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Past and present in translation collaborative practices and cooperation

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From suspicion to trust: "the pact of translation" in two author-translator collaborations

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Abstract

There is a vast literature showing that author-translator relationships are often fraught with tensions which undermine trust between the two parties (Anokhina 2017; Hersant, 2017, 2020). These tensions are hardly detectable from the sole comparison of source and target texts but are likely to be revealed in archival material such as editorial correspondence or revised translator's typescripts and galley proofs. The examination of archival material makes it possible to observe how trust between translator and author develops and deepens, but also how it can be jeopardized when other intermediaries come into play. This paper focuses on documents taken from the Lilly Library at the University of Indiana Bloomington. Both epitextual sources (such as correspondence with publishers and authors) and genetic sources (such as translators' manuscripts and notebooks) pertaining to translators William Weaver (1923-2012) and Barbara Wright (1915-2009) are examined, with a view to better understand the complex interplay of trust and mistrust that takes place in translation collaborations.

Keywords: trust, author-translator collaboration, translators' archives, (copy)editors, power relations.

1. Introduction[1]

As noted by Michael Cronin (2000: 108), "translation has been viewed with profound suspicion" in the history of intercultural exchanges and the oft-quoted Italian saying 'Traduttore, Traditore' reflects well the mistrust with which translation as a practice and as an artefact has been regarded (Folena 1991; Bassnett 2001; Pym 2004; Rizzi *et al.* 2019). Secondary in status, not the original, and 'self-evidently a lie,' the translation has often been suspected of being but an 'unfaithful' reflection of the original. The fear is that the translator will "alter, deform or mutilate the sacred wholeness of the original" (Cronin 2000: 108). George Steiner ([1975] 1998: 233) argues that "[t]here is in every act of translation – and specially where it succeeds – a touch of treason." And as Esperanza Bielsa (2016: 9-10) notes, "the suspicion of treason that translation and translators constantly provoke" stems from "[t]he fact that translation serves both the foreign work and the domestic reader at the same time." This explains "the contradictory esteem" in which translators are held, as "objects of both necessary trust yet at the same time deep suspicion" (Inghilleri 2018: 147-148). What is more, literary translation is a profoundly inegalitarian process, where the translator is often placed in a position of subservience to the commissioner of the translation (Simeoni 1998: 11-12; Venuti 1998: 48), and their auctorial status is necessarily second to, and therefore weaker than, that of the author.

This principial mistrust is in reality counterbalanced by a degree of trust that renders the translation process possible. In their recent study of translation history, Anthony Pym *et al.* posit that translation "is not possible without trust" (2019: 2), and that the "axiomatic mistrust of the intermediary" (Pym 2004: 168) can be subsumed by a leap of faith, which "means taking on trust not only the expertise but also the honesty of the person translating" (Bassnett 2011: 22). Thus a complex interplay of trust

[1] We would like to thank the Lilly Library in Bloomington, IN for granting us permission to publish extracts from William Weaver's letters. We are also grateful to Prof. Breon Mitchell for his invaluable help and advice. Every effort has been made to locate William Weaver's heirs and to obtain their permission for the use of copyrighted material in this article. We apologise for any errors or omissions and will be happy to hear from anyone who may hold copyright whom we found impossible to contact. We would also like to thank the Queneau Estate for permission to quote from the unpublished letters by Raymond Queneau (rights reserved Raymond Queneau Estate).
This essay was jointly conceived, prepared, and written by the two co-authors, with Pascale Sardin responsible for section 3, and Serenella Zanotti for section 2.

and mistrust takes place in the translatorial process involving author and translator or editor and translator. These tensions are hardly detectable from the sole comparison of source and target texts but are likely to be revealed in archival material such as editorial correspondence or revised translator's typescripts and galley proofs. The examination of archival material makes it possible to observe how trust between translator and author and other intermediaries develops and deepens, but also how it can be jeopardized. This paper focuses on documents taken from the Lilly Library at the University of Indiana, Bloomington, which houses one of the world's largest collections of translators' papers.[2] Adopting a historical perspective, it focuses on two case studies dating back to the mid-20th century. Both epitextual sources (such as correspondence with publishers and authors) and genetic sources (such as translators' manuscripts and notebooks) pertaining to translators William Weaver (1923-2012) and Barbara Wright (1915-2009) are examined. We show how this gives privileged insight into the complex tensions involved in the relation of trust between author and literary translator. The interplay of power thus exposed will lead us to reframe the very notion of the "translation pact", previously defined by Cecilia Alvstad (2014: 2) as a "mechanism" or "rhetorical construction through which readers are invited to read translated texts as if they were original texts written solely by the original author" and question the issue of the authority of the agents involved in the field of literary translation.

[2] In 2002 Breon Mitchell (1942-), a renowned American translator of German and professor of Germanic studies, became the new Director of the Lilly Library at Indiana University, Bloomington. There, he initiated a collection of translators' archives, including correspondence with authors and publishers, translators' manuscripts, and annotated copies of their works. Such is the material pertaining to Barbara Wright, which is otherwise dispersed in France (at the IMEC in Caen, the BNF in Paris, and in Bourgogne in particular) and in the UK (at the British Library and the Themerson archive, London). At Bloomington can be found some 10,000 items: correspondence with authors and publishers, radio scripts, notebooks, clippings, photographs, etc. Of notable interest are Wright's *Exercices de style* notebooks, which reveal the linguistic and stylistic work done during the translation process with its corrections, additions, emendations in blue and red and the Queneau correspondence that enables us to gain insight into the author-translator relationship. See Section 3 below.

