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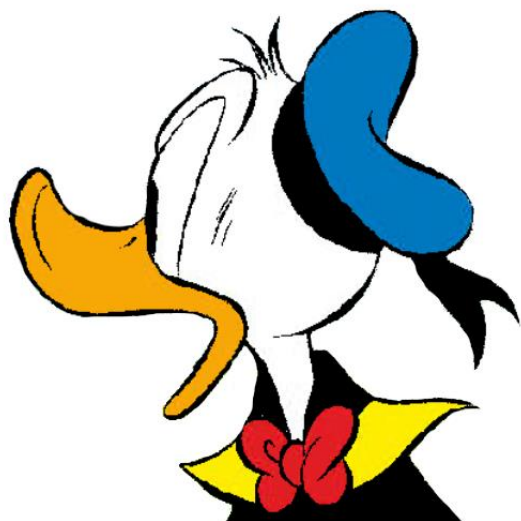
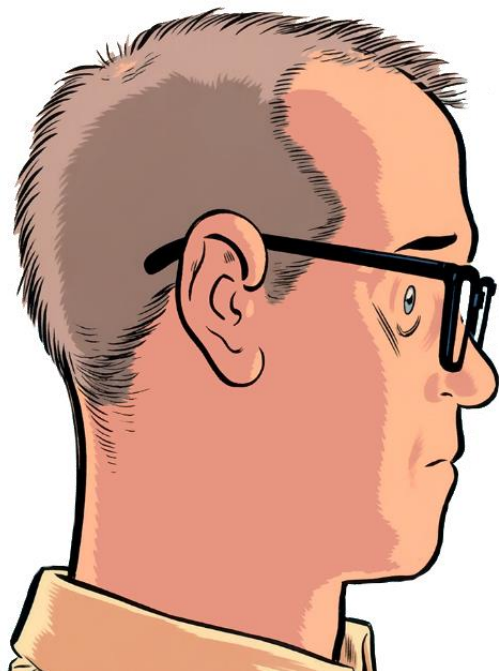
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Comics Translation Theory in Practice:

An analysis of different theories and how they apply to different comics



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Introduction

Comics seem to be everywhere nowadays. With Marvel and DC having moved their rivalry to the big screen, and the internet giving more and more creators the opportunity to share their work. In academia as well, comics theory has grown into a respectable field of study with several academic journals and research groups devoted to the topic, and Benoît Peeters being appointed as a comics professor at the University of Lancaster in 2015. Although comics theory is a fundamentally interdisciplinary field, the intersection of comics and translation studies seems to be neglected from the side of comics theory. There are several translation scholars, however, who have expressed great interest in the topic, by writing many great articles about it. As a field of study, however, there is little consensus and cooperation toward creating a workable theory.

It does seem like there have been several paradigms within the research area of comics translation. Zanettin characterizes early studies on the subject as focusing on linguistic elements, talking about the translation of verbal and visual puns, onomatopoeia's and proper names ("Translation studies" 3). Within this paradigm, the translation of comics is often seen as a form of constrained translation, with the image limiting what the translator can do with the text. Another approach to the theory of comics translation is a semiotic one, in which the multimodality of comics is examined. A great example of this can be seen in Celotti's article in Zanettin's 2008 collection *Comics in Translation*. In it, the interplay between image and text is seen as complementary, and not as a source of constraint (35). Lastly, Klaus Kaindl proposes a sociological approach, which gets picked up by Zanettin as well, in which he borrows Bourdieu's ideas of a cultural field to sketch a history of comics within Europe, the US, and Japan to show the differences between their sociohistorical contexts ("Thump, Whizz, Poom").

Kaindl explains how comics have come to have a higher status in some countries than in others. For example, in Japan comics are so big and universally

read, that they constitute about one fourth of all printed materials in the country (Zanettin, “Comics in translation” 2). In the Franco-Belgian area, comics are also held in high regard, which results in these countries being exporters of comics. This means that there are more comics translated from French and Japan, as well as English, Spanish and Italian, into other languages, than into French, Japanese, English, Spanish, or Italian. Then there are the German-speaking and Scandinavian countries which rely heavily on imported comics, since the production of comics in these countries is very low.

With these dynamics in the publication and translation of comics it is not surprising that there are similar dynamics within the research area of comic translation. According to Zanettin, most academic texts are written in languages other than English, and those that are in English are written by scholars operating outside of English-speaking countries and use English as a source language, and not the target (2004). This seems especially true for texts dealing with linguistic aspects of translating comics. While this bias toward multilingualism does provide a rich variety of viewpoints, it makes it hard to maintain discussions in an international level between scholars speaking different languages. There seems to be much disagreement between scholars over basic questions, such as how to define “comics” and what the relationship between text and image really is.

“Comics” is a broad term which can be applied to many different kinds of works, ranging from mass-produced superhero comics, classic structured newspaper comics, boundless webcomics, Japanese manga books, Franco-Belgian comic-albums, limited edition artworks, journalistic non-fiction comics, instructional leaflets, to book-length graphic novels. To define comics strictly while talking about their translation implies that all comics pose the same kind of translation problems. In this thesis, I will explore different definitions of “comics” given by scholars, and explore why these, in large part, are problematic. I will also explore the secondary literature about comics translation, and test it against two completely different comics, to see to what extent the theory holds up in practice.

My case study will focus on the work of both Klaus Kaindl and Nadine Celotti, who have both proposed different ways to categorize translatable elements in comics, and translation strategies to be used on those elements. I will ask to what extent these categorizations are useful for the analysis of Daniel Clowes' *Mister Wonderful*, and four Donald Duck comic strips and the translations of these comics. As a secondary research question, I will explore to what extent the different translation strategies are used in the two different comics, in order to explore to what extent different comics are translated differently. What I hope to show is that "comics" is a broad term, that in order to write theoretically about comic translation, we need to state explicitly about what kind of comics we are speaking. I also hope to convey the importance of empirical research in this cultural field of study, because, although it is important to know the underlying theories upon which our methods of analysis are based, our subject, actual comics in translation, still has a lot to teach us.

Chapter 1: Definitions

The way one defines comics influences the way one interprets them, and thus the way one goes about translating them. If one includes the idea of juxtaposition of images in one's definition, that may determine the amount of attention one pays as a translator to the particular placement of panels and their cohesion. If one sees the image as dominant over the text, that may determine whether one sees images as constraints, or rather as resources for translation. Many theoreticians have attempted to define comics in the past. The relationship between image and text has featured prominently in some of them. Kunzle sees a "preponderance of image over text" (qtd. in Meskin 369) as an essential part of comics, while others see comics as a "hybrid genre" (Kaindl, "Multimodality" 1) citing the combination of linguistic and pictographic elements as the source of this hybridity. In this chapter, I will discuss several attempted definitions and the difficulties that accompany them.

What is important to mention beforehand, is that even though I am citing from many articles that explicitly give definitions of their subjects, there are an even greater number of articles to be found where no such definition is given. Many scholars seem to assume that their readers already have an understanding of what is meant when they speak about "comics" and that that understanding is the same as their own. Often the examples given in such texts give away a bias toward comics from a certain culture or region, or even comics from a specific series.

1.1 Definitions of comics within comics theory

When defining comics, we might as well start with Eisner, who talks about them as "sequential art". The idea of comics as a sequence of images is a popular one, but it does exclude single-panel comics, which often get placed in a separate category, namely "cartoons". This exclusion has been criticized by others as being arbitrary, because often the kind of cartoons that can be found in a newspaper do form a of sequence, albeit one that is based on a temporal, for instance daily, sequence, rather than a spatial sequence (Meskin 371). Then, there is the value judgement implicit in

the word “art”, which seems to exclude many mass-media comics that aim for pure entertainment, but does include other non-visual art forms, such as music. Of course, Eisner’s “sequential art” was never meant as a definition, but is used as a starting point for other definitions.

Scott McCloud explicitly departs from the idea of comics as “sequential art” before arriving at his definition as “juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or produce an aesthetic response from the viewer” (9). This definition does manage to distinguish comics from film and animation, but adds a functional dimension which seems irrelevant and limiting. A comic might be produced entirely to give the creator a means of self-expression, never reaching another viewer, and still be a comic. Meskin also argues that the ahistorical nature of this definition, which McCloud himself celebrates by talking about pre-Columbian picture manuscripts and the Bayeux tapestry (10-12), distorts our perspective on these historical artefacts and simultaneously establishes “an ersatz history for comics—one that might legitimate their place in the world of art” (374). Meskin argues that “comics have earned the right to be considered art on their own merits”, making it unnecessary to go further back than the middle of the nineteenth century, when comics emerged on their own terms (376).

Meskin’s article is a great exploration of several definitions and concepts which have all been described as essential to comics by comics scholars at one point or another. Many of these are easy to dismiss as not essential, such as the need to appear in a “mass medium”, to have a “moral and topical” subject (Kunzle qtd. in Meskin 369), to include speech balloons, to be of “book-size scale” (Carrier qtd. in Meskin 370). Groensteen has encountered the same problem when searching for a definition in his *System of Comics*. He rejects the idea of an essentialist definition, because, as he notes, any single comic “only actualizes certain potentialities of the medium, to the detriment of others that are reduced or excluded” (12). So, while there may be a long list of attributes comics may have, any given comic will generally only have a few, but certainly not all, so there is no single attribute that is unique to

comics, that is also present in all comics. Of course, all comics are visual, but that is hardly unique to comics, and thus offers no solid ground for a demarcating definition.

Meskin denies the possibility of a definition altogether. Meskin argues that in order to analyze comics, it is hardly necessary to have a unified, agreed upon definition. It is more important that we grasp the “various styles, techniques, and purposes found in the art form, as well as a broad grasp of how to evaluate the variety of elements that are typically (but not necessarily) used in it, such as narrative, drawing, dialogue, and coloring” (376). Of course, it might be useful to give a working definition, in order to clarify to the reader from what perspective one views one’s subject, but this definition does not have to work for all comics, while excluding everything that is not comics.

Groensteen is not so resolute. He is unsatisfied with most attempted definitions, but he does uphold several ideas which could form the basis of a kind of definition. His view of comics is centered around the idea of “iconic solidarity”, which he defines as “interdependent images that, participating in a series, present the double characteristic of being separated and which are plastically and semantically over-determined by the fact of their coexistence *in praesentia*” (18). This principle, combined with the idea of narrativity, seem to form the center around Groensteen’s views of comics as a system or as a language. Narrativity is important to Groensteen, because he uses it to defend his position that the image is dominant over the text in comics. The idea that in comics text and image would be equal is, according to him, based on a false assumption that only text can be narrative. His argument rests on the idea that the image is the medium that carries the narrative in comics (8). But he never questions his basic assumption that comics are indeed narrative.

Meskin argues that just because every noncontroversial example of a comic is narrative, that does not mean that all comics must necessarily be narrative. He tries to imagine what a nonnarrative comic might look like, based on examples of

nonnarrative, avant-garde film and literature. The existence of nonnarrative artworks in other predominantly narrative art forms, points to the possibility of a page of panels in a comic that might be arranged, not according to a narrative, but for example, by theme or based on a character. He also points to some concrete examples of comics by Robert Crumb which may be considered nonnarrative, namely his “Comical comics” and “Cubist Be-Bob comics” in his collection *Carload O’Comics* (372).

1.2 Definitions of comics within translation theory

Within the field of translation studies, comics have also been discussed but are not always defined. When there is an attempt at a definition, it is often remarked that they combine words and images, but not much else (Kaindl, “Multimodality” 81). An example of this is Celotti’s short remark about what comics are at the start of her article, *The Translator of Comics as a Semiotic Investigator*:

“a narrative space where pictorial elements convey meaning, no less than verbal messages, over which they often have primacy. Comics are ‘narrative[s] with a visual dominant’ (Groensteen 1999:14).” (33)

These kinds of definitions are often problematic because they provide no way of distinguishing comics from other art forms, but are quite instructive when one wants to dissect the way in which the relationship between words and images is viewed by a certain scholar. We can see that Celotti follows Groensteen uncritically, which results in a foregrounding of image over text.

In his article titled “Comics in translation studies” (2004) Zanettin notes that there are two “core characteristics” that comics tend to have in common. He claims that “comics are (usually) printed paper objects and that ‘it takes at least two’ panels for it to be comics” referring McCloud for this second characteristic. Of course, the first point is already nuanced by adding “usually” between brackets. At the time he wrote that article, webcomics were already appearing online, but nowadays the internet can no longer be denied as a big competitor to paper.

As for this second characteristic, we have seen before that it is not agreed upon by all scholars. He defends his position by saying that “McCloud (1993) suggests that meaning in comics is to be found in the blank spaces between panels. It is the reader who fills in those interstices with expectations and world knowledge, and makes sense of sometimes seemingly incoherent images and words.” Yet, even a single panel comic leaves to the imagination of the reader what happened before and what will happen after the single moment pictured. One could argue that the blank space in cartoons is even more significantly present than in multi-panel comics and that cartoons are therefore even richer in meaning. There are arguments to be made to support the characterization of cartoons as separate from comics, but this is not a good one.

Zanettin also dispels some common misconception about comics when trying to define them. They often get called multimedial, but, as Zanettin says: “comics are not a medium in the same sense as print, films, tv, radio etc. are media. Rather they use print as a medium” (“Translation studies” 1). He describes comics as “a type of media discourse, which however cuts across the borders of media types”. Comics are also not a genre, but have genres, such as educational comics, animal comics, adventure, humor, horror, romance, science fiction etc. (2) Comics can be viewed as a semiotic system, and comic translation can be seen as the “intercultural translation between semiotic environments which are culturally determined, along dimensions of space and time.” (2). These semiotic environments consist of a multiplicity of semiotic systems such as text, illustration, caricature, painting, photography and graphics, written narratives, poetry and music, which are mixed and matched together.

In the end, he says that Eisner’s description of comics as sequential art may not be too bad after all. With this remark, he acknowledges the difficulty in coming up with a definition which is at once theoretically sound, and practical enough to distinguish actual comics from things that are not comics. It is implied that this distinguishing capability is not all that important. What is more important is the

awareness of the cultural determination that makes the translation of these things called comics so difficult. By focusing on this cultural determination of the content, form, text and especially images, he is in line with Kaindl in rejecting an idea brought forth by Rabadán that “pictures represent a universal code which is therefore not subject to translation” like a kind of “visual Esperanto” (qtd. in Kaindl, “Multimodality” 387). But as Zanettin shows in his 2004 article written in collaboration with Adele D’Arcangelo, the image is also subject to translation, precisely because of its cultural baggage (194).

In 2004 Klaus Kaindl published a monograph in German, which was based on his 1999 doctoral dissertation book about comics translation. In it he also explores many translation-relevant definitions of comics from the academic literature. He remarks that a lot has been written about comics in translation, but an overarching theoretical framework with which to analyze translation-relevant aspects of comics is still missing (121). He seems frustrated by the disunity that is apparent in the literature about comics translation. Because comics can differ so much in status and conventions from one country to the next, this causes a disunity between scholars from different countries talking about the theory of comics. The fact that many articles about comics translation are written in languages other than English, such as Kaindl’s book¹, does not help to unify the academic discussion about this topic. Kaindl, seems to have been aware of this problem, since he also published an English language article in 1999, “Thump, Whizz, Poom: A framework for the study of comics under translation”, in which he lays out his vision of a theoretical framework which has been cited by many other scholars since. His book, however, provides many more valuable contributions to the discussion of this topic, which still have not found their way into the international discourse around comics translation.

The definitions he discusses in his book are mostly by scholars who have written them in German, but many of the problems with these discussions are the

¹ This fact is also lamented by Zanettin in a footnote (21) in his article ‘Comics in Translation.’

same kind of problems we have seen in the English-language literature as well: he criticizes Grassegger's two characteristics of comics (the use of colloquial speech written in word balloons and the combination of verbal and non-verbal signs) as being too narrow (82), because not all comics necessarily use text this way, and many other art forms do. He also criticizes P.A. Schmitt, who refers to McCloud by describing comics as "räumlich sequentielle Grafik" (82), or, as McCloud himself puts it, "juxtaposed sequential static images" (8). Kaindl remarks that due to the rise of digital media, there are also comics which use hypertextual features to make panels appear not just in spatially juxtaposed order, but also in a temporal sequence (83). Nowadays, webcomic artists can even use the .gif-format to include all kinds of animation into their comics.

As a second criterion for comics, P.A. Schmitt describes the combination of verbal and non-verbal elements in a multimedial way (83). The idea of multimediality is problematic in the academic literature, because it is used by many scholars to mean many different things. We have already seen that Zanettin opposes categorizing comics as a medium, because comics *use* media. Kaindl's use of the words medium is in line with this use. He chooses to use the term "medium" in the way it is used within communications theory, which in the context of comics means that a medium can be a magazine, an issue, a newspaper, or a web site (83-84). He prefers to use the term "polysemiotic" to refer to comics, because they use multiple (verbal and non-verbal) semiotic signs. (84)

Kaindl also discusses several definitions given by German-language writers on comics theory that are not specifically related to the translation of comics. Most of these also seem to be based around the relation between images and text, which is often described as complimentary. The criteria of narrativity and sequentiality are other common themes, just as the differences in comics between cultures. The medial aspect of comics also receives some attention among these German-language scholars (85-86). It is not unexpected that in German-speaking countries, where many more comics get imported than produced (Kaindl, "Thump, Whizz, Poom" 264), there

would be such a focus on the cultural determinants that differ between countries. Because translations have a much more important role in comics in German-speaking countries than in English-speaking countries, these cultural differences are automatically foregrounded. The same is true for the medial aspect of comics, since the format of comics is also culturally determined. The standard number of pages per issue and the size of the pages differ between countries, so when comics are translated from other countries into German, the physicality of the work is also foregrounded as comics appear in all kinds of different sizes.

Before describing his own solution to the definition problem, Kaindl first gives a concise definition of comics translation: translation of comics is the sum of all actions that are taken on the level of the verbal, visual and typographical to transfer a text or text element from a source culture to a target culture (87). By focusing on translation, he provides a context for his foregrounding of certain elements of comics, which are especially relevant to comics translation. Rather than provide a dictionary definition or a list of essential criteria, Kaindl discusses four points which all play some part in defining comics for his purpose. His first point is about the medial aspect of comics. This is not to say that comics are a medium, but that comics are spread using different medial forms, such as the comic album, the comic issue, the comic magazine, the comic strip (87), the webcomic, etc. We have seen that this makes sense in the context of intercultural translation in which the physical format of the work is foregrounded due to the many different conventions in comics publication.

