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INTRODUCTION

I parody myself every chance I get. I try to make fun of myself and let people know that I'm a human being, and these things that have happened to me are real. I'm not just some cartoon who exists and suddenly doesn't exist.

GARY COLEMAN

Coleman's remark ("Gary Coleman") might seem like a paradox, showing your humanity through parody. Does parody not exaggerate things, so that they become absurd? Can self-mockery really be a sign of humanity? What people see on the surface may not hold true for what goes on beneath it. Such is the case with *The Gun Seller*. It tells the story of Thomas Lang, a hired gun who is approached by a mysterious figure to kill an American industrialist. He refuses, because he 'doesn't kill people'. Instead, he goes to the industrialist's house to warn him, where he meets his daughter Sarah. After their encounter, Lang begins to experience the consequences of his action: he is forcefully taken from place to place to talk to this and that person; chased by men in suits who appear to be on various sides; shot in the armpit by the person he is trying to help; and to top it all, coerced by a secret American organisation to go undercover in an underground movement, that is planning a hit on the Dutch Minister of Finance. It is a story of love, self-exploration, secrecy, resistance, betrayal, murder, espionage. Although Lang is pushed and pulled from side to side, making him doubt his own moral standing, he ultimately

manages to save the good people, give the bad people what they deserve, satisfy the several parties seeking his cooperation, while staying true to his own beliefs.

The author of the book is Hugh Laurie, who is now famous for his role as the cynical doctor House in the eponymous TV-series. He is also well-known from the comic duo he formed with Stephen Fry, and for his role in the *Blackadder* series. The humour that is involved in those periods of his career show what readers might expect from *The Gun Seller*. It is the first (and as yet the only) book he has written, and has been described by many as a parody, as a spy novel, as a parody of the spy novel. Incredible as it may seem for a combination of over-the-top action, British humour and parody, a closer analysis of the book will show that it might not be all that fantastical.

This essay concentrates on the translation of *The Gun Seller* – chapter eighteen will serve as the source for illustrations – with particular attention to translation problems that arise. The translator has to consider many elements of the book in this process. Not only do story, characters, tone and the humour have to be transferred to another language, but genre and the function of individual elements within the book and of the book as a whole, are also of importance during translation, and ultimately for the target text. The predominant problem of translating the parody of the book constitutes most of the theoretic framework. The humour that is integrated into every inch of the book, the all too familiar story line, Lang as the main character of the story, Lang as the narrator of the story: these individual elements make up the parody of this novel, and influence the translation process.

First, a 'translation brief' and a target text profile (Nord, 235-6) will give the translator an idea of what the ultimate translation should look like, and thus offer guidance and direction when it comes to methods and strategies of translating *The Gun Seller*. An analysis of the source text will show what elements give *The Gun Seller* its effect and therefore have to be transferred to the target text for similar effect. The concept of 'parody', an important aspect of the novel, will then be explored. By putting forward several definitions, occasionally dismissing dated ideas, a definition of parody will be offered according to a modern, more practical view. The workings of parody in the novel will be studied on the basis of source text illustrations, gradually establishing *The Gun Seller* as a parody. This will give some insight into the aspects of this book, especially the element of parody, that pose problems for translation, and possible methods and strategies for solving these difficulties. Eventually, this will answer the question that is central to the case study: what problems is the translator faced with when translating the parodic book *The Gun Seller*?

1 - SOURCE & TARGET TEXT

1.1 - TRANSLATION BRIEF & TARGET TEXT PROFILE

Translating *The Gun Seller*, or any other text for that matter, is a task that involves a target text that is created from a source text. Christiane Nord proposes that a translation brief and a target text profile are made prior to a source text analysis, so that the translator knows what aspects of the original text are important for the translation, and where translation problems may be expected (236). The translator's idea of the target text and target reader can for instance influence decisions about form and style of, and word choices and cultural features in the translation. Knowing the design of the end product thus facilitates the translator's job before the creation process even begins.

1.1.1 - TRANSLATION BRIEF

A target text profile shows what the translator should especially look for in the source text analysis: what elements should be retained in the translation, and what not? This brings to light potential translation problems and areas of the original text that might need adaptation due to differences in function, convention and culture. It is the translation brief, however, that gives direction to the target text profile by

answering general questions about the translation assignment, like function, target audience and reason for translating a certain text.

The general function of the translation is to entertain its audience. But the story is also an invitation for readers to rethink their ideas of popular spy stories, to see how incredible they actually are, even compared to *The Gun Seller*, which only seems to mock itself. (See chapter 2.2.1.)

In some aspects, the target audience has quite a wide range: it consists of speakers of Dutch; and not only can adults of various ages read the book, younger readers who are on the border of adulthood can likewise enjoy what it has to offer. The elements of action and espionage give the intended readers a more specific character, and the British humour narrows down the group further. In short, the intended readers are Dutch-speaking (young) adults who like action, spy stories and British humour.

A reason for translating *The Gun Seller* almost fifteen years after it was first published could be to share in the profits of Hugh Laurie's current popularity. Since he landed his role as the (in)famous doctor House in the eponymous television series, his worldwide fan base has gained considerably in size. A book that is written by such a person would no doubt attract the attention of his fans, making them a very attractive market, not to mention the numerous people who may read his book because they recognise his name, are drawn to the story, or are simply curious.

1.1.2 - TARGET TEXT PROFILE

Settling on a target audience helps to establish a target text profile, and acts as a starting point for rendering a text. For instance, the translator's word choices can be influenced by the kind of audience the translation is aiming at. Although the source text – its function, tone, place in time and space, etc. – gives an indication of what words should be used (formal/informal, common/uncommon, modern/archaic, etc.), it is important that the audience can understand and appreciate them. In practice, this will often be determined through difficulty of the word, and appropriateness in a certain context. If it is too difficult, or is used in a context that gives preference to or dictates another word, the audience could fail to fully understand the text, or fall over the inappropriateness. To give an (extreme) example of using an inappropriate word: a literal translation of “Who pulls the trigger?” (Laurie, 228) would be ‘Wie trekt aan de trekker?’. Even without a larger context, it is obvious that ‘trekt aan’ does not suit this context, as ‘trekker’ is always combined with ‘overhalen’.

Terminology that might occur in the source text similarly has to be rendered into Dutch to create an effect like that of the original. The use of certain (kinds of) words and special terms sets the tone and determines the character of the narrator, story figures and story itself, and therefore the words and terms should be likewise used in the translation.

Another factor that is to be considered is the age of the intended audience. It influences both word choice and subject content. It could be understood to be a bad

influence if a young audience were exposed to inappropriate subjects or words (sex, death, drug and alcohol abuse, swearwords). Alternatively, using difficult words (formal, technical) could become confusing for the child. Furthermore, a difference must be observed between toddlers and young adults, for instance. Whereas one group is still in the language developing stage, the other is (nearly) ready to move on to adult literature. Clearly, the 'language' of these two literatures will differ a great deal. As the effect of the source text is aimed at a certain audience, the target text will also aim for that particular audience in the Dutch-speaking society to gain that particular effect.

Socio-cultural differences can also require the translator to adapt his working method, and tune his translation to the readers' prior knowledge. Differing languages could mean differing cultures and differing social values. In America, for instance, American football and baseball are popular sports, whereas the Dutch rather play football. This not only means that American football and baseball players are not as well-known in the Netherlands as they are in the US, but their respective sports terms and traditions, even if they are translated into the proper target language terms, are also likely to mean little to the average Dutch. Alternatively, a subject can call up one reaction in one culture, and another reaction in a culture where the subject is a social taboo. Social values can likewise evoke different responses. To illustrate: in England, queuing is common practice. In fact, according to the website of ICONS, queuing is said to be one of England's icons ("Queuing"). If someone jumped the line, or stood on the wrong side of a moving staircase, the

English would seriously frown upon it, whereas people from other countries might just be annoyed or be used to it, or even do it themselves. Such a situation would then evoke stronger emotions in the English culture than anywhere else. The same goes for other values that call up different emotions per culture or country. Where a subject is openly discussed in one country, it might be a social taboo in another. The translator will have to look out for these aspects, and depending on the source text function and the target text function, he might even have to make a few adaptations. In the case of *The Gun Seller*, the general goal of the translation to reach a source text effect in target readers, would justify these adaptations to create that effect. But in today's internationally oriented societies, they do not have to occur too often, and possible changes do not have to be too drastic. Besides, if a text were considered to be unsuitable, it would with all probability not be translated at all. This is also something that highly depends on the target audience. The humour in *The Gun Seller* is likewise dependent for its effect on the receiving culture. But as the world internationalises through television, the Internet, and other cross-border media, people outside the country of origin are familiar with 'British humour', and the receptive audience stretches beyond cultural boundaries. Therefore, cultural elements in *The Gun Seller* such as British humour do not need to be replaced by elements from the target culture, for the translation's target audience is supposedly one that is familiar with them and/or appreciates them for what they are: an essential part of the story's effectiveness. It can then be said that the target text aims for the same effect in Dutch readers of the translation, as the original in readers of English.

1.2 - SOURCE TEXT ANALYSIS

An analysis of *The Gun Seller* shows what features – linguistic, stylistic and cultural aspects, tone, humour, story, characters, etc. – are characteristic to the text. These features together give the book its effectiveness, and the readers a certain reading experience. To reach a similar effect with the translation, these features have to be transferred to the Dutch text somehow. The source text is then the original object – including its function, message, and the ideas and emotions it calls up – with the translation as its mirror image, reflecting the same elements, only brought in a different language and culture. First, however, the features that characterise *The Gun Seller* have to be identified.

1.2.1 - TARGET AUDIENCE

Like in the target text profile, the target audience can help the translator with word choices, cultural features or otherwise. Considering the at times coarse language and violent content of *The Gun Seller*, the target audience for the translation of *The Gun Seller* consists of adults. But looking at the language adolescents use, and the things they watch, read and do these days, they may very likely be among the intended readership as well. In addition, one reader might like spy stories, whereas another might like fantasy fiction. So appreciation of parodies is one of the qualities that is pictured in the intended reader; likewise a love of spy novels and British humour.

Although there are some technical terms on weaponry, it is not necessary for the reader to know these, as they are merely employed to express the main character's knowledge and love of rifles, giving the reader some insight into his personality.

1.2.2 - NARRATOR / CHARACTER

It becomes clear very early on that the story very much hangs on the main character Thomas Lang's personality, what he does, what he says, what he thinks. *The Gun Seller* is told from Lang's point of view. However, it is important to distinguish between Lang as a character in the story and Lang the narrator. To simplify things, the narrator will be referred to as 'the narrator', and the character as 'Lang'. The narrator recounts what he has experienced and has had time to reflect on his past thoughts and actions; the character experiences everything at that moment in the past and is in fact a creation of the narrator. Because it is the narrator who is telling the story, Gregory Currie argues that the narrator is also the author of the story he tells (66): he uses his own words and methods to reconstruct *his* version of characters, emotions, and past events. He is to be distinguished, though, from the 'implied author', the reader's idea of the author of the book, the creator of the narrator, not the person telling the story within the book (O'Sullivan, 199). Likewise, the target audience is the readership that the actual author of the book ('the real author') has pictured for himself, the readers he imagines will read his book. This is also the case with the translator as an intermediate: the translation he creates is aimed at an

audience who he imagines will read the translation. In addition, the person who actually reads the book is the 'real reader'. And as Emer O'Sullivan notes, the translator, who has to read the original in order to translate it, is therefore first of all a real reader of the source text (200).

FOREKNOWLEDGE

The fact that the narrator already knows how the story will end gives him the opportunity to hint at the course of the story, or to use utterances like 'little did he know' or 'at the time' to make his foreknowledge apparent. Ironically enough, he does neither. Although the foreknowledge is there, information is given in chronological order, from Lang's perspective; in other words, the reader does not know what Lang does not know. It allows the narrator to highlight ironic situations, and include some older-and-wiser comments on his young-and-inexperienced self. In the following passage, both irony and self-mockery are present. Lang is sitting in the Piz Gloria restaurant, waiting for Hugo, a fellow member of the terrorist group The Sword Of Justice, to signal him into action by wearing his sunglasses over his eyes:

- (1) I was just beginning to wonder whether The Sword Of Justice budget could stretch to a second cup, when a movement of bright colour caught my eye. I looked up and saw that Hugo was waving from the gantry outside.

Everyone else in the restaurant noticed him too. Probably thousands of people in Austria, Italy and France noticed him. All in all, it was a hopeless piece of amateurism, and if Francisco had been there he would have slapped Hugo hard, the

way he'd had to do many times during training. But Francisco wasn't there, and Hugo was making a multi-coloured arse of himself, and a gibbering wreck of me, for no good reason. The only saving grace was that none of the many curious onlookers would have been able to tell exactly who or what he was waving at.

Because he was wearing sunglasses over his eyes. (Laurie, 234-5)

With his foreknowledge, the narrator is able to carefully construct an ironic situation, incidentally criticising himself for his amateurism. In this passage, Lang describes Hugo as amateurish and careless, giving vivid images and taking Hugo's earlier behaviour – where their leader Francisco had to reprimand him regularly – to support his shocked reaction, which is quite a logical one, considering the gravity of Hugo's action. The constructive criticism invites the reader to share Lang's view of Hugo as an irresponsible daredevil. When the cause of the waving is finally given – Lang's own carelessness for missing the initial signal – critique on Hugo becomes critique on Lang as well, creating an ironic situation and self-mockery. The reader is confronted with Lang's thoughts at that moment, as can be seen from his reaction and the thoughts that are described. “for no good reason” suggests that Lang cannot think of a logical explanation for Hugo's waving. Only in the last sentence of the passage does the reader, and Lang, find out that he himself has, in a way, caused this behaviour. The narrator thus uses his foreknowledge invisibly by carefully reorganising information to create ironic twists, and to mock and criticise Lang's juvenile behaviour. The subtle way in which he presents the story is very characteristic of the narrator and of the story's tone: it has a certain effect on the

reader, and the translator has to reproduce the subtle ways of the narrator to effect something similar with the target text.

ILLOGICALITY

Another notable thing about the narrative is that it is filled with illogical thoughts.

Lang reflects a lot on his own situation, moral standing, motivations and feelings, and other people's behaviour. He tries to find explanations from various perspectives, summarising possibilities, linking them together with many 'ands' and 'ors'. The conjunctions give his contemplations an organised impression, but that is counteracted by some strange and illogical reasonings, suggesting a rather confused and uncertain mind.

At one point, Lang is wondering why he had not asked Solomon, his outside contact, about love interest Sarah, and reflects on his motivations for joining The Sword Of Justice:

(2) Perhaps I was scared of what I'd hear. That was possible. Perhaps I was thinking about the risk of my covert meetings with Solomon; that by extending them, with a lot of chat about the folks back home, I was putting his life at risk as well as my own. That was also possible, if a touch shaky.

Or perhaps – and this was the explanation I came to last, moving cautiously around it, peering at it, prodding it with a sharp stick every now and then to see if it'd get up and bite me – perhaps I'd stopped caring. Perhaps I'd just been pretending to myself that Sarah was the reason I was going through with all of this when, in actual fact, now would be a good time to admit that I had made better friends,

discovered a deeper purpose, had more reasons to get out of bed in the mornings, since I joined The Sword Of Justice.

Obviously, that just wasn't possible at all.

That was absurd. (231)

The possibilities he considers become increasingly longer and more detailed.

Although all interpretations make perfect sense, the reader will be more tempted to believe the last one. It appears that more soul-searching is involved: for Lang to come up with such an analytical explanation suggests that there has to be some truth in it, making the longest, most elaborate explanation the most convincing one. In spite of its plausibility, Lang dismisses it as absurd. This points to Lang's tendency to avoid his real motivations, in fear of finding a side of him he does not like. Instead of convincing the reader that this explanation is impossible, he expresses his fear that this might actually be true. The illogical way the information is organised adds some irony to Lang's ponderings. The audience knows Lang is afraid of the truth, and Lang probably knows it himself. Still he is ready to accept an explanation that is hardly an explanation at all, and rejects the one he believes has the most truth in it.

Another instance of an illogical train of thought is when Lang lies hidden behind a drift, and finds Dirk Van Der Hoewe, the Dutch Minister of Finance and Lang's mark, staring at something behind him, just as he is focusing the rifle's sights on him.

- (3) I gently eased my head down below the level of the drift and twisted round, checking for some solitary langlauffer, or an errant chamois, or the chorus-line of *No, No Nanette* – anything that might have caught Dirk's eye. (238)

Instead of offering logical reasons for Dirk's behaviour, the explanations become more and more illogical. It would be very unnatural indeed to be thinking of *No, No Nanette* in such a situation. This, however, can be put down to the narrator: illogicality is one of his ways to point out some of Lang's dumb moves – instead of keeping an eye on his target, Lang looks away and consequently loses sight of him. It is almost as if the narrator is ridiculing Lang by portraying him as a clumsy, mentally uncertain spy.