2. On how the translation process may be jeopardized by suspicion

As Rizzi *et al.* (2019: 33) suggest, "[t]rust is often silent, whereas distrust tends to leave traces". Indeed, there is a vast literature that shows that author-translator relationships are often fraught with tensions which undermine trust between the two parties (Anokhina 2017; Hersant 2017, 2020). The aim of this section is to explore how suspicion takes over in a translation relationship. We examine a case study based on documents that are part of the William Weaver collection at the Lilly Library (The Weaver, W. mss., 1954-1988; The Weaver, W. mss. II, 1833-2006). More specifically, we discuss what happens when the author becomes involved in the production process that lies behind a published translation. We argue that, in this kind of situation, the risk of eroding trust in the translator is particularly high. The English translation of Elsa Morante's novel *La Storia* is further used as a case study with the aim of shedding light on the influence of editors and copyeditors (Buzelin 2005; Bogic 2010; Siponkoski 2013; Solum 2017, 2018; Kruger 2017; Hersant 2019), their degree of intervention, and the role they may have played in undermining the relationship of trust between the translator and the author.[3]

2.1. Suspicious authors

William Weaver was "the premier American translator of modern Italian fiction" (Venuti 1982: 16). He was one of the most prolific translators of his time, averaging "close to two book-length translations a year" (Healey 2019: xix). He translated the works of some of the most important Italian writers of the twentieth century: among them Umberto Eco, Italo Calvino, Primo Levi, Elsa Morante, Alberto Moravia, Italo Svevo and Carlo Emilio Gadda.

Collaborating with the authors he translated was integral to Weaver's method (cf. Bollettieri and Zanotti 2017). He worked closely with most of them, establishing a relationship of "total collaboration with some and less with others" (Venuti 1982: 21). As Weaver pointed out, "relationship with writers can […] be very difficult because when you start translating [their] work, you are in a sense taking it away from [them]" (Covi *et al.* 1987: 90). He recalled having "some very rough moments" with Calvino, with whom

[3] This may even sometimes lead to the termination of a contract, as exemplified by the case of María Reimóndez's Galician translation of British bestseller *The curious incident of the dog in the night-time* by Mark Haddon (see Castro 2013).

he worked for twenty years: "he was extremely possessive about his work, and he loved – once the translation was in proof – to make little changes in the English. This way he could feel that in the end he put on the finishing touches" (Covi *et al.* 1987: 90).

On several occasions, Weaver mentioned Elsa Morante as one of the most difficult authors he happened to work with:

> Elsa Morante made a point of not wanting to see my translation. […] But every now and then she would call me up and say, "Bill, on page 29, how are you going to translate this phrase or that one? I would have to say, 'I'll call you back', which I did and explained what I meant." (Venuti 1982: 21)

In Weaver's view, authorial suspicion was often triggered by imperfect knowledge of English, something that happened with other writers as well:

> sometimes her partial knowledge of English misleads her, so she thinks she has understood something when she hasn't. But this happens with other writers as well. It used to happen with Giorgio Bassani, who didn't know much English […]. When I started translating his work, he would actually sit down with a dictionary and go over the translation, usually after it appeared in print, and then say, "Bill, why did you use 'cot' and not 'bed'?". And I would say, "Well, Giorgio, in this case the bed is for a child and it's presumably smaller". Then he would say, "But 'cot' – doesn't that mean 'cottage'?" And I said, "No, that's a poetic version of the word. So we would have our little problems." (Venuti 1982: 22)

In an interview published in *The Paris Review* in 2002, Weaver was particularly outspoken about his relationship with Morante, confessing that she "was by far the hardest person [he] worked with":

> Elsa was a pain in the neck. […] When I was translating *La Storia*, I was living in Tuscany. Every now and then she would call me up in the morning. I had told her once that I worked from the time I got up until about ten-thirty, and then I would have a cup of coffee, and then I would work again until lunchtime. She would always phone at ten-thirty, thinking that that was my break. The reason I took the break was that I didn't want to think about translation for half an hour or so before I went back to it. But she would call and start asking questions. She said, Now on page three hundred and fifty-nine when I use the word so-and-so, how will you translate that? And I said,

> Elsa, I'm on page one hundred and twenty-three. I've got no idea! That didn't stop her, and she started calling me almost daily at ten-thirty, ruining my morning. (Weaver 2002: n.p.)

But the image of the suspicious author chasing her translator on the phone tells us only part of the story.

2.2. History: A novel

In his 1982 interview with Lawrence Venuti, Weaver (in Venuti 1982: 24) noted that publishers tend to "regard translators simply as hired help", while "some editors regard manuscripts […] as raw material which is shaped into the exquisite vase by the editor":

> Just a couple of years ago I had an extremely unpleasant experience in this respect with a novel that I translated. The publisher wanted to make endless changes. I mean hundreds and hundreds of changes. They weren't so much changes in the translation as really changes in the book. I defended the book very hotly, and the head publisher and the editor with whom I was having the fight argued back, saying, "Oh, but we do this all the time. We completely rewrote a translation of a Japanese novel and it won the National Book Award. […]" I did win in the end. But I also had to bring the author into the battle on my side. (ibid.)

