso asunto, se encargó con toda nobleza del caso a pesar de que en aquella época luchaba contra la amenaza de una afección pulmonar que la había llevado hasta el sur de Francia. Concertó del viaje del niño y una niñera desde Bombay, se reunió con ellos en Marsella, cuidó al niño durante un ataque de disentería provocado por la negligencia de la niñera, a la que tuvo que despedir, y por último, flaca y agotada pero triunfal, regresó a finales de otoño con el niño completamente restablecido a su casa de Hampshire. [Everyone in the village knew that Helen Turrell fulfilled her duty with all those who formed her world, and with no one in a more exemplary way than with the unfortunate son of her only brother. The village also knew that George Turrell had been since adolescence a constant source of upset for his family, and no one was surprised when they found out that, after many opportunities given and wasted, converted into an inspector in the Indian Police, he had got entangled with the daughter of a retired petty officer and had passed away when he fell from a horse a few weeks before the birth of his son. By luck, the parents of George were not alive to see it; and Helen, who at thirty-five years of age and owner of her own life could

well have washed her hands in that scandalous affair, she took charge with the utmost nobility of the case despite at that time fighting against the threat of a lung condition that had taken her to the south of France. She arranged the child's and a nurse's journey from Bombay, she joined up with them in Marseille, she looked after the boy during an attack of dysentery provoked by the negligence of the nurse, whom she had to fire, and finally, skinny and exhausted but triumphant, she returned at the end of the autumn with the child completely recovered to their house in Hampshire.]

Texts like this excerpt from Kipling, which display a high degree of complexity, can serve as the impetus for an in-depth class debate on possible readings, rhetorically relevant features and the most suitable translation options. It can be slow work, but it is time well spent, as it aids the development of the translator's exegetical gifts: their capacity to interrogate the text, to deconstruct it as an artefact, rebuild it and make it function again.

The so-called literary translator, in the exercise of his profession, is a translator of every type of book and text and is faced with a remarkably broad array of possibilities that, in terms of form, extend not only from the simple to the complex, but also from the polished to the careless. Their translation is, ultimately, a judgement on the value that they accord to the formal aspects of the text and of the way in which it adheres to the rules and conventions of composition. Not all texts are flawless (not all display the same degree of formal care), and the translator must decide in each case the amount of 'sacredness' they ought to attribute to their text and to what extent it is appropriate to adapt it to the expectations of those who will read the translation. The 'literary' space demands subtlety and creativity of the translator, a creativity which is attained from a state of complete awareness of the limitations imposed by form.

An exercise which can prove useful in the classroom in order to deepen students' awareness of form involves completing a series of translations of texts which approach the same subject from different textual perspectives. The 'what' is still being dealt with, of course, but placing the emphasis on the 'how' helps students to recognise and appreciate the way in which texts function and the different types of problems that they give rise to. By way of example, several fragments of texts written on the subject of Noah and the Ark are presented below. Almost all of them can be found on the

internet. They can promote a reflection upon many textual characteristics, in addition to those explicitly alluded to below.

This entry taken from the *Encyclopedia Britannica* can serve as an example of a piece of writing which claims to be denotative and neutral. It poses no syntactic problems, and the comprehension difficulties can be resolved with the aid of research (which should prevent Noah becoming transformed into the ninth son of Adam). The biblical quotes which it contains allow a reflection on the existence of different translations of the bible.

Noah appears in Gen. 5:29 as the son of Lamech and ninth in descent from Adam. In the story of the Deluge (Gen. 6:11-9:19), he is represented as the patriarch who, because of his blameless piety, was chosen by God to perpetuate the human race after his wicked contemporaries had perished in the Flood. A righteous man, Noah "found favour in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen. 6:8). Thus, when God beheld the corruption of the earth and determined to destroy it, he gave Noah divine warning of the impending disaster and made a covenant with him, promising to save him and his family.

The following text, also of an informative and syntactically simple nature, the beginning of which is quoted below, has been extracted from the website www.islam101.com. It allows the introduction of the concepts of point of view and ideology, and, like the previous example, it also highlights the importance of research. The comprehension problems occasioned by the word "oven" make it necessary to consult an annotated Koran or a work of exegesis. In a few passages, the reformulation entails the modification of certain aspects of the source text.

In recent years there have been some renewed attempts to locate the Ark. These attempts will perhaps continue until we have the answers we wish to have. Among the researchers is an American who is obtaining aerial photos of Mt. Ararat from the CIA collection. The Holy Quran describes the story of Prophet Noah (peace be on him), his building of the Ark, the people who joined him and the Flood in detail. The water started gushing out

from a particular oven, followed by a large number of other springs as well as a heavy downpour from the sky.