Considering the serious situation Lang finds himself in, the narrative maintains an unusually airy, almost casual tone, and tells of serious situations with humour and irony. A possible explanation can be found in the details.

DETAILS

The narrative is at times very detailed in its descriptions. Although the average spy has to take notice of details, in *The Gun Seller*, this characteristic is subverted because the details are often not relevant to the story itself. Instead, they are indicative of the narrator's attitude towards his story. By going into detail, he sometimes contrasts Lang's qualities with others':

- (4) He'd managed to get hold of a Green Thing in take-down format; or, as the makers would have you have it, a 'covert sniper rifle system'. It comes in pieces, in other

words, and most of those pieces had already arrived in the village. The compressed sniper-scope had come in as a 200 millimetre lens on the front of Bernhard's camera, with the mount hidden inside; the bolt was doing service as the handle of Hugo's razor, while Latifa had managed to get two rounds of Remington Magnum ammunition into each heel of a stupidly expensive pair of patent-leather shoes. All we lacked was a barrel, and that was coming into Wengen on the roof of Francisco's Alfa Romeo – together with a lot of other long metal things that people use for winter sports.

I'd brought the trigger myself, in my trouser pocket. Perhaps I'm just not the creative type. (229-30)

The account of Lang's smuggling method could not have been made much longer due to its uncreativity. The great detail with which the creative methods of Lang's team members are given, arouses the expectation that Lang will come up with an equally creative disguise. His failure to do so has a humorous effect, as it comes as a surprise.

Detailed descriptions can serve another purpose as well, as can be illustrated with example (2): the unusual detail of the last explanation, the one that Lang immediately rejects, is more than merely illogical. According to Currie, “unusual precision” with which someone tells his story, “is often an indication of irony, and an ironic speaker is generally understood as not asserting the proposition her words would naturally be taken to express” (15). In other words, *The Gun Seller's* narrator is to be taken with a pinch of salt. This also shows a certain distance between the narrator and his main character and story. Distancing the narrator from Lang's situation suggests that the narrator has left his troubles behind him, and that he is

now perhaps leading a happy-go-lucky life and sees this past experience as one big anecdote. The airy tone can then be interpreted as relief.

LANGUAGE

The language of the narrator is an important aspect that sets the tone of the story, and influences the readers' ideas on and feelings towards the story and the characters. The words of the narrative and the characters, for instance, are very similar to spoken language: the words are informal ('eency-weency', 'this skating thing') and the tone airy. There *is* the occasional excursion to more technical terms to do with rifles, and archaic or poetic words, but these have particularly mocking and dramatic purposes. The informal, airy, technical aspects of the narrative therefore have to be taken into the translation. Otherwise, the story would have a whole different tone and character.

LANG

The earlier mentioned instances of illogicality and detail come with long sentences, which is also indicative of the narrator's feelings towards past events and Lang's thoughts at that moment. A striking element of the story is the narrator's apparent sarcasm and self-mockery. He tends to laugh serious matters off by making a joke out of it, using an understatement, or by exaggerating the situation so that it becomes absurd. The calmness with which he describes Lang's assessment of risky situations and morally dubious actions is so overdone, that the reader might wonder about his

reliability. But the calm and cynical exterior is hiding something deeper: his true feelings. Hugh Laurie once said: "I probably use humour to try and avoid getting close to people, in a funny sort of way. Making people laugh is sort of cowardly. It can be an intimate thing, but it also distances you from the person somewhat" ("Quotes"). This is true for Lang as well. Humour is a kind of defence mechanism to keep someone, or something at bay. When he takes on a dangerous undercover mission, he is not sure whether he does it to save the life of the woman he thinks he loves, or because he wants to experience what it is to be a part of something, something big. It suggests that he is putting off the search for his real driving force, that he is indeed afraid of what it might really be. He could turn out to be someone completely different from who he thought he was, and that scares him.

The narrator's use of humour, his calm and airy tone, are in fact shields, means of evading his own feelings. This is especially apparent from the long sentences, and his great attention to trifling details. Take passage (4), for instance, where the narrator talks about the rifle parts which The Sword Of Justice members smuggle into Mürren: the creative ways in which the transportation of the parts happens, are irrelevantly described in great detail in a single sentence, making the whole operation a mere form of creative expression, acting as if smuggling in rifle parts to kill a statesman were the most natural thing in the world. The cause for his evasive behaviour lies within the story he tells. Since the events in the story are above all violent, it is the morality issue that drives him to his insecurity: being hired to assassinate someone on ideological grounds tends to trouble a soft-hearted man's

conscience, make him doubt his moral standards. The story is then not so much about espionage, ideology or love, as it is about Lang's struggle to find himself, to figure out what drives him, if he is who he thinks he is.

What needs to be kept in mind is that it is Lang the Narrator who is so airy about his situation. As the narrator's identity crisis is already behind him, the foreknowledge allows Lang the Narrator to be ironic about Lang the Character's struggle. He might at the time have been much more afraid, much more serious about the circumstances, about his emotions and thoughts. In this case, the humour is meant to take the edge off the inward struggle, to make it less melodramatic, to comfort the reader with the prospect of a happy ending. The story's narrative therefore represents two views: the one is the view of the character, who is struggling with himself; the other is the narrator, who has been there, knows how it all ends, and tells the story as a kind of anecdote, allowing himself to laugh about it afterwards. These underlying elements of the narrative are not explicit in the text, but have to be gleaned from the narrator's tone and humour, his use of words, and his organisation and presentation of information. The translator of *The Gun Seller* will have to keep these subtleties intact as much as possible, so that the reader of the translation, like the reader of the original, can discover these concealed feelings and ideas for himself.

THE MISSION

The most detailed parts of the narrative are about objects, pretence, and digressions to completely unrelated things; in other words, things that suggest emotional distance. For instance, when he shows his knowledge of a rifle, this is meant to keep his mind off his assignment.

- (5) With a lot of prompting from me, Francisco had agreed to go with the PM L96A1. It's not a pretty name, I know, nor even a memorable one; but the PM, nicknamed 'the Green Thing' by the British Army – on the basis, presumably, that it is both green and a thing – does its job well enough; that job being to fire a 7.62 millimetre round with sufficient accuracy to give the competent recreational shooter, which was definitely me, a guaranteed hit at six hundred yards. (Laurie, 229)

Lang describes the rifle in loving detail, even admires it. But enthusiasm turns into hysteria when he relates it to the actual assassination:

- (6) As rifles go, the Green Thing isn't a particularly noisy instrument – nothing like an M16, which frightens people to death fractionally before the bullet hits them – but even so, when you happened to be the one holding the thing, and you're busy lining up your cross-hairs on an eminent European statesman, you tend to get a little self-conscious about things like noise. About things like everything, in fact. You want people to look the other way for a moment, if they wouldn't mind. Knowing, as you squeeze the trigger, that half-a-mile away, cups would stop on their way to lips, ears would cock, eyebrows would raise, and 'what the fuck was that?' would come tumbling out of a few hundred mouths in a few dozen languages, just cramps your style ever so slightly. In tennis, they call it choking on the shot. I don't know what they call it in assassination. Choking on the shot, probably. (231-2)

The same goes for many other detailed passages in the story: talking and thinking about intricate details keeps Lang calm, keeps his mind from wandering off to the risks and morality of the mission, and thereby his own ethics. He can analyse and accept other people's thoughts and actions more readily than his own. To illustrate: while Hugo actually tries to make his disguise work, Lang himself is keen on showing he is not that good in pretending to be someone else by stressing his 'uncreative mind':

- (7) He was trying to cultivate the look of the serious skier, who wanted steep hills and fine powder, and anyway, don't talk to me because the bass solo on this track is just awesome. I was happy to play the gawping idiot. (234)

The irony in this is that he is already pretending to be someone he is not – he is an infiltrator in *The Sword Of Justice* – and with success. What this reluctant pretence shows, however, is that Lang is, indeed, reluctant; that is, he was coerced into this operation. Other things that keep his mind off the mission are digressions. When he and Solomon secretly meet, most of the words in that passage are dedicated to his environment, to his improving skating skills, to anything but the details of the assassination plan (228-9). Lang is a man on a mission he does not like. Again, Lang's concealed feelings and thoughts only become apparent when you look closer at the text, at how subtle use of words and abundant use of humour point to something deeper.

1.2.3 - CONCLUSION

What the source text analysis shows are the elements that are characteristic of the characters, the story, the style; in other words, characteristic of *The Gun Seller* as a whole, elements the translator has to retain in the translation. The subtle presentation of information, the humour, the tone, the words and long sentences, as opposed to explicitly showing the narrator's foreknowledge, feelings and thoughts, give *The Gun Seller* its effectiveness, and ultimately make it *The Gun Seller*.

2 - THE PARODY *THE GUN SELLER*

Some elements in the story seem contradictory: a humorous narrative does not seem to tally with the serious situation in which Lang finds himself; the action of the popular spy genre would not be expected in such a psychological narrative. The incongruity between these features and the story context would not have made sense if it did not have a certain function: to create the effect of parody. To see how 'parody' works in *The Gun Seller*, the concept itself has to be explored first.

2.1 - PARODY

On hearing the word 'parody', people tend to think that it is merely making fun of another text. When asked how this happens, exaggeration often comes to mind first. It goes without saying that this is a somewhat limited image of what a parody really is. It neither accounts for the parodies that have no clear text that acts as a model, nor the ones that do not use the method of exaggeration. Take *Don Quixote*, a parody that does not allude to any particular text, but rather parodies the romantic genre which was so popular in Cervantes's time. Parodies not only have to do with a given text, or elements of a text, but can stretch to cover whole genres. Conversely, texts that are not parodies can likewise make fun of other texts, amplifying characters and

situations in the process. Looking at the loose components can take us closer to a definition of the parody.

2.1.1 - 'PARA'

The very word itself contains an important aspect of how a parody works. The Greek 'para' means both 'beside' and 'in opposition to', the first indicating that the parody stays close to a model, the latter suggesting subversion, a movement away from a model. This duality in meaning causes a duality in function. Consequently, as Christy L. Burns comments on Margaret A. Rose's *Parody: ancient, modern, and post-modern*, a parody is never either 'subversive' or 'counter-subversive' (986), for it is both and neither. It points to a text that follows some aspects of the original, while also responding to it. Mikhail Bakhtin calls this two-sidedness 'double-voiced' (qtd. in Morson, 108). Parodies, according to him, are designed to express two different voices: that of the original, signified by characteristic features of the original text, and that of the parody, which responds to those distinguishing marks. An imitation, in contrast, only expresses the voice of the original, as it is meant to pass for the original. However, the two voices of the parody are not equal. The second voice, that of the parodist, has to have the "higher semantic authority"; that is, it has to be clear that the second voice is the one who has the last word. Otherwise, the subversive aspect would not become apparent, and consequently render the essence of 'parody' meaningless.

Gary Saul Morson elaborates on the double-voice principle, and lists three criteria that make up a parody (110-1). First, there has to be an original, another 'utterance', which is recognised by the audience. Finding the original utterance allows the parody to be acknowledged as such, giving it its two voices. An 'utterance' suggests something textual, however, something to do with words and sentences, whether spoken or written down. To be sure, it is true that there has to be a source on which the parody bases itself. But that source does not have to be a text. The target of a parody could be anything to do with previous works, from linguistic and stylistic properties of a text, to story and characters, to genre. 'Source', as opposed to 'utterance', is therefore a more inclusive term, as it accounts for non-textual allusions as well. The second criterion is that the parody has to be antithetical to its original. In other words, the treatment of the original features in the parody has to be different from that of the source text. If, for example, author X's style becomes the object of parody, its stylistic features, which entails an abundance of metaphors and descriptions of small details, will be subverted in the target text. This could mean the use of metaphors until falling into clichés, or long detailed descriptions of trivialities. The devices that characterise X's style are thus employed for different purposes and applied to different subjects, but are still recognisable as his style. The word 'antithetical', however, implies that the parodic element is the exact opposite of the source element. This would mean that there is only one way to subvert the source, by taking the exact opposite of a certain feature. Obviously, this is not and cannot be the case, as he later also explains. A parody of a tragedy might be a

comedy, but it could alternatively be converted into a song or a poem or an autobiography. On that account, a more fitting description would be: an alternate interpretation and/or application of a source element. This allows more ways of accomplishing parodic effect, but maintains the essential subversion of the source. The aforementioned “higher semantic authority” of the parodist's voice is finally indicated as an important condition for recognising a text as being a parody. If only a single voice were discerned, the text could even be taken to be an original work, instead of a new text with a different perspective on an original work.

2.1.2 - IMITATION

Many definitions of the parody regard imitation and humour as essential aspects. Yoshihiko Ikegami's distinction between ‘total’ and ‘partial’ imitation (18) is not a recent one, and is more to do with the linguistics than with the pragmatics of parody. The terms are however useful for highlighting the differences between the kinds of imitation with which parody is concerned.

Total imitation is the word for word use of passages, sentences and words, from the original. The parodic element would be a change in the function of the imitated text, for instance by changing the context of a quote: taking a Shakespeare quote and putting it in an entirely different context, giving it a different meaning, could – according to this definition, and provided it is humorous – be parodic. Henry Fielding remarks that such quotation is not so much quoting “out of context”, as it is

quoting in “too much” context (qtd. in Morson, 113). Here, one of the functions of parody becomes apparent. The change in context redirects the reader's attention to the context, making him wonder (again) about the meaning of the quote, both in the parody and in the original, and its purpose within the respective situations. The reader is thus invited to reconsider the quotation, to find a hidden message within the original context, and to discover a deeper or alternative meaning to the quote with the help of the new one. A parody that uses total imitation is thus less about coming up with a different interpretation, as it is about coming to a fuller understanding of the quote; hence Fielding's idea of “too much” context.

Partial imitation is more subtle, as it only follows the original in certain respects. It often concerns changes, but with the preservation of some of the original features (Ikegami, 25-7). It is not always about quoting lines, which explains the possibility of making intertextual allusions and of imitating sources other than texts. Genres, for instance, are characterised by story lines, characters, form, and so on. The imitation can be concerned with reproducing certain kinds of words (e.g. the use, but also the lack of use of many concrete nouns), a particular form (for instance the epistolary construction of *Pamela* in *Shamela*), a specific genre (like the spy genre), and so on; in principle any aspect of a text can be imitated – in the words of Seymour Chatman, “from [the] smallest particulars of form, like meter and rhyme, to the broadest choices of subject matter” (36). This does mean that there is the danger that the audience does not notice the imitation. After all, an intended effect of parody is that the reader recognises the object of imitation, and sees how it has been subverted.

However, retracing partial imitation to its source is not as easily done as backtracking a quotation back to its original: the latter offers the certainty of the exact wording of the original, whereas the former takes more alertness to see because of deliberate differences with the source. But recognising the original from the imitation might not always be necessary for parodies to have effect. Maria Cristina Schleder de Borba points out that “the appreciation of these texts [parodies] as comic and subversive ones depends on something other than the use of their originals as ‘interpretants’” (16). Although it might be essential to recognise the original author's style if that were the object of imitation, it might not be essential for a humorous effect. That could simply come from the incongruity between the imitation and its context; or from the imitation itself, a quote for instance. The sentence “The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it” (Wilde, 26) might in itself not cause any reaction that suggests amusement, but if it were told say among students, it could be humorously taken as an argument in favour of procrastination. It is thus the new context that gives the sentence its meaning, not its recognition as being a quote from *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Therefore, the quote, the imitation, stands on itself, and does not need the original per se.

2.1.3 - HUMOUR

What can be marked as humorous is primarily an instinctive issue. Victor Raskin describes humour as an innate human ability (qtd. in Attardo, 13 + 196). Inspired by

Noam Chomsky's 'grammatical competence', Raskin's 'humour competence' explains how people know whether something is humorous, even if they do not know exactly what causes this effect. However, Salvatore Attardo points out that, although a sentence can be uniformly judged grammatical, it is unlikely that it is equally uniformly judged humorous (196). What one person finds hilarious, another might find vulgar or feeble or inappropriate. Different kinds of humour evoke different kinds of reactions. While a play on words may elicit some sniggering, a joke is meant to cause the hearer/reader to laugh, preferably out loud. Laughter is, however, not a proper indication of humour. A humorous act can, as mentioned, have different responses, depending on the hearer's sense of humour, and the purpose of the act. While one act is *meant* to cause roaring laughter, another may aim to make a statement, incidentally causing silent amusement. Therefore, silence does not make a humorous act non-humorous; it might simply have met the wrong audience.