The novel in question was Elsa Morante's *La Storia*, whose translation had been commissioned to Weaver by Knopf. In her historical novel, published in 1974 and soon a best-seller, Morante narrates the story of a Jewish woman and her two sons. The English translation, a book of almost 600 pages, appeared in 1977.

In Autumn 1975, "fighting off nervous breakdown" (Weaver to Marcia Higgins, 29 September 1975),[4] Weaver completed the translation of the Morante book, after a long gestation extending over seven months that included extensive consultation with the author (Weaver to Bill Koshland, 5 August 1975, 9 September 1975 and 8 October 1975):

> I have spent several long sessions with Elsa – whole days, in fact – checking certain things, and she has approved of my solutions to

[4] Weaver, W. mss., 1954-1988, Subseries: Morante, Elsa, Box 16, *History: A novel,* correspondence, November 1958-February 1985.

> several thorny problems. She has also read a bit of the translation (in a less than final draft, to my dismay, and at her gentle insistence), and likes it very much. One hurdle past, I trust. (Weaver to Bill Koshland, 9 September 1975)

In sending off the manuscript, an exhausted but triumphant Weaver confessed to his agent: "I feel like the Red Army after the Long March!" (Weaver to Marcia Higgins, 8 October 1975).

Towards the end of October 1975, the manuscript was sent into copyediting, while the author was reading her copy in order to give "the go-ahead" (B. Koshland to Weaver, 20 October 1975). In November Weaver received a telephone call from the Knopf editor, Bill Gottlieb, who told him that the copy-editor had made numerous corrections "on almost every page".

Weaver wrote to Erich Linder, Morante's literary agent and commissioner of the translation, saying he has decided to withdraw the translation:

> I'm giving up. Mr. Gottlieb's telephone call, in the first place, was a severe shock. If he had said there were some passages that could bear re-thinking, I would have been the first to want to do just that. But he spoke of "necessary" corrections on almost every page. I may very well have made some mistakes (in a book of 1000 typewritten pages), but I can't believe I made hundreds of mistakes. So there is obviously a basic divergence between Mr. Gottlieb's view of the text and mine. (Weaver to Erich Linder, 16 November 1975)

But what worried Weaver most was Morante's change in attitude upon hearing about the Knopf editor's negative reaction to the translation:

> I would, however, have waited before withdrawing the work, until I received his 'revised' version, if Elsa hadn't chosen this moment to turn mean. Obviously, having heard of Mr. Gottlieb's reaction, she has become suspicious and distrustful. She called me Thursday night and kept me on the phone for nearly an hour. At that point, she had reached page 5 of the typescript. Her questions were, for the most part, foolish, deriving from her lack of knowledge of English. But they also betray a profound lack of faith in my knowledge of English (to say nothing of Italian). I simply cannot spend the next six months explaining to Elsa the meanings of English words she doesn't know (ibid.).

On the same day he wrote a letter to inform Morante about his decision to withdraw the translation, a decision he had made after her telephone call. He wrote: "I sensed in your words some kind of hostility towards the translation and, what is more, a distrust in my abilities":

> Ti confesso che a questa decisione la tua telefonata dell'altra sera ha contribuito. Ho avvertito nelle tue parole una certa ostilità verso la traduzione e, ancora di più, una sfiducia nelle mie capacità. Non voglio – e so che non potrei – importi niente. Ma nello stesso tempo non me la sento di giustificare ogni mia scelta. Ho lavorato per sette mesi con dedizione e amore per il testo. Ma a questo punto penso che saresti più felice con un altro traduttore, al quale faccio ogni augurio di successo." (Weaver to Elsa Morante, 16 November 1975)
> [I confess that it was your phone call the other night that led me to make this decision. I sensed in your words some kind of hostility towards the translation and, what is more, a distrust in my abilities. I do not want to – and I know I could not – impose anything on you. But at the same time I do not feel like justifying every choice I made. I have worked for seven months with dedication and out love for the text. I think that, at this point, you would be happier with another translator, to whom I wish every success.]

On the same day he wrote to his agent, Marcia Higgins, briefing her about the recent developments and the ensuing crisis in his relationship with Morante:

> Having found out from Erich Linder about Mr. Gottlieb's negative reaction, the author has become suspicious and is going over the typescript also. There is a problem: she knows very little English and is basically hostile to the whole idea of translation. She kept me on the phone for almost an hour (after she had reached only page 5), making me explain to her the exact meaning of words like 'gladly' and 'pledge'. Obviously, such explanations could continue for another six or eight months. My sanity is more valuable to me, and so I must abandon the enterprise. (Weaver to Marcia Higgins, 16 November 1975)

Later on, on the same day, Weaver wrote another letter to Higgins, informing her that "the crisis was past":

> at 11, Elsa Morante called me and when I told her I was thinking of abandoning ship, she was very distressed, swore that she wasn't going

