
Translating *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*

DON'T PANIC



Author: Lydia Stouten
Student number: 3500705
First reader: Onno Kusters
Second reader: Derek Rubin
June 2012
Bachelor Thesis Translation Studies
English Language and Culture
University Utrecht

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Appendix A: Source Text Passage One

Appendix B: Source Text Passage Two

1.0 Introduction

Science fiction literature has been popular for decades, ever since the works of Mary Shelly and Jules Verne. The science fiction genre offers the reader a true escape from reality, even more so than other genres, as it can transport its audience to futuristic worlds which may include space travel, aliens or futuristic technology. The *Hitchhiker's Guide* series can be categorised within the general category of science fiction, and more specifically within science fiction comedy, as humour therefore plays an important role. In the last few years, adaptations of science fiction works have become very popular. For example, the first movie that was created based on the novels written by Suzanne Collins, called *The Hunger Games*, broke records in tickets sales in the spring of 2012. The increase in demand created by the new adaptations has given rise to a resurrection of existing works in the genre and the creation of new works. Volume 6 of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* fulfils both these functions at the same time. It revived the interest in the first five volumes of the series, and it opened up possibilities of expanding the series with new volumes, despite the fact that the original author would not be able to write them, having died in 2001.

The *Hitchhiker's Guide* series had been on my bookshelves for over a year before I took the time to start reading Volume 1, but after that, it took me only a few weeks to finish the entire series, which existed of five volumes at the time. Despite the fact that science fiction had not been a favourite genre of mine before, I thoroughly enjoyed the surprising writing style and use of language in the series, which enriched the humour and absurdity of the plot. Being a new member of the *Hitchhiker's Guide* fan club, I started recommending the series to friends and family members. For most of them, this meant reading a Dutch translation of the series, and it usually turned out to be an unsuccessful endeavour, as many did not even finish Volume 1 of the series. Eventually, I decided to read the Dutch translation myself, and the writing style of the Dutch text appeared to be very different from the original.

For instance, most of the humour and culture-specific elements, which added so much to the tone and plot, had vanished.

It would be very arrogant to think that my effort at translating passages from the *Hitchhiker's Guide* would result in a much better target text. During the process, I might discover that the specific difficulties of this text make it impossible to maintain a large amount of cultural aspects and humour. Even though a published Dutch translation of Volume 6 exists, I will disregard this translation while translating two passages from this volume, in an attempt truly to produce my own strategy and target text, without being influenced by the decisions made by other translators.

As mentioned, Volume 6 of the *Hitchhiker's Guide*, entitled *And Another Thing*, is the most recent volume of the series, and was written by a new author, Eoin Colfer. From this volume, I selected two passages to translate. The first consists of the entire introduction to the story, which summarises the plot of the previous five volumes. In this short fragment, many important events are discussed, and the introduction is an important tool in refreshing the readers' memories or informing and grabbing the attention of first time readers, which is why this part of a novel deserves special attention during translation. The second passage consists of a little fewer than the first 2000 words of the first chapter. This passage was selected because the first chapter is the place where the interest of the reader has to be spiked, in order to motivate the audience to continue reading. My goal was to produce a translation that will captivate the audience in a way similar to the original text.

2.0 Description of Authors and Novels

2.2 Authors

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy (THGttG) franchise did not start out as literary series. Douglas Adams first created it as a BBC radio comedy (1978), after which the novels followed. The franchise was further expanded by a television series, plays, comics, a computer game and a feature film. All adaptations are famous for their witty, quintessentially British style of humour and an infinite number of jokes, word games and neologisms incorporated by Adams.

The “trilogy in five parts”, as the original writer referred to the novels, was expanded by a sixth volume in 2009. This volume was written by Eoin Colfer, in collaboration with Douglas's widow. Colfer is known for his successful science fantasy children's book series, *Artemis Fowl*, and of several popular novels that are not part of that series. All of his books have been published in many different countries and languages. Expanding a series imposes certain specific difficulties for a new writer, as the new volumes should be a continuation of not just the existing plot, but also of the style of the preceding volumes. As Adams's writing style was quite distinct, this must have made this task extra challenging for Colfer.

Some of the elements Colfer mimicked from Adams's work in order to make Volume 6 a true continuation of the previous volumes are the distinct voices the characters were given in the previous novels, and many of the stylistic elements Adams employed. For instance, Colfer incorporates elements such as alliteration, understatements, figurative language, wordplay and conflicting registers, in order to maintain the ironic and characteristically British humour of the series. An example of Colfer maintaining the original style in Volume 6 can be found in the passage describing the destruction of Earth, while the main characters are on a spaceship that cannot withstand the death rays, implying that death is imminent. As a

description of their state of mind, it is said that “Trillian and Random were pretty depressed by the whole destruction of their home planet thing too, and huddled together underneath the refrigerator” (Colfer, 41). In this description, Colfer has used the stylistic element of understatement by adding “pretty” to depressed, and “whole ... thing” to destruction of their home planet. The imagery of Trillian and random “huddled together underneath the refrigerator” (Colfer 41) adds humour by generating a strange image, as people usually do not hide underneath the refrigerator, whether this were an accessible place or not. Adams used a similar technique in Volume 1, when describing Arthur’s state of mind after he and Ford just hitched a ride on a Vogon ship. Arthur reacts to Ford informing him that the Earth has been destroyed by saying “Look, ... I’m a bit upset about that” (Adams, *Hitchhiker’s* 48). An understatement is created by adding “a bit”, in a situation where a person would be extremely upset.

2.1 Plot and Characters

The first five parts of *THGttG* chronicle the adventures of the two survivors from planet Earth and their extra-terrestrial friends. The first survivor is Arthur Dent, who is saved by his friend Ford Perfect. It turns out that Ford is from a small planet near the planet Betelgeuse, and he had been posing as a human being while he was stranded on Earth as a reporter for the *Hitchhiker’s Guide*. Ford describes the *Hitchhiker’s Guide* as “a sort of electronic book. It tells you everything you need to know about anything. That’s its job” (Adams, *Hitchhiker’s* 49), and it functions as a compact, electronic travel guide to the universe. They join Ford’s cousin Zaphod Beeblebrox, who is the president of the galaxy, the only other survivor from Earth, Tricia McMillan or Trillian, and Marvin, a depressed robot, and travel through the galaxy in an erratic fashion, facing several unfathomable quests, challenges and adventures.

The sixth volume of the trilogy starts off with Arthur, Trillian, their daughter Random

and Ford waking up from their ideal lives, that turn out to have been dreams. They dreamt those dreams during a hibernated state caused by the newest edition of the *Hitchhiker's Guide* book, which is now a robot in the form of a bird, which has stopped time right before the earth was destroyed by Vogons, as described at the end of Volume 5. With the help of Zaphod and Bowerick Wowbagger the Infinitely Prolonged, whom they met in Volume 3, they manage to escape the destruction of the Earth for the second time. This time, however, they are not the only ones. The planet Nano becomes the new colony for the survivors from earth, where, in an attempt to complete their mission, they are attacked again by the Vogons.

Each character's personality is distinctly portrayed through its voice and speech, which should be taken into account when writing another volume for the series and when translating this series. An experienced space traveller, Ford, for instance, is not easily startled by any situation and overall a very relaxed person. In Volume 6 he decides to calm himself by using a drug when it seems they are about to die during the attack on the Earth, which heightens his already carefree disposition. "“This is great!” he enthused, clapping Zaphod on the shoulder. ‘Look at those beams. Did you ever think you would live to see a Grebuon death lattice from the inside?’” (Colfer 41). Zaphod is described as if he is on this drug all the time, making him comment on the incredible light show. Arthur, on the other hand, is out of his element most of the time, which flusters this already neurotic character, and he is frustrated by Ford and Zaphod's calm outlook on life during stressful events. In the same scene, Arthur reacts to Zaphod dancing and asking if anyone sees anything different about him by saying ““Sorry, Zaphod,’ Arthur snapped. ‘We’re a little distracted by impending violent death’” (Colfer 41). As mentioned, Marvin is a deeply depressed robot, due to the fact that he is outfitted with a “Genuine People Personality” (Adams, *Hitchhiker's* 81). His outlook on life is conveyed in the way he speaks, for instance when he says ““Sorry, did I say something wrong? ... Pardon me for breathing, which I never do anyway so I don't know why I bother to

say it, oh God I'm so depressed.'" (Adams, *Hitchhiker's* 83), while taking Ford and Arthur to Zaphod on a stolen spaceship.

Not just individual characters have distinct voices, entire alien races can have specific mindsets and sensibilities which come out in their speech and behaviour. For instance, in Volume 1, Vogons are described as vile, stubborn beings, who have no patience for anything besides their mission, except for terrible Vagon poetry. This makes most Vogons yell what they have to say in short, compact sentences, while their private thoughts have a very different and more likeable tone. Both these tones have to be distinctly portrayed in new volumes and their translations.

3.0 Translating Science Fiction Comedy

As a series, *THGttG* is hard to fit into a specific genre, but the most appropriate general category would be science fiction. The main themes in this genre are aliens, supermen, immortality, apotheosis, artificial intelligence, technology wars, disasters, and alternate-dimensions, as John Pierce describes in his book *Foundations of Science Fiction*. Works within the genre describe “imaginary but more or less plausible (or at least non-supernatural) content” (“Science Fiction”), dealing with futuristic settings, but unlike fantasy, do not include paranormal or magical elements.