A clear definition of humour is, for said reasons, not possible. Moreover, Giovanni Sinicropi argues that "[the] lack of a rigorous, or at least reliable, definition of humor and of its categories causes (...) another difficulty that hinders research; it is represented by the fact that denominations of processes usually considered sources of humor (...) are often used as if they were synonyms or if they shared a semantic space. This denotes that the semantic field to which they belong does not have precise boundaries" (qtd. in Attardo, 4). It is then not even feasible to come to clear-cut definitions between kinds of humour. Definitions would merely consist of an

enumeration of techniques and devices employed to cause humorous effect, many of which would not restrict themselves to just one 'kind' of humour.

What is possible is to look for elements that determine whether something can be considered humorous; in other words, those same techniques and devices that make a clear definition impossible. From here onward, these techniques will be referred to as 'kinds of humour'. This is to distinguish between the use of techniques in order to create just any effect, and the use to create comic effect. The definition of 'kind of humour' is then very fluid indeed, as one kind can employ techniques from another kind, and the other way around.

'Exaggeration' is an old accustomed technique for causing amusement and at the same time exercising criticism. By blowing up characteristics of a character, text, story, etc, special attention is drawn to that aspect, creating a higher awareness in the reader. In parodies, it often causes humour, which flattens out obstacles that hinder a more direct approach, and is thus an oblique form of criticism. But exaggeration is neither *the* device in parody, nor the only kind of humour. In contrast to exaggeration is the 'understatement', which downplays a certain element. Doing this creates an incongruity between what the text says and what is really the case. The reader is then more conscious of the reality of circumstances, which is the ultimate purpose of an understatement. Incidentally, the incongruity, the downplaying of a situation, often has a humorous impact on the reader, especially when the situation is grave and would normally require an appropriate amount of sobriety. Closely related is the euphemism. By wrapping negative things into a more positive wording, it mitigates

circumstances by applying 'a nice way of saying'. Although it is meant to convey a negativity more agreeably, it is precisely this hiding of the message that, like in the understatement, draws closer attention to the matter at issue: it is so negative, that it calls for nicer words to alleviate the impact of the message. It is the irony that effects humour. Even though the speaker uses less strong words to convey his message, hearers – including the addressee – will know what he is really trying to say.

These are just some techniques and methods of creating humour. But for the parody itself, important roles are reserved for incongruity and context. They are the primary causes of humour in the understatement and euphemism among others. Incongruity has the ironic effect of saying one thing, with another intension in mind, of trying one thing and accomplishing something else (in chapter 2.3, the workings of irony and other kinds of humour in *The Gun Seller* will be demonstrated); as with the *Dorian Gray* illustration, context puts the act in perspective, a setting from which to view and judge, and to give the act its humorous effectiveness.

2.1.4 - DEFINITION

Humour has so far been regarded as one of the characteristics of parody, even though Morson states that parodies are not always comic (111-2). However, modern definitions have generally included humour as one of the distinctive properties. This would not have been so if there had not been some truth in it. In *Parody: Ancient, Modern, and Post-Modern*, Rose gives an overview of how views on parody have

developed over the years. She ultimately even uses humour to set parodies apart from other imitating categories: a characterisation without humour would, for instance, not differentiate between the parody and the pastiche, or between the parody and the cento (73, 78). Humour can thus be included as a distinguishing quality. The entertainment comes from the different – uncommon, unexpected – perspective or approach to a situation or context. All in all, it defines the parody as a humorous recontextualisation or refunctioning of characteristic features of one or more texts, one or more text elements, one or more characters, themes, genres, and so on.

It has to be noted, however, that research on parody and the translation of parody highly depends on contemporary views: how people define ‘parody’ influences the way parodies are written and translated. Morson points out that parodies highlight characteristics that people of that period regard as typical, and they can therefore serve as “valuable documents for a history of perception and interpretation” (109). The focus on humour could just be a temporary trend, and humour itself might in a few years not even be considered characteristic of parody at all. Researchers therefore have plenty of opportunity to continue searching for definitions of the phenomenon. Establishing *The Gun Seller* as a parody is therefore a task that is based on the tendencies at the moment.

2.1.5 - OTHER CATEGORIES OF IMITATION

To be able to establish *The Gun Seller* as a parody, and not a pastiche, satire or the like, the parody has to be distinguished from other categories that are likewise to do with some form of imitation, and might be confused with the parody.

What needs to be noted beforehand is that many, if not all of these imitating and/or comic categories, can be considered as both genres and devices. The presence of one does not exclude the use of another. While a parody can satirise a subject, a satire can likewise use parodic elements to criticise its target theme. A parody is then not only a genre or text type, it is also a device, a technique that can be applied to other genres and text types. Therefore, a definition of parody should work both on small passages within a text, and texts in a much broader sense and from a much wider perspective.

PASTICHE

Although it makes use of imitation as well, pastiche is mainly aimed at the style of one or more works or authors. Originating from the Italian word for 'hodgepodge', the work uses another style or other styles to compose a new work. The difference with the parody is that the imitation of styles usually has no intended humorous effect (Rose, 73).

CENTO

Similarly, the cento does not aim for comedy. It gives an original piece of writing, often verses, a new and inappropriate context, one unintended by the original author. But the cento generally lacks literary criticism. And it does not have the comic effect or the dual function that parody has (Rose, 78).

Nevertheless, both the pastiche and the cento can be humorous. This is the case where the author has a satiric or parodic purpose in mind.

SATIRE

A parodic text needs a source to establish itself as a parody, as its essence is to subvert something else, to draw on source features for its effect. A satire, on the other hand, merely needs a theme to satirise. Themes are not 'sources' in the sense of an earlier work, style, form or genre, but rather any social, political or other subject that can be criticised. It is not to say that a satirical work cannot have a source, but that it "need not make itself as dependent upon it for its own character as does the parody, but may simply make fun of it as a target external to itself" (Rose, 81-2). The source is then not one of the distinguishing features of satire, but rather a part of the content of satire, a theme that is being satirised.

2.2 – IMITATION & SUBVERSION

Before illustrating parodic elements in *The Gun Seller*, the first thing that has to be established is the object of imitation, the target of ridicule, the source on which the parody is based.

The themes of the main story (infiltration, (gun) fights, terrorist acts, elaborate missions, man against political world, etc.), the (international) setting, and the division of roles between the characters (hero, villain, traitor, girl, etc.), point towards the spy genre, with its secrecy and unadulterated action. There are various kinds of spy fiction, focusing on different themes, depending on aspects like historical context.

2.2.1 - THE SPY GENRE

It was not until the late 19th century that the literary spy genre came to be. The reason for this late development is the dubious reputation of spies: they were seen more as traitors than allies. As Peter Lewis puts it: “There was nothing romantic or glamorous about spying, little to invite literary exploration.” But as political tension between nations grew throughout the nineteenth century, the call for spies to ‘keep an eye’ on the enemy grew with it, giving the spy a new opportunity to develop into a possible literary hero (Lewis). Originally added as an extra element to common adventure stories, espionage became more and more the essence of the plot itself,

demanding a category of its own. As doubts about the morality and reality of the spy rose, different ideas were formed. This resulted in many spy novels that contained varying, at times contradicting themes. Some novels focused on the action, telling of pursuits, fights, etc. Others were romanticised, depicting men who are highly skilled in everything, twist women around their fingers, while preventing a worldwide catastrophe. Yet others emphasised the dark or ordinary side of the secret agent, the human side as it were, showing the dangers and the sacrifices, or their normal family life. John le Carré, writer of the latter kind of espionage novels and formerly working for MI5 and MI6, for instance criticised 'Bondian' spies, saying "the highly conspicuous and ostentatiously womanizing Bond would be the last person to be employed in real-life intelligence operations because he would not last a day" (qtd. in Lewis).

CHARACTERISTICS

There are some main ingredients that most, if not all spy novels share. For instance, David Seed states that the "genre is defined by its international subject" (115). At times it concerns historical issues, like the global scale of WWII, the arms race between the US and Russia during the Cold War, or more recently Afghanistan and Iraq in the 'war on terror'. There is an overall "feeling of national insecurity in the face of changing international relations" (116), and people want to believe in heroes who are watching the enemy's every move. Other times, fictional adversaries are created, as is the case in George Orwell's *1984*, where the fictional country of Oceania

is alternately at war with the equally fictional Eurasia and Eastasia. There is a distinction between 'us' and 'them' (Seed, 116). It often concerns political distrust between countries. Sometimes, however, the 'us and them' is about the people distrusting their own government. Especially at the beginning of the twentieth century and in the 1960s, there were doubts about politics. People did not know what their government did behind closed doors, and formed ideas of conspiracies and clandestine operations that did not care much for the ethical side of their actions (126). Le Carré linked these fears with the popularity of spy fiction. "I think that the spy novel encapsulates this public wariness about political behaviour and about the set-up, the fix of society" (qtd. in Seed, 126-7). Government conspiracies and covert operations by 'secret' organisations are therefore often subjects of this genre.

2.2.2 - THE SOURCE

What J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy is to the fantasy genre, Ian Fleming's James Bond is to the spy genre. These literary genres as we know them now are often associated with, and have been popularised by certain authors and their books, which have come to serve as models for the respective genres. Consequently, features that people believe to be characteristic of a genre, are often based on selected works by particular authors. There is thus an inextricable bond between James Bond and popular views of the spy genre. Additionally, Thomas Lang specifically refers to James Bond when he describes the Piz Gloria restaurant:

- (8) The restaurant's other claim to fame is that it once served as a location in a James Bond film. (Laurie, 234)

It draws the attention to, or rather confirms, parallels between the parody and its source: a Bond film was recorded at the exact location where another spy is performing *his* role as an 'assassin'. Both 'James Bond' and 'Thomas Lang' are mere performances; they do not show their true face or really kill anyone. Similarly, *The Gun Seller* is not really a spy novel, but rather a spy fiction parody. For these reasons, James Bond – referring to both the character and the stories – is a feasible source of *The Gun Seller*.

2.2.3 - ANTI-GENRE

The Gun Seller can be said to be an anti-spy novel, with the *James Bond* character and stories as the object of imitation. The concept of anti-genre can be regarded a form of imitation: certain features of a particular genre are copied, but others make it so that it is quite different from what is 'normal' for that genre; for instance, by celebrating an insignificant figure in the form of an epic, or by discussing an elevated character using features of satire.¹ An anti-genre, according to Morson, is not necessarily modelled after another work from that same anti-genre (115): as there are many ways to counter a genre, there are many ways to parody a text. In addition, it has to be a genre that is countered, not just a single work or aspect from a genre (116). This

¹ Satire is here referred to as a genre as opposed to a device to create humour. See chapter 2.1.5.

might seem contradictory to the *James Bond* stories that are taken as objects of parody, as they are specified works. However, as Morson points out, it is sometimes not the original work or author that is being countered, but rather the audience that keeps their work alive. Anti-utopian or mock-epic texts that allude to works by Homer and Virgil, do not (necessarily) take the original writers or works as sources for parody (115). Instead, it is their modern-day imitators and followers, to whom Homer and Virgil's writing still means something, that are being targeted. It is their view of Homer and Virgil that is being parodied. Therefore, it is not the *James Bond* works that are parodied: they are merely taken as exemplary, and can be regarded as representative of today's popular view of the spy genre.

The anti-genre is then a genre that subverts another genre, or the popular view of that genre. The difference between parody and anti-genre is that humour is not considered essential to the anti-genre, whereas it is regarded as a characteristic of parody.

2.2.4 - ANTI-SPY

The Gun Seller counters the popular spy story by taking all too familiar features and incorporating them into a story with different characters, a different tone, and a whole different purpose. On the surface, they may have the same function, but the parody's counteraction of allusions to the spy genre allows the reader to view those features – and consequently the source – in a new light.

STORY

Some general identifiers of the popular spy novel can be found in the story. To begin with, the story itself is full of espionage clichés: a man, a spy working for a (secret) organisation, goes from place to place to gather intelligence about a terrorist group, meets and is helped by a woman who becomes his love interest, is betrayed by someone he trusted or had not paid enough attention to, and ultimately ends up in a face-to-face confrontation with the one behind all the problems, accompanied by many explosions. He holds secret meetings with informants, has to deal with secrecy, weapons and women, and carries out well-planned and dangerous missions.

Psychological aspects – morality, ideology, etc. – are rarely given much notice. In *The Gun Seller*, however, it is Lang's thoughts that dominate the narrative. He seeks reasons and purposes behind many actions, and digs deep in an attempt to find out his own motivations for going along with others' orders. He questions his morality, and with that his identity. So, contrary to what is the case in your average *James Bond* story, Lang's mental processes are openly explored and shared with his audience.²

The Gun Seller thus shows many features of the popular spy story. The difference must be found on a much lower level; the level of characters, for instance.

² This is one of the effects that the narrative point of view has on the story. See chapter 1.2.2.

CHARACTERS

In keeping with popular spy fiction, the cast of characters is as standard as can be, though they may have different character traits: a hero, numerous villains, a traitor, shady figures who balance on the edge of good and evil, and of course, the Bond-girl. Lang is individualistic, but instead of him pulling the strings, it is others who are more often pulling *his* strings. He is thus coerced into cooperating with various organisations who each serve different ends. It makes him less a hero and rather more an anti-hero, as he does not take much initiative, and reluctantly does what others tell him to do – though with enough dedication to do it properly. Moreover, he is inexperienced as a spy and has a tendency to be defiantly clumsy; nothing like the well-trained, cunningly smart and highly competent James Bond. Villains have the appearance of being calm when everything goes according to plan, but they can turn into maniacal ghouls when they are driven into a corner. The traitor often reveals himself at the end of the story, suddenly appearing with some kind of weapon pointed at the hero's general direction. In this case, the maniacal ghoul and the traitor are combined in one character, and the weapon of choice is a highly advanced helicopter with rocket launchers on each side. Shady figures in the story are mostly bosses, Lang's bosses (Ministry of Defence, CIA, Francisco the Terrorist), and as befits shady figures, they do not play a crucial role in the story. Finally, the love interest is the one who has some hand in motivating the hero, or in this case the anti-hero. She is often found to be an independent, strong woman who can normally look after herself, but finds herself in a situation where she needs the help of the

hero. In this story, she is no different. Many characters are thus similar to the popular spy characters. The main difference lies in the principal character, who is also the narrator, which is an important factor to consider when looking for ways in which the parody is established.

COMPLEXITY

Another aspect that is taken from the espionage novel is complexity: elaborate conspiracies, unexpected connections between characters, organisations and events, complicated covert operations. The story usually starts with something small: a routine operation, a favour to a 'friend', a small act of benevolence. But it soon leads to something immensely complicated, involving a double agent, situations that threaten many lives, and bad people in high places. *The Gun Seller* magnifies the complexity by adding more secrecy and more plot twists, keeping Lang (and the reader) in the dark about whom he is really working for and who the actual bad guy is. To illustrate the resulting complexity of *The Gun Seller's* plot: Lang is approached by some acquaintance of the boss of an acquaintance, to kill an American industrialist, whom he decides to warn instead, drawing the attention of the British Ministry of Defence, who wants him to work for the CIA to infiltrate in an international terrorist group, which is actually being financed by a CIA agent, who turns out to be a renegade turned arms dealer, looking to buy a highly advanced helicopter, which the American industrialist helped develop.

Apart from an intricate plot, the narrator also mentions, or rather criticises, the Americans' tendency to overcomplicate things: for instance by using complex words and phrases to describe something quite simple – e.g. “a covert sniper rifle system” (Laurie, 229) as opposed to ‘a rifle in take-down format’ – or by successfully employing uncreative methods (to smuggle in rifle parts), making more elaborate methods seem a bit overdone. The complex elements in *The Gun Seller* are allusions to (over)complicated elements in popular spy fiction: the elaborate conspiracies, the keen use of technological terms, the meticulously planned and executed operations. By overcomplicating story, terms and plans, the narrator manages to ridicule some features that are so familiar in popular spy fiction.

2.2.5 - ANTI-SPY & PARODY

With the creation of an anti-spy novel comes the imitation of characteristic features of the popular spy fiction. The subversive aspect of parody is popularly associated with humour. It can be achieved by subverting identifying features in unexpected, exaggerated, ironic, or any of the numerous other ways. But subversion should not be limited to this, as the more psychological elements of Lang's narrative show.