> to bother me, and that she has complete faith in me and only in me (i.e. not in Knopf). So the crisis is past. (Weaver to Marcia Higgins, 16 November 1975)

Having succeeded in bringing the author into the battle on his side, he was now in a position to negotiate from a vantage point of strength with the Knopf editors: "if Mr. Gottlieb's 'corrections' are unacceptable to me, I want to be able to say 'no' with some clout. (If I sic the author on him, he'll be in real trouble anyway)." (Weaver to Marcia Higgins, 16 November 1975)

2.3. Battling with editors

Weaver wrote about his problems with the Knopf editors in a letter to Helen Wolff, the publisher at Harcourt Brace Jovanovich:

> I am in the midst of a big row with Knopf (more specifically with Mr. Gottlieb) about my translation of the Elsa Morante novel. They announced that they wanted some changes, and I expected the usual sort of thing: a few tactfully pencilled suggestions for improvement. Instead, they returned the first 250 pages of the typescript with literally hundreds of scrawls, marginal. Nearly all of them are unacceptable, and so I am fighting my way – like a Calvino character – through a thicket of pencil marks, trying to restore some sanity to it all. (Weaver to Helen Wolff, 1 December 1975, Box 2, Calvino, *The castle of crossed destinies,* correspondence, April 1972-May 1987)

In sending back the first 225 pages of the revised manuscript, the Knopf editor pointed out that the problems were of two kinds: those where the sentence structure followed the Italian original too closely (for example "the night, dark and dreary" instead of "the dark and dreary night") and those where sentences or phrases did not read quite right due to a lack of a final polishing up (Gottlieb to Weaver, 19 November, 1975).

Weaver replied with a sharp letter on 1 December 1975, where he stated quite clearly that "[he] felt that [his] professional ability and honesty had been under attack". And while he admitted that the copyeditor had made quite a few good suggestions, he also made it clear that the manuscript contained "literally hundreds of modifications" that he found "totally unacceptable". These, he wrote, "confirm my first impression of the editor's tendency to banalize and conventionalize the text" (Weaver to Gottlieb, 1 December 1975). He therefore fired back by saying that "The editor has

certain regular habits, so to speak, which conflict with the author's style" – "a very special, unconventional style" that "should be reproduced also in the translation, as far as possible". For example, he suggested that "the editor must not eliminate exclamation marks" and "must allow the author (and me) to begin sentences with the word 'And'" (ibid.). He also invited the editor to refrain from introducing clichés in places where the author uses unconventional images and from toning down words:

> When the author uses a bizarre image, it must not be replaced with a cliché. Phrases like 'tangled web', 'seething emotions', 'last resting-place', 'ominous thunderclouds', 'heaven on earth' should not be introduced into the text. If the author uses a cliché herself, she does so with evident irony. (ibid.)

And in those instances where the author ironically uses "high-flown words", these "should not be 'toned down'". For example, he suggested not to change the word *warrior* (for *guerriero*) into *soldier* in the following passage:

> For him, that little maternal hamlet in Bavaria signified the only clear, domestic spot in the tangled dance of fate. Beyond there, until he became a *warrior*, he had visited only the nearby city of Munich. (*History*, 13)

Weaver was firm in rejecting what he thought were arbitrary changes to the text: "Sometimes, I feel the editor has made capricious changes, which are also mistaken" and "seem to indicate a lack of feeling for the text" (Weaver to Gottlieb, 1 December 1975). He pointed to the copyeditor's failure to grasp crucial aspects of linguistic characterization, for example by suggesting substituting "depths" for "abyss" and "mud" for "mire" in the tirade of a character who "often uses high-flown, cataclysmic expressions" (ibid.):

> Ah, what a cross! Quiet, I tell you. You want to plunge this household into the *abyss* of shame and dishonor! You want to drag this family in the *mire*! (*History*, 21)

He clearly made a point of using the term "divergence of views" in contrast to the idea of error implied in the word "corrections" used by the editor.

In sending back the first 225 pages of the manuscript, Weaver urged the editor not to turn the writer's style "into the more anonymous house

style". He noted a tendency in the copyeditor's work "to conventionalize, to banalize" and "to eliminate difficult words. I do not think this is permissible, if the author uses them" (Weaver to Gottlieb, 1 December 1975). For example, in the episode where "some boys insult Nino calling him 'Negus' (after the ruler of Ethiopia) – an insult typical of the period", the copyeditor suggested "antique peddler", which in Weaver's opinion was "[a]n unlikely sort of insult for Roman boys to use." (Weaver to Gottlieb, 23 December 1975):

> s'erano urtati il gomito, dicendosi fra loro: "Anvedi er *Negus*?" (*La Storia*, 150)
>
> they had nudged each other and murmured: "Hey, look at the *Negus*!" (*History*, 146)

Weaver also questioned the copyeditor's correction for the translation of the word *triclinio*, which the copyeditor commented with "a peremptory 'no!' in the margin" (ibid.). In the editor's queries, the term was dismissed as "too arcane" and the suggestion was to replace it with "couch" (Morante / *History* / editor's queries / 6). Weaver was firm in defending his translation choice: "Why? If the author had wanted to say 'sofa' or something of the sort, she would have. Instead, she chose an exotic word, and the word must be retained." (Weaver to Gottlieb, 23 December 1975):