Creating a world that is more or less plausible offers writers freedom in inventing new concepts. This might result in describing new technologies, species, experiences etc. which pose difficulties when translating stories to different languages as the translator will be faced with finding or creating translations for elements that do not exist. In other words, the translator will have to choose whether to use a word in the target language that already exists and lose the foreign aspect that the original audience experiences in the source text, to maintain the term used in the source text, to delete the element or to invent a new term in the target language.

Strategies such as the ones formulated by Andrew Chesterman are helpful when making these decision and formulating a strategy for these elements. In his book *Memes of Translation: The Spread of Ideas in Translation Theory*, Chesterman discusses the history of translation theories, and the evolution of these theories over time. He applies a descriptive approach when formulating strategies, norms and conventions, based on previous works and discussions, as he believes “[a] norm-statement describes what ... a consensus *is*, not what it *should be*” (Chesterman, *Memes* 3).

The article “Vertaalstrategieën, een classificatie” summarises Chesterman’s strategies formulated in *Memes of Translation*. In this article, Chesterman’s categorisation of production

strategies is listed. He defines production strategies as strategies used during the actual production of a target text, and organises them into three groups, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic strategies. These three groups together contain 28 different strategies, some with their own substrategies. Defining which strategies have been used in translation can help in defining an overall strategy, as the options that have worked before in translating a certain text can function as initial responses to elements that pose problems further on in the translation process.

3.1 Translating Humour

Within the genre of science fiction, *THGttG* can be more specifically classified as science fiction comedy. Humour and comedy are essential to the plot and style of the series, and should therefore receive special attention during translation. Both writers employ many different stylistic strategies and techniques in order to achieve the level of humour which creates the *Hitchhiker's Guide's* unique style. This particular style is an essential element in the series, and should be one of the main focal points when translating these novels. This is emphasized by Zabalbeascoa's essay "Humor and Translation —An Interdiscipline", in which he argues that there are four levels of priority that humour can have within a genre. The categories are top, middle, marginal and prohibited, where top exists of "TV comedy and joke-stories" (Zabalbeascoa 202) while middle contains among others "happy-ending love [and] adventure stories" (Zabalbeascoa 202). Zabalbeascoa states marginal priority can for instance be found in pedagogical devices in school or Shakespeare's tragedies, and humour is prohibited in texts such as horror stories and laws (202). From this, the conclusion can be drawn that, as a comedy, humour should have a top priority in writing, as well as translating, *THGttG*. In other words, when translating this series, the translator has to make an effort to maintain as many humorous aspects in the translation as possible. In many cases, this means

having to diverge from the source text, and sometimes sacrifice elements from the original text, and literal translation will not always result in humour in the target text. For instance, when Ford is complimented by Random for giving her useful advice, he replies by saying “No charge for that nugget, young missy” (Colfer 136). One of the humorous elements in this sentence is a short version of the idiom *nugget of information*, but in Dutch the literal translation “klompje van informative” or “goudklompje van informative” does not exist. It would have to be changed to pearl, as a combination of pearls and wisdom do occur in Dutch colloquial speech. An expression incorporating “pareltje” changes the imagery, but would retain the implication that the information is valuable and the construction of the sentence could remain similar in Dutch, as the word “wisdom” could be omitted but still be implied when using pearl. In other cases it might be more difficult to find a similar expression, and the translator might have to choose to omit the entire humorous aspect in the target text. However, as humour is a high priority to the equivalence of the translation, the translator should employ a strategy which in Chesterman calls a “rhetorical scheme change” (*Memes* 199), which entails attempting to compensate for a loss by adding a humorous aspect or stylistic element that adds to the style and humour in the target text where there is none in the source text (*Vertaalstrategieën* 161).

3.1.1 British Humour

The fact that Arthur is British is important to the storyline, as the reader encounters him for the first time when his house is about to be torn down to make way for a bypass, because he neglected to object to the plans, which were hidden away in the cellar of planning office in time. This could be interpreted as Adams depicting and ridiculing British society and bureaucracy, and as a parallel to the fact that the Earth is about to be demolished for the exact same reason. Arthur’s British background plays an important role in other parts of the series

as well, for instance in his search for the perfect cup of tea, or his love for cricket.

The type of humour that *THGttG* is famous for can be defined as quintessentially British, although this is a very broad classification. Common elements within the genre and *The Hitchiker's Guide* series are of course an abundance of cultural elements, but also self-deprecation, slang, characters veiling emotions with humour and the use of irony and wit which together create a sarcastic tone. Characters embody these elements throughout the series in their tone of voice. For instance, when Random complains to Ford that her mother insists on making her happy, Ford reacts by saying "Happiness? That would never do, would it?" (Colfer 137), emphasising how ridiculous Random's complaints are. This also happens to Arthur, when he tells the computer on a spaceship, which resembles his lost soul mate Fenchurch, that his daughter is so moody. The computer replies by saying "Really? That's odd for an adolescent. You're truly cursed" (Colfer 139). In both cases, the irony is clear, and adds to an overall witty tone, which is very common in British comedy.

4.0 Categorising Translation Problems

Christiane Nord's theory on categorising translation problems will be used in order systematically to convey problems encountered during the translation of this text. In her article "Tekstanalyse en de moeilijkheidsgraad van een vertaling", she lists four different categories in which translation problems can be grouped: pragmatic translation problems, translation problems specific to a certain language pair, specific translation problems between two cultures, and text-specific translation problems¹ (Nord 147). For the translation of this particular text, the latter two categories will be discussed, as the problems within these categories are most prevalent when translating *THGttG* series. The other categories are also to a certain extent challenging in the translated fragments, as the usual linguistic problems that occur when translating from English to Dutch of course apply, but these pose a more manageable problem.

4.1 Specific Translation Problems Between Two Cultures

This type of problem is caused by cultural differences such as dialects, measurements or weights, legal or school systems (Nord 147). As Nord emphasises, translation problems between two cultures are centred around the translation of any type of culture-specific element.

According to Grit in his article "Het vertalen van realia", there are several strategies a translator can choose from when translating a culture-specific element. The translator will choose a strategy depending on three factors, namely text type, the goal of the text, and its intended audience (Grit 190). These factors will help the translator make a decisions whether to, for instance, naturalise culture-specific elements into elements that are recognizable to the

¹ All quotations and terms by Christiane Nord are translated by the author, unless indicated otherwise.

target audience, or whether these elements can remain exotic. Depending on such choices, one of eight translation strategies can be chosen: *maintaining*², in which the source text is not adapted or translated in the target text, *borrowing*, where an expression from the source text is translated literally in the target text, *approaching*, which entails translating a source text element into a more or less similar expression in the target text (Grit 192). Other strategies are *describing or defining in the target language*, in which a culture-specific element is described in the target language, *core translation*, which entails translating the core meaning of the element, *adaptation*, which focusses on translating the function of the culture-specific element rather than the linguistic content, and *omission*, in which the translator does not translate a culture-specific element in the target text and just leaves it out (Grit 192-193). The last option would be to use a *combination of strategies* (Grit 193).

Throughout the series, culture-specific elements appear. For instance, names of sports clubs, stores, newspapers, national heroes and holidays that are recognisable to a British audience are mentioned, and these elements sometimes play an vital role in the storyline. In the translated fragment from Volume 6, a reference to the British school systems appears. Arthur has a memory of the time when he was at Eaton House Prep, where a head boy bullied him. The name of this school will immediately evoke connotations of upper class exclusivity to British readers. Firstly, as the name Eaton echoes the name Eton, which is a famous and prestigious public college in the United Kingdom. The original audience and some of the target audience readers will understand this implied joke, but it is not necessarily relevant to the translation. Secondly, as Eaton House Prep is the primary school of The Eaton House Group of Schools, which are strict, expensive and exclusive. An audience outside of the

² All quotations and terms by Diederik Grit are translated by the author, unless indicated otherwise.

United Kingdom might not have any connotations with the name. This offers the translator the option of retaining the name of the school, with or without additional explanation, or to replace this element with a culture-specific element from the target culture with a similar meaning. In this instance, the name Eaton House is maintained, but the specification Prep has been replaced by the clarification “kostschool”, which has connotations of exclusivity and expensive education to a Dutch audience. This means the age indication of primary school is lost, and the idea that Arthur lived at the school is added. However, adding the idea that Arthur lived at school does not disturb the plot, while at the same time explaining the presence of his slippers that were filled with pudding. The exclusive image of the school is maintained, and the audience will still assume Arthur was a young boy at the time, as he was still in school.

4.2 Text-Specific Translation Problems

Through the extensive use of wordplay, creative use of idioms and other types of non-standard use of language, *THGttG* is a text with a high level of “unicity”³ (qtd. in Kußmaul 174), as Crystal and Davy call it in *Investigating English Style*. For these specific texts, translators can not use standard collocations or idioms, and will have to diverge from linguistic norms in order to create an equivalent target text.

4.2.1 Adjectives

Adjectives play an important part in the series, and are frequently used. For example, in Volume 1, a description of the use of towels is given, and they are described as the “most massively useful thing a hitchhiker can have” (Adams, *Hitchhiker* 22). The accumulation of

³ All quotations and terms by Kußmaul are translated by the author, unless indicated otherwise.

these adjectives strengthens, and in some situations exaggerates the image that is created with the noun or pronoun the adjectives modify. When translating these accumulations of adjectives, it is important to translate each one in order to reproduce the original effect.