His second point revolves around the status of comics in a society. This influences the production and translation of comics. He cites Drechsel et al., who describe comics as an anonymous art form, which is subject to reproduction, editing, and cutting to the extent that there is no authenticity in them. There is no solid ownership of comics and they move between the agents, publisher, sellers, syndicates, etc. (87) before ending up in the hands of the reader. This view of comics may have been true of certain markets, but definitely not for all comics. This seems

ridiculous if one considers the status of comic artists in the Franco-Belgian market such as Hergé and modern day graphic novelists such as Alan Moore. This does illustrate the extent to which the status of comics can influence the way one views them and thus would translate them.

In his third point, he comes close to describing comics the way they would be defined in a dictionary. He writes that comics are a narrative form, in which an action is shown in a series of (at least two) drawn panels and is told through verbal and/or visual signs. The content of these comics is extremely flexible and open, but the contents are often culturally determined (87). He describes how this culturally determined content is delivered in a polysemiotic form, which combines verbal and visual elements in a way that turns these separate parts into a coherent whole (88). With this description, he incorporates the idea of narrativity into comics, which has before been put into question by Meskin, and he distinguishes between single-panel cartoons and multi-panel comics. Other than that, he gives a description which leaves room for many different kinds of comics, without unnecessary exclusions.

Lastly, his fourth point is about specific components, which are typically, but not necessarily, used in comics. These are speech- and thought balloons, pictograms, onomatopoeias, speed lines, and typography. Again, he emphasizes the cultural specificity of these components, the use of which historically differs from country to country (88). While it is true that these components are typically associated with comics, they do not serve to distinguish comics from non-comics. It is, however, important for translators to be aware of the cultural specificity of these components, and the extent to which these can or should be translated.

In his article “Thump, Whizz, Poom: A framework for the study of comics under translation”, published in the same year as the original thesis his book is based on, Kaindl proposes a working definition of comics in which he seems to incorporate only the last two points mentioned in his book:

“Comics are narrative forms in which the story is told in a series of at least two separate pictures. The individual pictures provide contexts for

one another, thus distinguishing comics from single-frame cartoons. Comics involve linguistic, typographic and pictorial signs and combinations of signs as well as a number of specific components such as speech-bubbles, speed lines, onomatopoeia etc., which serve particular functions. The form and use of these elements are subject to culture-specific conventions.” (264)

Here he more explicitly excludes cartoons from his definition. The idea of individual images providing context for one another recalls Groensteen’s idea of iconic solidarity. Any image in a series will provide some context on the rest, even if that series is ordered randomly, because even randomness is a context in which we can interpret that series. In the case of single-panel cartoons, the context for the cartoon is entirely dependent on the experience the reader brings to the picture, which may or may not be a shared experience they have with the artist. This makes it much more difficult to create a whole world in a single-panel cartoon, than it is to create one in a comic. Of course, not all comics make use of this world-building capability, but this potentially increased independence from reality is a convincing argument to differentiate between comics and cartoons while trying to define the subject.

Another German-language scholar writing on the subject of comics translation is Nathalie Mälzer, who published an article called *Taxonomien von Bild-Text-Beziehungen im Comic* in 2015. In it she does not attempt any concise definition of comics, but she does make some interesting remarks about their semiotic constitution which distinguishes them from other art forms. Firstly, she rejects the use of the term multimediality as used by Bernd Spillner in his 1980 article, and suggests the term multicodal instead (47). Since, semiotically speaking, it is the pictorial code and the verbal code which are combined in the creation of comics, or iconic and symbolic signs. The combination of these signs is not unique to comics, but what makes comics interesting, is the semiotic convergence that occurs in them. For Mälzer, this is the way in which symbolic signs seem to become iconic, for example by using typography or onomatopoeia to visually express actions in comics, and iconic signs

can become symbolic (48), such as when stars or birds around a character's head are used to indicate injury. Mälzer remarks that this undermining of assumptions about the conventional use of image and text is precisely what makes comics so interesting (50).

1.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen that defining comics is difficult, and even gets neglected a large part of the time. Scholars writing on the subject tend to focus on the characteristics of comics which are relevant for their particular research, which results in disunity among scholars working in the same field, where people are often not even talking about the same thing when they use the word “comics”. Some scholars do include anachronistic examples such as the Bayeux tapestry, while others do not. Some scholars do include single-panel cartoons, while others do not. Some view the image as dominant in comics, some describe the image as something that can be “read” like text, while yet others see the relation between image and text as complimentary. Some people describe comics as a medium or a genre, some as multimedial, multimodal, multicodal or polysemiotic. Some focus on the cultural determinacy of comics, while others try to describe them in general terms.

What I think is important to remember, is the real diversity of the phenomenon that generally gets described as “comics”. Comics can range from mass-produced superhero comics, to the classic structured newspaper comics, to the boundless webcomic, to Japanese manga books, to Franco-Belgian comic-albums, to limited edition artworks, to journalistic non-fiction comics, to instructional leaflets, to book-length graphic novels, and those are just the uncontroversial examples. All these different forms of comics invite a different way of reading, and pose different kinds of questions to scholars of comic studies and to translators. It is hard to write about “comics” in general, because there is no such thing as a generic, platonic, comic. What I propose is to treat the term “comics” the same way we treat the term “prose”, in that we clearly acknowledge the different kinds of prose available for

translation, from literary works to scientific papers filled with jargon and so on, and the different kinds of strategies that go along with these differences. Rather than trying to define comics in general, I think it is important to acknowledge the diversity of the phenomenon, and when talking about one specific sub-species of comics, clarifying the position of that sub-type within the larger context of comics as a whole.

A helpful concept to keep in mind when talking about comics, is Wittgenstein's idea of family resemblances. Wittgenstein himself develops this concept in the context of trying to describe "games" (part 1, §66), which also have no unique, essential characteristic in common, which makes them hard to define. He describes games as "a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing [sic]: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail" (part 1, §66), just like families of people "for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way" (part 1, §67). Comics can be described as a family in the same way, as sharing several characteristics in an overlapping and crisscrossing way, without there being one single unique defining characteristic. Some of the most shared characteristics would be the use of visual imagery, the combination of words and pictures, the use of narrative images, semiotic convergence, and iconic solidarity, although these are of course not necessarily shared by all comics, or unique to comics. This might also allow us to view single-panel cartoons, as a side-branch on the family tree, photo-comics as a marriage between the family of photography and that of comics, and the Bayeux tapestry as a distant great-grandparent, giving us a much more nuanced view of the lines between art forms.

When talking about comics in translation it is also important to specify which kinds of comics are being discussed. Especially because scholars writing about comics in translation seem particularly inclined to skip the definition question altogether. Often it is just assumed that the reader knows what is meant by "comics". In older articles about comics translation that focus on linguistic elements, the idea of

constrained translation seems to dominate. Judging by the examples of comics given in those articles, they seem to focus more on comics such as *Asterix* and other comics that are generally seen as low-brow, and get published on paper in a standard comic book format. These comics are also known for their creative uses of puns and speaking names, which makes for a unique challenge to translators. This is very different from the kinds of translation problems one might find while working on certain graphic novels which do not utilize language in this way, or may use hardly any words at all.

It is also sobering to remember that when talking about comics in translation, we are necessarily not talking about comics in general, because a whole subtype of comics gets automatically excluded from the discussion, namely wordless comics. Being aware of the place of specific sub-types of comics within the cultural field of comics will not solve the disunity among scholars, because the disunity is fundamentally caused by the diversity of comics. It may hopefully make clear that that disunity is an inescapable result of studying such a diverse phenomenon.

Many differences in form between comics can be traced back to the role of comics within the cultural field of a particular country, which determines the status that is given to comics. This status is firstly an important factor that determines which comics even get translated, and from which source culture into which target culture. It also determines the kind of translation strategies are acceptable in that particular comic. In the kinds of comics that are owned by syndicates, where there is no original author anymore, but a collective of generally anonymous workers who mass-produce a product, it is much more acceptable to make changes to the source text and images in order to make it more suitable to a target audience. This, while in the kinds of graphic novels that make high-brow artistic claims, changing the images to suit the target audience may seem almost like sacrilege.

Chapter 2: Translation theory of comics

In this chapter, I will give an overview of what has been written about comics translation in the secondary literature. As I have mentioned in my introduction, scholarly writing knows several different paradigms. There is a linguistic paradigm, in which the focus lies on the analysis of specific translation problems that arise from the use of linguistic elements such as onomatopoeias, proper names, puns, etc. (Zanettin, “Translation studies” 3). These articles tend to focus on specific case studies as well, and are thus often linked to a specific language combination. These articles are interesting for the practical examples they give, but according to Kaindl, these examples tend to come from specific kinds of comics, namely entertaining comics that are written for a young audience that rely heavily on the use of puns for humor, such as *Asterix* and *Tintin* (“Multimodality” 173). I will not go into detail on this paradigm, since the paradigms that follow give a much more interesting range of theories.

2.1 Semiotics

There is also a semiotic approach to comics translation, in which the focus lies more on the classification of iconic and graphic signs to be translated. Bernd Spillner writes about this kind of approach in his 1980 article “Semiotische Aspekte der Übersetzung von Comics-Texten.” In it, he starts by citing Catford’s definition of translation as “a process of substituting a text in one language for a text in another” (73) and points out that this definition only works when a source text consists of only linguistic signs. Many texts rely on non-verbal signs, comics being an obvious example, and these signs can be culturally determined as well and may also require translation. In semiotically complex texts like comics, verbal and non-verbal elements can complement each other, which makes translation a lot more complicated than it would seem by Catford’s definition.

In the rest of his article, Spillner explores other kinds of semiotically complex text-types, and how they are described in the secondary literature. He specifically criticizes Reiss' category of 'audio-medial text types' which she proposes in her 1976 book *Texttyp und Übersetzungsmethode*. He argues that this category arbitrarily lumps together irrelevant texts, creating a meaningless divide. He does acknowledge the importance of being aware of the medium of your source text as a translator, but sees no point in creating these kinds or arbitrary categories.

The final part of his article is an exploration of the degree to which text contributes to the creation of meaning in comics. He explores several examples of strips from *Asterix* and shows how the humor is a result of the interplay between words and images. In his examples, humor can be a result of playing with expectation of the reader, by showing a contrast or a reversal of meanings between images and text. If one wants to translate a joke like this, in some circumstances it would be ideal if the image can be changed for the translation. This happens occasionally, but this is usually not the sole decision of the translator, as comic production is often a multi-person effort. More often the text is changed to such an extent that there is still a joke in the target text, but it is a joke of a different kind.

Another translation scholar using a semiotic approach to comics translation is Nadine Celotti. In her article from Zanettin's collection, she explicitly responds to another article by Grun and Dollerup from 2003, in which they talk about loss and possible gain that can occur when translating comics. They argue that while translation is often viewed as a derivative, where loss can occur relative to the original, it is also possible for there to be gain in a translation (197). They show that it is possible for comics, where the translation is constrained by space and by the fact that the words need to fit the context of the images (198), it is still possible to create a translation that is either more specific than the original or that contains more information, and thus has "gained" something relative to the original. Celotti rejects this whole idea of "loss" and "gain" because it is based on the idea that the image is a constraint to the translator (35). This idea of the image as a mere constraint implies

that the text is where the meaning is created, and thus does not recognize the role of the image in the meaning-making process (34).

Celotti's article focuses more on the different roles text can play in relation to the image. She distinguishes four loci of translation, namely:

- text balloons, be they speech or thought balloons,
- captions, traditionally found in rectangular text boxes,
- titles, by this she means the title of the comics, which is a small but significant part of the work itself, and influences how it is viewed in translation,
- and lastly linguistic paratext, which refers to text that is integrated within the image, such as onomatopoeia, inscriptions within the image and other textual elements (38-39).

When this linguistic paratext is thoroughly embedded in the image, it can be hard to translate, because it requires the cooperation of a translator, artist and the publisher who makes the final decision. According to Celotti, this is what makes these paratexts interesting as a research topic, because while the other loci of translation are usually translated consistently, the linguistic paratext could show a high variability in translation strategies (39).

These translation strategies are described as follows in Celotti's article. Firstly, there is the option to translate the text into the target language, changing the image if necessary. This often happens when the verbal message is important for the understanding of the comic as a whole. Another option is to leave the image the same, but provide a translation of the paratext in a footnote. This happens when the text is too deeply embedded in the image, or the words take on such an iconic status, that translating them would be an intrusion on the image (40). Examples can be seen in the Dutch translation of Alan Moore's *Watchmen*, where protest signs and newspaper headlines are often translated in footnotes. Another option is to leave the image untranslated without a footnote. This can be a purposeful strategy to emphasize the original setting of a comic (41).

Another strategy is to adapt the text so that it is not merely a translation of the source text, but a text that fits better in the target culture as well (40). This can be part of an overall strategy of domestication, which would be more common to find in Donald Duck comics. Lastly, it is possible to delete a part of the linguistic paratext altogether, for example when the text is not necessary to understand the comic, and when leaving it in the original language would cause confusion. This can prevent a reader from feeling like they are missing something, without making a convoluted attempt to compensate for that specific piece of lost information. In practice, of course, these strategies are found used in all kinds of situations, and combinations. In a single comic, a translator may make use of several strategies, in order to make a coherent whole.

2.2 Multimodality

Another theoretic approach to comic translation that is related to the semiotic approach, stems from the idea of multimodality. This term is used more broadly in communications theory and other fields to refer to media types that use multiple modes in order to create meaning. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen, who popularized this approach, a mode refers to “a socially shaped and culturally given resource for making meaning” (qtd. in Borodo, “Multimodality” 23). In the case of comics, it is a combination of the visual and the textual mode. From the multimodal perspective, “meaning is not only communicated by language but also many other modes (pictorial images, gesture, posture, gaze, and colour). This is not mere embellishment or illustration, but separate modes that in concrete circumstances possess equal meaning-making potential” (23). Research into comics translation using multimodality as a focus point, may ask questions about the relation between modes and how it may differ between source and target text.

Borodo talks about three ways in which the different modes may relate to each other based on an article by Martinec and Salway. Firstly, one can talk of elaboration when, for example, the text “merely mentions certain aspects already present in the

visual” (23). Then there is the relationship of extension, where the text may expand upon the visual by adding new information. Lastly there is the category of enhancement, where the text provides a new way of looking at the visual part of the comic (23). In the first of these categories the meanings created by each of these modes shows a high degree of overlap. In the second and third category, the overlap is smaller, and the meaning-making process is more of a collaboration between the two modes (24).

Borodo gives a method for analyzing the multimodal aspects of comics for translators by starting with identifying the “visual message elements”, which include the participants in the comic, animate or inanimate, the processes which occur, the circumstances under which they occur and the attributes that can be ascribed to each of these other elements (24). The next step would be to identify the lexical items that correspond to these visual message elements and figure out the relation these have, to their correspondent in the visual mode. These relations can be described in several different ways, namely as repetition, synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, where this last category contains the subcategories meronymy and collocation (24). Finally, comics exhibit some other compositional relationships such as visual salience, framing and reading paths (24). For a translator, it can be interesting to map the relations between the different modes of a comic this way, in order to be able to judge to what extent both the text and image contribute to the meaning of a particular comic panel, and to what extent the text can be changed and still fit into the existing multimodal relationship.

Another aspect of this multimodal approach which can be interesting for translators, is the reassurance that the image is not a mere constraint, but can also be a resource. An awareness of the relationships between modes can prove useful, because if you as a translator see redundant synonymy and repetition, it might be possible to leave out some text. “What has been shown in the visual mode, does not necessarily have to be repeated in the verbal mode” Borodo says, which has previously been remarked especially in the context of subtitling (25). This awareness

of the visual mode in relation to the textual mode also becomes relevant when we try to define comic translation. Borodo sides with Zanettin when he states that comics are more in need of localization than translation, with as a result that the image also becomes subject to change.

Klaus Kaindl has also written an article in 2004 in which he uses this multimodal perspective. In it he focusses on the multimodal aspect of humor in comics, and how it is changed or preserved in translation. He describes comics here as a hybrid genre, in which linguistic and pictographic elements combine to convey meaning (173). This multimodal perspective allows him to ask several interesting questions about the nature of the text-image relation and its influence on translation strategies and the nature of translation in general: “If we do not translate languages but cultures, what is the role of the non-verbal dimension in translation: do we have to redefine the concept of translation in order to also include forms of transfer which do not involve images?” (174).

In this article, he gives several interesting examples of case studies where the multimodal character of humor is hard to maintain in translation because of different gestural or idiomatic conventions. In some cases, the type of humor changes from multimodal to monomodal in translation, or the humor is removed completely. This article is explicitly a response to many linguistically focused articles about comic translation which focus on wordplay and onomatopoeia in “linguistically demanding comics” such as *Asterix*, and shows that the image deserves just as much attention as the text (173). He rejects the idea that there exists some kind of visual Esperanto for comics, where there is some kind of universal visual code which requires no translation at all (183). Aside from these observations, however, he does not come close to answering the questions he poses at the beginning. He ends his article with a reaffirmation that the image in comics deserves more attention, and a call to translation scholars to develop a method of analysis and translation procedures for multimodal humor in comics.

2.3 Contextual approach

More interesting is Kaindl's seminal 1999 article "Thump, Whizz, Poom: A framework for the study of comics under translation." In this work, he explores his idea of a sociocultural framework for the study of comic translation. He states that translation needs to be seen not just as a linguistic or textual operation, but a social practice (265). By taking this broader perspective, it is possible to incorporate the social context in which the source and target texts are published in their analysis. For this sociological approach, he bases his ideas on those of Bourdieu, who has written about the idea of a cultural field, the context in which creation, publication, distribution and consumption of a cultural product occurs, and habitus, the learned ways in which an individual consumes cultural products that becomes so natural as to seem like it was never learned at all. "Bourdieu's work is founded on the premise that any agent of cultural production occupies a particular position within a social space. The relative position in the space of production in turn shapes the form and content of what is being produced" (266).

Kaindl gives a rough sketch of the different social fields of comics within the western world and their historical context. He describes the origin of newspaper comics at the end of the nineteenth century in the US and the syndicates that owned those comics. This system promoted a type of commercial comic that follows a standard template, so that many different creators can work on it without interrupting the reading experience. This commercial motivation also meant that controversial or political content would not be shown, but that the focus was more on entertainment (269-270).

Meanwhile in Europe newspapers had much less influence, and there was more room for individual ownership of comics with specific publishing companies for comics in France the first half of the twentieth century (271). This resulted in a cultural field that is closer to that of literature in Europe, especially in French-speaking regions. In German-speaking countries these kinds of publishing companies only started to emerge after the Second World War, and the comics

published in German were mostly translations from American and Franco-Belgian comics. Comics were mostly seen as a foreign product to be distrusted, and rules censorship, especially self-censorship, were officially institutionalized in Germany in 1955. Most comics in the German-speaking countries were classified as mass-literature for children, and thus had a low cultural capital (271-272).