> Involontariamente gli succedeva d'allungarsi sul sedile del banco come su un *triclinio* (*La Storia*, 152)
>
> Involuntarily, he would sprawl on the bench of his desk as if on a *triclinium* (*History*, 131)

In another letter to Gottlieb, dated 26 January 1976, Weaver did not spare criticism of the copyeditor's corrections, which he believed tended to level out the author's style:

> Again, I have found some useful suggestions, which I have readily incorporated. And again, I have found a far greater number of capricious and insensitive changes. Obviously, your editor and I have divergent views about the translator's mandate. With considerable effort, I have tried to convey, in English, not just the novel's contents, but also its quality, its style. Thus, when the editor queries the syntax

> on occasion, it means that the author's eccentricity (or originality) is being questioned. (Weaver to Gottlieb, 26 January 1976)

A case in point was "the description of the big refugee family known as *I mille*", which Weaver had translated as "The Thousand". This was changed by the editor into "The Horde" (ibid.), thus obscuring the reference to Garibaldi. Another controversial point was the translation of the term "anticamera della morte", which was used "to describe the bunker-cell from which people are taken to be killed" (ibid.): "Do you know what they're like? The bunker security cells? They're known as the *antechamber of death*" (*History*, 205). The editor suggested replacing "antechamber of death" with "'Gate of Hell'", which was discarded by Weaver as, to him, it sounded "like the name of a tourist attraction" (Weaver to Gottlieb, 26 January 1976).

Weaver also responded, point by point, with his usual incisive counter critique, to the comments made by one of the copyeditors on two separate documents (Morante: *History* / Lesley and Morante: *History* / Queries). The editor observed that "often he tried to translate literally rather than idiomatically" (Morante: *History* / Lesley / 1), to which Weaver replied: "I should say that my aim was not, as you write, to be 'literal' (impossible), but to be faithful, to spirit even more than letter. Free translations are much easier for the translator but often unfair to the author" (Weaver to Gottlieb, 26 January 1976).

The copyeditors failed to understand Morante's use of "reversed name order" (Morante: *History* / Lesley / 2), as in "And *Vivaldi Carlo* neither rejected them nor made friends" (*History*, 174). In his letter, Weaver explained:

> This is a European usage, and generally means the tone is either official or working class or peasant. So when Eppetondo presents himself as Cucchiarelli Giuseppe it shows he is working class. The author uses the form frequently – especially in the case of Vivaldi Carlo – to indicate how <u>others</u> think of the person in question. The fact that in English-speaking countries we don't see Weaver William or Knopf Alfred doesn't bother me. I don't mind the text occasionally having a "foreign" (not "translated") sound. No point in changing pasta to hot dog, etc. (Weaver to Gottlieb, 26 January 1976)

Another controversial point was the use of *would of* for *would have* or *would've*. The copyeditor objected to the use of eye-dialect, suggesting that "it might as well be spelled properly." (Morante: *History* / Lesley / 1). By contrast

Weaver made it clear that non-standard spelling "stands to indicate that the speaker is speaking colloquially, not correctly. So please STET".

The last example, out of many possible others, concerns the phrase "senseless screams of matter" in the following passage:

> As a rule, none of the bunkers remained empty for long. You were shut up in them, usually, after the interrogation, while waiting to be sent elsewhere. At night especially, voices emerged from them; often voices that were no longer reasoning, but rather *senseless screams of matter*. (*History*, 189 – our emphasis)

The copyeditor objected to Weaver's translation, arguing that it did not make sense and suggesting "screams devoid of substance", "senseless screams of beasts", "screams without substance" as possible alternative solutions (Morante: *History* / Queries / 9). In his letter Weaver clarified that "What the au[thor] means is that the humanity has been drained from the prisoners. They are reduced to mere matter, without sense. We must bear in mind that Elsa Morante is a poet and therefore not every sentence in this book has to be crystal-clear. *The translation should avoid becoming an explication or a simplification*." (Our emphasis).

Recent studies have pointed to the role of editorial intervention in favouring explicitation, conventionalization and simplification in translation. As Kruger (2017: 119) points out,

> [e]ditors' concern with clarity of communication may lead them to increase the explicitness of lexicogrammatical encoding of texts, while their concern with ease of communication may cause them to simplify texts to improve accessibility. Copyediting, with its strong emphasis on normative usage, self-evidently leads to greater conventionalization.

The material in the Weaver archive brings before our eyes the image of a translator battling with editors who seek to make his translation conform to Anglo-American norms. It thus comes as no surprise that, in sending off the translation of Morante's last novel, *Aracoeli*, Weaver enclosed a special warning for Jon Galassi, editor at Random House:

> WARNING: please be very careful in your choice of copy-editor. And tell him or her to go very light with the pencil. Elsa's punctuation, capitalization, etc etc are all highly quirkish, but they are very much a part of her and of her book. I am just recovering from

> a terrible experience with a copy-editor from another house, who thought her job was to re-write my work. I wrote stet so many times that I'm thinking of investing in a rubber-stamp to that effect. *Els[a]'s (and my) prose must not be turned into senior-composition English*. Don't mean to sound testy, in advance. I'm sure you understand the problem. (Weaver to Jon Galassi, 10 March 1984 – our emphasis)