4.2.2 Idioms and Proverbs

Translating elements such as idioms and proverbs can be a challenge on their own, as “translators should know linguistic and non-linguistic features of both languages” (Dabaghi, Pishbin, and Niknasab 813). These elements carry meaning which is often not generated in the target language by word-for-word translation. It is important to relay the meaning from the proverb or idiom used in the source language into the target language, but this is not the only difficulty in *THGttG* series, as it is not unusual to find idioms and proverbs that are used in creative ways. These elements add to the humour of the series, which has already been determined as a high priority element to translators. A proverb that is used creatively can be found in the introduction to Volume 6, where the proverb “every cloud has a silver lining” (“A Silver Lining”) is incorporated, followed by literal use of the figurative language from the proverb. Ford is said to see a silver lining to every cloud that is visible to Arthur, but in the next sentence, this proverb is made literal by introducing a planet where clouds actually do have silver linings, which Ford would hypothetically steal. Simply translating the underlying meaning of the proverb will not be enough in this case, as this could produce “achter de wolken schijnt de zon”, and the aspect of a valuable substance which is worth stealing is not maintained. Luckily, a similar Dutch colloquialism exists, namely “met een gouden randje”. This is added to something that is especially good or positive, for instance “een dag met een gouden randje”. The image changes from silver to gold, but as these are both expensive materials, the joke where Ford steals the lining can easily be maintained.

Formulating a rule as to how to treat idioms and proverbs in translation is not productive. For these elements, an evaluation whether or not it is advisable to maintain the imagery or to change it in order to produce an understandable text for the target audience has to be made for each occurrence.

4.2.3 Wordplay

One of the wordplays in the first chapter of Volume 6 is actually a malapropism, as it is portrayed as an error in Arthur's memory and speech, where he uses words that are phonetically similar to what he intends to say. He wakes up from his life in his alternate universe and begins to remember Ford, "and that accursed book of his" (Colfer 7). He goes on to remember the name of the book, but that memory is not quite clear yet, which makes him say "The Pitchforker's Pride Is a Fallacy" (Colfer 7) instead of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. Translating this literally will not achieve the same effect as it did to the original audience. In this case, the play on words is based on rhyme with the intended title. Dutch publications of the *Hitchhiker's Guide* either carry the Dutch title *Het transgalactisch liftershandboek*, or the original English title. However, if the English title is maintained, the Dutch title is used within the storyline. Therefore, the target text should feature a phonologically based joke for the Dutch title, for instance, "*Het onpraktisch ziftershandboek*".

4.2.4 Neologisms

Neologisms are terms invented by a writer, which are not part of daily speech but might be in the process of becoming part of normal speech, and their meaning is derived from their context. The combination of the possibilities offered by the genre and Douglas Adams's writing style ensure an unusual amount of invented terms. Many of these neologisms are

related to futuristic technologies, such as weapons and computers. Another large category of neologisms is used by Ford and Zaphod, as their speech is laced with unique obscenities, for instance words such as “Blooming ‘eck” (Colfer 42), “holy shankwursters” (Colfer 23), and “Pormwrangler” (Colfer 137).

In a recent study, Nora de Buyscher (2009) formulates four strategies for translating neologisms, namely normalisation, omission, compensation and dynamic equivalent translation. Dorothy Kenny explains in “Lexis and Creativity in Translation: Corpus-Based Study” that the strategy of normalisation entails replacing a neologism with “conventional target language” (qtd. in de Buyscher 16). An example of normalisation from the translated passages could be the word “ka-boomed” (Colfer 3), if it were translated with the Dutch word for exploded or destroyed. Omission, and as de Buyscher mentions, especially lexical omission, entails simply deleting meaningful elements from the source text to the target text, and compensation involves adding a neologism in the target text where there is none in the source text. The strategy of dynamic equivalence is more complicated, as it contains several sub-strategies. The general aim of all these sub-strategies is to focus on achieving a similar meaning in the target text as the neologism does in the source text. Literal translation or translating the exact form is a secondary goal in dynamic equivalent translation. Nida claims that this strategy respects the “intent of the author” (qtd. in Gentzler 58), as it attempts to preserve as much of the original meaning as possible.

4.2.5 Repetition Throughout the Series

A problem specific to this series is the repetition of certain words, jokes and neologisms throughout the six volumes. Some of these repetitions appear within the translated fragments, for instance “fishy” (Colfer 9), which reminds Ford of the message “So long, and thanks for all the fish” (Adams, *So Long* 138), which was sent to the human race by the dolphins as they

left the Earth for another dimension before the planet was destroyed by the Vogons. Besides being mentioned several times within the novel, it is also the title of Volume 4.

Another repetition can be found in the neologisms “froody” (Adams, *Restaurant* 82). This word means “Unbelievably excellent, especially in a chilled-out, laid back way” (“froody”), or, when used as an adjective, describes a person who is “really amazingly together” (“froody”). The term is introduced in Volume 1, and is explained to Ford in Volume 2 by Zaphod, as Ford wrongly interprets it as “everything’s under control” (Adams, *Restaurant* 82), to which Zaphod replies by saying “[n]o, ... I do not mean everything’s under control. ... let’s just say I had the whole situation in my pocket” (Adams, *Restaurant* 82). Froody also appears within fragment 2 as an adjective, as in “froody dude” (Colfer 9). This particular adjective could be translated with an expression such as “toffe peer”, but this would not be a metaphor that could be used in the other occurrences of frood or froody, and it does not fit with the explanation given in Volume 2. In this case, introducing a neologism in the target text would be a good solution, as this would result in a similar expression everywhere a version of frood occurs in the source text. Therefore, in the fragments translated for this thesis, the neologism “froedig” is introduced, which maintains a similar phonological pattern and can be adapted to each context in which a version of frood is used.

In translating this series, the translator has to be aware of these repetitions and the possible explanations given for certain terms in previous volumes, in order to produce a consistent translation throughout the volumes. When, for instance, the explanation given for the term “froody” would not be taken into account in translating the volumes following Volume 2, the translator would not be able to translate the term consistently, or would have to change what the original author intended to convey.

5.0 Conclusion: Translation Strategy

In his book *Descriptive Translation Studies – And Beyond*, Toury claims that when translating a text, a choice has to be made between an adequate or an acceptable strategy. These terms are explained in *Introducing Translation Studies* by Jeremy Munday, in short saying adequate translation is guided by the norms of the source culture, whereas acceptable translation maintains the norms of the target culture (112). At the same time, it is added that “no translation is ever totally adequate or totally acceptable” (Munday 112). The choice between adequate or acceptable translation is related to what Christiane Nord describes as natural or exotic translation in *Text Analysis in Translation*. When deciding on a strategy, the target audience should be a primary consideration. The target audience of these novels is very diverse, and they do not, for instance, target a specific age group. The target text should therefore be readable and enjoyable for adults, children, science fiction fans, first time science fiction readers, and every other possible audience.

The published Dutch translation of the *Hitchhiker’s Guide* series uses the strategy of acceptable translation quite consistently. For instance, all culture specific elements have been changed to elements that are familiar to a target audience. The setting has also been drastically changed, as Arthur lives near London in the source text, and Arthur suddenly lives near Amsterdam in the published Dutch translation. The names of characters have also been changed to Dutch names, indicating that the setting and identity of characters has been turned from British into Dutch. In other words, the published Dutch translation is very much written with the target audience in mind, and therefore also naturalised. This can result in dramatic losses in the plot, as all these elements together add to the tone and plot of the series. As mentioned in the introduction, this actually has resulted in a very different, and arguably less gripping and amusing text than the original.

In order to produce a more effective Dutch translation, the strategies that were used in

the translated fragments differed as much as possible from the strategies used in the published Dutch translations. When translating the two passages, an adequate translation was the goal, as long as this strategy produced an understandable text for its broad target audience. Naturalisation was not the preferred strategy, but was applied when an exotic translation would hinder the reading experience of the target audience.

As mentioned, the voice of the characters and the elements adding to the humour of the series should be maintained as much as possible while translating. Therefore, contrary to the published Dutch translations, the focus while translating the two fragments for this thesis was on maintaining as many cultural and humorous elements as possible, while creating a text that is understandable to the target audience. The focus was on maintaining the meanings and connotations from the target text in the source text whenever possible, in order to provide the target audience with a similar reading experience as the source text does for the original audience. In other words, the main strategy was dynamic equivalent translation, and maintaining as much of the meaning as possible while not rigidly retaining the form of the source text.

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7.0 Translation – Passage One

Voor zover we nu weten . . . Heeft het Keizerlijk Galactisch Gouvernement⁴ op een dag, onder het genot van een emmer met juwelen bezette krabben, besloten dat er een hyperspace-snelweg moest worden aangelegd aan de niet-chique kant van de westelijke spiraalarm van de Melkweg. Deze beslissing werd haastig door de juiste kanalen heen geloodst, zogenaamd om verkeershinder in de verre toekomst te voorkomen, maar in werkelijkheid om baantjes te creëren voor een aantal neven en nichten van ministers, die maar eeuwig rondhingen op het Gouvernementsplein. Helaas lag de aarde in het tracé van deze geplande snelweg, dus werden de meedogenloze Vogons in een bouwvloot uitgezonden om de boosdoener – middels de zachtaardige inzet van nucleaire wapens – uit de weg te ruimen.