2.2.6 - NARRATOR & PARODY

The narrative style has a substantial hand in establishing *The Gun Seller* as a parody. The foreknowledge of the narrator offers him the opportunity to rearrange and

highlight certain pieces of information to effect a maximum response from the audience. On parodic level, attention is drawn to Lang's qualities that contrast the qualities of the popular spy. By making illogical connections, he additionally shows that Lang has some misgivings about his task. He is mentally struggling, which contradicts the state of mind of a spy like James Bond, who hardly doubts his actions, and scarcely stops to think about their morality. The psychological aspect of the story is at right angles with popular spy fiction, which has more the tendency to focus on adventure and pursuit than on the main character's moral standing. Detailed descriptions are expressive of the narrator's thoughts on his younger self. He emphasises Lang's inexperience as a spy by setting it off against the skills of others. Furthermore, Lang's insecurity is made apparent through the narrator's many accounts of his thoughts at the time.

The first-person perspective has played a major role on this account. Because the story is drawn from the narrator's own experiences, it is made more personal. It creates a bond between the narrator and the reader, causing the latter to be more sympathetic towards the narrator, and thus the main character. The idea that it is a person's history gives the story an actual source, and with that more credibility. It might be said that the irony and illogicality of some situations and thoughts would make the narrator less reliable – for who would make a joke about being found wearing an unfashionable anorak when there is a real danger of avalanches? But because he does not refrain from ridiculing himself, or from recounting even the most amateurish moments, the narrator becomes more believable. This 'believe/don't

believe' quandary the reader is faced with, could not have been as strong if the narrative had been told from a third-person or any other perspective. Consequently, this 'believe/don't believe' dilemma and the contrastive elements of *The Gun Seller* and popular stories about espionage, make the audience reflect on the improbability of popular spy fiction in general.

2.3 - HUMOUR

Humour is a characteristic of parody that comes in many forms. This, along with individual sense of humour, is one of the reasons why it is so difficult to come to a sound, all-encompassing definition. In *The Gun Seller* too, there are many kinds of humour, all of which contribute to the effect the story wants to convey to the intended reader.

2.3.1 - REPRESENTATIONAL IRONY

The Gun Seller shows many instances of irony. Geoffrey Leech and Mick Short define it as "double significance which arises from the contrast in values associated with two different points of view" (223). Currie calls this "representational irony", and describes it as "saying one thing and meaning its opposite" (150). Both point to a

contradiction in surface expression and deeper meaning.³ The message that is hidden behind this contrast between 'what is said' and 'what is meant', is generally known to all parties involved, both to sender and recipient. Rose describes an ironic statement as a kind of 'code', used by the 'ironist' and understood by the 'initiated' audience (87). Thus "the reader must acknowledge what is implicit rather than explicit and must understand the rhetorical and literary norms which are being flouted by the parodying text" (Chatman, 35). Since the real message is not being concealed from the addressee, it can be said that the effectiveness of irony lies precisely in the roundabout delivery of it – completely concealing the true meaning would nullify the impact of an ironic act, as there would be no one to 'see' the irony. Furthermore, Ikegami argues that the marker 'irony' on a particular text is only temporary. It is the context in which the linguistic expression occurs that determines whether the label can be applied. What is considered ironic in one situation does not have to be so in the next, which indicates that irony entails incongruity between a linguistic expression and its context (Ikegami, 14).

One such instance is when Thomas Lang is on a skating rink, learning how to skate. The narrator describes the scene:

³ It may be considered difficult and confusing to distinguish between irony and sarcasm, as both are concepts that 'mean the opposite'. According to the Sarcasm Society, sarcasm is a kind of humour, "a concept that utilizes irony." Irony is then in fact a 'vessel' for giving a remark its sarcastic tone. Moreover, irony can be applied to more varied situations – sad, serious, humorous – whereas sarcasm is primarily "a form of wit".

(9a) I was definitely getting the hang of this skating thing. I'd started to copy a fancy cross-over turn from a German girl in front of me, and it was working pretty well. I was just about keeping up with her too, which was pleasing. She must have been about six. (Laurie, 229)

(9b) Ik begon dit schaatsen echt onder de knie te krijgen. Ik deed een kunstig pootje-over na van een Duits meisje voor mij en het ging best goed. Ik kon haar ook aardig bijhouden, wat wel prettig was. Ze was zes jaar oud, schat ik zo.

The final sentence has ironic impact because of how the narrator builds up his narrative. The fact that Lang just manages to keep up with the girl suggests that she is more experienced, which in turn suggests that she is at least a bit older than she actually is. But when the girl's age is mentioned, it is merely an indication of his own inexperience. The linguistic expression "She must have been" would under normal circumstances highlight the experience of the girl, and give Lang a pat on the back for keeping up with her despite his beginner's experience. In the current case, it does not seem to fit the situation, as it is not much of an achievement to keep up with a six-year-old. The effect is then that the narrator's earlier praise gets a sarcastic tone, which in turn amplifies Lang's lack of skill. The translation reads: "Ze was zes jaar oud, schat ik zo." Linguistically, this sentence is different. Instead of a fluent sentence, the Dutch text shows two clauses, and the concept of 'about' is put in a separate clause. This gives the phrase a matter-of-fact tone, suggesting that it is very natural for an adult man to be slower than a six-year-old girl. As it is very *unnatural* indeed, this sentence, like the original one, actually draws attention to the

discrepancy between age and skill. Since effect is more important than linguistic or syntactic exactness, this change in sentence structure is justified. Both the English and the Dutch narrative seemingly praise Lang's achievement, but with the last sentence subtly turn praise into self-mockery. Evidently, anything can be Lang's target of irony, including himself. The underlying message is that Lang is actually a slow and inexperienced skater, and it has gained in effectiveness because it is not told directly, but is rather hinted at through subtle linguistic choices.

At times, Lang ironically gives his own interpretation to situations. These interpretations are very unlikely to be the case, and do not agree with what is the most logical scenario given the circumstances. The incongruity between the real event and Lang's version gives the text its ironic effect. For instance, Dirk is described as an awful skier who spends more time lying down than on his feet. When Lang sees how Dirk speeds down the mountain, unable to stop, he says:

(10) He was having a go at a schuss. (238)

Considering Dirk's inexperience with skiing, it would be improbable that he even knows what a 'schuss' is, let alone how to perform it. It is evident that Lang is actually ironically reporting that Dirk has lost control of his movements and has involuntarily covered a considerable distance. Because the audience knows the context, wherein Dirk cannot ski, he also knows that the linguistic expression, "having a go at a schuss", should not be taken literally. By describing the act of clumsiness as if it were an honest attempt, Dirk's skiing performance is ridiculed.

With the device of irony, Lang has in fact painted a more vivid picture of Dirk uncontrollably speeding down the slope, probably scared to death.

Although a 'linguistic expression' is easily associated with whole sentences, or at least a group of words, a single word can make an entire sentence (more) ironic.

Such is the case in the following example:

- (11) (...) the PM, nicknamed 'the Green Thing' by the British Army – on the basis, presumably, that it is both green and a thing (229)

Lang seemingly theorises that the British Army has nicknamed the rifle 'the Green Thing' on the basis of how it looks and what it is, a green thing. If the second part of the sentence did not contain the doubting tone that 'presumably' carries, it would simply be a redundant explication of the BA nickname. The addition makes it as if this explication were conjecture, as if Lang were not fully certain about the nickname's origin. But as both Lang and the reader know that this is the most likely scenario, there is probably another message beneath the surface expression. Since he gives the simple explanation an element of uncertainty, Lang is more likely to be ridiculing the BA for coming up with such an obvious and uncreative nickname. The irony of this clause thus emanates from one word.

2.3.2 - SITUATIONAL IRONY

Situational irony is concerned with situations that involve, as Currie describes it, “a contrast between what is permitted or expected or hoped for or believed, and what is really the case” (148). Ironic would be if a Minister of Finance had debts, if it were hotter in the Antarctic plains than in the Sahara desert, if someone would not have gotten a fine for urinating in public if he had just looked around one more corner for a toilet. The state of affairs is set off against what could or would be the case if someone had done otherwise, or what could or would be the case in normal, expected circumstances. The truth of the current situation is thereby highlighted. Situational irony is therefore concerned with incongruity between a given situation and an alternative one.

Lang portrays his team member Hugo as being amateurish and reckless. Hugo's eyes betray his eagerness to swing into action; instead of pretending that they have not seen each other before, he looks straight at Lang; when he is to give Lang a subtle signal (sunglasses over the eyes) to come into operation, he starts waving enthusiastically, “making a multi-coloured arse of himself” (235) in front of an audience; in other words, he is depicted as a loose cannon who jeopardises the mission. However, on further and closer reading, Lang and Hugo seem to be quite similar. Whereas Hugo's excitement can be read from his eyes, Lang himself is not less excited when he is holding the rifle. At a certain point, when he is searching for his target, his mouth even “seemed to taste of blood” (238). Furthermore, although he

condemns Hugo for looking straight at him, Lang does the very same thing not long after. And while Hugo seems reckless for waving so extensively, it is only by doing so that he manages to attract Lang's attention and is able to signal him with the sunglasses. Hugo might have overdone the signalling, but Lang does not prove any better for missing the signal in the first place, causing Hugo to act the way he does. The situational irony is carefully built up over several passages. First, Hugo is made to appear idiotic and reckless, so that Lang comes across as the more sensible and professional one. Then, this situation is counteracted by Lang, who does the very things he earlier thought of as amateurish. Whether he is aware of it or not, is not essential in situational irony, as it is the situation that brings about the ironic effect, not the deliberate linguistic act of a person.

2.3.3 - UNDERSTATEMENT & EUPHEMISM

The understatement is another rhetorical device Lang uses abundantly. It is similar to irony in that something is asserted, but not literally meant. Rather than pointing towards the opposite, however, the understatement gains its effect from the downplaying of a situation. The linguistic expression is thus a lesser version of what is actually meant, as opposed to a mirrored one. Because it is obvious that circumstances are not as mild as the understatement suggests, the reader will be especially attentive to the actual situation.

Obvious cases of understatement are often indicated by moderating words. For instance, Lang worries that people will hear the gunshot, and that this knowledge “just cramps your style ever so slightly” (232). Given the context, “ever so slightly” sounds improbable as a modifier, for Lang's anxieties would point to a much stronger reaction. It indicates that we are dealing with an understatement. Lang has opted for the indirect approach, suggesting something stronger by giving a disproportionate reaction. A direct statement would not have caused the current incongruity between context and reaction that gives the text its airy and humorous tone.

Similarly, Lang uses milder wordings to avoid explicit talk of something serious. Dirk's lack of experience with skiing increases his risk of injuring himself. Instead of mentioning the possibilities of small injuries, broken bones or death, he subsumes it under the heading of “some not-getting-up-again” (235). It is not an understatement, but rather a euphemism: not a disproportional, but a more subtle expression is used to refer to those unfortunate circumstances. The effect, however, is similar, as the reader will likewise be more attentive to risk factors that might cause the implied injuries. The comic effect is produced by the possibility that Lang might not have to carry out his assignment if Dirk's clumsiness kills him first.

Another instance of euphemism is when the narrator says:

(12) I'd shown the other three rounds of ammunition out of the bathroom window. (232)

The normal expression would be 'to show someone out', i.e. to accompany someone to the door in a polite gesture. Lang, however, applies the courtesy to inanimate objects. As an effect, the common expression becomes a nice way of saying the rounds of ammunition were ungraciously thrown out the window. It gives the text an airy, casual tone, as if he were talking about something other than lethal projectiles.

When Lang expresses his worries about the loudness of the shot, afraid that people might hear it, he says:

(13) You want people to look the other way for a moment, if they wouldn't mind. (232)

The tone of the sentence is rather relaxed, and almost like a request directed at a real person, creating the impression that Lang is actually asking people to look the other way. Since it is highly unlikely that Lang would personally ask people if they would mind looking away so that he can kill someone in peace, this 'request' in fact works like a euphemism: the desire that people do not hear or pay any attention to a gunshot, is phrased as a polite request, but what Lang really wants to convey is the unlikelihood of a loud gunshot going unnoticed, not to speak of people actually granting his request.

2.3.4 - EXAGGERATION

Exaggeration could be called the opposite of understatement: it does not use moderate terms, but excessive ones; it does not downplay situations, but magnifies them. It can serve various functions.

One function is to illustrate a certain fact:

- (14) As rifles go, the Green Thing isn't a particularly noisy instrument – nothing like an M16, which frightens people to death fractionally before the bullet hits them. (231)

Here, Lang exaggerates the loudness of an M16 to illustrate that the Green Thing is not very loud compared to some other rifles. Similarly, the price of a cup of coffee, symbolising prices in commercial locations in general, is comparable to the price of a sports car, will bankrupt most people, and would probably take up the whole The Sword Of Justice budget (234).

Other times, Lang paints bizarre pictures to emphasise how he feels. For instance:

- (15) I wanted to urinate too. But I had the feeling that if I started, I'd never stop; I'd just keep on pissing away, until there was nothing left of me but a pile of clothes. (236)

The image goes from a 'natural necessity' to an absurd fantasy. Lang wants to answer nature's call, but cannot because he has more urgent matters to attend to. The excessiveness shows how badly Lang wants to urinate.

In these instances of irony, understatement, euphemism and exaggeration, the incongruity between two situations again leads to an airy tone, which, under the given circumstances, leads to a comic effect on the reader. However, it also suggests a certain distance between the narrator and the character. The incongruity has the function, like it has in parodies in general, of explicitly stating one thing, but suggesting something else, something less, or something more. By giving the message another packaging, the audience is offered the opportunity to unwrap the message, and to think about what it actually is.

2.3.5 - STEREOTYPES & PRECONCEPTIONS

Then there are stereotypes and preconceptions: certain ideas that are generalised to become characteristic of a given group.

In the book, they are mainly used as illustrations:

- (16) An average ski-bum, you would have tutted to yourself if you'd seen him; it's not enough to be gliding through the most beautiful scenery on God's earth, he has to go and put Guns 'N' Roses over the top of it. (233)
- (17) I went inside, and gasped and pointed and shook my head at how really neat all this mountain stuff was. (234)

By using stereotypical features of 'an average ski-bum' and the mountain tourist, Lang illustrates the roles he and Hugo have assumed. It is an efficient way to quickly describe their disguise and how they try to come across.

In the following example, Lang is 'imitating' the Americans:

- (18) 'Our analysis of Lang indicates a nugatory response profile to incoming amatory data.' Something like that. With a few 'now let's kick ass' phrases thrown in. (230)

Lang's preconceptions about Americans shows through their use of clever words, their fondness of making analyses, and their eager use of phrases like 'now let's kick ass'. He thereby illustrates how they want to come across as intelligent, well-informed people, who want to appear cool and tough by using cool and tough phrases.

On another occasion, the narrator admires the Piz Gloria restaurant:

- (19) When you've seen a construction like that, and reflected on how long it takes the average British builder to send you an estimate for a kitchen extension, you end up quite admiring the Swiss. (234)

He aims his criticism at the British builders, and expresses his praise and admiration for the Swiss. It illustrates the swiftness and efficiency with which the Swiss have built the Piz Gloria restaurant, by pointing out the slowness of the British.

Preconceptions can also be used as arguments, though a bit shaky. The rifle Lang uses, for instance, has the manufacturers' guarantee that he will definitely hit a target at six hundred yards (229). But as those guarantees are often felt to differ to a great degree from reality, Lang uses their 'unreliability' as an argument to shoot from a certain distance well below the one indicated by the manufacturer.

Lang's use of stereotypes and preconceptions has a comic effect, as it often exaggerates and generalises certain features that are in some ways recognisable or in other ways understandable. In a certain sense it works like a parody, taking characteristic features from a source and assigning another function to them.

2.3.6 - HUMOUR & PARODY

Many of these instances of humour, that abundantly intersperse the main story, help to establish *The Gun Seller* as a parody. They may seem unconnected and random, but collectively they show how the main character of the novel overthrows the usual ideas of spies and spy novels. Lang is rebellious, goes against the grain, but in a different way than we would expect from a James Bond. His rebellion manifests itself primarily through his thoughts, and only to a lesser degree through his actions. His self-mockery, train of thought, and airy, almost casual tone portray him as an awkward, inexperienced man, making him rather more like a normal person than the superhuman spy we know from popular spy fiction. The character Thomas Lang is thus an anti-spy: an imitation of the popular spy, only a subversively human rendition of one.