3. On how mutual trust is built and how it enhances the translation process

Trust both in the source text and in the translator is a prerequisite to a successful translation. As George Steiner explains in *After Babel*, the "hermeneutic motion" (1998: 312) starts with trust in the meaningfulness of the source text and in one's ability to render it in the target language. Furthermore, as Umberto Eco has argued, an implicit pact tying author and translator, or commissioner and translator, and based on the principle of the faithfulness of the target text with the intention of the source text (Eco 2003: 16), is likely to be established following this first step. This leap of faith "means taking on trust not only the expertise but also the honesty of the person translating." (Bassnett 2011: 22). It presupposes the suspension of doubts and uncertainties and is necessary to build this "pact of translation" that further determines the translator's relation with the commissioner of the translation and enables the success of the translation process (Olohan and Davitti 2017).

3.1. The Queneau-Wright relationship

Barbara Wright, in the second half of the twentieth century, was an active agent in presenting French culture to English-speaking readers. She was a major translator of experimental French writing, authoring over 90 published translations. She contributed to making the French literary avant-garde of the 1960s and 1070s known in the UK and US. Wright was also a regular contributor to the *Times Literary Supplement* and she also adapted plays and poems for BBC radio.

Wright translated into English most of the works of French writer Raymond Queneau (1903-1976). Queneau was a French experimental novelist, poet, critic and editor with Gallimard, a prestigious Paris-based publishing house. In 1959 he authored *Zazie dans le métro*, a book written in a form of witty colloquial French, which brought him international acclaim

when it was adapted for cinema by Louis Malle in 1960. He is also known for his *Exercices de style*, a retelling 99 times of the trivial story of a man on a bus in Paris, originally published in 1947. He entered the *Collège de Pataphysique* in 1950 and founded the *Ouvroir de littérature potentielle (OuLiPo)* in 1960.

The collaboration between Wright and Queneau began in 1954 when they corresponded briefly over her translation of "At the edge of the forest" and "The Trojan horse", two short stories written by the French writer. Wright, who was a professional pianist, had not originally trained as a translator and started translating Queneau "by accident"[5] when she was commissioned to put into English these stories for Gaberbocchus Press, a small London publisher she had cofounded.

Wright sent Queneau her two translations successively, a rather bold move for a relatively inexperienced translator, and for someone who had trained as a musician in Paris, not as a writer. Wright had previously translated into English Alfred Jarry's *Ubu roi* (London: Gaberbocchus Press, 1951) and collaborated on the translation of a children's book the previous year. This seems to prove she both trusted in her own skill as a translator and in the author's willingness to collaborate with her in a benevolent and helpful way. She was right: Queneau wrote back respectively in May and July of 1954, each time commending her "excellent" work.

At the same time, he also very politely and sensitively entered into a conversation about the translated text, asking her if she might reconsider the rendering of one word for which he offered a possible alternative:

> J'avoue que je ne suis pas absolument satisfait par <u>cold meat</u>, puisque ce terme peut s'appliquer à l'homme. Carrion serait peut-être trop fort? En français (familier), charogne peut s'appliquer aussi à l'homme, mais désigne spécifiquement le cadavre d'un animal (et notamment d'un cheval). Mais carrion est-il possible en anglais, dans ce cas?
> Quant à <u>ce qui fit</u>, je crois que qque chose de simple comme, <u>and there was</u>, ferait tout à fait l'affaire.[6]
> [I must admit I am not totally satisfied with <u>cold meat</u>, since this term can apply to man. Would <u>carrion</u> be too strong? In (colloquial)

[5] Barbara Wright, "Bergens Letter," The Lilly Library Online Exhibitions, accessed April 22, 2023, http://collections.libraries.indiana.edu/lilly/exhibitions/items/show/1641 (henceforth, "Bergens Letter").

[6] Raymond Queneau, letter to Barbara Wright, 28 May 1954 (Wright, B. mss, folder individuals, Raymond Queneau, Correspondence, Lilly Library, Indiana University).

French, charogne can also apply to man, but it specifically designates an animal carcass (and notably that of a horse). But is carrion possible in this case in English?
As to ce qui fit, I believe sth simple like, and there was, would do just fine.]

Interestingly here, one can note how Queneau suggests rather than imposes; he is addressing a peer, placing himself under the linguistic authority of the translator, and thereby putting himself on the same footing as her. Contrary to Morante, Queneau knew English very well; he was himself a translator who authored many French translations of Anglophone texts.[7] What is more, he knew many writers and translators: at Éditions Gallimard, he was in charge of the translations department and had many dealings with translators. For all these reasons, perhaps, he did not consider Wright in any way as his subservient double but as an author in her own right, despite her relative inexperience.

Their nascent friendship and intellectual collaboration were confirmed in 1957 when, of her own accord this time, Wright started the translation of Queneau's *Exercices de style*. Queneau reacted very positively to the initiative. Wright recalls: "I was very lucky because once I confessed to [Queneau] that I had translated more than half of [the *exercices*], he asked me to send him each further variation as it was done" ("Bergens Letter": 4).