The following fragment belongs to a newspaper review of the book *Noah's Flood*, a scientific investigation carried out by two marine geologists. Amongst other things, this text requires terminological research in different disciplines and presents some reformulation problems which call for a certain departure from the structure of the sentence in the original English text. Finally, in the first paragraph, it allows problems related to the translation of a sustained metaphor to be identified and addressed.

The enjoyment of detective stories comes not so much from discovering who done it, but in following the layers of events, accidents and coincidences that lead up to a satisfying conclusion. At best the story will not be a straightforward narrative, but will interweave disparate, sometimes apparently unconnected, strands into a pleasing multitextured piece.

Such a detective story is *Noah's Flood* (Simon & Schuster, 319 pages). The authors, marine geologists William Ryan and Walter Pitman, plot the events, ideas and discoveries that lead them to conclude that Noah's biblical flood was a real event in comparatively recent history. They believe that it took place not in the Middle East, as might be assumed from reading the Bible, but in the area around the Black Sea.

The next fragment comes from the book *God: A Biography*, for which Jack Miles received the Pulitzer Prize in 1996. Besides the exegetical demands that the translation of a work of thought entails, this essay boasts a scrupulously crafted prose, through which the argument fluidly unfolds. The quoted passage allows, for example, a reflection on repetition and its use within discursive writing. Seen by students as a negative element, repetition here becomes a parallelism and an anaphor; this obliges the reader to decide whether it does or does not possess rhetorical value and if it adds to the argument. Furthermore, when the author makes use of an English version of the Hebrew bible in his exegesis, it is imperative that he make a decision regarding the translation of biblical quotes. Essays are also valuable in virtue of the added exegetical difficulties they present, difficulties which go beyond those simply related to matters of lexis and



syntax; analysing the discursive structures of the following passages could help establish a firm ground upon on which to construct an interpretative hypothesis.

The story of the flood, like the story of creation, is told twice; but, unlike the two creation stories, the two flood stories are interwoven. This is the more easily possible because the two versions are structurally identical. In both, the deity decides to destroy all human and animal life by drowning it in a great flood. In both, Noah and his family are spared, being warned to prepare an ark in which to ride out the flood. In both, after the flood recedes, there is a new divine-human beginning. The inconsistencies lie in the details. How many animals is Noah to take on the ark? The "God" version says two of every kind (6:19); the "Lord" version says seven pairs of the clean, one pair of the unclean (7:2). These "doublets" fatten up and slow down the typically lean and swift style that otherwise characterizes the Book of Genesis, but they do not obscure the common plot.

The first sentence of *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters* by Julian Barnes is a model of what the first sentence of a novel ought to be like. It is directed towards the well-informed reader, one who is capable of appreciating its surprising lexical choices and the irony of what comes afterwards. The translator must be capable of recognising and maintaining the ironic winks. It goes without saying that this demands an equally profound knowledge of biblical texts as was required for the previous extract. The reformulation of this text can cause serious problems. Besides which, there is an inescapable need to identify not only the narrator but the receptors of the texts as well. By which I mean, the "you" which appears in the second sentence (which can give rise to a reflection on the many ways this personal pronoun can be translated when endowed with this textual function).

They put the behemoths in the hold along with the rhinos, the hippos and the elephants. It was a sensible decision to use them as ballast; but you can imagine the stench. And there was no-one to muck out. The men were overburdened with the feeding rota, and their women, who beneath those leaping fire-tongues of scent no doubt reeked as badly as we did, were far too delicate. So if any mucking-out was to happen, we had to do it ourselves.



A highly useful text, given its form and brevity, is the theatrical monologue *Never Mind the Weather*, by Michael Frayn, which is presented below in full. Like the previous text, it allows a consideration of the problems that arise when translating irony and humour. In a more compelling way than with Barnes, it also demands the disentanglement of narrator and receptor. Unlike the Barnes story, however, orality plays a much more central role. The appearance of syntactic simplicity, arising from the will to reproduce oral language, conceals a treasure trove of cultural allusion.

We've just been on our first cruise! Yes, our first one ever! Oh, we had a lovely time! We're quite converted! Beautiful boat, it was. Oh, an absolutely first-class. Not one of those big luxury liners where you have to change for dinner. We shouldn't fancy that. That's not our style. No, nice little boat. Well, about 300 cubits long. Made of gopher wood, which I believe is very good for making boats out of. And a nice homey atmosphere. In fact it was more for cargo than passengers, really. Cattle, and pigs, and sheep, and that type of thing. Oh, we're all very fond of animals so it didn't worry us! The weather was a bit, you know, *mixed*. But it didn't matter, you felt you were seeing the world. Don't ask me where we went exactly—we went all over the place! All round the Holy Land, all round there. And we finished up by putting in at that famous mountain they've got out there. What's it called? Not Vesuvius. It'll come to me in a minute. We were rather pleased to see it, actually! We'd had one or two days quite bad weather, you see. Oh yes, it was quite bad at times. But it didn't worry us.