3 - TRANSLATING *THE GUN SELLER*

3.1 - TRANSLATION PROBLEMS IN *THE GUN SELLER*

All kinds of problems can arise during translation of *The Gun Seller*. These have to do with various levels of the text: the lower level of linguistic and textual aspects, and individual cases of humour, and the higher level that encompasses the text as a whole, including story, genre, themes and socio-cultural aspects. In general, Nord distinguishes between four categories of translation problems: 1) pragmatic problems have to do with differing communicative situations of source and target text – e.g. difference in function, (foreknowledge of the) target audience, time and place, etc; 2) culture-specific problems arise when source and target culture differ in norms and traditions; 3) language-pair specific problems occur when differences in language systems become apparent; 4) and text-specific translation problems are specific to a given text – e.g. style, puns and neologisms (237).

3.1.1 - PRAGMATIC & CULTURE-SPECIFIC

During the translation process, differences between the source and target cultures can surface. Humour, for instance, can demand significant creativity from the translator as it varies from culture to culture, and even from person to person. This not only creates culture-specific translation problems, but also pragmatic ones. The

different circumstances in which the source and target text are imbedded, point to different intended readers, with different socio-cultural backgrounds, which implies a different reaction to source text features such as humour. *The Gun Seller* generally uses English humour, which ICONS describes as mostly consisting of word play and self-depreciation: "The English sense of humour can ultimately be summarised like this: we laugh at everything, and most of all at ourselves. However grim the situation us English can usually find some way of making it amusing" ("English Sense of Humour: The Basics"). This concept of 'laughing at everything' goes a long way in explaining why the narrator Lang can humorously recall such dark times. The point is that English humour is typically associated with the English. Whether or not it could or should be transferred to another culture highly depends on the target culture. After all, a positive attitude towards foreign elements will not hinder their occurrence in the translation. Familiarity is of similar influence. Fortunately, judging from the success and popularity of English shows (e.g. *Fawlty Towers*, *Mr. Bean*, 'Allo 'Allo!) in the Netherlands, the Dutch are both familiar to and appreciative of English humour. It is then a 'kind of humour', and is not limited by boundaries, either geographical or cultural. The view on spy fiction can in principal also differ from culture to culture. But the international successes of espionage films (e.g. the *James Bond* films) and television series (e.g. *Alias*, *Spooks*) has somewhat blurred the differences in conceptions of the spy genre. It is comparable to how J.R.R. Tolkien set an international standard for the fantasy genre.

Alternatively, if the translator feels that the audience he has pictured for himself, might not be very familiar to, or even negative towards a cultural feature, he may choose to subtly adapt the source text to the target culture; for instance by replacing it with one that *is* familiar or more popular in the target culture. This could be achieved by say, reconsidering choice of words, changing the devices or kind of humour in the target text, etc. What has to be kept in mind, though, is that the object of imitation and the function of the source in the parody are not affected by the changes and maintained in the translation.

3.1.2 - LANGUAGE-PAIR & TEXT-SPECIFIC

What is particular of *The Gun Seller* is the parody. Since there are many ways to parody something, the kinds of translation problems will vary per text. As Laurie is often creative with the English language, this creative use of language can be regarded as specific to this text. The different language systems of the source and target language, however, cause problems for the translator. Language-pair specific and text-specific translation problems are closely related in *The Gun Seller*, and are therefore discussed together. In the next section, translation of parody will first be explored to give an impression of how parodic elements have been approached in the translation of *The Gun Seller*.

3.2 - TRANSLATING THE PARODY

3.2.1 - OBJECT OF IMITATION

The basic components of parody, imitation and humour, can be taken as starting points when translating a parody. First, the source has to be found. To be able to render a parodic text into another language, the translator has to know what that parody is based on, what it draws on or responds to. If the source is another text, the connection between the story, themes, characters, etc. of the original and the parody will usually be fairly straightforward, for it is more to do with general features of a text. It is more difficult if an author's style of writing or narration is imitated, as these concern smaller elements: linguistic and stylistic features, word choice, the subtle organisation of information, etc. Essentially, pretty much any aspect of a text can be the source of parody, be it a single quote or a specific character in a story, or an all-inclusive genre. The identification of the source is important for an accurate interpretation of the parody, and therefore essential to the translator, as it is his goal to gain an effect in his intended audience that is similar to that of the source text. As Schleder de Borba points out, "[it] is seminal (...) to be able to infer from the parody itself or from its translation that which is being mocked (...) because it will determine the type of text to be employed in the target version to achieve similar effect" (17). The 'text type' must, however, be interpreted less strictly and more specifically as 'method of subversion or translation', for that is what will ultimately define the effect

of the parody. Of equal significance is the function of the source in the parody. A different translation strategy may be required, depending on whether the source is inextricably bound to the context of the original for its interpretation, or that it works in its own right. To be sure, retracing the imitation to the original is likely of greater importance to the translator than to the intended audience, as the translator has to decide *for the reader* whether the source is to be taken in the light of the original or not. The target language readers would not know from the translation itself if the translator has correctly interpreted and incorporated the source; they are dependent on the translator's interpretation for their own.

3.2.2 - OBJECT OF SUBVERSION

What the object of subversion is, is another matter the translator has to figure out. How is the source subverted? What methods are used to ridicule the source? As was said earlier, there are as many ways to parody something as there are perspectives on one matter. A different perspective basically suggests a different approach, which in turn suggests that every perspective offers the opportunity for another 'kind' of parody, each focusing on different elements of the source. To come to an effect similar to the source text, the translator thus has to find out what perspective the parodist has taken, what methods he has used for humorous effect, which elements of the source he has focused on. The object of subversion can be indicative of the parodist's view of the source. Linnéa Anglemark points out that research on the

author's background, his possible inspirations and motivations for writing, can help with the interpretation, and with that the translation of the source text (par. 4).

Taking a point of view that is critical of an author's writing style, for instance, the parodist will employ a method that ridicules the characteristics of the style. The author's writing style is then the object of imitation, the source; the identifying features are the objects of subversion. If, in another instance, a whole genre is the target of parody, as is the case with *The Gun Seller*, the imitated genre is the source, the features of that genre the target of humour. Humour is an important element that makes the duality of parody practicable. First, it implies an original, as it is the difference between the parody and the source that causes parodic humour. Even if the parody pretends to be a serious work, the humour can expose it as a parody. Furthermore, it is a more subtle, a more agreeable way to pass criticism. What Currie states about 'pretence', can also hold for humour: it "achieves things that straight-faced assertion or denial does not, or does not easily, or does not with the same lightness of effect" (151-2). What would be seen as open criticism, humour turns into innocent teasing. The source is given a different function in the parody, so that the parody is able to both imitate and subvert.

For the translator, it is therefore important to discover the method of subversion, what kind of humour is used, and how he uses it. It shows how the source functions in the parody, and how it should function in the translation. It not only gives insight in the parodist's view of the source, but its new function also

defines a particular parodic text and the effect it has on its audience, which the translator has to bring about in the translation.

3.2.3 - TRANSLATING PARODY

In short, it is essential for the translator to find out what *The Gun Seller* imitates exactly and how the source refunctions in the parody, to be able to transfer a parodic text that subverts a specific source, in a specific way, using specific methods, into the target language. By retracing the source, the object of imitation can be found; identifying the source's distinguishing features means knowing what source elements are being subverted; and by figuring out how the source refunctions in the target text, the translator will also figure out *how* the source is subverted. These are basic operations that underlie the translation of parody.

3.2.4 - SHAKESPEARE

An instance in *The Gun Seller* that shows these operations clearly, is citation that is taken from a text that has nothing to do with espionage, but is chosen for its alleged aptness to the events of chapter eighteen. The chapter begins with a quote from Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*.

(20a) This night methinks is but the daylight sick. (228)

As the play's title is known – it is written directly under the citation – the reader can easily recover the original text and find the context in which the sentence originally occurred. When it comes to the translation of the quote, it would have been simple if there were one official translation of Shakespeare's works, or at least this play. But as there are several to choose from, there are the options of making a new one, or choosing an existing translation. The first option could prove to be more time-consuming. The translator has to understand the circumstances of the expression – which is made by Portia, the female lead of the play – to be able to translate it. He would have to read significant passages of the play, maybe even the whole play, to understand the plot, the characters' thoughts and actions, and more importantly, the meaning and function of that one sentence. Translating a single sentence from an entire play, which additionally has to fit the style of the text, is therefore not the preferred working method. With the second option, the translator does not have to worry about whether the translated sentence will fit the rest of the text. It is translated simultaneously with the rest of the text, so the style and meaning of the original have already been worked into that sentence. The function of the quote in the parody will have to be the deciding factor. In *The Merchant of Venice*, Portia makes the utterance without actually meaning anything. She talks about the weather, but is not interested in the weather at all. It is simply a way of hiding her thoughts from her lover Bassanio. The function is then to give the impression that nothing special is going on. In *The Gun Seller*, there is a sharp contrast between Lang's actions and his ponderings, particularly when his morality is tested, in chapter eighteen. Lang is

trying to hide his thoughts from the people around him, and acts as if he is very certain about his actions and motivations. Talking about the weather is then his way of hiding away his thoughts. If the quote were taken as an individual sentence, however, there could be an actual meaning to it, one that is given by the context in the parody, by the reader; a meaning that stands on its own outside the source text: the subversive side of parody at work. Looking at the sentence, there is a comparison between 'night', often symbolising the dark and uncertain hours of life, and 'daylight', which connotes hope. If Lang sees the night as 'just another kind of day', it suggests that he has hope of an end to uncertainty. For him, the quote, the hope it represents, is something to hold on to in his time of insecurity.

The translation should preferably fit both the context and style of *The Merchant of Venice*, and represent Lang's hope in *The Gun Seller*. Over the years, many translations have been made, and choosing one will depend on how much the translation fits the new context.

(20b) De dageraad lijkt mij vannacht wat ziek (Jonk, 597)

This translation by Jan Jonk, for instance, has laid the main focus on 'dageraad'. When seen from an 'uncertainty vs hope' perspective, this sentence would signify the uncertain side: the daylight is seen as different than usual, in a negative sense, symbolising not hope, but diminishing hope instead. Likewise the following translations:

(20c) Het lijkt vannacht wel of het daglicht kwijnt (Voeten, 111)

(20d) Deze nacht lijkt wel 'n treurige dag (Hageman, 81)

(20e) De nacht lijkt wel een zieke dageraad (Courteaux, 159)

Their focus on the negative side of day, instead of the positive side of night, which is mainly caused by the use of 'wel', makes them inappropriate for the parody interpretation. The latter two additionally show a more modern use of language, like this translation by Tom Kleijn:

(20f) Vannacht is, volgens mij, alleen het daglicht ziek (126)

Although Kleijn's translation is able to represent Lang's hope, the modern language does not feel authentic. Given Lang's other instances of formal, more archaic language ("slept the sleep of the tired", "the condemned man"), he would more likely use archaic words when quoting someone. Edward B. Koster's 1916 translation is therefore more suitable of the parody:

(20g) Mij dunkt deez' nacht is 't zieke daglicht slechts ("Vijfde bedrijf")

It shows Lang's hope of a better future, while in keeping of Shakespeare's iambic pentameter.⁴ But moreover, the subversive aspect of the parody thus becomes more

⁴ The metre is a feature that differs from culture to culture. Although Shakespeare's iambic pentameter (an unstressed syllable, followed by a stressed one) is also popular in the Netherlands and preferred in a translation, using a metre that is more common in the target culture is not a crime. It might in fact lead to a more appreciated translation, as the target reader may be more familiar with that rhythm

apparent through the incongruity between Lang's informal spoken language and Shakespeare's old poetic language, and the new function the quote serves in the parody. Of course, this is one interpretation by an individual. But it is a clear demonstration of how the translation, and the way it is translated, is influenced by the interpretation of the translator, and how this can affect the interpretation of the intended audience.

3.2.5 - TERMINOLOGY

Since *The Gun Seller* is a parody of the popular spy story, the regular spy and Lang share their interest in and love for guns. Lang uses technical terms to refer to rifle parts, and does not bother to explain or describe them. It suggests that Lang is very enthusiastic about firearms, and that *The Gun Seller* has turned the 'usefulness' into a 'love' of weapons. The mocking reference to the interest that popular spies show, makes guns seem like the most natural thing in the world, an ordinary hobby, something that is not meant to end someone's life. The more technical the term is, the bigger the comic effect when the connection between the parody and the source is made. For the translation of those terms, it is important for the tone and character of the narrator that the proper Dutch terms for the rifle parts are used. Looking them up in run-of-the-mill dictionaries and encyclopaedia may result in less technical terms,

than with Shakespeare's. In such a case, keeping Shakespeare would only result in an interrupted reading experience due to unfamiliarity with the metre.

or may even result in nothing at all, as these are filled with everyday words and not much terminology. Together with multilingual information databases, such as Wikipedia, they *can* form a good starting point for further research.

Reference books, amateur and professional websites and forums, and online shops that are specialised in a given subject, in this case rifles, are another way to find terms. Although simply browsing through them may give you a general impression of the language that is used in a particular field, finding a specific term will prove very hard indeed if you do not know what to look for. Therefore, understanding what the English term signifies can help the translator to find the Dutch variant quicker: descriptions and related words and subjects allow for a more goal-oriented search.

It is often the case that more than one word can be used to refer to a single concept. Choosing from several possibilities can be difficult for someone unfamiliar with the subject. It is then an option to feed the Dutch word(s) into a search engine and decide by the number of hits which is more commonly used,⁵ or to contact an expert and ask what is the more specialised and more common term. Then there is always the question of what sounds better in the translation. But this is more a subjective issue than a question of what is the *better* translation, and should therefore only be a deciding factor when multiple options present themselves that are equally common. More important is that the function of the specialised words within the

⁵ This method does need some differentiation, since a word may be used in more than one area of expertise. This could be solved by accompanying it with another word for disambiguation.

parody as a whole, in this case to show enthusiasm, is known and maintained in the translation.

3.2.6 - CREATIVE USE OF LANGUAGE

The Gun Seller shows many cases where the English language is creatively used, as is often the case in parodies. It adds diversity to the text, so that it can keep the reader captivated with its freshness; it can express feelings and opinions by using language in a certain way; it can create humour by playing with words and idioms.

Unconventional use of language allows for an expression to have more impact because of an original usage of words and expressions. Anglemark, who wrote a dissertation on translating Terry Pratchett novels, notes that the translator has to use the target language in the same way the author uses the source language (par. 4).

When the different language systems and cultures allow it, this can indeed be a strategy that produces an effect that is similar to that of the source culture. But when such 'simple' translations are not possible, because of obstacles in the form of differences of language systems or ideas, other strategies and methods of translation have to be found.

EXPRESSIONS

An expression that is known and understood to say one thing, can be altered or reused to convey something new that is equally known and understood because of its resemblance to the normal expression or meaning. To illustrate:

(21a) Francisco was prepared to bet my life that Dirk would ski it. (Laurie, 235)

The normal phrase is 'to bet my life', with the actor betting his own life. In this instance, however, it is the actor (Francisco, leader of The Sword Of Justice) betting someone else's life (Lang's). The narrator is criticising Francisco's arrogance. As it is Lang who is pulling the trigger, he is running the most risk when things go bad, not Francisco. This new expression indicates that Francisco is very confident about his analysis of Dirk, confident enough to jeopardise the whole operation if he were wrong. Translating this sentence does not pose a problem, as changing the direct object from 'oneself' to 'someone else' is equally simple in Dutch:

(21b) Francisco was bereid mijn leven erom te verwedden dat Dirk hem zou skiën.

Other translations are not as straightforward:

(22a) Hugo was making a multi-coloured arse of himself, and a gibbering wreck of me, for no good reason. (235)

In English, it is possible to use ‘make a [A + N] of [(R)P]’⁶ both on ‘himself’ and on ‘someone else’. Dutch expressions that resemble the original meaning – ‘zich als een [(R)P] gedragen’, ‘[(R)P + A] voor schut zetten’, ‘[(R)P + A] belachelijk maken’ – are used very differently from the English one. ‘Gedragen’ is a reflexive verb, so that it is only possible for Hugo to make something of himself, but not of Lang (* ‘hem als een [A + N] gedragen’). ‘[(R)P + A] voor schut zetten’ and ‘[(R)P + A] belachelijk maken’ are similar in that they can at the most insert adverbs to represent the English nouns, which makes it difficult to work the English meaning into a Dutch phrase. Moreover, the placing of the adverb would in any case make the adverb about the actor; it does not say anything about the object (* ‘mij brabbelend voor schut zetten’, * ‘mij brabbelend belachelijk maken’). The humour of the sentence lies in the connection between the two usages of ‘make a [A + N] of [(R)P]’ – Hugo becomes a kind of creator, making something both of himself and of Lang – and in the combination of words that describe Hugo and Lang (“multi-coloured arse”, “gibbering wreck”). It is therefore important that the translation maintains some connection between the two descriptions. As preservation of a phrasing similar to that of the English original does not work in Dutch, another solution has to be found. An alternative would be to establish another kind of link, not one where a verb or phrase is used in another way. Since Lang only becomes a gibbering wreck because Hugo is a multi-coloured arse, the cause-effect connection seems quite a practical possibility:

⁶ The square brackets indicate the positions where the nouns N, adjectives/adverbs A or (reflexive) pronouns (R)P can or are to be placed.