Zanettin goes into more detail on the history of comics publication in the introduction to *Comics in Translation*. He describes the golden age of comics in the United States before and after the Second World War, and the flourishing of comic genres that were published at the time, which ultimately lead to an anti-comics crusade by people who thought they were having a bad influence on children. This, in its turn, lead to the underground commix scene from the 1960s, which later resurfaced in the 1980s as graphic novels (2-3). Meanwhile in Japan, a mostly independent cultural field emerged. Some translated American comics have had influence on the development of comics in Japan, but the scope of manga's popularity and diversity is incomparable to that of comics in the West.

2.4 Kaindl's Taxonomy

Along with his contextual approach, Kaindl also provides a concrete schema to analyze the elements that make up a comic. Firstly, it is possible to divide these elements into linguistic, typographic and pictorial signs. These linguistic signs can take the form of titles, dialogue texts, narrations, inscriptions and onomatopoeia (273-274). These are all the words that can appear in or around a comic, and while it is straightforward for dialogue texts and narrations to be subject to translation, the translation strategy for the other subcategories might be more dependent on the context.

The typography of a comic forms "the interface between language and pictures" (274). In comics, the way text and letters are shaped can give information about the tone, pitch or tempo with which they are spoken. This relates to the idea also brought forward by Neil Cohn that the textual element of comics is actually a

visual representation of aural text (8). Another example of the use of typography in *Asterix* is the use of different typefaces for characters from different nationalities (274). Then, there is the classic use of a sequence of pictograms in comics to indicate swearing: @%#\$%! When changing the textual content of a comic in translation, it is important to keep in mind the typographical form in which that content was presented, and the extent to which it might be bound by cultural conventions.

For the pictorial part of comics, one can look at the panels, the use of color, speed lines, perspective, the format, etc. (274). In “Thump, Whizz, Poom”, Kaindl does not go into much detail about the analysis of the visual part of a comic, but he does in his book *Übersetzungswissenschaft im interdisziplinären Dialog*. Firstly, he distinguishes the macro from the micro level, where the pictorial elements on the macro level establish the functional coherence between panels, for example by repeating certain visual elements or by introducing new ones. He distinguishes five types of coherence, namely a relation in time, space, time and space, atmosphere, and an emotional dimension. Then on the micro-level, one can look at the individual panel and distinguish between pictorial signs which give information about the spatial context, and signs which portray the action of a panel. The spatial signs may situate an action in a geographic space, or clarify the temporal or atmospheric context. These are entirely dependent on the perspective from which the artist portrays the action, while the action signs will be present no matter which perspective is chosen. These action signs give information about what is happening, what the emotional attitudes are and how movements and facts are occurring (227).

In *Thump, Whizz, Poom*, Kaindl also gives a typology of translation procedures for the different textual, pictorial and typographic elements to be found in comics, which he bases on Delabastita’s 1989 work on film translation. There are six broad categories of translation strategies, namely: repetitio, deletio, detractio, adiectio, transmutatio, and substitutio (275). The first of these, repetitio, means an unchanged repetition of the source text element into the target text (275). Deletio is the complete removal of text or pictures, whereas detractio would be the partial removal of such

elements (277). *Adiectio* refers to an addition of material in the target text, for example the coloring of a comic which was originally in black and white, or the addition of footnotes to add context or a translation (278-289). When *transmutatio* occurs, it refers to a change of order in the pictorial or textual elements, for example when Japanese manga were mirrored in translation in order to comply with the conventional western reading direction (281). Lastly, *substitutio* means a replacement of source text elements with “more or less equivalent” elements (283). This may mean a replacement of a culturally specific element, with one that has the same function in the target culture.

In his 2004 book, Kaindl also gives a broad categorization of different types of image-text relationships in comics. These are the categories of parallelism, confirmation, enrichment, emphasis, opposition and unity (265). Parallelism occurs when the visual and the verbal part of a comic tell two independent stories without any direct relation between the two. Complete parallelism is rare, but it is possible for the spatial signs of a comic to be independent from the verbal elements, while the action signs are not (259). Confirmation occurs when the image and the text each support the message presented by the other sign system (260). This is different from unity, where the image and text convey the same message. Complete unity is just as rare as parallelism, since there is usually a difference in the way information is presented in both sign systems, so that the overlap in meaning is not complete (262). Enrichment happens when in one sign system information is given that is not given in the other system, so that both systems complete each other (261). Emphasis is when one sign system gives information about which part of the other sign system deserves more attention (261).

2.5 Mälzer

In her 2015 article, Nathalie Mälzer compares Kaindl’s categorization of image-text relations with another proposal for the categorization of these relations brought forth by Scott McCloud in his work *Understanding Comics*. McCloud gives seven categories

for relations, namely word specific, picture specific, duo-specific, additive, parallel, montage, and interdependent (153-154). The first three categories refer to the element in the comic where the meaning is mostly created, with duo-specific comics being an example where the image and text convey the same meaning (153) – unity in Kaindl's terms. With an additive relation, the image and text amplify each other in the same way as Kaindl's category of confirmation (154). McCloud's category of parallelism is also similar to that of Kaindl, but McCloud does not give the kind of flexible nuance Kaindl gives (154).

Montage is a completely different kind of relation, where the text is integrated into the picture in such a way that it becomes part of the picture (154). Kaindl addresses this type of typographic play in his other work, but makes no separate category for it in his categorization of image-text relations. Perhaps because he would rather treat typology as a separate phenomenon to be analyzed in comics. Lastly McCloud's category of interdependence is similar to Kaindl's category of enrichment, where the pictures supply information that cannot be found in the words to create a meaningful message, or vice versa (155).

Mälzer points out that in Kaindl's taxonomy it is possible for several categories to apply to a single panel. McCloud does not mention any compatibility between categories. According to Mälzer, McCloud's categories seem to betray two separate kinds of spectra, where on the one hand it is possible to distinguish between comics that are either more dependent on text for meaning-creating or on the visual part of the comic. On the other hand, there is the opposition between redundancy and parallelism, where the image and text may confer the same meaning, may supplement each other or may be completely separate from each other (53). Mälzer also suggests distinguishing between redundancy that is obligatory, and redundancy that is not, which when it occurs is probably there for a reason (60). The category of montage would not fit into either of these spectra, but might require a different kind of categorization altogether.

Mälzer further suggests several other terms which might be helpful for translators to keep in mind. Firstly, there is the idea of semiotic convergence, which occurs when iconic and symbolic signs take on each other's functions. In comics, often the pictorial aspects will convey symbolic meanings which in other types of works would be fulfilled by text (48). For example, when colors are used to symbolize moods or ideas. Likewise, text, which usually serves a symbolic function may become iconic, by the use of typography (48). This becomes especially clear when onomatopoeias are used, which are often portrayed in such a way that the shape of the words mimics the type of sound they make. For translators, this becomes interesting when determining to what extent the image needs to be taken into account when translating a text, and what can be left out when redundancy would otherwise occur.

Secondly, there is the idea of spatial competition. Because comics are a visual medium which, on paper, only occupies a limited space. There is always a form of spatial competition going on between the image and the text. The two cannot occupy the same physical space, so often room is made for text in the form of word balloons. The relation between the space occupied by the text and that occupied by the image may differ at different points in a story, and may differ in general between different kinds of comics and comics by different artists. Sometimes when a single panel provides not enough room for both images and text, it can happen that either element will protrude outside of the panel and into the gutter, or white space between panels, or even into other panels (58). In some cases, as with the comic *Mister Wonderful* by Daniel Clowes in some panels the word balloons overlap to give the effect of people talking over each other (57). These give an interesting effect, which only works if there is an established norm for the spatial relation between text and image which is referenced and then rejected. While translating, it may happen that the translation is longer or shorter than the source text, which may disrupt the original spatial relation between image and text.

Finally, the idea of synchronization points, which Mälzer borrows from Michel Chion's book on image and sound, *L'audio vision*, becomes interesting when looking at the temporal relation between image and text. The image and text both give a sense of time, but in a different way. The text in comics is often part of dialogue, which means that there is a passing of time during which the text is spoken in the story. The image may be a snapshot, but also often implies movement and action. The passage of time often happens between panels, when the action plays out in the mind of the reader. When text and images are utilized in the same panel, they usually result in a synchronization point, in which the link between the moment in time when the visual action happens and the moment in time when the verbal speech happens. As a translator, it is important to be aware of these synchronization points, because these are where the image and text are most intertwined, and a shift in these points may result in a comic looking not quite right.

2.6 Comparison of Kaindl and Celotti's theories

Although there are many interesting theoretical approaches to comic translation, my case study will focus on the works of Kaindl and Celotti. As we have seen, both scholars have developed somewhat contradictory, but also complimentary systems of parsing different comic elements, and translation strategies. I will here compare both theories to see to what extent they overlap and whether it is possible to create a single categorization method for both translatable elements in comics and translation strategies.

2.6.1 Taxonomy of translatable elements

Looking first at the translatable elements of comics, we have seen that Celotti distinguishes four categories of translatable elements, namely:

- text balloons, which can be either speech or thought balloons,
- captions, which often occur in rectangular boxes,

- titles, which appear above the story, and can influence the way the story is viewed,
- and linguistic paratexts, which includes onomatopoeia, inscriptions and other textual elements. (38-39)

Kaindl's taxonomy is one that includes a broader description of the pictorial elements of comics, as well as the linguistic and typographic elements. Within these linguistic elements Kaindl distinguishes several categories, namely titles, dialogue texts, narrations, inscriptions, and onomatopoeia (273-274). Thus, we see that although both scholars take a completely different approach to parsing the different elements of comics, they come to a similar categorization. Both scholars agree that titles of comics deserve to be seen as a category of their own, even though they represent a relatively small part of the comic, because they provide a first impression of a comic to the reader and a context through which the comic is viewed.

Another category would be what Celotti calls text balloons and what Kaindl calls dialog texts. For Celotti this explicitly includes thoughts in thought balloons, but with Kaindl's taxonomy this is not explicitly mentioned. It is also important to note that while it is conventional for dialogue and thoughts to be written in balloons, this is not necessary. In Japanese manga, for example, it is more conventional to use a line to connect the speaker to the text, than a classic western word balloon. There are also western examples, like *Mister Wonderful*, where thoughts are consistently shown in rectangular blocks which are more commonly used for captions. There is an instance where the thoughts of our main character are written in the center of the panel, as though the whole panel is the thought box (see image 1). In the next panel, we even see a personification of Marshall's thoughts, which uses a dialogue balloon to express words which are clearly not said out loud. This illustrates that it is not important which form the text box for dialogue or thought takes, as long as it is clear where it is coming from. The form only becomes relevant for translation when the text is embedded in the image such a way that the image needs to be redrawn in order to make the translation fit.

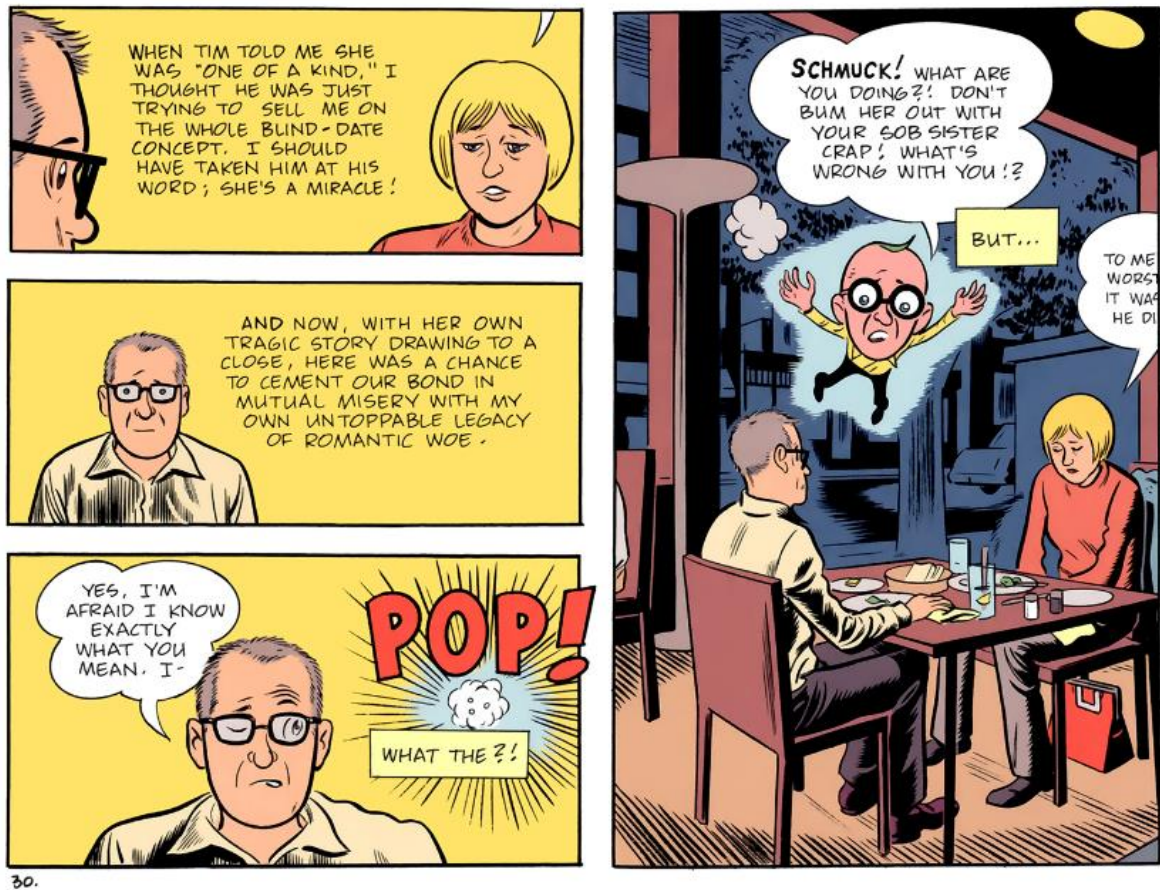


Image 1: Departure from the conventional use of thought balloons. © Daniel Clowes.

Narrative captions form a separate category for both Celotti and Kaindl, Celotti, again, remarks on the convention of using rectangular boxes for these types of captions. We only have to look at the first page of the Donald Duck story *Poor Rich Campers* to see an example of a narrative text in a different kind of formatting (see image 2). Again, I think it is safe to say the format is not what leads us to classify something as narrative text. Here, it is important to ask who the narrator is, and who the speaker is for each sentence. If there is an external narrator to the story who talks directly to the reader, text written from that narrator's perspective can typically be seen as narrative captions. They are typically much less common than dialogue text, but they help to tie the story together on a narrative level, by giving information about elapsed type or a change in location.



Image 2: Narrative text outside of a rectangular box. © Disney.

Lastly, Kaindl and Celotti differ in the way they categorize inscriptions and onomatopoeia as linguistic elements in comics. Kaindl sees them as two separate categories, on the same level as dialogue text and narrative captions. For Celotti they form a single category called “linguistic paratext” which also leaves room for any other type of text that can be used in a comic. In *Mister Wonderful*, we see an example of text which would be hard to classify in Kaindl’s taxonomy, but which could easily fit in the category of linguistic paratext (see image 3).

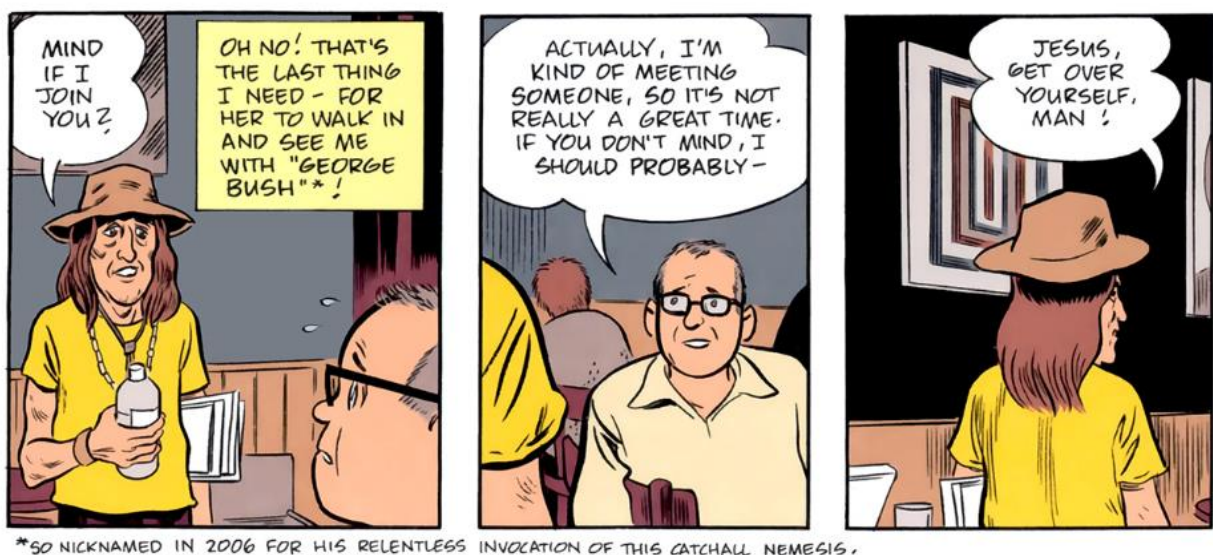


Image 3: Example of the use of a footnote to give more information to the reader. © Daniel Clowes

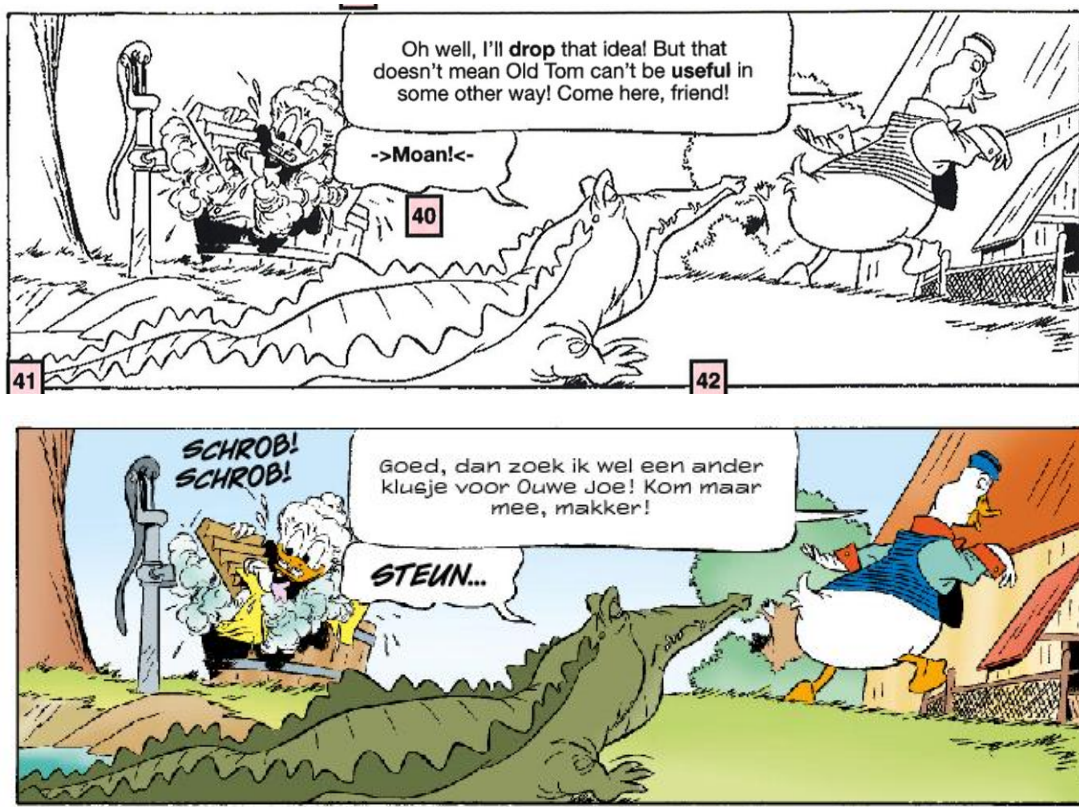
2.6.2 Translation strategies

Both Kaindl and Celotti also give a list of possible translation strategies for comics. Again, both scholars have different approaches to the classification of these strategies. Kaindl borrows his terms from film theory, and his terms apply to both images and text (TWP 275). Celotti focusses on text exclusively, and remarks that most of the variety in translation strategies can be found in linguistic paratext, since this often has the most complicated relation to the images around it (40). To recap Celotti's theory, she proposes the following translation strategies for text in comics: translation, translation in footnote, non-translation, cultural adaptation, deletion, and mix of these strategies (40). As described in an earlier chapter, Kaindl's translation strategies are: *repetitio*, *deletio*, *detractio*, *adiectio*, *transmutatio*, and *substitutio* (TWP 275). *Repetitio* being the untranslated repetition of the source text element in the target text, and *deletio* being the removal of a source text element altogether. With *detractio* only a part of the source text element is removed, and with *adiectio* an element is added in the target text that was not present in the source text. *Transmutatio* happens when the order of source text elements is changed and substitution is when a source text element is substituted with a culturally "equivalent" element in the target text (275-283).