Wright sent the French author a first batch of 'exercises' and Queneau wrote back that he was very impressed, as well as intrigued, by her enterprise. He wished to study Wright's whole translation closely, "impatient" to know "how [she had] resolved the translation problems that were raised" by his French text (13 August 1957, letter quoted and translated in Bellos 2013: 70). Three months later, he wrote again, telling Wright this time how much he admired her work: "It seems to me that all of this is excellent. I should even say that I am seized with an inexpressible astonishment at the result of this work. Please accept my immense compliments" (13 November 1957, letter quoted and translated in Bellos 2013: 71). In the same letter, he further commended Wright's humour, her command of languages and her technical skill as a translator, noting that

[7] He is the author the French translation of Sinclair Lewis's *It can't happen here* as *Impossible ici* in 1937; by G. du Maurier, he translated *Peter Ibbetson* (1946), and by Amos Tutuola, *The palm-wine drinkard* (1952) as *L'ivrogne dans la brousse* (1953). In 1947 he also published a pseudotranslation that Wright was later to translate back into English: *On est toujours trop bon avec les femmes* by fictive Irish writer Sally Mara. On his career as a translator, see Federici 2009: 99-106.

"rien n'est intraduisible" [nothing is untranslatable]. As before, he added that he might have a "few (minuscule) remarks" to make, but did not include them in the letter.

Wright sent further queries to the writer in the spring of 1958, to which Queneau diligently replied, explaining for instance that "outisse" – present in the exercise titled "Hellénismes," ("Hellenisms") – meant "nobody": "Outisse ← οὖτις, personne. C'est le nom que se donne Ulysse lorsque le cyclope l'interroge…" Outisse ← οὖτις, nobody [It's the name Ulysses uses when the Cyclops questions him…] (15 April 1958, letter by Raymond Queneau to Barbara Wright). Wright, who had originally envisaged the term *anthropoid*, meaning "shaped like a human," changed her translation to "outis", the English transliteration of the Greek word.[8]

3.2. Enhancing the translator's creativity

Wright was not only 'assisted' in her task of translation by the author, she was also 'encouraged' in her own creativity. After reading Wright's adaptation of his macaronic "Dog Latin" episode, Queneau congratulated her on her translation of two specific occurrences: that of "hatto", which Wright had chosen in place of the French "chapito" (for "chapeau", meaning "hat"), and that of "jungum", chosen in place of "junum" (for "jeune", meaning "young"). He also courteously but firmly recommended that she reconsider her rendering of "ferocaminorum". She had rendered the pseudo-Latin word (coming from the French *chemin de fer*) as the too common "railway". Wright followed Queneau's piece of advice and coined "ferreamuiam" instead.[9]

In the same letter, the French writer quoted famous examples of nineteenth-century English macaronics, an unnecessary addition which testifies to his interest in the matter and to the constructing of the intellectual relationship between the two in the epistolary mode. Later, he would send her poems he had penned, not for her to translate, but as a token of their friendship (see for instance 31 October 1967, letter by Raymond Queneau to Barbara Wright).

Even when Queneau was unable to help her, Wright's agency was stimulated by his input. This happened with the incipit of the "Modern

[8] Barbara Wright, "EXERCISES II", Wright, B. mss, folder Raymond Queneau-*Exercices de styles*, 4 Notebooks, Lilly Library, Indiana University.

[9] Raymond Queneau, "Pataphysique letter", letter to Barbara Wright, 9 May 1958, *The Lilly Library Online Exhibitions*, accessed April 22, 2023.

style" exercise. Queneau was incapable of remembering what he meant by this style: "je n'arrive pas à me souvenir de ce que représentait pour moi Le Modern Style lorsque j'écrivais le dit exercice." [I can't remember what The Modern Style represented for me when I was writing that exercise.] (9 May 1958, letter by Raymond Queneau to Barbara Wright). Maybe as a result of this, Wright extemporized upon the French source text, imparting the target text with intercultural humour, when she added a playful game with the Anglophone reader, as in the following sentence:

> Dans un omnibus, un jour, vers midi, il m'arriva d'assister à la petite tragi-comédie suivante. (Queneau 1947: 140)
>
> In a bus one day it so happened that I was a witness of the following as you might say tragi-comedy which revealing as it does the way our French cousins go on these days I thought I ought to put you in the picture. (Queneau 2012: 166)

That both agents shared authority over the published text, and that Queneau gave Wright authorial credit for this, are further demonstrated in the fact that he accepted her reinvention of otherwise untranslatable exercises that presented "hybridized prose" that mixed French with Latin, Italian and English (exercises 70, 81, 83 and 84). Wright "followed her own natural and stupendously witty bent" (Bellos 2013: 72). As a result, this trust was doubled by pleasure and contentment on Wright's part: "I am somewhere, somehow, on Queneau's wavelength" and "this is why, in translating him, I think less of the difficulties, and more of the fun and the rewards", she wrote to Andrée Bergens ("Bergens letter": 2).