That's the wonderful thing about a cruise. You don't have to go out. You've got all the entertainment provided. So we didn't care if it rained all the time. Well, you make your own fun, don't you? The whole family was there, after all. Oh, yes! We all went! My husband and I—his brother Shem and his wife—Ham and his wife. And the boys brought their Mum and Dad! You should have seen us all! You'd have thought we owned the ship! In fact, we were the only passengers. So we had the run of it. Which was nice. Talk about fun and games! Particularly when the weather was bad! Oh, they all said the same thing, they all



said they'd never seen anything like it before. Half the time we really and truly didn't know whether we were ever going to see land again. I said to Dad, I said, "At least the rats haven't deserted us!" Because we had rats on board. Not many. You'd see one or two from time to time. Yes, the storm lasted forty days, non-stop! They sent off a pigeon at one point, to see if it could get a message through. It was as bad as that. Still, it was a holiday, that's the main thing. And I took a lovely picture of the rainbow—I've got it here somewhere. Well it's lovely of Japheth—the rainbow didn't come out.

This text can be used as part of a highly illuminating didactic experiment. When given to a group of students at the beginning of a series of classes, it is possible that some of the students may not pick up on the references which form the foundations of the whole monologue. In such a case, it provides a good example of underinterpretation, and can thus lead to the initiation of a debate on translator responsibility. When read again, with a full awareness of all the references, it contributes to the student's experience of translation as something more than a linguistic phenomenon.

4. CONCLUSION

Learning to translate is, above all else, about learning to go beyond oneself. The novice's natural tendency is to make use of their own resources to the exclusion of all others. This tendency is nourished by the romantic myth of the creator as demiurge, symbolised in the struggle of Jacob against the angel, and is sustained by several theories and conceptions of translation that reinforce the primacy of meaning, i.e. taking what the original text says and putting it into our own words. One of the problems associated with this approach is that, in practice, it involves passing the 'other' through the filter of the 'I' without a sufficient awareness of our own limits. First of all, it is possible that the text doesn't say or doesn't only say what we believe that it says and, secondly, that it says it better. When choosing between several alternative solutions to a problem, the novice translator typically opts for what is known and familiar, often to the detriment of the unknown and more suitable option. In the end, the upshot of this is that the foreign text will have passed through the prism of personal ignorance, and the readers' access to the original will be curtailed, as a result of the limit imposed by the interpretative or expressive deficiencies of the intermediary.



The challenge of translation classes, especially at the initial levels, is to break this fixity and encourage students to overcome the inertia that makes them prefer what is known and familiar over the new and unknown. The teacher's task is to foster an inclination towards curiosity and an abandonment of complacency. The translator inhabits a Wonderland: a land of wonders, indeed, but above all, a land of wondering. That is why we must place a radical questioning at the centre of our inquiries, one which widens our perspectives, as we constantly plunge into the vast *terra incognita* of what we do not know. This requires time and intellectual effort.

Fundamental to the enterprise of learning to translate is cultivating the impulse towards 'perspiration'. Those who are just beginning in translation must learn to resist the siren calls of comfort, such as limited and uncritical searches in Wikipedia, Wordreference or in the DRAE, and be aware that behind each word there must be a decision which is as objective and well-researched as possible. To this end, they must dare to go beyond the realm of necessity, necessity being understood in the Aristotelian sense of what cannot be otherwise; this means they shouldn't be content with choosing, for example, between the two options offered by the bilingual dictionary that they are using at that time. Instead, they should venture undaunted, even though it requires a greater effort, into that realm of freedom; where freedom is understood as the capacity to reach a conscious decision, after having compiled an array of meticulously selected options. It is obvious that the more freedom of choice we have at our disposal, the freer we will be. It is equally obvious that to translate better, knowing more is preferable to knowing less. Literary texts, and texts in which the possibilities of form can be made manifest, provide us with an excellent instrument for the exercise of our translation skills. Once again Flaubert offers his advice: 'Plus les muscles de votre poitrine seront larges, plus vous respirerez à l'aise.' (The broader your chest muscles, the more easily you will breathe) (Flaubert 1927b:141). When we begin translating we must understand that we should not write the other as if they were us, but rather as if we were them (On the contrary, their translations will always be similar). For the maxim contained in another letter from another of the great 19th century French writers has a literal meaning for translators: 'Je est un autre' (I is other).

Translated by Niall Smith

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