(22b) zonder enige reden maakte Hugo er een bontgekleurd potje van, met mij als brabbelend wrak tot gevolg.

This way, there is not the problem of grammar stopping one phrase from being used on subject and object.

GRAMMAR

A problem where grammar forms a solution is the sentence:

(23a) On top of the head meant they might, you might, I might, anything might. (233)

In the original text, the narrator focuses on possibilities: the Van der Hoewes might go to the slopes; the reader might follow Lang and the story to the slopes; Lang might follow the Van der Hoewes to the slopes and carry out the mission; anything might happen. Sunglasses on top of the head therefore have no real significance. Likewise the repetition of 'might', accompanied by pronouns and 'anything'. The sentence construction as it stands is impossible to translate due to 'might', which meaning is conveyed by more than one word in Dutch, namely 'zou kunnen' or '(zou) misschien'. It is therefore necessary to look for another construction. Since the sentence is meant to convey idleness, it has been translated with an adaptation of 'alles kan', a popular Dutch response to 'dat kan', a meaningless answer to a question, as it does not answer anything. It is then complemented by 'koffiekan, theekan, melkkan'. The meaningless nature of 'dat kan' is pointed out by a play on

the verb 'kan', which is also the Dutch noun for 'jug'. Building on this idea, and on the repetition and combination of 'might' with the first and second person singular, the third person plural and 'anything', the usual 'koffiekan, theekan, melkkan' are replaced:

(23b) Bovenop het hoofd en alles kon, ik kon, jij kon, zij konden.

It shows more resemblance to a grammatical exercise to remember the conjugations of the verb 'kunnen', than to an expressive sentence. The function of the sentence – to highlight the meaninglessness of the sentence, and with that the sunglasses on top of the head – is thus maintained in translation.

WORD CLASS

Then there are cases where words are created and placed under another linguistic category.

(24a) A dry, grey, just-remember-you're-in-the-Alps-sonny kind of cold (231)

(25a) (...) a great deal of falling over, and possibly even some not-getting-up-again. (235)

These two examples show the creation of a new word by joining several words – in (24a) even a whole sentence – together with dashes. They then function as an adjective and a noun respectively.

(24b) Een droge, grauwe, vergeet-niet-dat-je-in-de-Alpen-zit-knul soort kou

(25b) (...) een flink potje vallen en mogelijk zelfs wat niet-meer-opstaan.

For the translation of these 'words' it is important that they can be read quickly and fluently, without being hindered by its length, so that they can actually be read as one word. Keeping it as simple as possible can prevent awkward tongue twisters. In the next example, "let's go" is not connected by dashes, but still functions as one noun, and the same attention to fluency and simplicity has to be observed.

(26a) His eyes were shining. There's no other word for it. Shining with fun and excitement and let's go, like a child on Christmas morning. (233)

(26b) Z'n ogen glinsterden. Anders kan je het niet omschrijven. Ze glinsterden van plezier en opwinding en kom op, als een kind op kerstochtend.

3.2.7 - CONCLUDING REMARKS

These are all translation difficulties that occur on a lower level of the text, concerning linguistic and textual aspects, and individual cases of humour. They can mostly be ascribed to the difference in language systems, and solutions differ per individual problem. But they can ultimately affect the effect of the book, which makes them text-specific problems as well. The way the story is told, the tone of the narrator, how he uses the language; it is the smaller details that influence the reader's view of the narrator, the characters, the story, the genre as a whole, and ultimately, on a higher

level, make up the parody *The Gun Seller*. But, as Tomoko Aoyama and Judy Wakabayashi argue, “[although] this might apply to the translation of any text, stylistic deviations and allusions play a crucial role in parody, so the translation obstacles are even greater” (225). Because these details are so important for creating parodic effect, the translator has to take extra care working them into the translation. After all, ‘the bigger picture’ of the parody has to be considered.

CONCLUSION

The Gun Seller has been put forward as a parody of the popular spy genre. The 'parody' can ultimately be seen as a text type or a device that is (a) based on a certain source, be it a text, a part or an aspect of a text, or a whole genre, (b) that imitates some features of the source and (c) gives new functions to others. And (d) humour is an important element that makes the parody's air of critique and ridicule more permissive, and allows for new and/or more profound interpretations that would otherwise be less apparent.

The Gun Seller imitates some elements from the popular spy genre; other elements are altered to make them humorous and disruptive of popular views. The subversive side of this parody, the voice of the parodist, however has a higher authority than the voice of popular spy fiction as the greater public knows it. The main character's mental processes are predominant in the narrative of the novel, as opposed to the action that traditionally prevails in popular spy stories. This psychological point of view makes the novel story more about the feelings and moral standing of Thomas Lang as a person. Contrary to James Bond, Lang does not deliberately set out to get involved in dangerous operations, nor is he as experienced or as skilled as his fictional colleague. Far from it. It is just these imperfections, these character traits that make Lang unfit to be a spy, that amplify the imperfections of popular spies like James Bond, which would in real life render them unfit for

espionage purposes. As the translation of a technical manual concentrates on technical terms and actions, the translation of a parody is very much focused on humorous and subversive devices that give a certain source a new function. In the case of *The Gun Seller*, the devices create a more human version of the impassive, superhuman 'James Bond'.

Translating *The Gun Seller* thus becomes a task that particularly involves the translation of parody. Because parody works both on a lower (linguistic and textual) level as a device for creating humour, and on a higher level as a genre that imitates and subverts certain concepts, the translator is faced with the task of maintaining the connection between the smaller parodic elements of the characters, the narrative and the humour, and the wider parodic aspects of story and genre; between 'James Bond' and Thomas Lang; between popular spy fiction (the source) and *The Gun Seller* (the parody). Since parody happens differently per text, the translation problems follow from the way Hugh Laurie has subverted and parodied his source. It is thus the elements on a lower level of the text – like word choice and humour, and the ironic, self-mocking way the narrator focuses on his past mental state – that determine the tone of his story, and with that the effect the story will have, the effect his parody will have on the reader.

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APPENDIX

A - SOURCE TEXT: *THE GUN SELLER*

Eighteen

This night methinks is but the daylight sick,

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

'Who pulls the trigger?'

Solomon had to wait for an answer.

In fact he had to wait for every answer, because I was on a skating-rink, skating, and he wasn't. It took me roughly thirty seconds to complete a circuit and drop off a reply, so I had lots of scope to be irritating. Not that I need lots of scope, you understand. Give me just an eency-weency bit of scope, and I'll madden you to death.

'Do you mean the metaphorical trigger?' I said, as I passed.

I glanced over my shoulder and saw that Solomon had smiled and lifted his chin a little, like an indulgent parent, and then turned back to the game of curling he was supposed to be watching.

Another lap. Speakers blared out some jolly Swiss oompah music.

'I mean the trigger trigger, sir. The actual...'

'Me.' And I was off again.

I was definitely getting the hang of this skating thing. I'd started to copy a fancy cross-over turn from a German girl in front of me, and it was working pretty well. I was just about keeping up with her too, which was pleasing. She must have been about six.

'The rifle?' This was Solomon again, speaking through cupped hands, as if he was blowing on them for warmth.

He had to wait longer for this reply, because I fell over on the far side of the rink, and for a moment or two managed to convince myself that I'd broken my pelvis. But I hadn't. Which was a shame, because it would have solved all sorts of problems.

I finally got round to him again.

'Arrives tomorrow,' I said.

That wasn't strictly true, as it happens. But in the circumstances of this particular de-briefing, the truth was going to take about a week and a half to deliver.

The rifle wasn't arriving tomorrow. Bits of it were already here.

With a lot of prompting from me, Francisco had agreed to go with the PM L96A1. It's not a pretty name, I know, nor even a memorable one; but the PM, nicknamed 'the Green Thing' by the British Army – on the basis, presumably, that it is both green and a thing – does its job well enough; that job being to fire a 7.62 millimetre round

with sufficient accuracy to give the competent recreational shooter, which was definitely me, a guaranteed hit at six hundred yards.

Manufacturers' guarantees being what they are, I'd told Francisco that if the shot was an inch over two hundred yards – less if there was a cross-wind – I wasn't taking it.

He'd managed to get hold of a Green Thing in take-down format; or, as the makers would have you have it, a 'covert sniper rifle system'. It comes in pieces, in other words, and most of those pieces had already arrived in the village. The compressed sniper-scope had come in as a 200 millimetre lens on the front of Bernhard's camera, with the mount hidden inside; the bolt was doing service as the handle of Hugo's razor, while Latifa had managed to get two rounds of Remington Magnum ammunition into each heel of a stupidly expensive pair of patent-leather shoes. All we lacked was a barrel, and that was coming into Wengen on the roof of Francisco's Alfa Romeo – together with a lot of other long metal things that people use for winter sports.

I'd brought the trigger myself, in my trouser pocket. Perhaps I'm just not the creative type.

We had decided to do without the stock and fore-end, as both of them are hard to disguise and, frankly, inessential. Likewise the bipod. A firearm, when all is said and done, is nothing more than a tube, a piece of lead, and some gunpowder. Putting a lot of carbon-fibre bits on it, and a go-faster stripe down the side, won't make the person you hit any deader. The only extra ingredient you need to make a

weapon meaningfully lethal – and thankfully, it's a thing that's still pretty hard to come by, even in this wicked old world – is someone with the will to point and fire it.

Someone like me.

Solomon had told me nothing about Sarah. Nothing at all. How she was, where she was – I could even have made do with what he'd last seen her wearing, but he hadn't said a word.

Perhaps the Americans had told him to say nothing. Good or bad. 'Hear this, David, and hear it good. Our analysis of Lang indicates a nugatory response profile to incoming amatory data.' Something like that. With a few 'now let's kick ass' phrases thrown in. But then, Solomon knew me well enough to make his own decisions about what he told me or didn't tell me. And he didn't tell me. So either he didn't have any news about Sarah, or the news he did have wasn't good. Or then again, perhaps the best reason of all for not telling me, because the simplest is often the best, was that I hadn't asked.

I don't know why.

I lay in my bath at The Eiger, turning the taps with my feet and adding a pint or two of hot water every quarter of an hour, and thought about it afterwards.

Perhaps I was scared of what I'd hear. That was possible. Perhaps I was thinking about the risk of my covert meetings with Solomon; that by extending them, with a lot of chat about the folks back home, I was putting his life at risk as well as my own. That was also possible, if a touch shaky.

Or perhaps – and this was the explanation I came to last, moving cautiously around it, peering at it, prodding it with a sharp stick every now and then to see if it'd get up and bite me – perhaps I'd stopped caring. Perhaps I'd just been pretending to myself that Sarah was the reason I was going through with all of this when, in actual fact, now would be a good time to admit that I had made better friends, discovered a deeper purpose, had more reasons to get out of bed in the mornings, since I joined The Sword Of Justice.

Obviously, that just wasn't possible at all.

That was absurd.

I climbed into bed and slept the sleep of the tired.

It was cold. That was the first thing I noticed as I pulled back the curtains. A dry, grey, just-remember-you're-in-the-Alps-sonny kind of cold, and that worried me a little. True, it might keep some of the more reluctant skiers in their beds, which would be useful; but it would also slow my fingers to 33rpm and make good marksmanship extremely difficult, if not impossible. Worse still, it would make the sound of the shot travel further.

As rifles go, the Green Thing isn't a particularly noisy instrument – nothing like an M16, which frightens people to death fractionally before the bullet hits them – but even so, when you happened to be the one holding the thing, and you're busy lining up your cross-hairs on an eminent European statesman, you tend to get a little self-conscious about things like noise. About things like everything, in fact. You want

people to look the other way for a moment, if they wouldn't mind. Knowing, as you squeeze the trigger, that half-a-mile away, cups would stop on their way to lips, ears would cock, eyebrows would raise, and 'what the fuck was that?' would come tumbling out of a few hundred mouths in a few dozen languages, just cramps your style ever so slightly. In tennis, they call it choking on the shot. I don't know what they call it in assassination. Choking on the shot, probably.

I breakfasted well, laying down calories against the possibility that my diet might change radically in the next twenty-four hours, and remain changed until my beard turned grey, and then I headed down to the ski room in the basement. A French family were falling about down there, arguing over who had whose gloves, where the sun cream had gone, why ski-boots hurt as much as they do – so I settled down on the farthest bench I could find and resolved to take my time gathering the gear.

Bernhard's camera was heavy and awkward, clunking painfully about my chest and feeling twice as phoney as it was. The rifle bolt and one round of ammunition were stowed in a nylon bum-bag, strapped round my waist, and the barrel nestled inside one of the ski poles – red dot on the handle, in case I couldn't tell the difference between a pole that weighed six ounces and one that weighed near enough four pounds. I'd shown the other three rounds of ammunition out of the bathroom window, reasoning that one round had better be enough because if it wasn't, I was going to be in even bigger trouble – and I just didn't think I could face bigger trouble right at that moment. I wasted a minute cleaning my fingernails with

the end of the trigger, then carefully folded the tiny sliver of metal in a paper napkin and stuffed it into my pocket.

I stood up, took a deep breath, and clumped past *la famille* to the lavatory.

The condemned man threw up a hearty breakfast.

Latifa had her sunglasses propped up on top of her head, which meant stand by, which meant nothing. No sunglasses, and the Van Der Hoewes were staying indoors to play tiddlywinks. Sunglasses over the eyes meant they were headed for the slopes.

On top of the head meant they might, you might, I might, anything might.

I stumped across the foot of the nursery slopes, heading for the funicular railway station. Hugo was already there, dressed in orange and turquoise, and he too had his sunglasses perched on top of his head.

The first thing he did was look at me.

In spite of all our lectures, all our training, all our grim nods of agreement at Francisco's coaching tips – in spite of all of that, Hugo was looking straight at me. I knew immediately that he would keep looking at me until our eyes met, so I stared back at him, hoping to get it over with.

His eyes were shining. There's no other word for it. Shining with fun and excitement and let's go, like a child on Christmas morning.

He reached a gloved hand to his ear and adjusted the Walkman headphones. An average ski-bum, you would have tutted to yourself if you'd seen him; it's not enough to be gliding through the most beautiful scenery on God's earth, he has to go

and put Guns 'N' Roses over the top of it. I'd probably have got annoyed by those headphones myself, if I hadn't known that they were actually connected to a short wave receiver at his hip, and that Bernhard was broadcasting his own particular shipping forecast from the other end.

It had been agreed that I would carry no radio. The reasoning went that in the event of my capture – Latifa had actually reached across and squeezed my arm when Francisco said this – nobody would have any immediate reason to think of accomplices.

So all I had was Hugo and his shining eyes.

At the top of the Schilthorn mountain, at an altitude of a little over three thousand metres, stands, or sits, the Piz Gloria restaurant; an astonishing confection of glass and steel where, for the price of a pretty decent sports car, you can sit, and drink coffee, and take in a view of no less than six countries on a clear day.

If you're anything like me, it might take you most of that clear day to work out which six countries they might be, but if you have any time left over, you're liable to spend it wondering how on earth the Mürrenians got the building up there and how many of them must have died in the course of its assembly. When you've seen a construction like that, and reflected on how long it takes the average British builder to send you an estimate for a kitchen extension, you end up quite admiring the Swiss.

The restaurant's other claim to fame is that it once served as a location in a James Bond film; its stage name of Piz Gloria has clung to the place ever since, along with the operator's right to sell 007 memorabilia to anyone who hasn't been bankrupted by the cup of coffee.

In short, it was a place that any visitor to Mürren just had to visit if they got the chance, and the Van Der Hoewes had decided, over a supper of *boeuf en crôte* the previous evening, that they definitely had the chance.

Hugo and I dismounted at the top cable-car station and split up. I went inside, and gasped and pointed and shook my head at how really neat all this mountain stuff was, while Hugo hung around outside, smoking and fiddling with his bindings. He was trying to cultivate the look of the serious skier, who wanted steep hills and fine powder, and anyway, don't talk to me because the bass solo on this track is just awesome. I was happy to play the gawping idiot.

I wrote some more postcards – all of them to a man called Colin, for some reason – and every now and then glanced down at Austria, or Italy, or France, or some other place with snow in it, until the waiters started to get peeved. I was just beginning to wonder whether The Sword Of Justice budget could stretch to a second cup, when a movement of bright colour caught my eye. I looked up and saw that Hugo was waving from the gantry outside.