The first major difference we see between both categorizations, is the lack of a category for translation proper in Kaindl's proposal. This may be because his categorization is based on film theory, which is entirely visual, and the category of "translation proper" doesn't make a lot of sense when applied to the visual aspects of comics. This categorization also makes more sense when we see it as a way to identify anything that deviates from translation proper. Still, it might be useful to add this category for instances when the text in a comic gets translated without any major additions or deletions, and without the content being culturally adapted. Of course, there is no such thing as a straightforward translation, and many sub-categories of translation strategies have previously been discussed by other scholars such as Chesterfield, Vinay and Dalbarnet, Catford, Nida, Malone, etc., since these

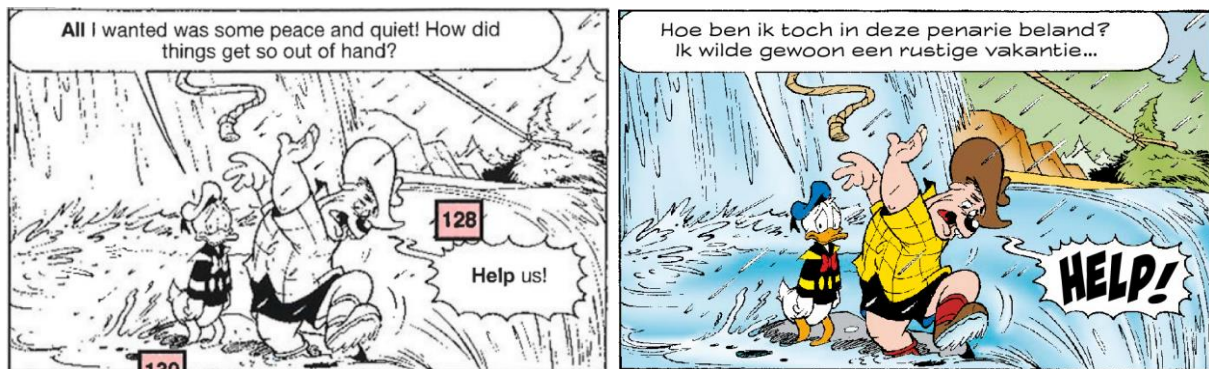
apply to other types of text as well. For this thesis, I will not go into further detail of these types of translation strategies.

Another translation strategy Celotti proposes which is missing from Kaindl's visual categorization, is translation in the form of a footnote, but there are several categories which both scholars recognize, albeit with a different kind of wording. Celotti's non-translation can be compared with Kaindl's *repetitio*, which would describe the strategy of keeping a source text element the same in the translation. Similarly, Celotti's cultural adaptation is similar to Kaindl's *substitutio*, in which culture specific elements from the source culture are replaced with corresponding elements from the target culture. Deletion for Celotti is simply the removal of certain source text elements, whereas Kaindl distinguishes between the complete and partial removal of elements. It can be hard to draw the line between these two types of removal, since for the target text reader, it is often equally hard to tell whether an element was partially reduced or removed entirely. Therefore, it might be simpler to combine these two categories.



Images 4 and 5: Example of what Kaindl calls *adiectio*, in Donald Duck. © Disney.

Lastly, there are two categories described by Kaindl, which are absent in Celotti's categorization, namely *adiectio* and *transmutatio*. The addition of elements is a possibility which should not be ignored, as can be seen in images 4 and 5, where an onomatopoeia is added in the Dutch version of this comic, to clarify what grandmother is doing in this panel. As for the category of "*transmutatio*", Kaindl gives mirrored translations of manga comics where as an example whereby the order of comic elements is changed. Another example can be seen in images 6 and 7, where the order of two sentences in one speech balloon is reversed. I will be using the terms "*addition*" and "*transmutation*" to refer to these concepts.



Images 6 and 7: The two sentences uttered by Donald Duck are placed in a different order in the translation. © Disney.

Chapter 3: Case study

For my case study, I will analyze two different comics and their translations, to see to what extent the theories described above can be applied to them. I will start by introducing the two comics, and their position in the social field, in accordance with Kaindl's sociocultural approach to comic translation. I will explore Donald Duck as a comic character, then I will discuss Daniel Clowes and his comic *Mister Wonderful*. Next, I will explore to what extent our categorization of translatable elements can be applied to both comics. I will do this by discussing the way each of the different proposed elements appear in both comics, and putting into context what the use of each element can tell us about a comic and the way it might best be translated.

Lastly, I will explore the different proposed translation strategies, and how they are used in practice. I will do this by categorizing each instance of text in the translations of both comics by what strategy was used. This process will result in different graphs for both different comics, which present an impression of the overall translation strategies used. For the purpose of my analysis, a single speech balloon counts as a single instance and in cases where several strategies were used in the same text-field, each strategy receives an equal part of a point.

3.1 Donald Duck

The Donald Duck figure started as a Walt Disney cartoon in the 1930s, but it was during the 1940s that the character was given life on the comics page by Carl Barks. Barks was the one who created Duckburg and the many secondary characters who live there as well (Pollmann 126). While the character is American in origin, the comics are more popular in other countries nowadays. Where in the US the number of copies of the Donald Duck magazine run in the ten thousand, in the Netherlands that number exceeds three hundred thousand. Foreign versions of the Donald Duck strips also often include local cultural elements, such as accents and "duckified" local place names (128). As evidenced by the sheer number of publications by country on

the I.N.D.U.C.K.S. website, Donald Duck also seems to be quite popular in Italy, Germany, Brazil, France and the Scandinavian countries (“Publications”). While comics are produced in each of these countries for their own home-markets, comics are also often produced in English, for translation into other languages.

Its Walt Disney origin, places Donald Duck strips into a highly commercial part of the cultural field, aimed at children as a target audience. The strips are meant to entertain as many kids as possible, and are therefore more likely to be inoffensive and relatively uncomplicated. Of course, in the European countries, there are also many older readers, who have either been reading the strip since childhood, or are reading it with their own children. This gives the strip a possible second layer of humor which is aimed at older readers, but which children may not even pick up on. The fact that this character is more than eighty years old means there is a vast canon of historical precedent which can be referred to, and a vast number of side characters with their own personalities and idiosyncrasies. The Dutch weekly magazine has been in print since 1952, which means there is also a whole separate Dutch canon of traditions and localized idiosyncrasies that translators need to keep in mind when translating these stories.

Now we have given a brief overview of the position of Donald Duck as a character in the cultural field. I want to focus on a few specific comics. The source texts of these comics were generously provided to me by Manon Berlang, who is also the translator of these comics, with the permission of Sanoma, the publishing house behind the Dutch Donald Duck comics. The titles of these stories are *Lazy Day* (D 2009-177), *Boss Lady* (D 2012-006), *Gator Aid* (D 2014-079), and *Poor Rich Campers* (D/D 2003-033). *Lazy Day* is about Donald Duck’s day off, where he tries to relax, but everything around him seem to go wrong. In *Boss Lady*, Scrooge McDuck’s secretary wins millions of dollars in a game show, and Uncle Scrooge offers to be her secretary. *Gator Aid* is about Gus Goose, Donald’s lazy cousin, who discovers that his grandmother has adopted a lazy old alligator. Gus tries to come up with chores for the alligator to do, but fails humorously. Finally, in *Poor Rich Campers* Donald goes

camping with his cousins Huey, Dewey and Louis, and runs into his old classmate and rival Phil T. Rich, which results into a competition about who can stay on the camp grounds, and who should find another spot.

If we enter the story codes written in brackets into the I.N.D.U.C.K.S. we find that these stories were originally written by Terry LaBan, Janet Gilbert, Lars Jensen, and Jens Hansegård and drawn by Bas Heymans, Miquel Pujol, José Ramón Bernado, and Carlos Valenti respectively. These four comics were commissioned by the Danish publication house for the Donald Duck and written in English, to be later translated into several different languages for publication. As mentioned earlier, the Dutch versions have all been translated by Manon Berlang, although the I.N.D.U.C.K.S. incorrectly credits editor Jim van der Weele as the translator for *Lazy Day*. Interestingly enough, none of these comics have ever been published in the original English. The English-language original seems to serve as a template, from which translators can then make a comic that suits their respective target audiences and cultures. This means that the status of the source text is different from that of most comics or other kinds of translations, since it was never meant for publication as is.

3.2 Daniel Clowes

Daniel Clowes is an American comic artist who got his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at age 23 at the Pratt Institute in New York City. Five years later, in 1989, he started his own comic-book series *Eightball*, with Fantagraphics books, which ran through 2004, in which he published many short comics and several serialized graphic novels. Two of his comics have later been turned into movies. He has won several awards for the comics in this series, including Eisners, Harveys, and Ignatz awards. After *Eightball* he created his famous graphic novel *Wilson*, which was published by Drawn & Quarterly, and the serialized comic *Mister Wonderful*, which was first published in *New York Times Magazine*, and later collected and expanded into a standalone graphic novel published by Pantheon Books. He has also made

illustrations for several magazines, musicians and films. His latest graphic novel *Patience* came out in March of 2016 with Fantagraphics Books. According to his own website, his work has been translated into more than twenty languages (“Bio”).

It is important to note that the *Eightball* magazine was published by Fantagraphics books. Fantagraphics is an American independent publishing company for comics, which started in 1976 with the publication of *The Comics Journal*. With this critical journal Fantagraphics wanted to promote the view of comics as fine art, which deserved to be studied with a higher critical standard. The comics published by Fantagraphics were those which the larger comic publishers rejected. Comics that were in their eyes “serious, dramatic, historical, journalistic, political, and satirical”. They published work from artists that were part of the underground commix movement of the 1960s, but also newer generation of alternative cartoonists (Fantagraphics). Daniel Clowes was part of that group of artists, and his career was launched by the magazine that he published with Fantagraphics, which ties him together with the publishing company in the larger cultural field.

Looking at *Mister Wonderful*, I will first give a short summary of the plot. Marshall, an anxious, middle-aged man is set up for a blind date with Natalie, who seems perfect for him. Their date is interrupted by a phone call, a beggar who incites a fit of rage in Marshall, and who later steals Natalie’s purse, a visit to the hospital, and a fist fight between Marshall and Natalie’s ex, but also by Marshall’s intrusive thoughts. His thoughts are written in rectangular boxes which often block the speech balloons with Natalie’s dialogue. This makes for very interesting play with text overlapping text, which poses an interesting problem for our translation analysis. Despite the obstacles during their date, or possibly because of them, Natalie and Marshall get to know each other very well in a short span of time.

The comic started as a twenty-page story for the New York Times Magazine, which ran one page at a time between September 16, 2007 and February 10, 2008. The number of pages was set in advance, and the whole story had to fit in that limited area. It was later expanded into an eighty-page book, published by Pantheon Books

in 2011. The change in the number of pages is mostly due to the change in page format – the pages were cut in two, horizontally, to produce a book that is wider than it is tall – and the enlargement of several panels to fill the whole page, or even two pages. In an interview with the comics-website cbr.com from 2011, Clowes stated that the idea for the wide format came from a book by Maurice Sendak he saw with that shape. It is a striking page format, which he kept in mind while making the comic for the New York Times magazine, with the idea that at one point the comic would be collected into a book.

The different publication formats both influence the way the story is written, and need to be kept in mind while analyzing this comic. The fact that the original run of comics was serialized, means that each page can be read as a stand-alone comic as well, which results in a kind of narrative break between what were the original pages. In the book, however, the story prevents falling into a predictable rhythm by the occasional enlarged panels which allow for breaks in the otherwise packed narrative. The density of the magazine version of the comic is again, due to the twenty-page format. The Dutch translation is published by Oog and Blik, the comics imprint of major literary publisher De Bezige Bij, and uses the book version as the source text, so for the rest of this analysis I will use the book version of the comic, while keeping in mind its magazine-origin.

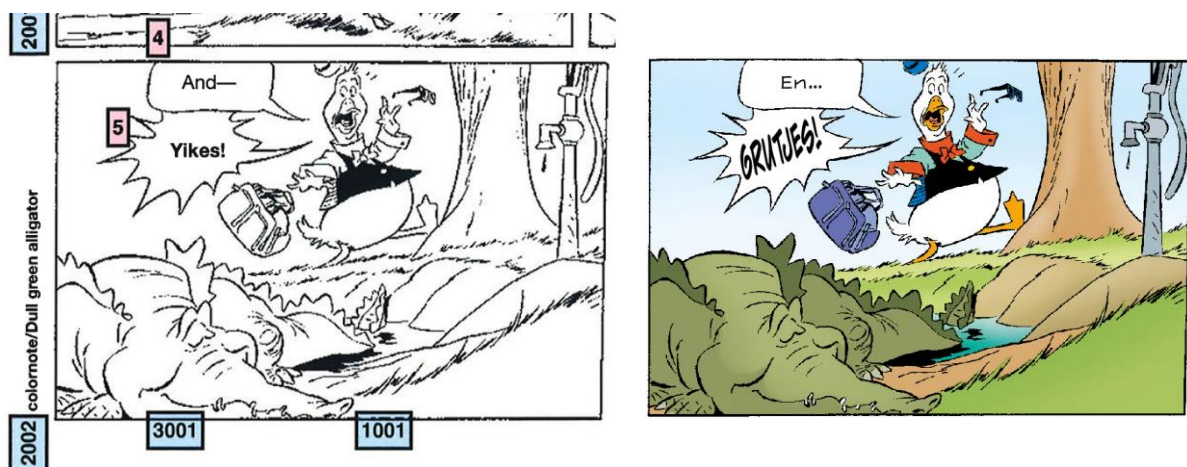


Image 8 and 9: Black and white source text panel with “colornote” and colored translation. © Disney.

3.3 Taxonomy of translatable elements in practice

Before trying to apply the different linguistic categories to these comics, I will start with some general remarks about the pictorial and typographical levels of each comic. When we look at the source texts of the Donald Duck stories, the first thing we notice is that they are not colored, like the translations are. They do have occasional color notes written in the margins (see image 8). These color notes all seem to be followed in the coloring of the Dutch published versions, except for a red rooster which seems to have become white in the Dutch version. Furthermore, in the source texts, all the text in the comics, be it dialog, narration onomatopoeia or inscription, are numbered. This makes it easy for the translator to just provide a numbered list of translations, which then go to the letterer, who makes sure the text fits into the right place. Another visual change is the bottom margin on the *Poor Rich Campers*-story, which has received a decorative border in the Dutch version (see image 10). This border runs under several of the stories in the same issue, which was published July 28th, 2016, which coincides with the summer holiday for Dutch school children. This border helps establish a common vacation theme through the whole issue. Another small addition is the balloon with the word “uit”, which marks the end of each story (see image 10), which seems to be a Dutch tradition that is not present in the source texts.

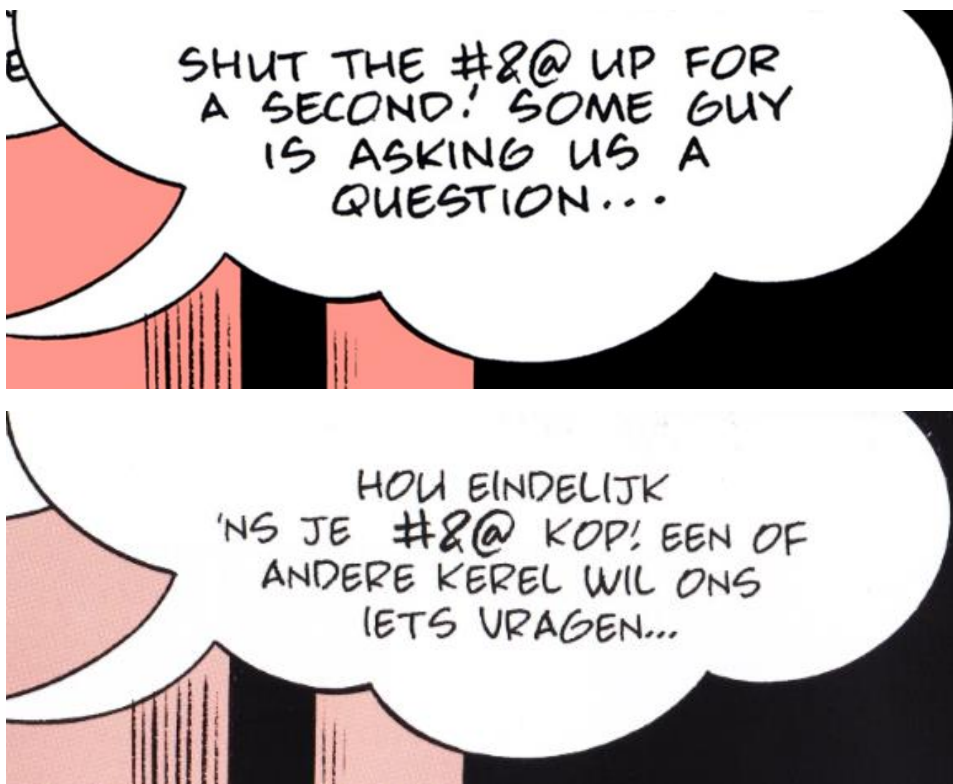


Image 10: Decorative border along the bottom margin of the Dutch version of *Poor Rich Campers*. © Disney.