Twee overlevenden wisten met een Vogon schip mee te liften. Een daarvan was Arthur Dent, een jonge, Britse medewerker van een regionaal radiostation, van wie het tot puin schieten van zijn planeet onder zijn sloffen geen onderdeel van zijn ochtendritueel uitmaakte. Als er een referendum was gehouden onder het menselijk ras is het niet onaannemelijk dat Arthur Dent zou zijn verkozen tot minst geschikte persoon om *de hoop der mensheid*⁵ in de

⁴ The term used in the target text, “government” (Colfer 1), is usually translated to “regering” in Dutch, but in this case the more exotic word “gouvernement” was used as this retains the style element alliteration.

⁵ “De hoop der mensheid” is used as translation for “carry the hopes of mankind into space” (Colfer 1) in this instance as it carries biblical connotations, portraying Arthur as a Messiah, even though he is the polar opposite of what usually is thought of as a Messiah. He is even chosen in a referendum as least likely person to do this, but eventually he is actually the only one carrying the hopes of mankind into space. This contrast adds to the tone of the story, and

ruimte te vertegenwoordigen. In Arthur's jaarboek werd hij door zijn medestudenten uitgeroepen tot degene die 'zeer waarschijnlijk in een gat in de Schotse Hooglanden zal belanden, met zijn eigen lange tenen⁶ als enige gezelschap'. Gelukkig was de tweede overlevende, Arthur's Betelgeusiaanse vriend Ford Perfect, een zwervende verslaggever voor de illustere reisgids voor het heelal, *Het transgalactische liftershandboek*, optimistischer ingesteld. Alle wolken die Arthur zag hadden voor Ford een gouden randje, dus in combinatie vormden de twee een evenwichtige ruimtereiziger. Behalve dan wanneer ze tijdens hun reizen de planeet Junipella zouden aandoen, waar de wolken daadwerkelijk een gouden randje hebben. Arthur zou hun schip ongetwijfeld direct recht op de eerste de beste donderwolk af sturen, terwijl Ford bijna zeker een poging zou doen het goud te stelen, wat zou resulteren in de catastrofale ontploffing van de natuurlijke gassen in die rand. De explosie zou fraai zijn geweest, maar als heroïsch einde zou het net wat gemist hebben – d.w.z.⁷ een held in één stuk.

De enige andere aardebewoner die nog in leven was, was Tricia McMillan, of Trillian, om haar hippe ruimtenaam te gebruiken, een uiterst ambitieus astrofysicus en tevens beginnend journalist die altijd al geloofde dat het leven meer was dan het leven op aarde alleen.

can therefore not be replaced by a translation such as “het overleven van de mensheid in de ruimte”.

⁶ Translating this proverb and its metaphor literally would result in an awkward and unclear description, while the use of the Dutch “lange tenen” the description of his irritable nature maintains, while using the imagery of the body.

⁷ The more unusual option of abbreviation was chosen instead of a word such as “namelijk”, as the source text also features an abbreviation instead of a word here.

Desalniettemin was Trillian verbaasd geweest toen ze werd meegeflitst⁸ naar de sterren door Zaphod Beeblebrox, de non-conformistische, dubbelhoofdige president van het universum.

Wat kunnen we nog over president Beeblebrox zeggen dat hij niet al op een T-shirt heeft laten drukken en dat gratis bij elke uBid-aankoop heeft laten verspreiden door het universum?

Zaphod Zegt Ja Tegen Zaphod was waarschijnlijk de beroemdste slogan, al wist zelfs zijn team van psychiaters niet wat dat eigenlijk betekende. Op de tweede plaats stond vermoedelijk *Beeblebrox. Wees maar blij dat hij daar ergens is.*⁹

Het is een universele stelregel dat als iemand de moeite heeft genomen iets op een t-shirt te drukken, het zo goed als zeker niet voor honderd procent nonsens kan zijn, wat betekent dat het hoogstwaarschijnlijk bijna gegarandeerd niet compleet¹⁰ onwaar is. Dus iedere keer dat Zaphod Beeblebrox op een planeet aankwam zei men stevast ja op alles wat hij vroeg, en was men toch blij dat hij ergens was zodra hij vertrok.

⁸ “whisked off” (Colfer 2) implies a rapid movement, which is not found in Dutch translations such as “meevoeren”, “meeslepen”, or “meesleuren”, where the latter two also imply an involuntary movement. Therefore, the neologism “meegeflitst” is introduced, which maintains the element of speed, and might conjure up connotations of new technologies such as beaming transportation devices.

⁹ When translating “out there” (Colfer 2), the reassuring element has to be maintained, together with the fact that Zaphod is in outer space. Eventually the translation “Wees maar blij dat hij daar ergens is” was chosen, which maintains the reassurance while adding a sense of mystery.

¹⁰ The importance of the accumulations of adverbs in the source text has been mentioned, therefore this accumulation has been maintained in the target text. This creates an unusual sentence, but the sentence from the source text provides a similarly unusual reading.

Deze bepaald niet traditionele helden werden op oneindig¹¹ onwaarschijnlijke wijze naar elkaar toe getrokken en beleefden een reeks avonturen, die voornamelijk bestonden uit het ronddolen door tijd en ruimte, op quantum sofa's zitten, met gasvormige computers keuzen, en over het algemeen tekortschieten in het ontdekken van enige betekenis of voldoening in welke hoek van het universum dan ook.

Arthur Dent keerde uiteindelijk weer terug naar het gat in de Melkweg waar de Aarde ooit was geweest, en ontdekte dat dit gat gevuld werd door een planeet ter grootte van de aarde, die er opmerkelijk genoeg net zo uitzag als de Aarde, en zich ook precies op dezelfde manier gedroeg. Deze planeet was feitelijk *een* Aarde, maar niet die van Arthur. Niet van *deze* Arthur in ieder geval. Omdat zijn planeet zich in het hart van een plurale zone bevond, werd de Arthur met wie wij van doen hebben langs de dimensionele as geschoven naar een Aarde die nooit door Vogons vernietigd was. Dit maakte de dag van *onze* Arthur min of meer goed, en zijn doorgaans pessimistische stemming klaarde nog meer op toen hij Fenchurch tegenkwam, zijn zielsverwant. Gelukkig werd deze idyllische periode niet verkort doordat Arthur en Fenchurch ronddwalende *parallel universum*-Arthurs tegen het lijf liepen, in Los Angeles bijvoorbeeld, werkzaam voor de BBC.

Arthur en zijn grote liefde reisden samen door het heelal, totdat Fenchurch middenin een gesprek tijdens een hyperspace-sprong opeens verdween. Arthur doorzocht het hele universum, zijn eerste klas tickets bekostigend door lichaamsvloeistoffen te doneren. Uiteindelijk strandde hij op de planeet Lamuella waar hij een leven opbouwde als broodjessmeerder voor een primitieve stam die behoorlijk onder de indruk was van

¹¹ Added the Dutch word “oneindig” in order to clarify the reference to the “Infinite Improbability Drive” (Douglas *Hitchhiker's*, 86) which has been introduced in Volume 1. Readers that have read previous volumes will see this connection, and for them, this will add scientific connotations to this sentence.

sandwiches.

Zijn rust werd verstoord door de komst van een per koeriersdienst verstuurd doos afkomstig van Ford Perfect met daarin *Het transgalactische liftershandboek* versie II¹², in de vorm van een pan-dimensionele zwarte vogel, uitgerust met een buitengewoon zalvende stem. Trillian, die ondertussen een succesvol verslaggeefster was geworden, had haar eigen pakketje voor Arthur, in de vorm van Random Dent, de dochter die verwekt was met Arthur's donatie voor stoel 2D op de nachtvlucht naar Alpha Centauri.

Arthur nam schoorvoetend de ouderlijke rol op zich, maar deze strijdlustige puber ging hem volledig boven de pet. Random stal het nieuwe *Liftershandboek* en zette koers naar de Aarde, waar ze eindelijk geloofde zich thuis te kunnen voelen. Arthur en Ford volgden haar, en troffen ook Trillian op de planeet aan.

Toen werd het doel van de vogel pas onthuld. Zwaar geïrriteerd door het feit dat de aarde niet kaput¹³ wilde blijven, ontwikkelden de Vogons versie II van *Het handboek* om alle ontsnapte aardbewoners naar hun thuisplaneet terug te lokken, zodat ze vervolgens de planeet

¹² The term used in the source text is “mark II” (Colfer 3), which was first translated to “druk II”, which is not an adequate translation, as this implied a rewritten book. This new Hitchhiker's Guide is an entirely new form and format of the original Guide, as it is now a robot in the form of a bird. This resulted in the translation “versie II”, as this implies that it could be a new format and not just new text.

¹³ The neologism “ka-boomed” (Colfer 3), that had the function of a verb, has been translated with the adjective “kaput”. “Kaput” implies destruction, although not necessarily with an explosion, as the original does. This translation also retains an element of humour, partly because it is a loanword from German, which will be read as an exotic element by the target audience.

in alle dimensies konden vernietigen, en zo hun oorspronkelijke opdracht alsnog zouden hebben uitgevoerd.

Arthur en Ford haastten zich semi-halsoverkop naar Club Beta in Londen, onderweg alleen stoppend om foie gras en blauwe suède schoenen te kopen. Dankzij dat goede oude dimensie-as/plurale zone gedoe vonden ze Trillian *en* Tricia McMillan in dezelfde tijdruimte, beide het doelwit van een schreeuwende, emotionele Random.