The relationship between the two continued over the years. In 1960, she put into English Queneau's *Zazie in the metro*. By 1964, Queneau was addressing her as "Chère Amie" [Dear Friend], instead of using the formal "Chère Madame" [Dear Madam], and they met in Paris whenever Wright was visiting over from London. In 1967, he congratulated on her success with the translation of *Les fleurs bleues* (London: Bodley Head): "d'après les coupures de presse, je vois avec plaisir que vos talents de traductrice sont massivement acclamés" [from press releases, I am delighted to see that your skills as a translator are massively acclaimed] (24 February 1967, letter by Raymond Queneau to Barbara Wright). The previous year he had helped her understand the meaning of "pallas", slang for an emphatic and boring speech. And he commented upon the phrase "haute et basse justice",

quoting both the *Littré* and the *Petit Larousse* (15 April 1966, letter by Raymond Queneau to Barbara Wright).

As evidenced from material kept at the Lilly Library, the process of translation seems to have benefitted from both parties' mutual trust, which was based on reciprocal 'admiration' and 'respect' for each other's work, rather than suspicion. When this trust is verbalized, a gratifying exchange can take place between translated author and translator, as happened with Queneau and Wright, and trust can lead to mutual admiration. Incidentally, the rapport between suspicion and admiration is suggested in the double meaning of the Latin root of the former word, as *suspicere* originally meant both "to look from beneath" and "to look at with admiration", as if suspicion were a prerequisite to admiration and that these were interconnected feelings.

3.3. Final disrespect of the translator by a publisher

The relation of trust thus established between Wright and Queneau lasted well into the 1970s, with Wright publishing by Queneau *Between blue and blue* in 1967, *The bark tree* in 1968, and *The flight of Icarus* in 1973. After he died in 1976, she put into English *We always treat women well* (1981) and *Pierrot mon ami* (1987). But although Wright continued to translate books by Queneau, the relationship with his Estate was not as solid as it had been with the author himself and her position and legitimacy as his translator was fragilized, as seen in her dealings with editors and publishers.

Like Weaver, Wright was much more suspicious of publishers than she was of the writers she collaborated with: "in my experience publishers either have practically nothing to say [about a manuscript before publication], or else argue over trifles, and press me to change things that I am sure are right." ("Bergens Letter": 5). Such misgivings were justified, as proven by the disregard for her rendering of the Queneau *Exercises* that Oneworld Classics was to use in a thoroughly revised version published in 2009, years after the death of the author. At the time, the Queneau Estate felt that some of the exercises were "free adaptations rather than translations" and asked that they be rewritten so that they "correspond more closely to the original."[10] Wright was adamantly against such revisions. Speaking under the aegis of the Estate, Alessandro Gallenzi, who was head

[10] "Gallenzi letter", *The Lilly Library Online Exhibitions*, accessed April 22, 2023, http://collections.libraries.indiana.edu/lilly/exhibitions/items/show/1649.

of the publishing house, tried to placate her, writing to her at the time: "I realize that it may be frustrating that they should demand this after the book has been in print for so many years and your translation has been widely acclaimed." But while he insisted that he greatly "admired" Wright's translation, trust was transferred to other in-house translators: "Our *trusted* translator J. G. Nichols adapted your old translation [of 'Alexandrines' which was to be changed to iambic-pentameter couplets] to the new form, trying to be as respectful as possible."[11] Ironically, the rhetoric of trust and respect was reversed here and was utilized to disrespect the translator's work and the author-translator relationship of trust built during the author's lifetime.

4. Conclusion

"Whether visible or not, trust is in every relation that translators and interpreters enter into with texts, and with those people around them." (Rizzi *et al.*, 2019: 34). In this paper we explored the potential of the archive as a source of insight into the pact of trust in translation. Examining a translator's archive makes it possible to unveil dynamics of trust and distrust between author and translator, the negotiations that take place behind the scenes, and how this process influences the finished product. While the Wright-Queneau correspondence is indicative of a relationship that rested on mutual trust (and perhaps of the author's deep faith in translation), the material from the William Weaver collection analyzed here sheds light on the "conflictual" (Hersant 2017: 108) nature of translation collaboration while at the same time pointing to suspicious views of translation shared by literary writers. The Weaver-Morante case points to the fact that, when editorial intervention is pervasive and occurs under the author's eyes, it is likely to question the translator's authority, putting at risk the relationship between the translator and the author. By contrast, the Wright-Queneau case shows that lack of editorial interference can contribute to establishing a trustful relationship between author and translator. This was probably made easier as the power relationship was more balanced than in the Weaver-Morante case, due to Wright's being part of the editorial process as

[11] "Gallenzi letter", *The Lilly Library Online Exhibitions*, accessed April 22, 2023, http://collections.libraries.indiana.edu/lilly/exhibitions/items/show/1649 – our emphasis.

a cofounder of the publishing house that introduced Queneau to the English public. Indeed, the translator's negotiation capacity over editorial interventions depends, first and foremost, on their status. As Paloposki (2009: 205) points out, "[t]o be able to negotiate, a translator needs certain credibility and trust." The minute credibility is lost, then suspicion takes over. The often invisible role of editors and copyeditors should thus be included among the factors that may contribute to jeopardize the "pact of translation". In the cases analyzed, trust and distrust function together to establish the "pact of translation", a fragile balancing act that is necessary for the translation process to take place and be successful. This "pact of translation" can be defined as an act of faith which means the commissioner of the translation will believe in the skill and honesty of the person translating and the translator that they their work will be respected.

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