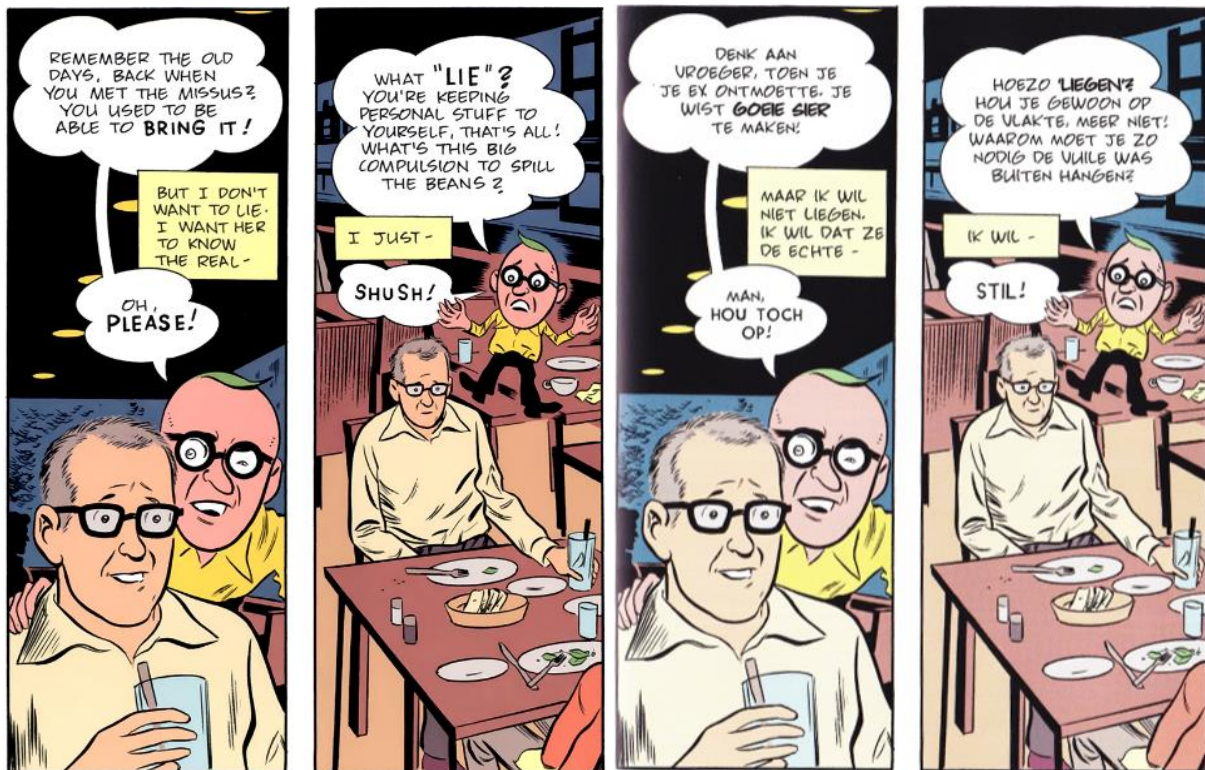
A black and white line drawing depicting the life cycle of a man and a woman. The scene is divided into several vignettes. In the top left, a young boy and girl are climbing a tree. In the top center, a woman in a chef's hat cooks while a man plays a guitar. To the right, a man and woman are shown in two states: one where the man is reading a newspaper and the woman is sitting, and another where they are both looking at a large sheet of paper. In the bottom left, an elderly couple stands under a large umbrella in the rain. In the bottom center, a man and woman are in a small boat on water, with the man playing a guitar. In the bottom right, an elderly couple is shown in a close embrace. The background includes stylized clouds, a crescent moon, and a small airplane flying across the sky.

If we look at the pictorial level in *Mister Wonderful*, we see that the English version of the book starts with illustrated endpapers, which are unfortunately absent in the Dutch translation. This is the only purely visual change present in the

translation. There are, however, several onomatopoeia's and instances of typography use where changes occur. Firstly, if we look at the lettering of the source text, we see that all letters are unique, which suggests the text was written by hand. In the Dutch translation, we see a script that looks a lot like that of the source text, but not all letters are unique, which suggests the uses of a typeface based on the handwriting of Daniel Clowes. There are cases, however, where Clowes uses punctuation marks to indicate swearing, where we see that the Dutch version uses the exact same marks, in the same handwriting, like the characters are merely moved to the right place in the sentence (see images 12 and 13). There are also instances where a change in typography is used to indicate tone of voice (see images 14 and 15). In the Dutch version, there is a similar use of typography in those instances, but since the lettering was done by a different person, the style is clearly less unified and fluent than in the original.



Images 12 and 13: Example of the use of punctuation marks to indicate swearing. © Daniel Clowes.



Images 14 and 15: Example of the use of typography to indicate intonation. © Daniel Clowes.

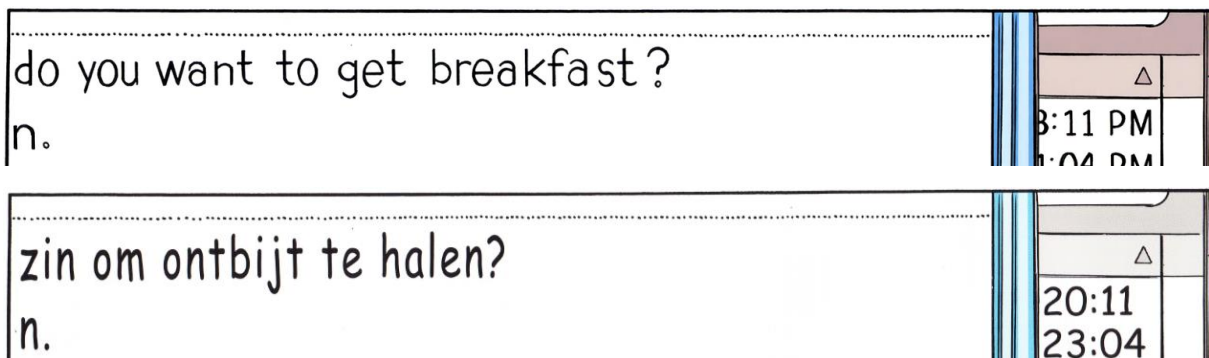
There are also other instances where the typography differs between the source and target texts, as can be seen on the next page. The way the typography is done in the translated comic produces a bland style, where the source text is much richer in its use of lettering to differentiate between different types of text.



Images 16 and 17: Italics in the original become regular text in the translation. © Daniel Clowes.



Images 18 and 19: An alternative typeface in the source text is translated using the same typeface as the regular dialogue text. © Daniel Clowes.



Images 20 and 21: Text on a computer screen which uses another alternative typeface in the source text, is translated using the standard typeface comic sans. © Daniel Clowes.

Titles

Looking at the linguistic elements of the Donald Duck strips, we see that the strips have creative titles, which are subject to change in translation. In the camping story, the subtitle changes from *Poor Rich Campers*, to “Kamperen met een klasgenoot” (camping with a classmate), probably because of the alliteration that this produces. The story *Gator aid* is translated as “Krokodillenklusjes”, which also contains a nice alliteration. The header for this story is also translated from *Gus Goose* to the regular Dutch name for this character, Gijs Gans. In *Lazy Day*, we see that the Dutch version plays with the combination of the header, which tells us who the main character is, and the subtitle. The story is published with the header *Donald Duck*, and the subtitle

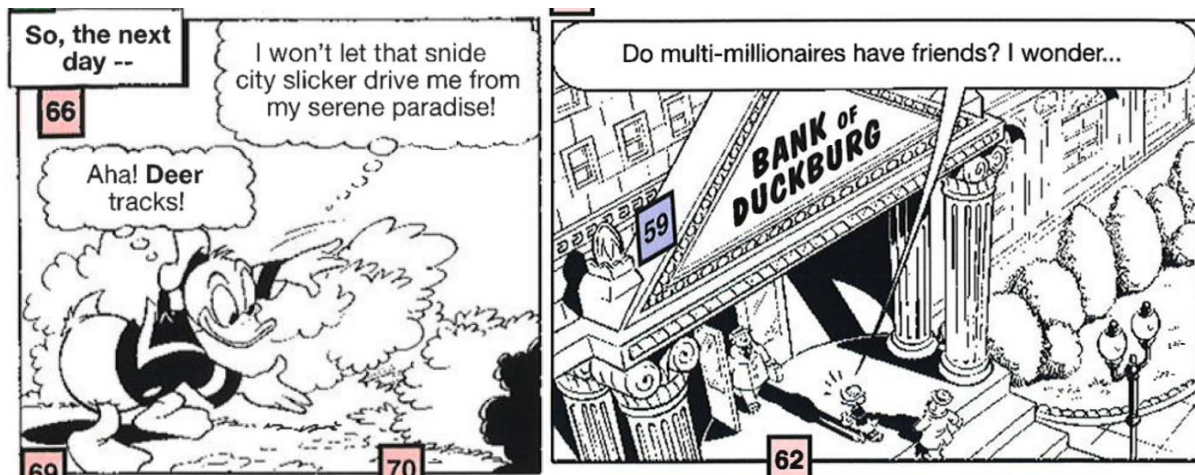
“...zal niet rusten totdat hij rust heeft!” This translates to “Donald Duck... won’t rest until he’s rested!” Here the title already makes fun of our poor protagonist.

We see the biggest change in the story about Scrooge McDuck’s secretary, Miss Typefast. In English, the story has the header *Uncle Scrooge*, with the subtitle *Boss Lady*. In Dutch, the focus lies more on the secretary herself, and the comic is published under the header *Juffrouw Eugenia*, which is her Dutch name. The subtitle *De prijs van rijkdom* (literally, the price of wealth), refers to the theme of the story, whereas Boss Lady merely describes Miss Typefast’s role from Scrooge’s perspective. These changes in the titles suggest a high level of freedom to adjust the story to target culture preference and convention. Especially on the level of character names. Although Donald Duck himself keeps his original name in Dutch, all other characters have a Dutch name which generally gets used consistently between stories.

The Daniel Clowes’ story *Mister Wonderful*, is translated in Dutch as “De ideale man” (the ideal man). On the original cover, there is also the subtitle “A Love Story”, which is translated quite literally on the Dutch cover as “Een liefdesverhaal.” Upon reading the story, it becomes clear that the title of the story is meant ironically, since Marshall has many flaws, which make it very hard to call him wonderful or ideal. Even though the form of the title is changed, the irony is still there.

Dialogue and thought

The category of dialogue text or text balloons is by far the largest part of the comic text that is subject to translation in the Donald Duck. In these comics dialogue text is generally portrayed in the form of a speech balloon. In the four Donald Duck stories analyzed here, thought balloons are only used in *Lazy Day* and *Poor Rich Campers*. In the other two stories, there are moments when one might expect a thought balloon, but the characters rather seem to speak aloud to themselves (see image 23). The focus in Donald Duck is generally on the external world of the action and not on the internal world of thought. This makes a distinction between thought and dialogue unnecessary for these four stories.



Images 22 and 23: Example of the use of thought balloons, and the tendency of characters in Donald Duck stories to think aloud. © Disney.

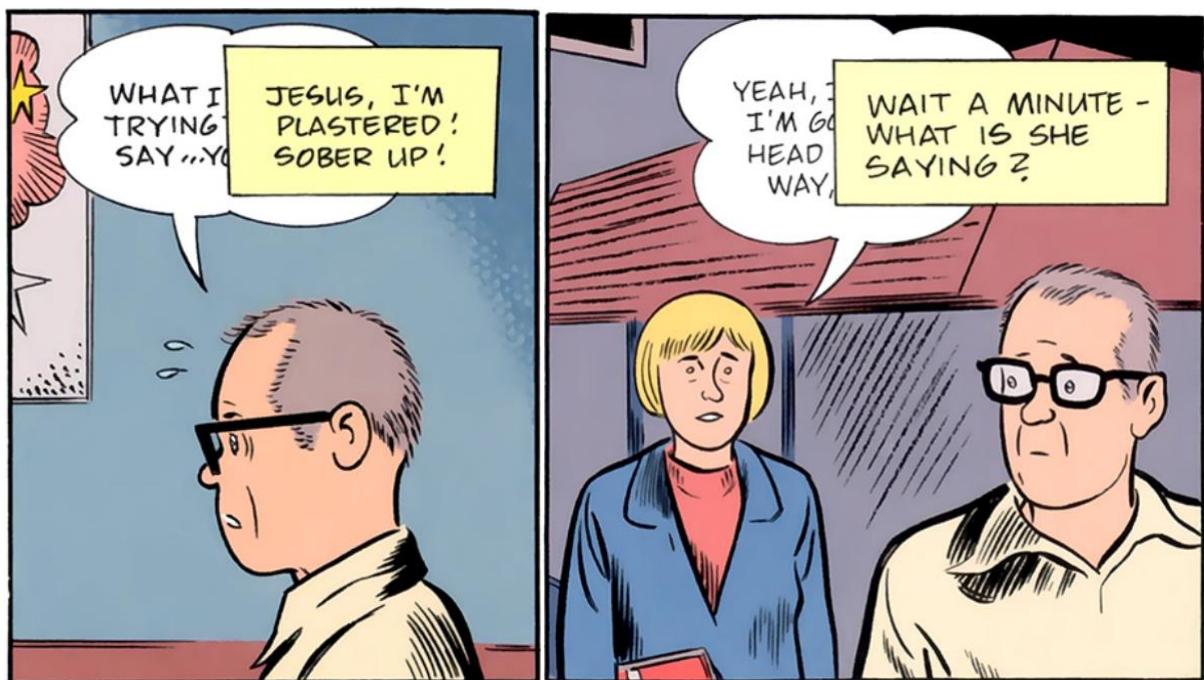
In Daniel Clowes' *Mister Wonderful*, the relation between thought and dialogue is much more complicated. When we meet Marshall, he is sitting alone in a café, waiting for his date. His thoughts are written in rectangular boxes, like he's narrating the whole story, and at one point, he explicitly addresses the reader as he starts introducing himself (see image 24). This makes it hard to distinguish between narration and thought, since Marshall tends to narrate his evening in his thoughts. But since there are no other instances of thought balloons, and not even any other instances of narrative boxes, we can use the ad hoc category of narrative thought to distinguish between dialogue text and text of this type.



Image 24: Marshall introduces himself. © Daniel Clowes.

Image 25: An example of narrative thought blocking speech, which in turn is blocking an inscription. © Daniel Clowes.

The distinction between these types of text becomes important, when we see the combination of the two in one panel (see image 25). In around ten percent of all panels in *Mister Wonderful*, we see a juxtaposition of dialogue text and narrative thought in such a way, that the thoughts obscure the dialogue text. This has the effect of foregrounding the internal world of the main character, rather than the action that is occurring in the external world. As can be seen in images 26 and 27, his thoughts sometimes distract Marshall from the conversation he is having, which results in half-visible sentences in the speech balloons. The content of what is said in these speech balloons becomes clear from the fragmented sentences that are still visible, and from the context given by the panels around them. The actual words in these balloons, however, seem quite unimportant, which means that, as a translator, one could take great liberty to make them work in Dutch.



Images 26 and 27: Two separate examples in which Marshall's thoughts distract him from the dialogue. © Daniel Clowes

Narrative text

As I have said, the category of narrative text is not applicable to *Mister Wonderful*, since the text is dominated by narrative thoughts, which form a category of their own. In Donald Duck, however, there are several instances of narrative text, which function in the prototypical way that narrative text does in comics. In *Boss Lady*, the first panel starts with a narrative text block which introduces the setting of the quiz show. In the rest of the story there are several instances of narrative text which indicate the passage of time, and finally one concluding bit of narration in the final panel. This same narrative pattern is present in *Lazy Day*, which also starts with a narrative text to set the stage, narration to indicate time, and one final concluding block. *Gator Aid* also has two pieces of narrative text which set the stage and indicate time.

In *Poor Rich Campers*, the narrative text is used more creatively. In image 28, we see an example where the narrative text responds to the dialogue text. There are also two instances where the narrative text is not merely enclosed in a rectangular box in the top-right corner, but takes over a central position in the panel (see images 29 and 30). The narration is foregrounded, which emphasizes the presence of an omniscient narrator who is talking directly to the comic-reader.

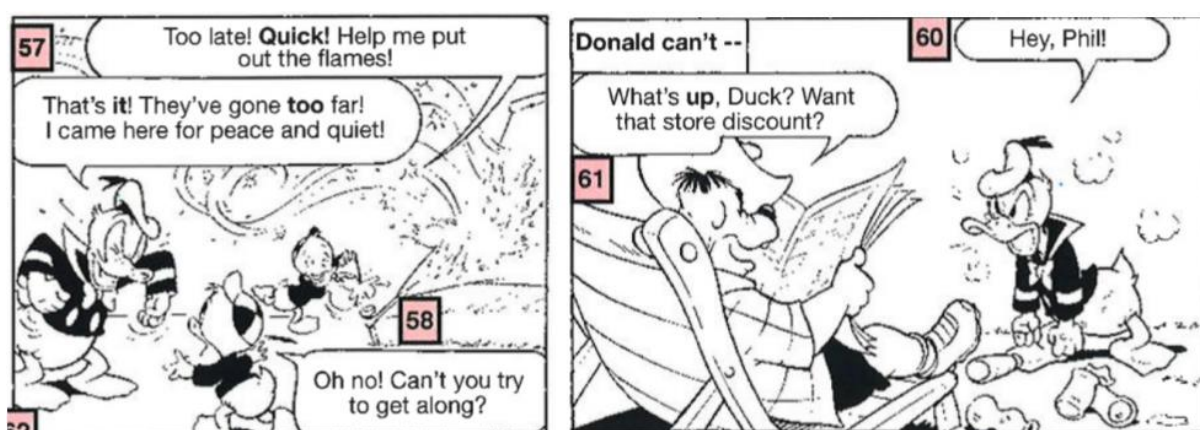
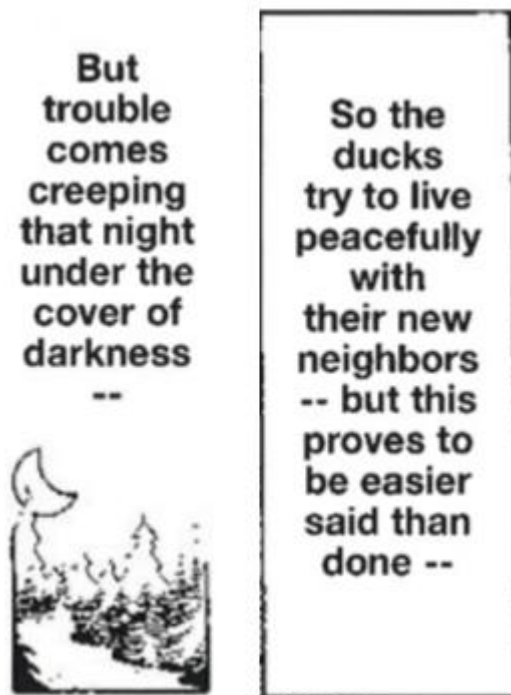


Image 28: Narrative text responds to the dialogue text said by one of Donald's nephews in the previous panel. © Disney.