Begrijpt u het nog?¹⁴ Arthur niet helemaal, maar stond daar niet lang bij stil. Zodra hij de groene doodslasers zag pulseren in de lagere atmosfeerlagen verloren alle hinderlijke probleempjes van die dag hun hinderlijkheid. Uiteindelijk zou onbegrip hem waarschijnlijk niet in een miljoen verschroeide stukjes snijden.

De Vogon prostetnic¹⁵ had zijn taak naar behoren uitgevoerd. Hij had niet alleen Arthur, Ford en Trillian teruggelokt naar de aarde, maar hij had ook een Grebulon-kapitein zo ver gekregen de aarde voor hem te vernietigen, waarmee hij de bemanning honderden Voguren administratieve rompslomp richting het munitiedepot had bespaard.

Arthur en zijn vrienden zitten machteloos in Club Beta en kunnen niet meer doen dan

¹⁴ The original “confused?” (Colfer 3) is not just translated to “verward?”, but the sentence is changed to address the audience more directly. This appears to have been the goal of the source text, and has been done more clearly in the target text with the translation “begrijpt u het nog?”. This involves the reader more, but also means the next sentence had to be altered from a confirmation to a negation, and the word “confusion” from the last sentence of the paragraph has to be translated to “onbegrip”.

¹⁵ The term “prostetnic” (Colfer 3) is used throughout the series, and the audience will be able to deduce from the context that this neologism is used as a rank on a Vogon ship in a similar way as the original audience would, which is why it is maintained in the target text.

toekijken hoe de moeder van alle oorlogen¹⁶ op aarde woedde. Ze waren niet in staat eraan deel te nemen, tenzij onvrijwillige spasmen en het smelten van botten tellen als deelnemen. Deze keer zijn de vernietigingswapens doodslasers en niet Vogon-torpedo's, maar ach, het ene planeet-vernietigingswapen is zo ongeveer hetzelfde als het andere als het op jou gericht is . . .

¹⁶ The translation “moeder van alle oorlogen” for the original “the ultimate war on Earth” (Colfer 4) retains the idea that this is a serious and possibly final battle, while adding a connotation with the Gulf War, as this translation was originally part of a statement made by Saddam Hoessein.

8.0 Translation – Passage Two

Hoofdstuk 1

Volgens een assistent-conciërge aan de Maximegalon Universiteit, die vaak buiten de hoorcollegezalen rondhangt, is het heelal zestien miljard jaar oud. Een stel Betelguesiaanse beatnik dichters¹⁷ spotten met deze veronderstelde waarheid door te beweren dat ze Moleskine notitieblokken¹⁸ hebben die ouder zijn dan dat (rat a tat-tat). Zeventien miljard zeggen ze, op z'n minst, volgens hun versies van de Bonzende Beukende Oerknalrollen¹⁹. Een

¹⁷ In Dutch, there is no official term for the original “beat poets” (Colfer 5), so I have chosen to use a term that was used frequently at the time, which was derived from the name of the movement. Consequently, the original meaning and reference to the movement is maintained and the target text will be understandable to the target audience.

¹⁸ Maintained the brand name, but added “notitieblokken” explaining what products are meant.

¹⁹ The original neologism is a combination of rhyme and alliteration, combining the first two words of a colloquialism, “wham bam thank you ma’am”, which is generally used in a sexual context, and a cosmic event, the Big Bang. This event is called “oerknal” in Dutch, and an exact translation of the English colloquialism that has a phonetic link to “oerknal” is hard to find. The words “wham bam” imply force, which in combination with “oerknal”, rhyme and alliteration produces translations such as “Bonzende, Beukende Oerknalrollen”, or “Ruig Orerende Oerknalrollen”. Another option would be “Oerknallen voor Dummies”, as the *voor Dummies* series would evoke humorous connotations with the audience, but it would lose the meaning of the word “scrolls” as an official document, and the implication of force has also

tienerwonderkind van het menselijk ras stelde het ooit vast op veertien miljard jaar, en bepaalde dit aan de hand van een ingewikkelde berekening gebaseerd op de dichtheid van maansteen en de afstand tussen twee pubermeisjes op een waarnemingshorizon. Een van de tweedegraads Asgardiaanse goden mompelde wel dat hij ergens iets gelezen had over een of andere min of meer belangrijke kosmische gebeurtenis achttien miljard jaar geleden, maar niemand besteedt tegenwoordig nog aandacht aan verkondigingen van hotemetoten²⁰. Niet meer sinds het *geboorte van de goden* debacle, of Thorgate, zoals het beter bekend staat.

Hoeveel miljarden jaren geleden het feitelijk ook is, en het zijn miljarden jaren, de oude man op het strand zag eruit alsof hij minstens één van deze miljoen miljoenen op zijn vingers heeft afgeteld. Zijn huid was net ivoorkleurig perkament, en vanaf de zijkant leek hij erg op een bevende hoofdletter S.

De man herinnerde zich dat hij ooit een kat had gehad, als herinneringen vertrouwd konden worden als iets anders dan neuronconfiguraties over triljoenen synapsen. Herinneringen kunnen niet met je vingers aangeraakt worden. Kunnen niet worden gevoeld zoals de branding over zijn knokige tenen gevoeld werd. Maar wat waren fysieke gevoelens nu anders dan nog meer elektrische signalen van de hersenen? Waarom zou je daar wel in geloven? Was er dan ook maar iets betrouwbaars in het universum dat geknuffeld en vastgehouden kon worden als een Hawalusiaanse windvlaag in het midden van een

disappeared. Therefore, “Bonzende Beukende Oerknalrollen” was chosen, as this portrays the idiomatic values of “Wham Bam” best.

²⁰ When translating “from on high” (Colfer 5) with “hotemetoten”, the biblical connotations are lost, but instead a humorous image is added, as “hotemtoot”, which is a mocking word for boss or someone with power, and this “minor Asgardian god” (Colfer 5) is diminished even further

vlinderstorm, behalve dan een Hawalusiaanse windvlaag?

Verdomde vlinders, dacht de man. Toen ze eenmaal het effect van fladderende vleugels op een ander continent ontdekten, hebben miljoenen ondeugende lepidoptera²¹ samengespannen, en zijn vervolgens kwaadaardig geworden.

Dat kan toch niet echt voorkomen, dacht hij. *Vlinderstormen?*

Maar toen stroomden nog meer neuronen over nog meer synapsen, fluisterend over onwaarschijnlijkheidstheorieën. Als iets beslist nooit zal gebeuren zal dat ding zo snel mogelijk resoluut weigeren niet te gebeuren.

Vlinderstormen. Het was slechts een kwestie van tijd.

De oude man rukte zijn gedachten bij dit fenomeen weg voordat een andere catastrofe in hem zou opkomen en zijn trage gang naar geboorte inzette.

Was er dan nog iets om op te vertrouwen? Iets om troost uit te putten?

De ondergaande zon bescheen halvemaanjes op de rimpelingen van het water, polijste de wolken, kleurde de palmladeren zilver en liet de porseleinen theepot op de tafel op zijn veranda glinsteren.

O, ja, dacht de oude man. *Thee. In het hart van een onzeker en mogelijk denkbeeldig universum zou er altijd thee zijn.*

De oude man schreef met zijn van een afgedankt robotbeen gemaakte wandelstok twee natuurlijk voelende²² cijfers in het zand, en keek hoe de golven het getal wegspoelden.

²¹ The term “lepidoptera” (Colfer 6) is also exotic and possibly unfamiliar to the original audience, adding to the overall style. Therefore, the official Latin name of the species has been maintained in the target text, as the target audience will experience a similar reading to the original audience.

²² Translated “natural numbers” (Colfer 6) to “natuurlijk aanvoelende cijfers”, even though this is not a usual term in Dutch. However, this is a reference to previous volumes, where the

Het ene moment stond er 42, het volgende niet meer.

Misschien waren deze nummers er nooit geweest, en mogelijk deden ze er ook niet toe.

Om een of andere reden moest de oude man hier kakelend om lachen terwijl hij de glooiing op ploeterde richting zijn veranda. Met hevig gekraak van botten en hout ging hij in een rieten stoel zitten die uitstekend in zijn omgeving paste, en riep naar zijn androïde of hij wat biscuitjes kon brengen.

De androïde bracht Rich Tea biscuits.

Goede keuze.

Seconden later veroorzaakte de plotselinge verschijning van een zwevende metalen vogel een kortstondig verval in sopconcentratie, en de oude man verloor een groot maanvormig stuk biscuit aan de thee.

“O, in hemelsnaam,” gromde de man. “Heb je enig idee hoe lang ik aan deze techniek gewerkt heb? Soppen en sandwiches²³. Wat rest een mens nog meer?”

De vogel was er stoïcijns²⁴ onder.

number 42 “is the Answer to The Ultimate Question of Life, The Universe and Everything” (Kazan), and readers that are familiar with the previous volumes will understand this reference.

²³ Alliterations are frequently used in the source text, and can not always be maintained. In order to balance this loss in other places, an alliteration is added here by using the word “sandwiches” instead of “broodjes”.

²⁴ This is not the literal Dutch translation of “unperturbed” (Colfer 7), as that would be “onverstoord”. but as the next sentence focusses on the sound of the word, I chose to translate

“Een stoïcijnse vogel,” zei de oude man zachtjes, genietend van de klanken. Hij sloot zijn slechte oog, dat al niet meer goed werkte sinds hij als onbezonnen jongetje uit een boom was gevallen, en bekeek het schepsel eens goed.