Everyone else in the restaurant noticed him too. Probably thousands of people in Austria, Italy and France noticed him. All in all, it was a hopeless piece of amateurism, and if Francisco had been there he would have slapped Hugo hard, the

way he'd had to do many times during training. But Francisco wasn't there, and Hugo was making a multi-coloured arse of himself, and a gibbering wreck of me, for no good reason. The only saving grace was that none of the many curious onlookers would have been able to tell exactly who or what he was waving at.

Because he was wearing sunglasses over his eyes.

I took the first part of the run at a gentle pace, for two reasons: firstly, because I wanted my breathing to be as even as possible when the time came for the shot; secondly, and more importantly, because I didn't want – with a passion, I didn't want – to break my leg and have to be stretchered off the mountain with a lot of rifle parts concealed about my person.

So I side-slipped and edged, making the turns as big and slow as possible, gently traversing the blackest part of the run until I came to the tree-line. The severity of the slope was something of a worry. Any fool could have seen that Dirk and Rhona were, frankly, not good enough to manage it without a great deal of falling over, and possibly even some not-getting-up-again. If I'd been Dirk, or a friend of Dirk, or even just an interested skier-by, I'd have said forget it. Take the cable-car back down again and find something gentler.

But Francisco was confident about Dirk. He felt he knew his man. Francisco's analysis said that Dirk was careful with money – which, I suppose, is one of the qualities you look for in a Minister of Finance – and if Dirk and Rhona decided to scratch, they'd have to pay a hefty penalty for the cable-car ride back down.

Francisco was prepared to bet my life that Dirk would ski it.

Just to make sure, he'd popped Latifa into the bar of The Edelweiss the night before, while Dirk was spilling a couple of brandies down the inside of his throat, and made her bill and coo at the bravery of any man prepared to tackle the Schilthorn. Dirk had looked a little worried at first, but Latifa's batting eyelashes and heaving bosom had finally pulled him round, and he'd promised to buy her a drink the following evening if he made it down in one piece.

Latifa crossed her fingers behind her back, and promised to be there on the dot of nine.

Hugo had marked the spot, and he stood there now, smoking, and grinning, and generally having a hell of a time. I skied past him and came to rest ten yards further into the trees, just to remind myself, and Hugo, that I still knew how to make decisions. I turned and looked back up at the mountain, checking the position, the angles, the cover – then jerked my head at Hugo.

He tossed his cigarette away, shrugged, and set off down the mountain, turning a tiny mogul into a needlessly spectacular jump, and then sending a plume of powder into the air as he paralleled a perfect stop on the other side of the run, about a hundred yards further down. He turned away from me, unzipped his suit, and started to urinate against a rock.

I wanted to urinate too. But I had the feeling that if I started, I'd never stop; I'd just keep on pissing away, until there was nothing left of me but a pile of clothes.

I unhitched the lens from the front of the camera, removed the cap, and trained it on the mountain, squinting through the eyepiece. The image was thick with condensation, so I unzipped my jacket and slipped the scope inside, trying to warm it against my body.

It was cold and quiet, and I could hear my fingers shaking as I started to assemble the rifle.

I had him now. Perhaps half-a-mile away. He was as fat as ever, with the kind of silhouette that snipers dream about. If they dream about anything.

Even at that distance, I could tell that Dirk was having a horrible time. His body language came across in short, simple sentences. I. Am. Going. To. Die. His bottom was stuck out, his chest was forward, legs rigid with fear and exhaustion, and he was moving with glacial slowness.

Rhona was making a slightly better job of the descent, but not by much. Awkwardly, jerkily, but making progress of a kind, she trickled down the slope as slowly as she could, trying not to get too far ahead of her miserable husband.

I waited.

At six hundred yards, I started to over-breathe, charging the blood with oxygen so I'd be ready to switch off the tap, and keep it switched off, from three hundred. I exhaled through the side of the mouth, gently blowing away from the scope.

At four hundred yards, Dirk fell for about the fifteenth time, and didn't look in any hurry to get up. As I watched him panting for breath, I pulled back on the knurled grip of the bolt, and heard the firing-pin cock with a shatteringly loud click. Jesus, this shot was going to be noisy. I suddenly found myself wondering about avalanches, and had to stop myself from spinning into a wild fantasy of being buried under a thousand tons of snow. What if my body wasn't found for a couple of years? What if this anorak was desperately unfashionable by the time they hauled me out? I blinked five times, trying to steady my breath, my vision, my panic. It was too cold for avalanches. For avalanches, you need a lot of snow, then a lot of sun. We had neither. Get a grip. I squinted through the scope, and saw that Dirk was on his feet again.

On his feet, and looking at me.

Or at least, he was looking towards me, peering down into the trees while he scraped snow out of his goggles.

He couldn't have seen me. It wasn't possible. I had buried myself behind a drift, digging out the narrowest possible channel in which to rest the rifle, and whatever shape he was trying to make out would have been disguised by the irregular jumble of trees. He couldn't have seen me.

So what was he looking at?

I gently eased my head down below the level of the drift and twisted round, checking for some solitary langlauffer, or an errant chamois, or the chorus-line of *No*,

No Nanette – anything that might have caught Dirk's eye. I held my breath and turned my head slowly from left to right, sweeping the hill for sounds.

Nothing.

I inched back up to the top of the drift, and squinted through the scope again.

Left, right, up, down.

No Dirk.

I bobbed my head up, the way they tell you never to do, and desperately searched the stinging, blurring whiteness for some glimpse of him. My mouth suddenly seemed to taste of blood, and my heart was hammering on the inside of my chest, frantic to get out.

There, three hundred yards. Moving faster. He was having a go at a schuss, on a flatter part of the slope, and it had carried him over to the far side of the piste. I blinked again, settled my right eye to the scope, and closed my left.

At two hundred yards, I drew in a long, steady breath, pinched it off when my lungs reached three-quarters full, and held it.

Dirk was traversing now. Traversing the slope, and my line of fire. I held him easily in the sight – could have fired at any time – but I knew that this just had to be the surest shot of my life. I nestled my finger on the trigger, taking up the slack of the mechanism, the slack of the flesh between my second and third joint, and waited.

He stopped at about a hundred and fifty yards. Looked up at the mountain. Down the mountain. Then turned his body towards me. He was sweating heavily,

gasping with the effort, with the fear, with the knowledge. I settled the cross-hairs on the exact centre of his chest. As I'd promised Francisco. As I'd promised everyone.

Squeeze it. Never pull. Squeeze it as slowly and as lovingly as you know how.

B - TRANSLATION: DE WAPENHANDELAAR

Achttien

Mij dunkt deez' nacht is 't zieke daglicht slechts

DE KOOPMAN VAN VENETIË¹

'Wie haalt de trekker over?'²

Solomon moest wachten op antwoord.

In feite moest hij wachten op elk antwoord, want ik was op een schaatsbaan, aan het schaatsen,³ en hij niet. Ik deed er grofweg dertig seconden over om een rondje te maken en een antwoord te droppen,⁴ dus ik kreeg volop kans om irritant te zijn. Niet dat ik veel kansen nodig had, begrijp me goed.⁵ Geef me een petieterig klein kansje en ik erger je dood.

'Bedoel je de figuurlijke trekker?' vroeg ik toen ik voorbijkwam.

Ik wierp een blik over m'n schouder en zag Solomon nog net glimlachen en z'n kin een stukje opheffen,⁶ als een geduldige ouder, voor hij zich weer omdraaide naar de curlingwedstrijd waar hij zogenaamd⁷ naar keek.

Nog een rondje. Luidsprekers schalden jolige Zwitserse hoempamuziek.

'Ik bedoel de trekker trekker, meneer. De feitelijke...'

'Ik.' En weg was ik weer.

Ik begon dit schaatsen echt onder de knie te krijgen. Ik deed een kunstig pootje-over⁸ na van een Duits meisje voor mij en het ging best goed. Ik kon haar ook aardig bijhouden, wat wel prettig was. Ze was zes jaar oud, schat ik zo.⁹

‘Het geweer?’ Dit was Solomon weer, die in zijn gebalde handen¹⁰ praatte, alsof hij er warmte in blies.

Hij moest langer wachten op dit antwoord, omdat ik gevallen was, aan de andere kant van de baan,¹¹ en mezelf er even van had weten te overtuigen dat ik m'n pelvis had gebroken. Maar dat had ik niet. Wat jammer was, omdat het zo veel¹² problemen had kunnen oplossen.

Eindelijk kwam ik weer bij hem.

‘Komt morgen aan,’ zei ik.

Strikt genomen was dat niet helemaal waar. Maar gezien de omstandigheden van deze specifieke ondervraging, zou het vertellen van de waarheid zo'n anderhalve week in beslag nemen.¹³

Het geweer kwam niet morgen aan. Delen ervan waren al hier.

Op veel aandringen van mij¹⁴ stemde Francisco in met de PM L96A1. 'Tis niet de mooiste naam, dat weet ik, of zelfs maar een om te onthouden; maar de PM, ‘het Groene Ding’¹⁵ zoals het Britse leger het noemt – vermoedelijk¹⁶ omdat het zowel groen als een ding is – doet zijn werk goed genoeg; het werk dat bestaat uit het afvuren van een 7,62 millimeter¹⁷ patroon met voldoende nauwkeurigheid om de

bekwame sportschutter, wat¹⁸ ik absoluut was, van een treffer te verzekeren¹⁹ op zeshonderd meter²⁰ afstand.

Fabrieksgaranties kennende²¹ zei ik tegen Francisco dat, als het schot ook maar een centimeter²² meer dan tweehonderd meter was – minder als er een zijwind stond – ik hem niet zou nemen.

Hij wist een demonteerbaar model²³ van een Groen Ding te ritselen,²⁴ of, als je de makers moest geloven,²⁵ een ‘geheim snipergeweersysteem’.²⁶ Met andere woorden, hij bestaat uit losse onderdelen,²⁷ en de meeste van die onderdelen waren al in het dorp. De compacte richtkijker²⁸ kwam binnen als een 200 millimeter lens op de voorkant van²⁹ Bernhards camera, met de montageringen³⁰ daarbinnen verstoppt; de grendel³¹ deed dienst als het handvat van Hugo's scheermes, terwijl Latifa twee Remington Magnum-patronen in elke hak van een paar belachelijk dure kwaliteitsleren schoenen had weten te krijgen. We misten alleen nog een loop,³² en die kwam Wengen binnen op het dak van Francisco's Alfa Romeo – samen met een boel andere lange metalen dingen die mensen gebruiken voor de wintersport.

Zelf bracht ik de trekker mee, in mijn broekzak. Misschien ben ik gewoon niet zo'n creatieveling.

We hadden besloten het zonder kolf en handbeschermer³³ te stellen, aangezien die allebei lastig te vermommen en, eerlijk gezegd, overbodig zijn. Zo ook de tweepoot. Een vuurwapen is tenslotte niks anders dan een pijp, een stuk lood en wat buskruit. Koolstofvezel franjes en racestreden³⁴ langs de zijkant maken je slachtoffer er niet doder op. Het enige extra ingrediënt dat je nodig hebt om een wapen effectief

dodelijk³⁵ te maken – en goddank is het iets wat nog altijd redelijk lastig te vinden is, zelfs op deze verdorven wereld – is iemand die bereid is het te richten en te vuren.

Iemand als ik.

Solomon had me niks over Sarah verteld. Helemaal niks. Hoe het met haar was, waar ze was – ik zou zelfs genoeg hebben genomen met wat hij haar voor het laatst had zien dragen, maar geen woord erover.

Misschien hadden de Amerikanen hem opgedragen niks te zeggen. Goed of slecht. 'Luister, David, en luister goed. Onze analyse van Lang wijst op een futiel responsprofiel op amicale input.'³⁶ Iets in die trant. Met wat de-beuk-erinetjes³⁷ ertussen gegooid. Maar dan, Solomon kende me goed genoeg om zelf te bepalen wat hij me wel of niet vertelde. En hij vertelde me niks. Dus hij had ofwel helemaal geen nieuws over Sarah, of het nieuws dat hij had was niet goed. Of anders, misschien nog de beste reden om me niks te vertellen, want de simpelste is meestal de beste, was dat ik niks had gevraagd.

Ik weet niet waarom.

Ik lag in m'n bad in het Eiger, draaide met m'n voeten aan de kranen en deed er elke kwartier weer een litertje heet water bij, en dacht er achteraf over na.

Misschien was ik bang voor wat ik zou horen. Dat was mogelijk. Misschien dacht ik aan het risico van mijn geheime gesprekken met Solomon; dat ik, door ze aan te vullen met een hoop geouwehoer over de mensen op het thuisfront,³⁸ zowel zijn

leven als die van mijzelf op het spel zette. Dat was ook mogelijk, hoewel wat zwakjes.

Of misschien – en dit was de verklaring waar ik als laatste mee kwam, waar ik voorzichtig omheen draaide,³⁹ naar staarde, zo nu en dan in porde met een puntige stok om te zien of hij zou opspringen⁴⁰ en me zou bijten – misschien kon het me niks meer schelen. Misschien had ik mezelf wijsgemaakt dat Sarah de reden was dat ik dit alles doorzette, terwijl nú juist een goed moment zou zijn om toe te geven dat ik betere vrienden had gevonden, een hoger doel had ontdekt, meer redenen had om 's morgens uit bed te stappen, sinds ik me had aangesloten bij Het Zwaard der Gerechtigheid.

Dat was natuurlijk absoluut niet mogelijk.

Dat was absurd.

Ik kroop in bed en sliep de slaap der slapen.

Het was koud. Dat was het eerste wat ik opmerkte toen ik de gordijnen opentrok. Een droge, grauwe, vergeet-niet-dat-je-in-de-Alpen-zit-knul⁴¹ soort kou en dat baarde me wat zorgen.⁴² Toegegeven, sommigen van de wat onwillige skiërs bleven hierdoor misschien in bed liggen, wat goed zou uitkomen; maar de kou zou ook mijn vingers vertragen naar 33 schoten per minuut en een goede schietvaardigheid extreem lastig maken, zo niet onmogelijk. Erger nog, het schot zou vanaf een grotere afstand te horen zijn.⁴³

Voor een geweer is het Groene Ding niet een bijzonder luid instrument – het is niks vergeleken met een M16, die mensen laat doodschrikken net voordat de kogel ze raakt – maar dan nog, als je toevallig degene was die het ding vasthield en bezig was je vizier⁴⁴ op een prominente Europees politicus⁴⁵ te richten, dan ben je nog weleens geneigd je bewust te zijn van dingen als geluid. Van dingen als alles eigenlijk. Je wil⁴⁶ dat mensen even de andere kant opkijken, als ze het niet erg vinden. Als je, terwijl je de trekker overhaalt, weet dat een kilometer verderop kopjes zich niet langer richting lippen begeven,⁴⁷ oren zich spitsen, wenkbrauwen zich optrekken en ‘wat de fok⁴⁸ was dat?’ uit honderden monden komt tuimelen in tientallen talen, dan doet dat je toch wel enigszins verkrampen.⁴⁹ Bij tennis noemen ze dat choken op het schot. Ik weet niet hoe ze het bij moord noemen. Choken op het schot waarschijnlijk.⁵⁰

Ik ontbeet stevig, werkte calorieën naar binnen met de gedachte dat mijn dieet in de komende vierentwintig uur weleens drastisch zou kunnen veranderen en veranderd zou blijven tot mijn baard grijs werd, en daalde daarna af naar de skiruimte in het souterrain. Daar was een Frans gezin druk aan het lachen,⁵¹ aan het kibbelen over wie wiens handschoenen had, waar de zonnebrand⁵² was gebleven, waarom skischoenen nou altijd zo'n pijn moesten doen⁵³ – dus ik maakte het me gemakkelijk⁵⁴ op het verste bankje dat ik kon vinden en besloot de tijd te nemen om de spullen bij elkaar te rapen.

Bernhards camera was zwaar en lomp, beukte pijnlijk tegen m'n borst en voelde dubbel zo nep als hij was. De grendel van het geweer en een kogel werden in

de nylon heuptas om mijn middel⁵⁵ gepropt en de loop lag verborgen in een van de skistokken – een rode stip op de handgreep, voor het geval ik een stok van tweehonderd gram en een van bijna tweeduizend gram⁵⁶ niet uit elkaar kon houden. De andere drie kogels had ik het badkamerraam uit gemikt,⁵⁷ omdat één kogel maar voldoende moest zijn, want als dat niet zo was, dan zou ik een nog groter probleem hebben – en ik kon op dat moment gewoon even geen groter probleem aan. Ik verdeed een minuut aan het schoonmaken van m'n nagels met het puntje van de trekker, vouwde toen voorzichtig het metalen pennetje in een papieren servet en stopte het in m'n zak.