Images 29 and 30: The narrative text takes a central position in the panel.

Linguistic paratext

When looking at other types of text visible in the Donald Duck comics, there are a few inscriptions in the story *Boss Lady*, mostly showing names of buildings. But linguistic paratext for these comics is mostly present in the form of onomatopoeias. As I have mentioned previously, while talking about typography in Donald Duck, the line between dialogue and onomatopoeia in these comics is quite thin. There are many instances in which spoken onomatopoeia are portrayed in a speech bubble next to regular dialogue text (see image 31). In the source text, they are often printed either in bold letters or surrounded by the “>” and “<” symbol. But, of course, there are also many onomatopoeias outside of text balloons. The different degree to which onomatopoeias are integrated within an image, may influence whether or not an onomatopoeia can be changed in the translation. Although for the Donald Duck comics, the source texts are made to be translated, so, in general, changing an image in order to translate an onomatopoeia should not be a problem.



Image 31: One panel with three onomatopoeias, each with different degrees of integration within the image. © Disney.

In *Mister Wonderful*, the inscriptions we see are again mostly names of stores and buildings, when our main characters are walking around outside. The inscriptions are often merely part of the background, and are not always entirely legible. This makes it an obvious choice for the translator to leave those inscriptions untranslated. There are also inscriptions in the coffee shop at the start of the strip, which show the menu, a tip jar, a newspaper, and a book. These show different degrees of integration within the image as a whole, and may be considered on a case by case basis by the translator.

As for onomatopoeias, they are used throughout the comic, and come in two general types. Firstly, there is a smaller onomatopoeia, outside any text balloon, written in black letters (see image 32). These typically indicate an action like flipping through a newspaper, chewing, or walking footsteps. These are relatively small and generally appear in front of a plain background, which makes them easy to read, and also easy to change in translation. Secondly, there are colored onomatopoeia's, in red or yellow, which indicate a sudden noise (see image 33). Because they have a contour, they can appear on top of an image and still be legible. This is not always

the case however, and depending on the way the onomatopoeia is used in the image, it may be easily changed in a translation.



Images 32 and 33: Two different types of onomatopoeia. © Daniel Clowes.

As for different types of linguistic paratext, we can find several creative uses of language in *Mister Wonderful*. Previously, in image 3, I have given an example of the use of a footnote below a comic panel. Below are several other examples of linguistic paratext, several of which I have previously discussed for their typographic properties. The translation of these instances of linguistic paratext is not merely a question of textual translation, but also visual.



Image 34: A label is attached to a speech balloon. © Daniel Clowes.

Image 35: An answering machine plays an automatic message. © Daniel Clowes.

Image 36: Marshall is shown typing, with the text appearing above his head. © Daniel

Clowes

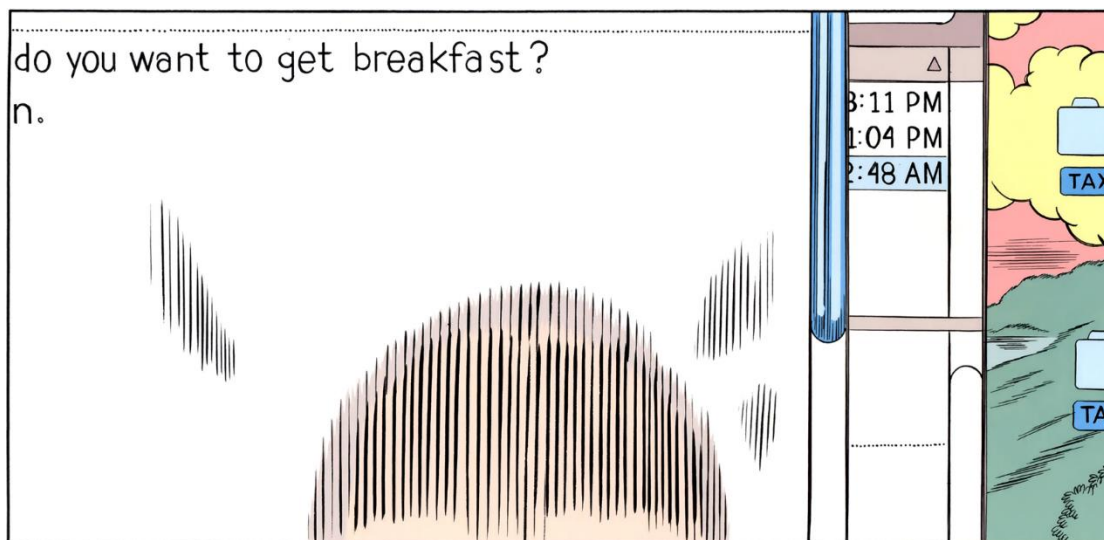


Image 37: A view of Marshall's computer screen shows an email and some labelled desktop items. © Daniel Clowes.



Image 38: The "ha ha" in the above panels is a symbolic representation of a traumatic moment in Natalie's previous relationship. © Daniel Clowes.

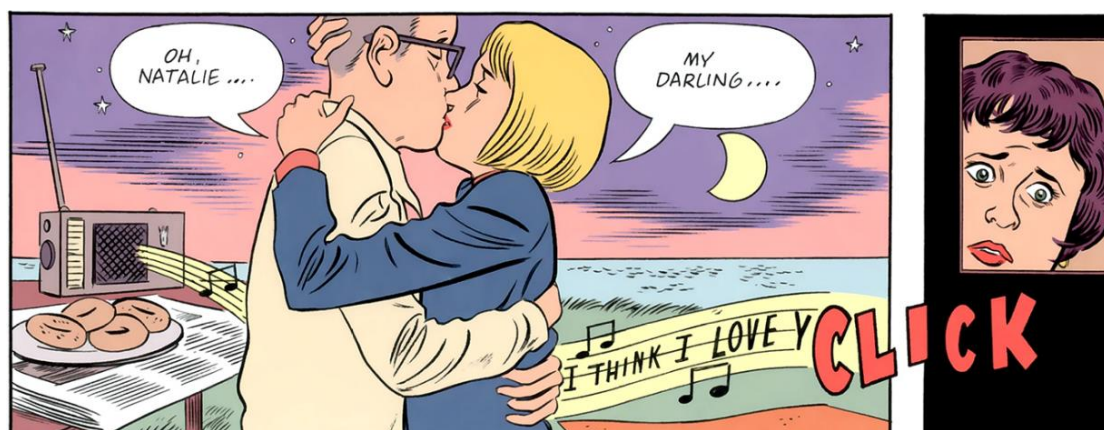


Image 39: Example of song lyrics transcribed in the style of sheet music to suggest music playing. © Daniel Clowes.

3.3.1 As applied to Mister Wonderful

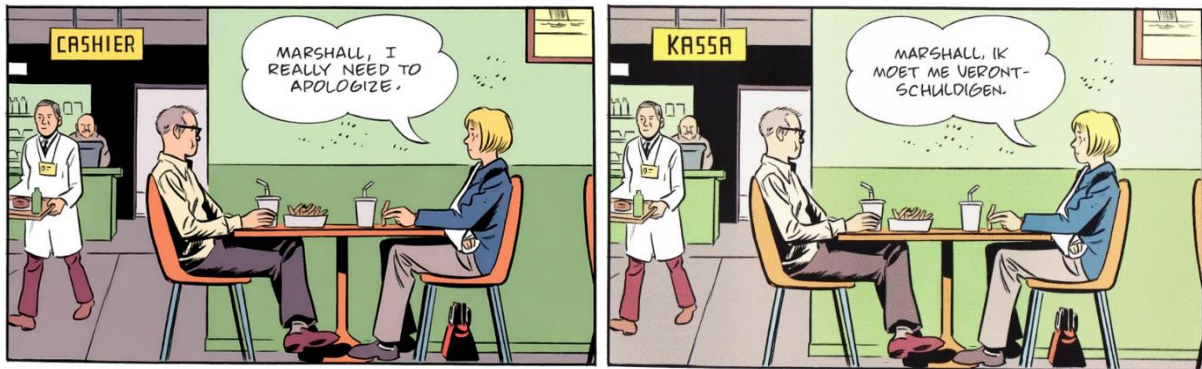
In order to test these categories of translation strategies, I looked at every instance of text usage in *Mister Wonderful*, and tried to categorize them. Most of the dialogue text and narrative thoughts seem to get translated without any adaptations, additions, or deletions. This would mean they fall under the translation category of translation proper. By categorizing something as translation proper, I in no way aim to judge the quality of the translation. The interrupted phrase “I’ll be –”, in image 40, can be interpreted as meaning something like “I’ll be damned” or “I’ll be right back”. The translator seems to have chosen the first option, while I find the latter option to be more likely, since cursing is generally expressed in symbols, and Marshall responds as though he is trying to prevent Natalie from going back for her purse. Still, for the purposes of this analysis, this falls under the category of translation proper, since the intended purpose was to translate the source text as is.



Images 40 and 41: Example of a possible translation error. © Daniel Clowes.

The strategy of non-translation, whereby a piece of text is kept the same as in the source text, is the second most used strategy, in part because the names of characters are untranslated, and occur several times by themselves in dialogue

balloons. Non-translation is also used for all but one of the inscriptions in *Mister Wonderful* (see images 42 and 43). In this instance, the inscription-text is not relevant to the conversation, so the reasoning behind this inconsistency is unclear.



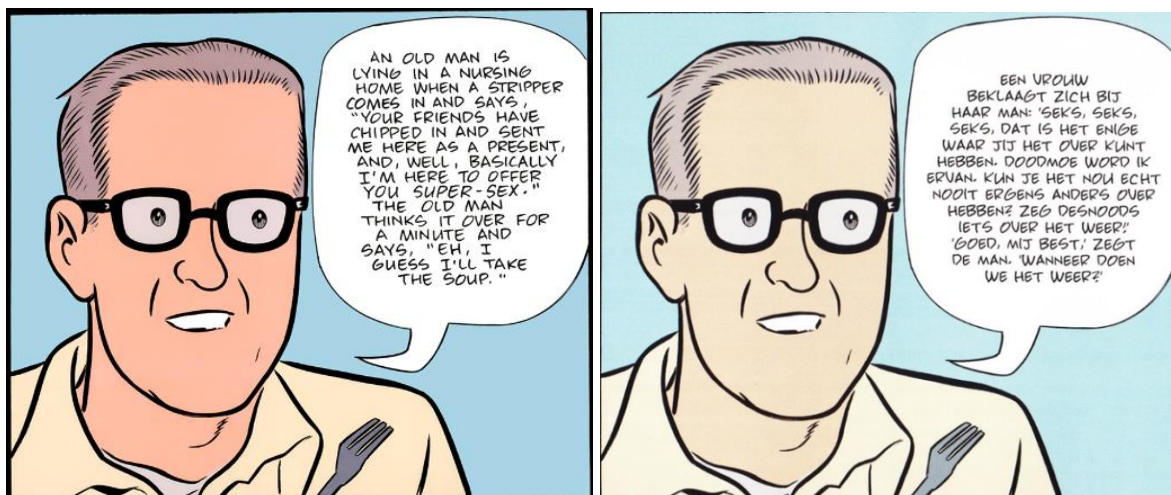
Images 42 and 43: Translation of an inscription. © Daniel Clowes.

As for onomatopoeias, the distinction between small action-onomatopoeia's and large noise-onomatopoeias becomes relevant when we look at the translation strategies that are used. All eleven small onomatopoeias are translated, whereas only five out of twelve larger onomatopoeias are changed in translation. The other seven remain the same as the source text. Some of these, like the sound of a car, and a ringing doorbell, are universal enough that they work as Dutch onomatopoeias as well, but that leaves four, or one third, of the larger onomatopoeias that remain unquestionably English onomatopoeias in a Dutch text, such as the "WUMP" example from image 33. In image 44 we see an example of linguistic paratext which is left untranslated. This strategy makes sense in this example, since this gives the impression of an English-language song being played. In the other cases of linguistic paratext, the strategy of translation proper has been used.



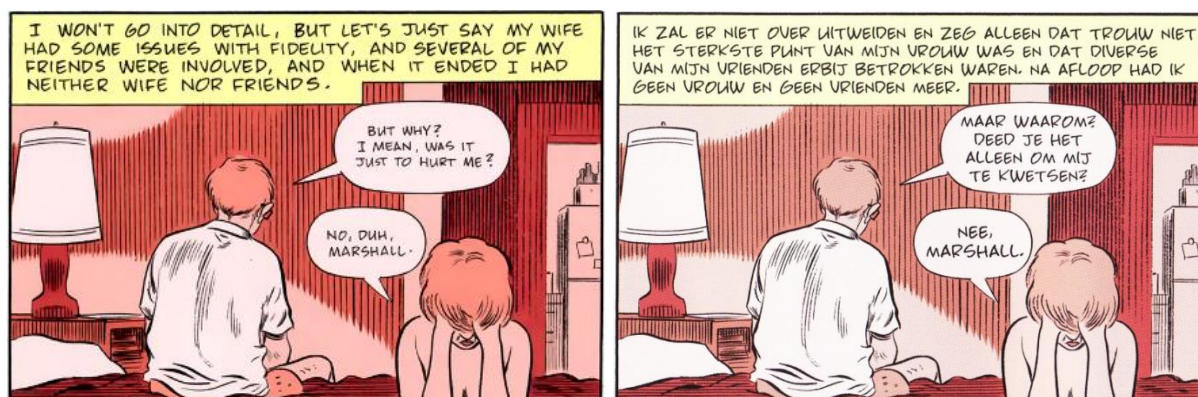
Image 44: An example of non-translation for a piece of linguistic paratext, followed by the translation of a larger onomatopoeia. © Daniel Clowes.

The strategy of cultural adaptation is quite rare in this graphic novel. There are only four instances that can be classified as cultural adaptation, two of which are the adaptation of time which is displayed in a 12-hour format in English, and in a 24-hour format in Dutch, which is the norm in the Netherlands. In another case Marshall refers to an older woman as Baby Jane, who is an unknown character to Dutch readers, and is translated as 'opoe', an informal name for a grandmother in Dutch. The last instance of adaptation is visible in images 45 and 46, where Marshall tells a sexual joke to Natalie. The Dutch translation uses a different joke, which also has a sexual theme. The joke in the source text, however, is funny because the sexual theme is subverted in the punchline, whereas the Dutch joke does not have this kind of subversion.



Images 45 and 46: Example of a language based joke that is changed into another joke in the Dutch translation. © Daniel Clowes.

When looking at the translation strategy of deletion as used in *Mister Wonderful*, it is interesting to point out, that in the original comic, the speech balloons are generally drawn much bigger than is required for the text inside. This means that the translator, Pieter van Oudheusden, had the luxury of some extra space for his translate dialogue. Dutch translations of English generally are a little longer, so when spatial restrictions are in place, deletion is usually a necessity in order to make the translation fit the available space. In *Mister Wonderful* we see some deletions of single words, but these seem to be motivated by a need to produce natural flowing speech, rather than a lack of space. In one instance, however, the tone shifts greatly in the translation, because of a deletion (see image 47 and 48).



Images 47 and 48: Marshall's ex-wife responds with a "duh" in the original, which is not present in the translation. © Daniel Clowes.



Images 49 and 50: Example of an addition in the Dutch version of *Mister Wonderful*. © Daniel Clowes.

In the translation of *Mister Wonderful*, when addition occurs, it is generally of pragmatic particles. There is one larger addition, however, when Natalie and Marshall are separated at a party. When Natalie sees Marshall again, she again asks him where he has been (see images 49 and 50). In the Dutch version, she also says that she has been looking for Marshall, which could be true, but seems unlikely in the source text, since it was Marshall who was looking for Natalie, while she was out having a good time.

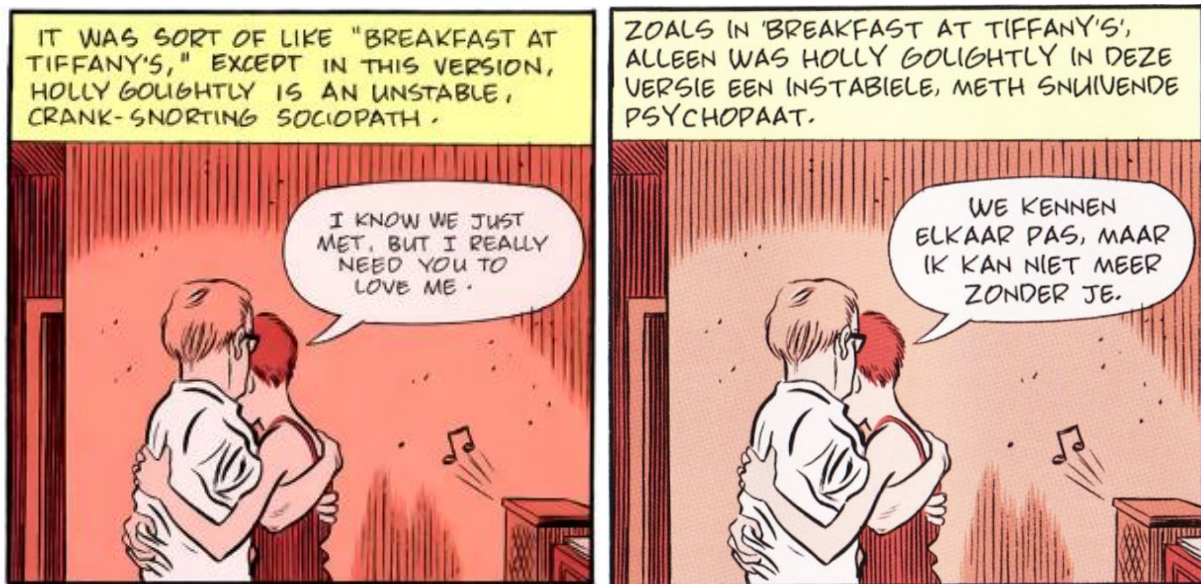
Of the other possible translation strategies proposed by our scholars, transmutation and the use of footnotes for translation, there are no instances to be found in the Dutch version of *Mister Wonderful*. There are, however, still many instances of translation strategies which do not fit in the categories described above.