De vogel zweefde, een rode gloed op zijn metalen veren door de laatste zonnestralen, terwijl zijn vleugels kleine draaikolken deden opwervelen.

“Batterij,” zei hij, in een stem die de oude man deed denken aan een acteur die hij ooit Othello had zien spelen in het Globe Theatre in Londen²⁵. Verbazingwekkend wat je je door de toon van een enkel woord kan herinneren.

“Batterij zeg je?” vroeg de man, gewoon ter bevestiging. Het had mogelijk ook bakkerij of zelfs platterij kunnen zijn. Zijn gehoor was niet meer wat het geweest was, vooral niet wat medeklinkers betrof.

“Batterij,” zei de vogel weer, en plotseling barstte de werkelijkheid uiteen en viel als een gebroken spiegel aan stukken. Het strand verdween, de golven bevroren, barstten en verdampten. Het laatste dat verdween was de Rich Tea.

“Sodemieters,” mompelde de man terwijl de laatste kruimels van zijn vingertoppen vervlogen, en hij maakte het zichzelf gemakkelijk op een kussen in de kamer van lucht die hem plotseling omringde. Er zou gauw genoeg iemand komen, dat wist hij zeker. Uit de duistere dieptes van zijn oude herinneringen kwamen de namen Ford en Perfect als grijze vleermuizen naar boven om zichzelf met de dreigende catastrofe te associëren.

Telkens wanneer het Universum instortte duurde het niet lang voordat Ford Perfect

the word with the Dutch “stoïcijns”, which has a similar meaning as unperturbed and is not used very frequently, retaining the exotic element.

²⁵ Maintained this British culture specific element in order to convey the fact that Arthur is British, which is an important element to the tone and plot of the series.

opdoek. Hij en dat vervloekte boek van hem. Hoe heette het ook alweer? O, ja. *Het onpraktisch ziftershandboek.*

Dat, of iets dat daar erg op lijkt.

De oude man wist precies wat Ford Perfect zou zeggen.

Bekijk het van de zonnige kant oude vriend. Je ligt ten minste niet op de grond voor een bulldozer, toch? We worden ten minste niet uit de luchtsluis van een Vogonschip gespoeld. Een kamer van lucht is zo slecht nog niet, toevallig. Het had erger gekund, veel erger.

“Het wórdt ook veel erger,” zei de oude man met zwaarmoedige zekerheid. In zijn ervaring werden dingen over het algemeen erger, en in het zeldzame geval dat het zowaar beter leek te worden was dat alleen als dramatische inleiding voor een cataclysmische verergering.

O, deze kamer van lucht *leek* onschuldig genoeg, maar welke verschrikkingen lagen op de loer achter de golvende muren? Niet één die niet verschrikkelijk was, daar was de man zeker van.

Hij porde met zijn vinger in het meegeevende oppervlak van de muur, wat hem deed denken aan tapioca pudding.²⁶ Hier moest de man bijna om glimlachen, totdat hij zich herinnerde dat hij een hekel had aan tapioca, al vanaf het moment dat een treiterende huisoudste²⁷ zijn sloffen met het spul had gevuld toen hij nog op de Eaton House kostschool zat.

²⁶ This paragraph has been split up into two sentences, as such long sentences are not acceptable in Dutch, and this split improves reading speed and rhythm.

²⁷ “Head boy” (Colfer 8) is translated to “huisoudste” as this is a term used in Dutch boarding schools for pupils with extra responsibilities, who have similar tasks as head boys.

“Blisters Smyth, jij huichelachtige hufter,” fluisterde hij.

Zijn vingertop liet een tijdelijk gat achter in de wolken, en hij ving daar doorheen een glimp op van een hoog schuifraam, en daarbuiten, kon dat een doodslaser zijn?

De oude man was tamelijk bang dat het er een was.

Al die tijd, dacht hij. Al die tijd en er was niets gebeurd.

Ford Perfect had een droomleven. Ervan uitgaande dat *een droomleven* bestond uit het wonen in een van Han Wavel’s ultraluxe, met vijf reuzensterren bekroonde, op natuurlijke wijze geërodeerde hedonistische resorts, alle wakkere uren vullend met het drinken van permanente schade aanrichtende hoeveelheden exotische cocktails en affaires met nog exotischere vrouwen afkomstig van verschillende planeten.

En het beste van dit alles: de kosten van dit hele genotzuchtige en mogelijk levensverkortende arrangement zouden op rekening komen van zijn Dine-O-Charge creditcard²⁸, die geen bestedingslimiet meer had dankzij wat creatief geknoei met computers tijdens zijn laatste bezoek aan het hoofdkantoor van *Het transgalactisch liftershandboek*.

Als een jonge Ford Perfect een lege pagina was gegeven om, wanneer het hem uitkwam, een korte paragraaf te schrijven met daarin zijn grootste wensen voor zijn eigen toekomst, was het enige woord dat hij misschien zou hebben verbeterd uit het bovenstaande het bijwoord *mogelijk*. Waarschijnlijk.

De resorts van Han Wavel waren zo obscene luxueus dat er werd gezegd dat een man van de planeet Berquinda zijn eigen moeder zou verkopen voor een nacht in de beruchte vibra-suite van het Sandcastle Hotel. Dit is niet zo weerzinwekkend als het klinkt, aangezien ouders een geaccepteerd betaalmiddel zijn op Berquinda. Een goed gehydrateerde zeventigjarige met een gaaf stel tanden kan zo geruild worden voor een middenklasse gezins-

²⁸ Added “credit” in order to clarify that this is a means of payment.

motorvoertuig.

Ford zou misschien geen van zijn ouders verkocht hebben om zijn verblijf in het Sandcastle Hotel te bekostigen, maar hij had wel een dubbelhoofdige neef die vaak meer problemen veroorzaakte dan hij waard was.

Ford nam iedere nacht de flitslift²⁹ naar zijn penthouse, kraste met hese stem een bevel naar de deur om hem toegang te verschaffen tot de suite, en nam vervolgens de tijd om zichzelf in zijn bloeddoorlopen ogen te kijken voordat hij met zijn gezicht naar beneden bewusteloos raakte in de wasbak.

Dit was de laatste nacht, zwoor hij iedere keer. Mijn lichaam zal nu ongetwijfeld in opstand komen en imploderen.

Wat zou er in zijn overlijdensbericht staan in *Het liftershandboek*? vroeg Ford zich af. Het zou kort zijn, dat stond vast. Een paar woorden. Misschien hetzelfde paar woorden die hij al die jaren geleden had gebruikt om de Aarde te beschrijven.

Grotendeels ongevaarlijk.

De Aarde. Was er niet iets tamelijk betreurenswaardigs gebeurt met de Aarde waar hij bij stil zou moeten staan? Waarom kon hij zich sommige dingen wel herinneren en waren anderen net zo helder als een heiige ochtend op de permanent nevelige Mistvlakten van Nephologia?

²⁹ The neologism “fleshelevator” (Colfer 9) implies a new type of elevator, but the workings of this elevator are not explained, it is just mentioned as the means of transport to Ford’s suite. This gives some freedom in translation, first resulting in “lichtlift”, which has evolved to “flitslift”, as a variant on “flitslicht” and “lichtflits”. “Flitslift” is short enough to not disturb the flow of this long sentence and adds an alliteration.

Het was doorgaans rond dit melodramatische stadium dat de derde Breinbeuker³⁰ de laatste druppel bewustzijn uit Ford's overgestimuleerde hersenen perste. Hij giechelde dan twee keer, kakelde als een rodeokip en voerde een bijna perfecte voorwaartse duikeling uit, landend in de dichtstbijzijnde afvoer.

En toch, als hij zijn hoofd iedere ochtend weer optilde uit de wasbak (als hij geluk had), voelde Ford zich elke keer op wonderlijke wijze weer zo goed als nieuw. Geen kater, geen slechte adem, niet eens een gesprongen bloedvat in zijn sclera³¹ als getuige van de overmaat van de voorgaande avond.

“Je bent een froedige vent, Ford Perfect,” zei hij steevast tegen zichzelf. “Ja, dat ben je zeker.”

*Hier zit een luchtje aan*³², hield zijn zelden opsprekende onderbewustzijn vol. *Een soort vislucht.*

³⁰ Translated “Gargle Blaster” (Colfer 9) to “Breinbeuker”, as the effect of the cocktail is explained in Volume 1 as “having your brains smashed out by a slice of lemon wrapped round a large gold brick” (Adams *Hitchhiker's* 17). In Breinbeuker, the violence and body part are maintained, while adding an alliteration.

³¹ Maintained exotic term for same reason as Lepidoptera (footnote 15).

³² The word “fishy” (Colfer 9) does not have a literal translation in Dutch, as “vissig” is not a term used when describing a situation in which something is wrong. The image of fish has to be maintained in order to mention part of the title of Volume 4, “so long and thanks for all the ...” (Colfer 9), a few sentences later. Therefore, the proverb “er zit een luchtje aan”, combined with the addition of a second sentence mentioning “vislucht” will create a sufficient link with the title mentioned later on.

Vislucht?

Tot ziens en bedankt voor alle ...

Was er niet iets met dolfijnen? Dat zijn geen vissen, dat niet, maar ze leven in hetzelfde ... leefgebied.