Firstly, there are some thirteen instances in which the Dutch translation is much shorter than the source text, but without any source text element really missing. They might be a subtype of deletion, whereby rather than omitting meaning, it is merely compacted in a smaller space. If we did count these cases as deletion, they would make up one third of that category, which seems substantial enough for it to warrant its own category. We will also see this strategy be used in the translation of Donald Duck.



Images 51 and 52: Marshall uses fewer words in Dutch to say the same thing. © Daniel Clowes.

There is still one group of translations for which we haven't yet named a strategy, and which forms the third most common translation strategy used in *Mister Wonderful*. I will give two examples where the content of a sentence changes to such an extent, that it cannot be classified as translation proper. The first case is a piece of dialogue text which is part of a flashback sequence, which is told in narrative thought blocks by Marshall (see images 51 and 52). The dialogue text functions as an illustration of what is said in the narrative, and thus doesn't drive the narrative itself. The translation offers a different content, but serves the same function as the original. Although it might be hard to draw a line between translations in this category, and translation proper, I do want to propose that we call this type of strategy "functional translation". In the next chapter on Donald Duck, we will also see more of it.



Images 53 and 54: The Dutch version translates back as: “We only just met, but I can’t go on without you.” © Daniel Clowes.



Images 55 and 56: The Dutch version is a common Dutch expression, which means “It’s over” or “You can forget about it”. © Daniel Clowes.

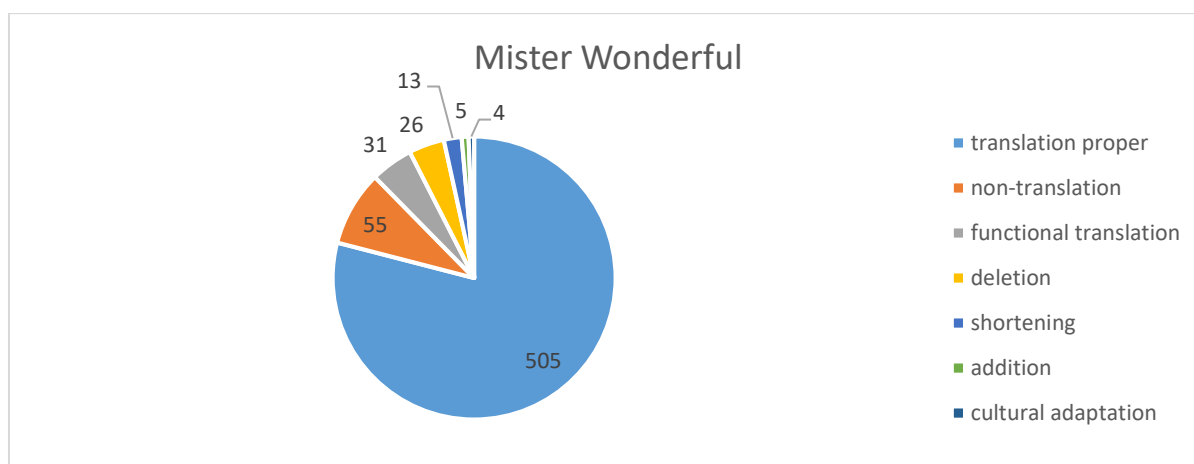
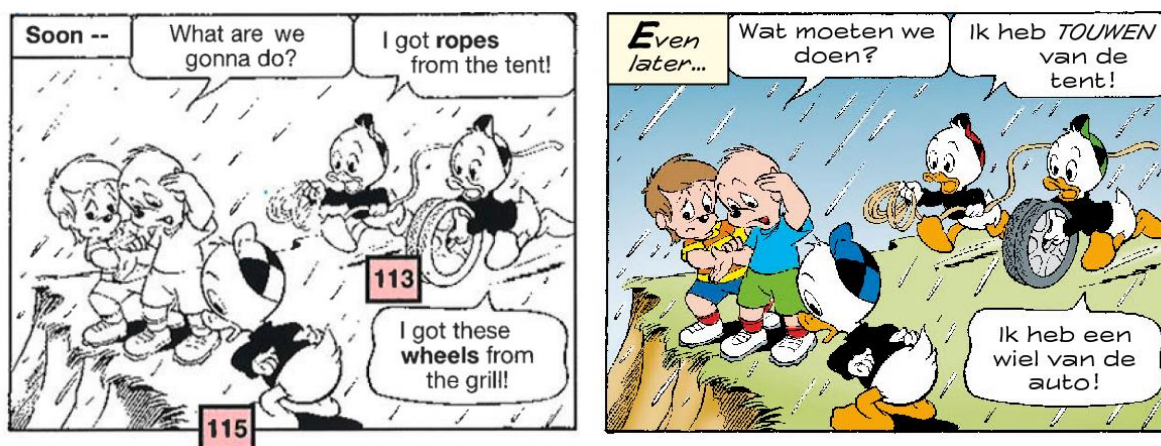


Chart 1: The frequency of use of seven translation strategies in *Mister Wonderful*.

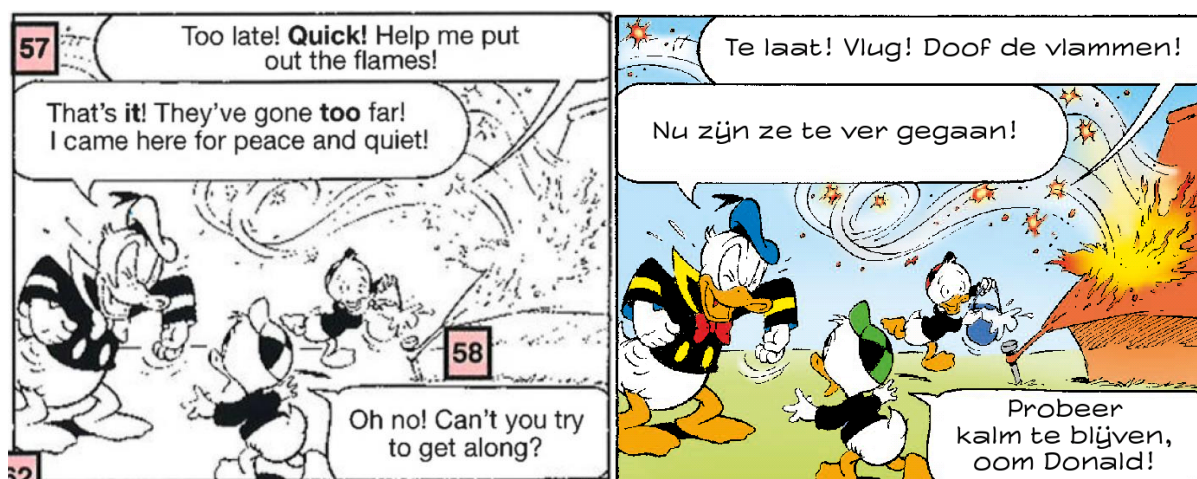
Using these seven categories, we can show the frequency of the use of each strategy on a pie chart (see chart 1). The numbers indicate the absolute number of instances in which each strategy was used. When two strategies were used in the same text field, each strategy is given half a point. This chart gives a clear signal that the overall translation strategy must have been to change as little as possible, and thus the instances in which the translator deviates from that strategy stand out as strange and inconsistent, such as in images 44 and 50.

3.3.2 As applied to Donald Duck

If we try to apply the given translation strategies to our Donald Duck strips, including shortening and functional translation, which we have seen in the translation of *Mister Wonderful*, we can get pretty far. Translation proper still seems to be the most common translation strategy for our Donald Duck translations, but to a lesser extent. Deletions are much more common, possibly because, unlike Daniel Clowes, the dialogue balloons are generally shaped to fit the text, so that when the Dutch translation runs longer than the original, deletions become necessary. There is only one instance where a narrative block is enlarged slightly to fit the translation (see images 57 and 58). However, not all deletions seem to be merely about making the text fit. Often entire sentences are deleted, possibly because they give no additional information or they do not serve the plot (see images 59 and 60).



Images 57 and 58: Example where the text field for the narrative text is enlarged. © Disney.



Images 59 and 60: Donald's dialogue is reduced to a single sentence in the Dutch translation. © Disney.

Another popular strategy in Donald Duck translations, is addition. We have already seen an onomatopoeia which is added in the Gus Goose story in images 37 and 38. There is also an addition of a whole block of narrative text in this comic (see images 61 and 62). In many other cases of addition, small onomatopoeias are added within the dialogue balloon, such as "hihi" or "oh", but there are also larger additions (see images 63 and 64).



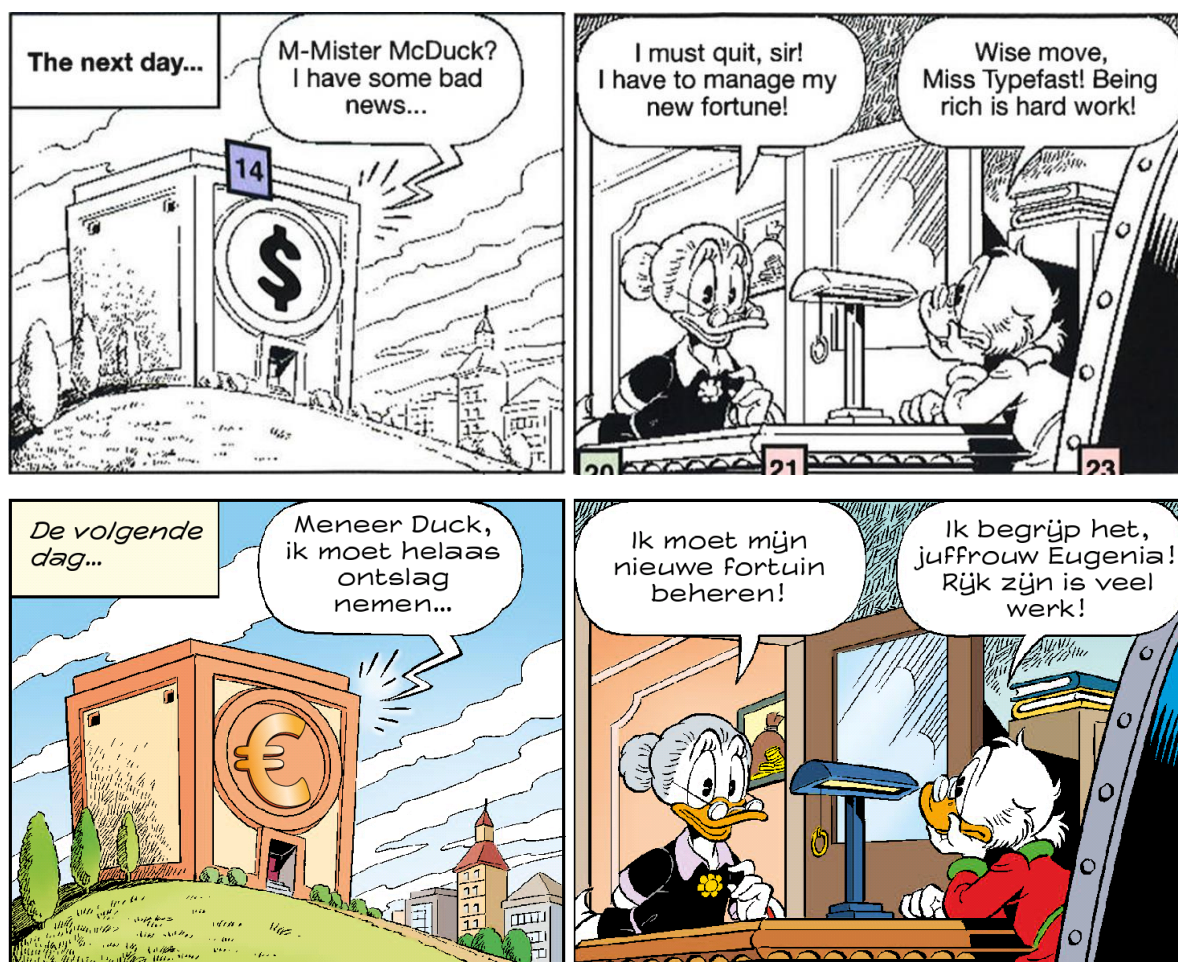
Images 61 and 62: The Dutch translation tells the reader that Gus has just been on a vacation, in the form of a narrative box which is not there in the source text. © Disney.



Images 63 and 64: A sentence is added in a dialogue balloon saying the jury was wrong on the game show. © Disney.

Non-translation is relatively rare, and as a strategy only applied to dialogue balloons which contain only an exclamation point or question mark, or to onomatopoeias such as “hahaha”, “wak” and “zzzzz”. If we exclude balloons with mere typography, there would only be a total of nine non-translated onomatopoeias in the four stories in our study.

Transmutation is a strategy we have not seen in *Mister Wonderful*, but is used several times in our Donald Duck translations. These transmutations mostly occur within a single dialogue balloon, but sometimes they even cross panels. Mostly, we see instances where onomatopoeias inside a dialogue balloon are moved to be either before or after the sentence in that same balloon. In other cases, two sentences are placed in a different order, like we have already seen in images 6 and 7. And there is one instance in which there is a mistake in the source text, where the text from two dialogue balloons is switched around. This is fixed in the translation with a transmutation. The biggest transmutation might be the one found in images 65, 66, 67, and 68.



Images 65, 66, 67, and 68: The sentence "I have some bad news" is removed entirely in the Dutch translation, while the sentence "I must quit, sir!" is moved to the previous panel. © Disney.

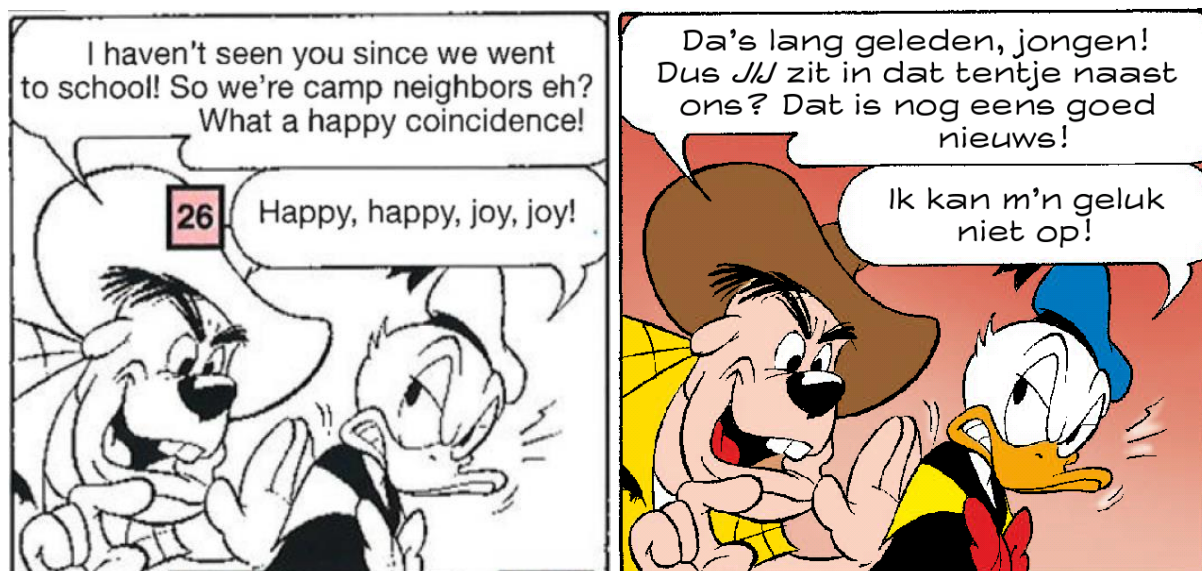
When looking at cultural adaptations, it is important to keep in mind the multicultural team behind each of these comics. When there are cultural references in a story, they tend to refer to the culture of Duckburg and not to that of any particular nation on earth. There are, however, several instances where dollars are changed to euros in the Dutch translation. Most cultural adaptations revolve around names of people or places. The Dutch translations uses many place names that are puns on actual Dutch place names. The state of Calisota, which is the state in which Duckburg is located according to Carl Barks, is changed to Eindhoven in one case and replaced with a reference to Snaveldoorn in another. The character of Phil T. Rich is named Peter Poch in Dutch, which is a pun on the word “pochen” which is Dutch for boasting or bragging. The game of Cash-a-Rama is translated as “De slimste eend” which means “the smartest duck”, and is a reference to an existing Dutch game show called “De slimste mens” or “The smartest human.” Perhaps the most creative cultural adaptation can be found in images 69 and 70.



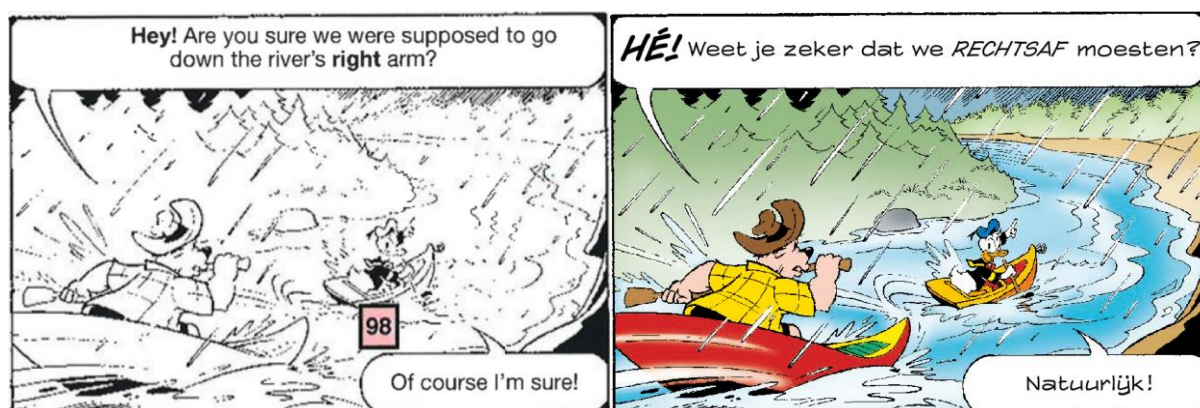
Images 69 and 70: Rather than a jumble sale, or yard sale, the girls are going shopping in a big department store modeled after the Dutch Bijenkorf. © Disney.

As mentioned earlier, the strategies of functional translation and shortening are also used throughout the translation of these strips. In most cases of functional translation, the Dutch version uses an idiomatic expression, which serves the same expressive function as the message in the source text, but has a different denotation (see images 71 and 72). We see shortenings to a lesser extent, but there are several

cases where the message is condensed, without omitting any part of the meaning (see images 73 and 74).