Denk na, idioot die je bent! Denk na! Je had al honderd keer dood moeten zijn. Je hebt genoeg cocktails geconsumeerd om niet alleen jezelf, maar ook meerdere alternatieve versies van jezelf op sterk water te zetten. Hoe is het mogelijk dat je nog leeft?

“In leven en froedig,” zei Ford dan, vaak naar zichzelf knipogend in de spiegel, zichzelf verbazend over hoe weelderig zijn rode haar was geworden. Hoe hoog zijn jukbeenderen opeens waren. En het leek alsof zijn kin groeide. Een echte geprononceerde kin.

“Deze plek doet me goed,” zei hij tegen zijn spiegelbeeld. “Alle pakkingen met fotobloedzuigers en bestraalde colono-lemming behandelingen zijn een echte oppepper voor mijn gestel. Ik denk dat ik het Ford Perfect verplicht ben om hier nog een tijdje te blijven.”

Dus dat deed hij.

Op de laatste dag liet Ford een onderwatermassage op zijn rekening zetten. De masseur was een Damograniaanse pom-pom inktvis met elf tentakels en duizend zuignappen die Ford's rug afranselden en zijn poriën reinigde met een serie whiplash-bekloppingen. Pom-pom inktvissen zijn over het algemeen enorm overgekwalificeerd voor een baan in de kuuroordindustrie, maar werden bij hun zoveelste doctoraat weggelokt door de aantrekkingskracht van hoge salarissen, planktonrijke zwembaden en de kans op het masseren van een talentspotter uit de muziekindustrie, en misschien zelfs de mogelijkheid om een eigen platencontract te veroveren.

“Ooit wel eens wat talent gespot vriend?” vroeg de inktvis, hoewel het niet hoopvol klonk.

“Nee,” antwoordde Ford, waardoor er bellen uit zijn plexiglas helm opstegen. Zijn gezicht glansde in de aangename oranje gloed van de fosforescerende rotsen. “Al had ik ooit wel een paar blauwe suède schoenen, en dat stelt toch ook wel wat voor. Ik heb er nog steeds één van, maar de andere is meer mauve geworden, aangezien het een kopie is.”

De inktvis hapte naar wat passerend plankton terwijl hij sprak, wat het gesprek nogal onsamenhangend maakte.

“Ik weet niet of ...”

“Of wat?”

“Ik was nog niet uitgesproken.”

“Maar je stopte met praten.”

“Er was een glinstering. Ik dacht even dat het lunch was.”

“Je eet glinsteringen?”

“Nee. Geen echte glinsteringen.”

“Mooi, want glinsteringen zijn baby glonsteraars³³, en die zijn giftig.”

“Weet ik. Ik wilde alleen zeggen dat ...”

“Meer glinsteringen?”

“Juist. Maar je weet zeker dat je geen talentspotter bent dan, of een impresario?”

“Ja³⁴.”

³³ Based on the neologism “gloonts” (Colfer 10) from the source text, the neologism

“glonsteraars” is created in the target text, by changing the first vowel in the word “glinstering”.

³⁴ “No” (Colfer 10) has been changed to “yes” in this instance, as the double negative created by the original can be confusing to the target audience. In Dutch, maintaining “no” would

Appendix A: Source Text Passage One

So far as we know ... The Imperial Galactic Government decided, over a bucket of jeweled crabs one day, that a hyperspace expressway was needed in the unfashionable end of the western spiral arm of the Galaxy. This decision was rushed through channels ostensibly to preempt traffic congestion in the distant future, but actually to provide employment for a few ministers' cousins who were forever mooching around Government Plaza. Unfortunately the Earth was in the path of this planned expressway, so the remorseless Vogons were dispatched in a constructor fleet to remove the offending planet with gentle use of thermonuclear weapons.

Two survivors managed to hitch a ride on a Vagon ship: Arthur Dent, a young English employee of a regional radio station whose plans for the morning did not include having his home planet blasted to dust beneath his slippers. Had the human race held a referendum, it's quite likely that Arthur Dent would have been voted least suitable to *carry the hopes of mankind into space*. Arthur's university yearbook actually referred to him as "most likely to end up living in a hole in the Scottish highlands with only the chip on his shoulder for company." Luckily Arthur's Betelgeusean friend, Ford Perfect, a roving reporter for the illustrious interstellar travel almanac *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, was more of an optimist. Ford saw silver linings where Arthur saw only clouds, and so between them they made one prudent space travellers, unless their travels led them to the planet Junipella, where the clouds actually did have silver linings. Arthur would have doubtless steered the ship straight into the nearest cloud of gloom, and Ford would have almost certainly attempted to

imply that Ford is not sure if he is a talent scout, even though a few sentences earlier he says he's never worked as one.

steal the silver, which could have resulted in the catastrophic combustion of the natural gas inside the lining. The explosion would have been pretty, but as a heroic ending, it would have lacked a certain something – i.e., a hero in one piece.

The only other Earthling left alive was Tricia McMillan, or Trillian to use her cool spacey name, a fiercely ambitious astrophysicist cum fledgling reporter who had always believed that there was more to life than life on Earth. In spite of this conviction, Trillian had nevertheless been amazed when she was whisked off to the stars by Zaphod Beeblebrox, the maverick two-headed Galactic President.

What can one say of President Beeblebrox that he has not already had printed on T-shirts and circulated throughout the Galaxy free with every uBid purchase?

Zaphod Says Yes to Zaphod was probably the most famous T-shirt slogan, though not even his team of psychiatrists understood what it actually meant. Second favourite was probably *Beeblebrox. Just be glad he's out there.*

It is a universal maxim that if someone goes to the trouble of printing something on a T-shirt, then it is almost definitely not a hundred percent untrue, which is to say that it is more than likely fairly definitely not altogether false. Consequentially, when Zaphod Beeblebrox arrived on a planet, people invariably said yes to whatever questions he asked and when he left they were glad he was out there.

There less than traditional heroes were improbably drawn to each other and embarked on a series of adventures, which mostly involved gadding around through space and time, sitting on quantum sofas, chatting with gaseous computers, and generally failing to find meaning or fulfilment in any corner of the Universe.

Arthur Dent eventually returned to the hole in space where the Earth used to be and discovered that the hole had been filled by an Earth-sized planet that looked and behaved remarkably like Earth. In fact this planet was *an* Earth, just not Arthur's. Not *this* Arthur's at

any rate. Because his home planet was at the centre of a plural zone, the Arthur we are concerned with had found himself shuffled along the dimensional axis to an Earth that had never been destroyed by Vogons. This rather made *our* Arthur's day, and his usually pessimistic mood was further improved when he encountered Fenchurch, his soul mate. Luckily this idyllic period was not cut short by Arthur and Fenchurch bumping into any *alternative universe* Arthurs who may have been wandering around, possibly in Los Angeles working for the BBC.

Arthur and his true love travelled the stars together until Fenchurch vanished in mid-conversation during a hyperspace jump. Arthur searched the Universe for her, paying his way by exchanging bodily fluids for first-class tickets. Eventually he was stranded on the planet Lamuella and made a life for himself there as sandwich maker for a primitive tribe who believed that sandwiches were pretty hot stuff.

His tranquillity was disturbed by the arrival of a couriered box from Ford Perfect, which contained the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy Mark II in the form of a smarmy pan-dimensional black bird. Trillian, who was now a successful newswoman, had a delivery of her own for Arthur in the shape of Random Dent, the daughter conceived with the donated price of seat 2D on the Alpha Centauri red-eye.

Arthur reluctantly took on the role of parent, but was completely out of his depth with the truculent teenager. Random stole the Guide Mark II and set a course for Earth, where she believed she could finally feel at home. Arthur and Ford followed, to find Trillian already on the planet.

Only then was the Mark II's objective revealed. The Vogons, irritated by the Earth's refusal to stay ka-boomed, had engineered the bird to lure the escapees back to the planet before they destroyed it in every dimension, thus fulfilling their original order.

Arthur and Ford rushed at semi-breakneck speed to London's Club Beta, pausing only

to purchase foie gras and blue suede shoes. Thanks to the old dimensional axis/plural zone thing, they found Trillian *and* Tricia McMillan coexisting in the same space-time, both being screamed at by an emotional Random.

Confused? Arthur was, but not for long. Once he noticed the green death rays pulsating through the lower atmosphere, all of the day's other niggling problems seemed to lose their nigglyness. After all, confusing was not likely to slice him into a million seared pieces.

The Vogon prostetnic had done his job well. Not only had he lured Arthur, Ford, and Trillian back to the planet Earth, but he'd also managed to trick a Grebulon captain into destroying the Earth for him, thus saving the crew several hundred Vog hours' paperwork with the munitions office.

Arthur and his friends sit powerless in London's Club Beta and can only watch as the ultimate war on Earth is waged, unable to participate, unless involuntary spasming and liquefaction of bone matter counts as participation. On this occasion the weapons of destruction are death rays rather than Vogon torpedoes, but then, one planet killing device is pretty much the same as another when you're on the receiving end...