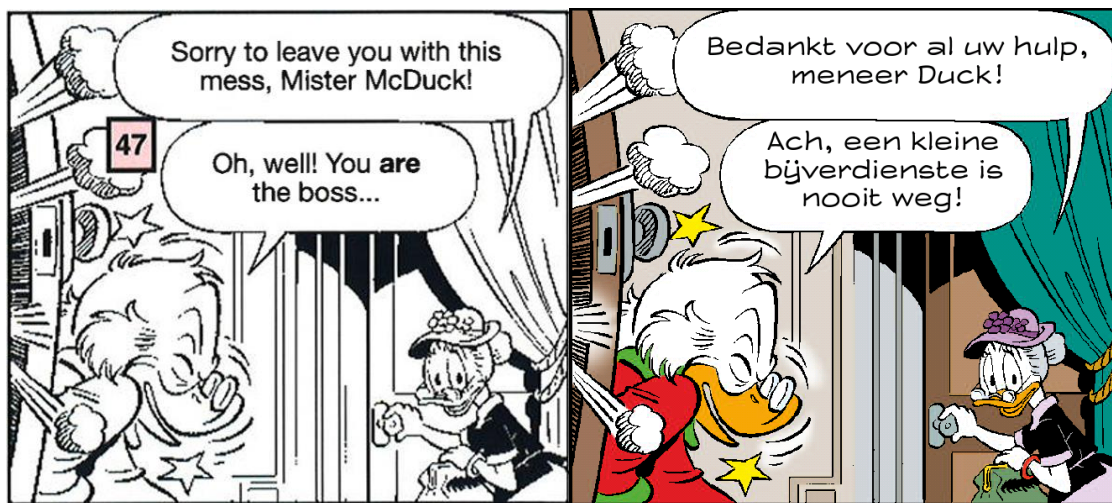
Images 71 and 72: An example of a functional translation using a Dutch idiom with a similar meaning as the English idiom. © Disney.



Images 73 and 74: Two examples of shortening in a single panel. © Disney.

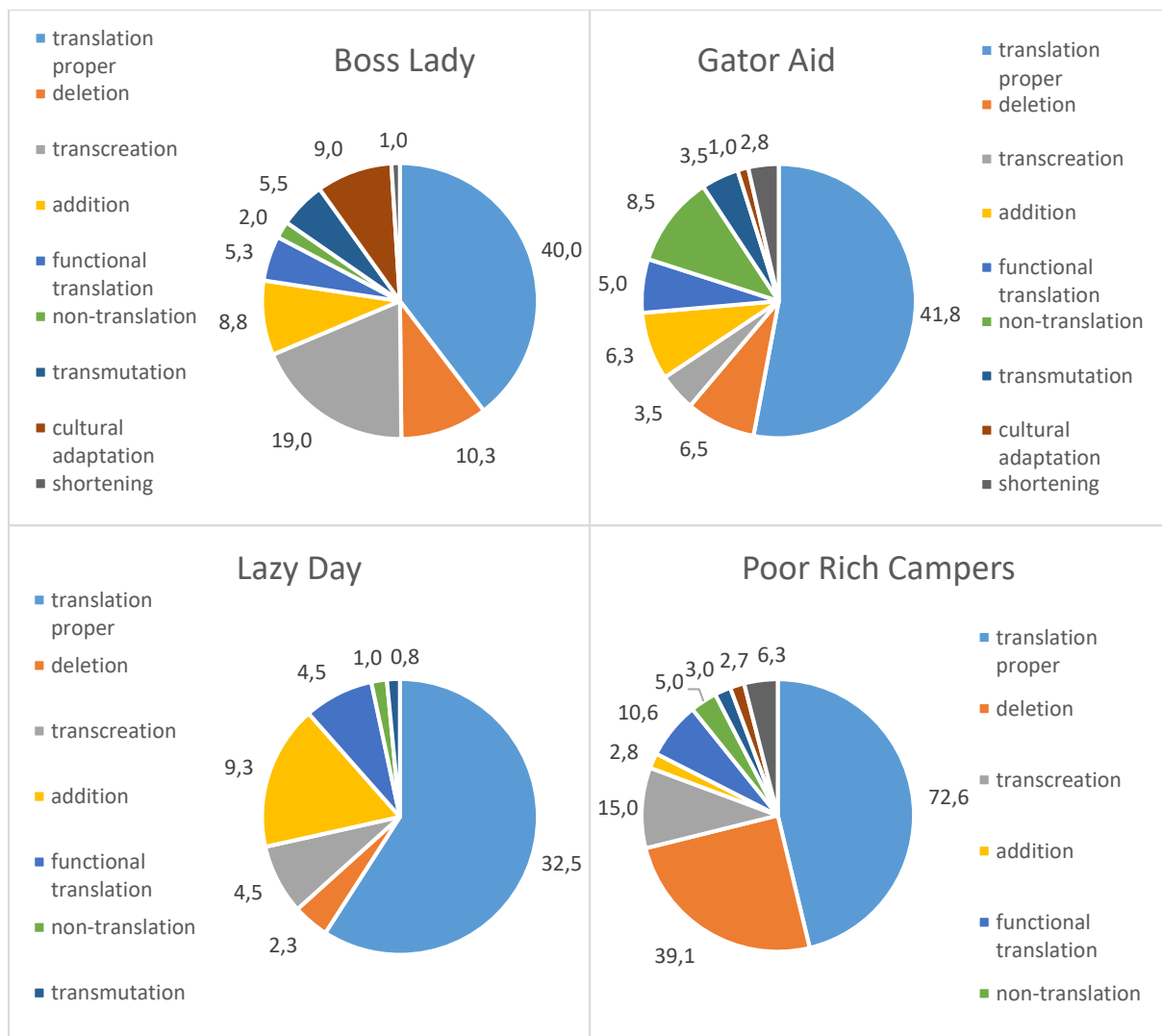
Having categorized most of the translation strategies used in these strips, using our existing categories, there remains a large group of translations which seem to use a different strategy still. The translations in this group seem to have no regard whatsoever for the content of the source text, and just provide some text in Dutch which fits the story and the context (see images 75 and 76). These cases can hardly be

called translation, and go further than functional translation in their disregard for the content of the source text. I will call them transcreations in this thesis, borrowing a term from marketing translation, in which the literal meaning of a source text is often much less important than the context of the target text, and the target audience. This term also emphasizes the role of the translator as a cocreator of the finished comic, since the translator is as much a writer in these instances as the original scriptwriter.



Images 75 and 76: The Dutch text translates back as “Thanks for all your help, Mister McDuck!” and “Oh, a little additional income is always welcome!”. © Disney.

Using these nine categories, we can make pie charts for each of the four Donald Duck stories individually (see charts 2, 3, 4, and 5). These charts show that different stories may see a different pattern of use of each of the nine strategies. In *Lazy Day*, for example, we only see seven strategies used, and we see that translation proper is used much more frequently than in the other stories, and we see a relatively high number of additions. This might be because *Lazy Day* is a relatively short story, with only a total of 55 text fields, compared to 79 for *Gator Aid*, 101 for *Boss Lady*, and 157 for *Poor Rich Campers*. The plot of *Lazy Day* is quite simple, and there is not much text needed to convey Donald’s misery. The text that is there, is quite succinct, which leaves little room for creative translations. Still, the relative number of instances of translation proper is significantly lower than in the translation of *Mister Wonderful*.



Charts 2, 3, 4, and 5: The use of nine translation strategies in each Donald Duck strip.

In *Boss Lady*, we see a relatively high number of cultural adaptations and transcreations, and the least number of instances of translation proper. This may be attributed to the content of the story, which revolves around a game show, which typically involves many cultural references, which tend to get adapted to the target culture in Donald Duck strips. The high number of non-translations in *Gator Aid* is due to the high number of dialogue balloons with merely punctuation in them. And lastly, the high number of deletions in *Poor Rich Campers* may be because of the overall length of this comic. Perhaps the source text comic was deemed too wordy, and the strategy of deletion was used extensively to increase readability for young fans.

3.4 Comparison

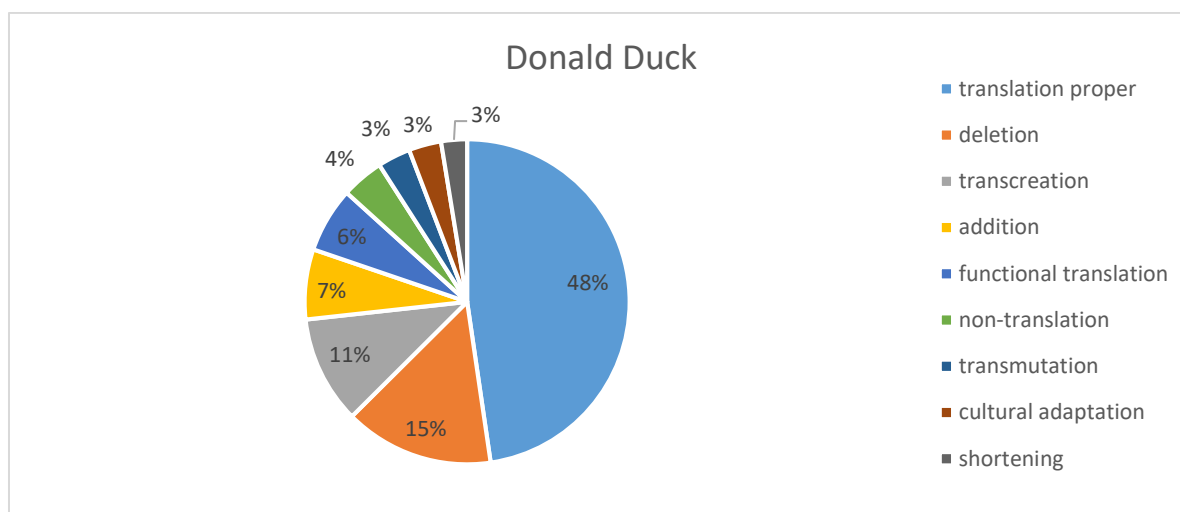


Chart 6: The relative use of the nine translation strategies in four different Donald Duck strips.

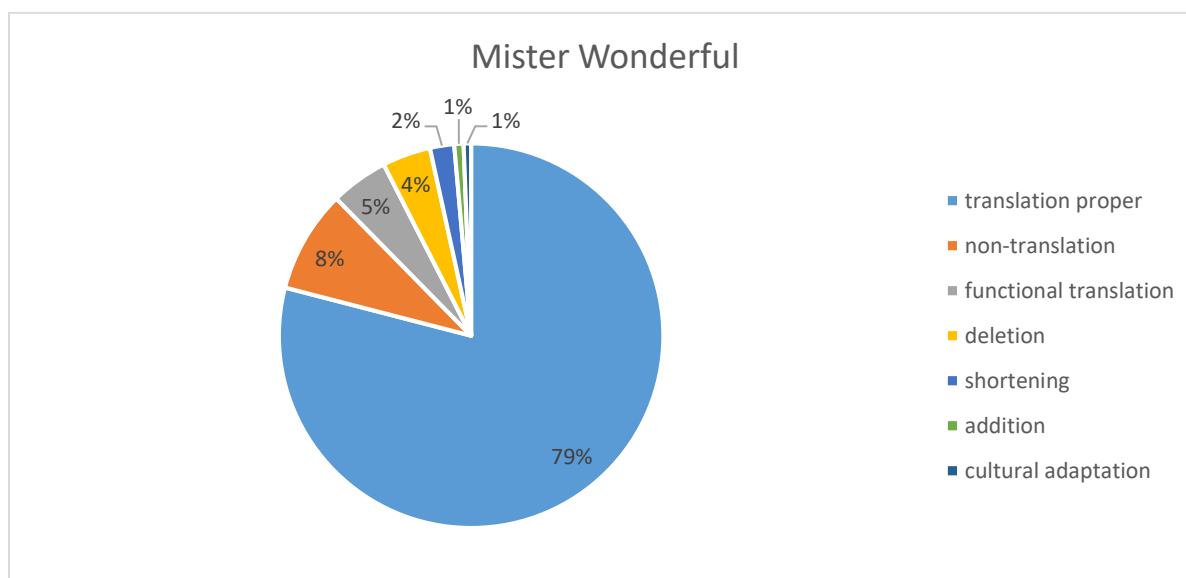


Chart 7: The relative use of seven translation strategies in *Mister Wonderful*.

If we want to compare the overall translation strategy of Donald Duck translations with a graphic novel like *Mister Wonderful*, we need to take all four stories together. Each individual story is much too short for such a comparison, since we can clearly see the influence of the content of the story itself on the shape of the graph it produces. If we combine the four stories, this comes out to 392 individual text fields, compared to 639 in *Mister Wonderful*. This might still not be an equal

comparison, but we can already see a clear difference between the shape of the two graphs.

Firstly, the relative number of instances of translation proper is much lower in Donald Duck, which gives room for a greater use of each of the other translation strategies. The fact that deletion is used much more often in Donald Duck than in *Mister Wonderful*, could be related to the relative sizes of the dialogue balloons in each of these comics. We have already seen that Daniel Clowes leaves more space around his text than the Donald Duck artists, which results in a struggle to fit the translation in a tighter space. The fact that non-translation is the second most used translation strategy in *Mister Wonderful*, and is only used in 4% of the cases in the translation of Donald Duck is sign that the translators have used completely different overall strategies.

The lack of transcreation in the translation of *Mister Wonderful* is striking, if we compare it to Donald Duck translations, in which it is the third most common translation strategy. This points to a much higher level of creativity in the translations of Donald Duck, and a much stricter adherence to the source material for the translation of *Mister Wonderful*. If we relate difference to the status of each of these comics in the cultural field, it makes sense to say that a high-status work, such as that of Daniel Clowes is more likely to be treated as an authentic original, which the translator should respect, trying to keep the translation as close to the original as possible. The commercial nature of Donald Duck, on the other hand, means that the comic should appeal to as large an audience as possible, meaning that the translation should cater to its specific target audience and target culture.

Conclusion

On a practical level, my case study has shown that when categorizing translatable elements in comics, it is important to differentiate between different types of comics, and take the style of a particular creator into account. While Donald Duck comics, for example, make little use of inscriptions and other types of linguistic paratext, they do use onomatopoeia in different ways, in or outside of word balloons, which may influence the way they are translated. In *Mister Wonderful*, we have seen an even more specific distinction between large sound-onomatopoeias and small action-onomatopoeias, which were translated or non-translated to different degrees. *Mister Wonderful* also contains a type of text which seems to be a combination of narrative text and thought, which focusses the story on the internal world of the main character, rather than the action around him. This could be a signal for a translator to perhaps take some more liberty with the dialogue text of secondary characters, in order to further establish that gap between Marshall and the outside world.

Looking at translation strategies for comic elements, the difference between our two different comics becomes even clearer. Firstly, the six translation strategies postulated by our scholars were clearly not enough to describe the range of strategies used in the comics I have examined. In Donald Duck, the third most used strategy was what I have called transcreation, whereby the source text is practically disregarded, and the translator creates a new text to fit the image and context. While this strategy is quite common in our Donald Duck strips, it is not used at all in the translation of *Mister Wonderful*. In that comic, there is a much greater tendency to translate while changing as little of the meaning of the original as possible. In both the Donald Duck comics and *Mister Wonderful*, the translators have occasionally used the strategies of shortening and functional translation, whereby a sentence is shortened without a deletion of content, or the literal meaning of a sentence is altered, while retaining its communicative function. Although the line between translation proper, functional translation and transcreation and between shortening

and deletion may be hard to draw at times, these strategies may provide a helpful addition to the existing translation toolkit.

The differences in overall translation strategy for the two different comics, may be explained by looking at the position of both comics in the cultural field, like Kaindl suggests. Looking at the status of a particular comic creator, such as Daniel Clowes, and the context of publication of both the source text comic and the translated version, the choice for a general strategy of foreignization or domestication seems to depend on the level of cultural capital of a comic and the intended target audience. Just as with other kinds of source text, when a comic has a higher level of cultural capital, the translator is inclined to keep the target text as close to the original as possible. With comics aimed at children, the cultural capital is generally low, especially with highly commercial comics like Donald Duck, which results in a choice for a domestication strategy.

Looking at Celotti's work again, it is interesting to note that she states how the category of linguistic paratext is the most interesting for translation scholars to study, since there we would find the most diverse use of translation strategies (39). Looking at inscriptions in *Mister Wonderful*, we saw only one inscription which was translated, while all others are left untranslated. For onomatopoeia's the majority were translated, while a few larger onomatopoeias were also left untranslated. For the other instances of linguistic paratext, either the strategy of translation proper or non-translation was applied. In the Donald Duck strips, we have seen some cultural adaptations of inscriptions, but for most onomatopoeia the strategy of translation proper was applied, except for such universal onomatopoeias such as "zzzz", "wak", and "huh", which are used the same way in Dutch. The most interesting changes and the most diverse use of translation strategies seemed to occur in dialogue text, simply because this is the largest category of text in these comics.

Maybe a more important lesson, is that of the importance of empirical research. While it is possible to hypothesize over translation strategies and taxonomies of comics, it is important to test these hypotheses by analyzing a whole

comic, rather than just looking for examples with each proposed category in order to confirm your hypothesis. This way it becomes clear that, while some categories work for some comics, they may not work for others, and there may be categories which you have not thought of. It also becomes clear that it is hard to generalize any remarks about comics, since comics are such a dynamic a varied form of expression, in which there are many conventions, and even more ways to break with these conventions.

On a theoretical level, I also hope to have shown that comics as a term is so broad and unwieldy that it becomes hard to talk about comics translation as a singular phenomenon. We do not talk about “prose translation” as a singular topic, but tend to distinguish between literary translation, translation of children’s books, legal translation, medical translation, and bible translation. Even within literary translation, it is acknowledged that every author, and every book requires a unique approach. So too should we acknowledge the diversity of styles and genres and topics that are found in comics, and the different theoretical approaches that go along with them. We can start to acknowledge this diversity by explicitly demarcating which kinds of comics a theory might apply to, and placing those comics in the context of the cultural field.

I hope this thesis can serve as a foundation for further research, whereby other theoretical approaches to comic translation are tested against practice. It might be possible, for example, to look at the image-text relations proposed by Borodo and Mälzer’s interpretation of those relations proposed by Scott McCloud. It would be interesting to see to what extent certain image-text relations can be correlated with certain translation strategies. In the spirit of the scientific method, I would also love to see the same method be applied to different kinds of comics, or even the same comics, as a kind of replication. This way we can truly examine the diversity of approaches to the translation of comics. It would also be interesting to compare different translators’ works, in order to see to what extent these strategies are signs of an individual translator’s preferences.

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