Appendix B: Source Text Passage Two

Chapter 1

According to a janitor's assistant at the Maximegalon University, who often loiters outside lecture halls, the universe is sixteen billion years old. This supposed truth is scoffed at by a clutch of Betelgeusean beat poets who claim to have moleskin pads older than that (rat a tat-tat). Seventeen billion, they say, at the very least, according to their copy of the Wham Bam Big Bang scrolls. A human teenage prodigy once called it fourteen billion based on a complicated computation involving the density of moon rock and the distance between two pubescent females on an event horizon. One of the minor Asgradian gods did mumble that he'd read something somewhere about some sort of a major-ish cosmic event eighteen billion years ago, but no one pays much attention to pronouncements from on high anymore, not since the *birth of the gods* debacle, or Thorgate as it has come to be known.

However many billions it actually is, it *is* billions, and the old man on the beach looked as though he'd counted off at least one of those million millions on his fingers. His skin was ivory parchment, and viewed in profile he closely resembled a quavering uppercass S.

The man remembered having a cat once, if memories could be trusted as anything more than neuron configurations across trillions of synapses. Memories could not be touched with one's fingers. Could not be felt like the surf flowing over his gnarled toes could be felt. But then what were physical feelings but more electrical messages from the brain? Why believe in them either? Was there anything trustworthy in the Universe that one could hug and hold onto like a Hawalusian wind staunch in the midst of a butterfly storm, apart from a Hawalusian staunch.

Bloody butterflies, thought the man. Once he'd figured out the wing fluttering a

continent away thing, millions of mischievous Lepidoptera had banded together and turned malicious.

Surely that cannot be real, he thought. Butterfly storms?

But then more neurons poured across even more synapses and whispered of improbability theories. If a thing was bound never to happen, then that thing would resolutely refuse not to happen as soon as possible.

Butterfly storms. It was only a matter of time.

The old man wrenched his focus from this phenomenon before some other catastrophe occurred to him and began its rough slouch to be born.

Was there anything to trust? Anything to take comfort from?

The setting sun lit crescents on the wavelets, burnished the clouds, striped the palm leaves silver, and set the china pot on his veranda table twinkling.

Ah, yes, thought the old man. Tea. At the centre of an uncertain and possibly illusory universe there would always be tea.

The old man traced two natural numbers in the sand with a walking stick fashioned from a discarded robot leg and watched as the waves washed them away.

One moment, there was forty-two and the next there wasn't.

Maybe the numbers were never there and perhaps they didn't even matter.

For some reason that made the old man cackle as he leaned into the incline and plodded to his veranda. He settled with much creaking of bone and wood into a wicker chair that was totally sympathetic to the surroundings, and called to his android to bring some biscuits.

The android brought Rich Tea.

Good choice.

Seconds later the sudden appearance of a hovering metal bird caused a momentary

lapse in dunking concentration and the old man lost a large crescent of his biscuit to the tea.

“Oh, for heaven’s sake,” grumbled the man. “Do you know how long I have been working on that technique? Dunking and sandwiches. What else is left to a person?”

The bird was unperturbed.

“An unperturbed bird,” said the old man softly, enjoying the sound of it. He closed the bad eye that hadn’t worked properly since he’d fallen out of a tree as a giddy boy, and examined the creature.

The bird hovered, its metallic feathers shimmering crimson in the sun’s rays, its wings beating up tiny maelstroms.

“Battery,” it said in a voice that reminded the old man of an actor he had once seen playing Othello at London’s Globe Theatre. Amazing what you can get from the tone of a single word.

“You did say battery?” said the man, just confirming. It could possibly have been flattery or even hattery. His hearing was not what it used to be, especially on initial consonants.

“Battery,” said the bird again, and suddenly reality cracked and fell to pieces like a shattered mirror. The beach disappeared, the waves froze, crackled, and evaporated. The last thing to go was the Rich Tea.

“Bugger,” muttered the old man as the final crumbs dissipated on his fingertips, then he sat back on a cushion in the room of sky that suddenly surrounded him. Someone would be coming soon, he was sure of it. From the dim caverns of his old memories, the names Ford and Perfect emerged like gray bats to associate themselves with the impending disaster.

Whenever the Universe fell apart, Ford Perfect was never far behind. Him and that accursed book of his. What was it called? Oh, yes. *The Pitchforker’s Pride Is a Fallacy*.

That, or something very close to it.

The old man knew exactly what Ford Perfect would say.

Look on the bright side, old mate. At least you're not lying down in front of a bulldozer, eh? At least we're not being flushed out of a Vogon air lock. A room of sky is not too shabby, as it happens. It could be worse, a lot worse.

"It will be a lot worse," said the old man with gloomy certainty. In his experience, things generally got worse, and on the rare occasion when things actually seemed to get better, it was only as a dramatic prelude to a cataclysmic worsening.

Oh, this room of sky *seemed* harmless enough, but what terrors lurked beyond its rippling walls? None that were not terrible, of that the old man was certain.

He poked a finger into one of the wall's yielding surfaces and was reminded of tapioca pudding, which almost made the old man smile, until he remembered that he had hated tapioca ever since a bullying head boy had filled his slippers with the stuff back in Eaton House Prep.

"Blisters Smyth, you sneaky shit," he whispered.

His fingertip left a momentary hole in the clouds, and through it the old man caught a glimpse of a double-height sash window beyond, and outside the window, could that be a death ray?

The old man rather feared that it was.

All this time, he thought. All this time and nothing had happened.

Ford Perfect was living the dream. Providing the dream included residence in one of Han Wavel's ultraluxury, five-supergiant-rated, naturally eroded hedonistic resorts, filling one's waking hours with permanent damage amounts of exotic cocktails, and liaisons with exotic females of various species.

And the best bit: The expenses of this whole self-indulgent and possibly life-shortening package would be taken care of by his Dine-O-Charge card, which had no credit

limit thanks to a little creative computer tinkering on his last visit to the Hitchhiker's Guide offices.

If a younger Ford Perfect had been handed a blank page and asked to, in his own time, write a short paragraph detailing his dearest wishes for his own future, the only word he might have amended in the above was the adverb *possibly*. Probably.

The resort of Han Wavel were so obscenely luxurious that is was said a Brequindan male would sell his mother for a night in the Sandcastle Hotel's infamous vibro-suite. This is not as shocking as it sounds, as parents are accepted currency on Brequinda and a nicely moisturized septuagenarian with a good set of teeth can be traded for a mid-range family moto-carriage.

Ford would perhaps not have sold either parent to finance his sojourn at the Sandcastle, but there was a bicranial cousin who was often more trouble than he was worth.

Every night, Ford rode the fleshevator to his penthouse, croaked at the door to grant him entry, then made time to look himself in the bloodshot eyes before passing out facedown in the basin.

This is the last night, he swore nightly. Surely my body will revolt and collapse in on itself.

What would his obituary say in the *Hitchhiker's Guide*? Ford wondered. It would be brief, that was for sure. A couple of words. Perhaps the same two he had used to describe the Earth all those years ago.

Mostly harmless.

Earth. Hadn't something rather sad happened on Earth that he should be thinking about? Why were there some things he could remember and others that were about as clear as a hazy morning on the permanently fogbound Misty Plains of Nephologia?

It was generally at about this maudlin stage that the third Gargle Blaster squeezed the

last drop of consciousness from Ford's overjuiced brain and he would giggle twice, squawk like a rodeo chicken, and execute a near perfect forward tumble into the nearest bathroom receptacle.

And yet every morning when he lifted his head from the en suite basin (if he was lucky), Ford found himself miraculously revitalized. No hangover, no dragon breath, not even a burst blood vessel in either sclera to bear witness to the previous night's excesses.

"You are a froody dude, Ford Perfect," he invariably told himself. "Yes, you are."

There is something fishy going on here, his rarely-heard-from subconscious insisted.

Fishy?

So long and thanks for all the...

Wasn't there something about dolphins? Not fish, true, but they inhabited the same... habit.

Think, you idiot! Think! You should be dead a hundred times over. You have consumed enough cocktails to pickle not only yourself but several alternate versions of yourself. How are you still alive?

"Alive and froody," Ford would say, often winking at himself in the mirror, marvelling at how lustrous his red hair had become. How pronounced his cheekbones. And he seemed to be growing a chin. An actual chiseled chin.

"This place is doing me good," he told his reflection. "All the photoleech wraps and the irradiated colono-lemming treatments are really boosting my system. I think I owe it to Ford Perfect to stay another while."

And so he did.

On the last day, Ford charged an underwater massage to his credit card. The masseur was a Damogranian pom-pom squid with eleven tentacles and a thousand suckers that pummeled Ford's back and cleaned out his pores with a series of whiplash tapotement moves. Pom-pom

squids were generally hugely overqualified for their work in the spa industry, but were tempted away from their umpteenth doctorates by the lure of high salaries, plankton-rich pools, and the chance of massaging a talent scout for the music industry and maybe getting themselves a record deal.

“Have you done any talent scouting, friend?” asked the squid, though he didn’t sound hopeful.

“Nope,” replied Ford, bubbles streaming from his Plexiglas helmet, face shining orange in the pleasant glow of rock phosphorescence. “Though I once owned a pair of blue suede shoes, which should count for something. I still own one; the other is closer to mauve, due to it being a copy.”

The squid nipped at passing plankton as he spoke, which made conversation a little disjointed.

“I don’t know if ...”

“If what?”

“I hadn’t finished.”

“It’s just that you stopped speaking.”

“There was a glint. I thought it was lunch.”

“You eat glints?”

“No. Not actually glints.”

“Good, because glints are baby gloonts, and they’re poisonous.”

“I know. I was merely saying that ...”

“More glints?”

“Precisely. You’re sure you’re not a talent scout then, or an agent?”

“Nope.”