Ik stond op, ademde diep in en beende langs *la famille* naar het toilet.

De veroordeelde man spuwde een stevig ontbijt.

Latifa droeg haar zonnebril bovenop haar hoofd, wat stand-by betekende, wat niks betekende. Geen zonnebril en de Van der⁵⁸ Hoewetjes⁵⁹ bleven binnen mens-erger-je-nieten.⁶⁰ Zonnebril over de ogen betekende dat ze naar de helling gingen.

Bovenop het hoofd en alles kon, ik kon, jij kon, zij konden.⁶¹

Ik stapte langs de voet van de oefenpiste, op weg naar de skilift.⁶² Hugo was er al, gekleed in oranje en turquoise, en ook hij had zijn zonnebril bovenop zijn hoofd rusten.

Het eerste wat hij deed was mij aankijken.

Ondanks al onze colleges, al onze training, al ons ernstige, instemmende geknik op Francisco's tips – ondanks dat alles, keek Hugo me recht aan. Ik wist

meteen dat hij me aan zou blijven kijken tot onze blikken kruisten, dus ik staarde terug en hoopte het maar gehad te hebben.

Z'n ogen glinsterden. Anders kan je het niet omschrijven. Ze glinsterden van plezier en opwinding en kom op, als een kind op kerstochtend.

Hij hief een geschoeide hand op naar z'n oor en deed de walkman-koptelefoon⁶³ goed. Een doorsnee skifanaat zou je hebben gezucht⁶⁴ als je hem zo zag; het is niet genoeg om door het prachtigste landschap onder de hemel te glijden, hij moet het per se overstemmen met Guns 'N' Roses.⁶⁵ Ik zou die koptelefoon zelf waarschijnlijk ook erg irritant hebben gevonden, als ik niet had geweten dat hij in werkelijkheid verbonden was met een kortegolfontvanger op z'n heup, en dat Bernhard z'n eigen speciale weerberichten⁶⁶ uitzond vanaf het andere eind.

Er was besloten dat ik geen radio zou dragen. De redenering was dat, in het geval dat ik werd gepakt – Latifa had nota bene haar hand op m'n arm gelegd⁶⁷ en er zachtjes in geknepen toen Francisco dit zei – niemand een onmiddellijke reden zou hebben om te denken aan handlangers.

Dus alles wat ik had was Hugo en zijn glinsterende ogen.

Bovenaan de berg de Schilthorn,⁶⁸ op een hoogte van iets meer dan drieduizend meter, staat, of ligt, restaurant Piz Gloria;⁶⁹ een verbazingwekkend bouwwerk van glas en staal waar je, tegen de prijs van een heel behoorlijke sportwagen, kan zitten, een kopje koffie kan drinken⁷⁰ en op een heldere dag kan genieten⁷¹ van uitzicht op maar liefst zes landen.

Als je ook maar een beetje bent zoals ik, kan het je een groot deel van die heldere dag kosten om uit te vogelen welke zes landen het zouden kunnen zijn, maar als je toch nog wat tijd overhoudt, dan zul je die waarschijnlijk gebruiken om je af te vragen hoe de Mürrenaren⁷² het gebouw in hemelsnaam daarboven hebben gekregen en hoeveel van hen wel niet moeten zijn gestorven tijdens het bouwproces. Als je een constructie zoals deze hebt gezien en nagaat hoe lang de gemiddelde Britse bouwer erover doet om je een offerte voor een keukenuitbouw te sturen, dan kun je niet anders dan bewondering hebben⁷³ voor die Zwitsers.

De andere trots van het restaurant is dat het ooit dienstdeed als decor van een James Bond-film; z'n toneelnaam Piz Gloria is sindsdien aan de plek blijven hangen, samen met het recht van de ondernemer om 007-memorabilia te verkopen aan degenen die niet failliet zijn gegaan aan het kopje koffie.

Kortom, het was een plek die elke bezoeker van Mürren gewoon móést bezoeken als die de kans kreeg, en de Van der Hoewetjes hadden besloten, tijdens een diner van *boeuf en crôte* de avond ervoor, dat zij zeker de kans hadden.

Hugo en ik stapten uit bij het bovenste station en splitsten ons op. Ik ging naar binnen en hapte naar adem en wees en schudde m'n hoofd om hoe ontzettend gaaf al die berggoedjes⁷⁴ waren, terwijl Hugo buiten rondhing, rokend en frunnikend aan z'n bindingen. Hij ging voor de look⁷⁵ van de serieuze skiër die steile heuvels en fijn poeder wilde, en hoe dan ook, laat me met rust, want de bassolo van dit nummer is gewoon te gek. Ik was tevreden met mijn rol als de dom starende idioot.

Ik schreef nog wat ansichtkaarten – om de een of andere reden allemaal aan ene Colin⁷⁶ – en zo nu en dan wierp ik een blik op Oostenrijk, of Italië, of Frankrijk, of ergens anders waar sneeuw ligt, tot de kelners chagrijnig begonnen te worden. Ik begon me net af te vragen of Het Zwaard der Gerechtigheid-budget kon worden opgerekt tot een tweede kopje, toen een beweging van felle kleuren mijn aandacht trok. Ik keek op en zag dat Hugo aan het zwaaien was vanaf de loopbrug⁷⁷ buiten.

De andere mensen in het restaurant hadden hem ook opgemerkt. Waarschijnlijk duizenden mensen in Oostenrijk, Italië en Frankrijk hadden hem opgemerkt. Al met al, het was een hopeloos stukje amateurisme, en als Francisco er was geweest, zou hij Hugo flink op z'n lazer hebben gegeven,⁷⁸ zoals hij al zo vaak had gedaan tijdens training. Maar Francisco was er niet, en zonder enige reden maakte Hugo er een bontgekleurd potje van, met mij als brabbelend wrak tot gevolg.⁷⁹ Het scheelde nog dat geen van de vele nieuwsgierige toeschouwers kon weten naar wie of wat hij precies aan het zwaaien was.

Omdat hij een zonnebril over zijn ogen droeg.

Ik nam het eerste deel van de piste op een rustig tempo, om twee redenen: ten eerste omdat ik mijn ademhaling zo regelmatig mogelijk wilde hebben als het schot eenmaal gelost moest worden;⁸⁰ ten tweede en belangrijker nog, ik wilde niet⁸¹ – met heel mijn hart wilde ik niet – dat ik m'n been brak en van de berg gedragen moest worden met een hoop geweeronderdelen op mijn persoontje.

Dus ik schoof en bewoog me zijwaarts, nam de bochten zo wijd en zo langzaam als ik kon, en stak voorzichtig het zwartste gedeelte van de piste⁸² over⁸³ tot ik bij de boomgrens kwam. De moeilijkheid van de piste baarde me wat zorgen. Elke gek kon zien dat Dirk en Rhona eerlijk gezegd niet goed genoeg waren om hem aan te kunnen zonder een flink potje vallen en mogelijk zelfs wat niet-meer-opstaan.⁸⁴ Als ik Dirk was geweest, of een vriend van Dirk, of zelfs maar een geïnteresseerde voorbijskiër, dan zou ik waarschijnlijk hebben gezegd vergeet het maar.⁸⁵ Neem de lift weer terug naar beneden en zoek iets makkelijkers.

Maar Francisco twijfelde niet aan⁸⁶ Dirk. Hij meende⁸⁷ zijn mannetje wel te kennen. Francisco's analyse zei dat Dirk zorgvuldig met geld omging – wat, neem ik aan, een van de eigenschappen is die je in een minister van Financiën zoekt – en als Dirk en Rhona besloten af te haken, dan zouden ze een fors bedrag⁸⁸ moeten neertellen voor de skilift terug.

Francisco was bereid mijn leven erom te verwedden dat Dirk hem zou skiën.

Voor de zekerheid had hij Latifa de avond daarvoor in de bar van het Edelweiss geplant, toen Dirk een paar brandy's in z'n keel goot, en liet haar zwijmelen bij de bravoure van elke man die bereid was de Schilthorn te bedwingen. Dirk had eerst nog bedenkelijk gekeken, maar Latifa's flirtende⁸⁹ ogen en op- en neergaande boezem⁹⁰ hadden hem uiteindelijk om gekregen en hij had haar voor de avond erop een drankje beloofd⁹¹ als hij heelhuids beneden wist te komen.

Latifa kruiste haar vingers achter haar rug en beloofde er klokslag negen te zijn.

Hugo had de plek aangegeven en stond daar nu, te roken,⁹² te grijnzen en zich simpelweg kostelijk te vermaken. Ik skiede hem voorbij en kwam tien meter verder tussen de bomen tot stilstand, gewoon om mezelf,⁹³ en Hugo, eraan te herinneren dat ik nog altijd wist hoe ik beslissingen moest nemen. Ik draaide me om en keek op naar de berg, controleerde de positie, de hoeken, de beschutting – en draaide toen m'n hoofd met een ruk naar Hugo.

Hij gooide z'n sigaret weg, haalde zijn schouders op en vertrok bergafwaarts, veranderde een kleine mogul in een onnodig spectaculaire sprong, en wierp een poederwolk op toen hij tot een perfecte halt kwam aan de andere kant van de piste, zo'n honderd meter lager. Hij wendde zich van me af, ritste z'n pak open en begon tegen een kei te plassen.

Ik wilde ook plassen. Maar ik had het gevoel dat ik, eenmaal begonnen, nooit meer zou ophouden; ik zou gewoon door blijven pissen tot er niks meer van mij overbleef dan een hoopje kleren.

Ik haalde de lens van de voorkant van de camera, verwijderde het kapje en richtte hem op de berg terwijl ik door de zoeker tuurde. Het beeld was wazig door de condens, dus ik ritste mijn jas open, liet de kijker erin glijden en probeerde hem met m'n lichaam te verwarmen.

Het was koud en stil, en ik kon m'n vingers horen trillen toen ik het geweer in elkaar begon te zetten.

Nu had ik 'm. Op misschien achthonderd meter.⁹⁴ Hij was dik als altijd, met het soort silhouet waar sluipschutters van dromen. Als die al ergens van dromen.

Zelfs vanaf die afstand kon ik zien dat Dirk het allemaal verschrikkelijk vond. Zijn lichaamstaal kwam over in korte, simpele zinnen. Ik. Ga. Hier. Dood.⁹⁵ Zijn kont stak naar achteren, zijn borst vooruit, z'n benen waren stijf van angst en vermoeidheid, en hij bewoog zich met een ijzige traagheid voort.

Rhona bracht 't er iets beter af,⁹⁶ maar niet heel veel beter. Stuntelend, hortend en stotend, maar met zekere vorderingen, gleed ze zo langzaam als ze kon naar beneden en probeerde ze niet te ver voor haar ellendige echtgenoot uit te gaan.

Ik wachtte.

Op zeshonderd meter begon ik te hyperventileren, het bloed met zuurstof te vullen, zodat ik klaar zou zijn om de kraan dicht te draaien, en dicht te houden,⁹⁷ bij driehonderd meter. Ik ademde voorzichtig uit via de mondhoeken, weg van de kijker.⁹⁸

Op vierhonderd meter viel Dirk voor ongeveer de vijftiende keer⁹⁹ en leek helemaal geen haast te hebben om weer overeind te komen. Terwijl ik hem zo zag snakken naar adem, trok ik de geribde greep van de grendel naar achteren en hoorde de slagpin spannen met een oorverdovende klik. Jezus, dit schot ging een lawaai maken. Opeens werd ik me bewust van lawines¹⁰⁰ en ik moest mezelf ervan weerhouden helemaal op te gaan in een wilde fantasie begraven te zijn onder duizend ton sneeuw. Wat nou als mijn lichaam pas over een paar jaar werd gevonden? Wat nou als deze parka¹⁰¹ hopeloos uit de mode was tegen de tijd dat ze

mij eruit hesen? Ik knipperde vijf keer met m'n ogen en probeerde mijn ademhaling, mijn zicht, mijn paniek onder controle te krijgen.¹⁰² Het was te koud voor lawines.

Voor een lawine heb je heel veel sneeuw nodig, dan heel veel zon. Wij hadden geen van beide. Verman je.¹⁰³ Ik tuurde door de kijker en zag dat Dirk weer overeind stond.

Overeind en naar mij aan het kijken.

Of tenminste, hij keek mijn kant op, tuurde naar de bomen terwijl hij sneeuw uit z'n skibril schraapte.

Hij kon me niet hebben gezien. Het was onmogelijk. Ik had mezelf ingegraven achter een sneeuwhoop, had de smalst mogelijke geul uitgegraven waarin ik het geweer liet rusten, en wat voor vorm hij ook probeerde te onderscheiden zou worden gecamoufleerd door de onregelmatige wirwar van bomen. Hij kon me niet hebben gezien.

Waar keek hij dan naar?

Ik liet voorzichtig mijn hoofd tot achter de sneeuwhoop¹⁰⁴ zakken en draaide hem rond, speurend naar een eenzame langlaufer, of een verdwaalde berggeit, of een dansgroep uit *No, No Nanette*¹⁰⁵ – alles wat Dirks aandacht had kunnen trekken. Ik hield mijn adem in en draaide m'n hoofd langzaam van links naar rechts, de heuvel afzoekend naar geluiden.

Niks.

Ik schuifelde terug naar de top van de sneeuwhoop en tuurde weer door de kijker. Links, rechts, boven, beneden.

Geen Dirk.

Ik stak m'n hoofd omhoog, zoals je dat nooit mocht doen, en zocht wanhopig de verblindende, witte vlakte¹⁰⁶ af naar een glimp van hem. Mijn mond leek plotseling bloed te proeven¹⁰⁷ en mijn hart bonsde tegen de binnenkant van mijn borst, wanhopig om eruit te komen.

Daar, op driehonderd meter. Snelheid aan het maken.¹⁰⁸ Hij probeerde een schuss uit¹⁰⁹ op een vlakker gedeelte van de piste, en dat had hem naar de andere kant van de helling gevoerd. Ik knipperde nog eens met m'n ogen, bracht m'n rechteroog naar de kijker en sloot de linker.

Op tweehonderd meter haalde ik diep en gelijkmatig adem, sloot de luchtstroom af toen m'n longen voor driekwart vol waren, en hield m'n adem in.¹¹⁰

Dirk kruiste nu de piste. En kruiste mijn vuurlinie.¹¹¹ Ik hield hem makkelijk in het vizier – had elk moment kunnen vuren – maar ik wist dat dit gewoon het zekerste schot van mijn leven moest zijn. Ik zette mijn vinger op de trekker, nam het drukpunt¹¹² weg met het punt tussen mijn tweede en derde vingerkootje, en wachtte.

Hij stopte op zo'n honderdvijftig meter. Keek op naar de berg. Neer op de berg. En¹¹³ draaide toen zijn lichaam mijn kant op. Hij zweette hevig en hapte moeizaam, angstig, welbewust¹¹⁴ naar adem.¹¹⁵ Ik vestigde het vizier precies op het midden van zijn borst. Zoals ik Francisco had beloofd. Zoals ik iedereen had beloofd.

Haal langzaam over.¹¹⁶ Nooit trekken. Haal zo langzaam en zo liefdevol over als je maar mogelijk kan.

C - TRANSLATION NOTES

¹ See chapter 3.2.4 for the explanation of this translation.

² This question could in principal be rendered in different ways – *Wie is de schutter?*
Wie vuurt? Wie neemt het schot? – but as Lang's next question concerns the 'trekker',
a translation that includes this word would be the most appropriate and logical one.

³ Although 'skating rink' and 'skating' could also mean 'rolschaatsen', it is
'schaatsen' that best suits the Swiss ski resort, where the debriefing takes place.

⁴ The circumstances of the conversation necessitate Lang to give short and swift
answers, which is emphasised by 'drop off'. This verb is used to indicate that the
'deliverer' delivers something and immediately leaves again. The short monosyllabic
words also create the impression of a speed with which the answer is given. In Dutch
verbs like 'afleveren' or 'afgeven' are less effective because of 'af', which would stand
apart from the rest of the verb, and would eliminate the swiftness of the answers.
Conversely, 'droppen' is concise. What is more, it is more colloquial than anything
else, which makes the text more airy and fit Lang's character more.

⁵ Lang wants the reader to understand that he is very good at annoying people, and
neither needs someone to give him an opportunity, nor needs many opportunities to
be annoying. 'you understand'/'begrijp me goed' is therefore meant to clarify this
imaginary misunderstanding.

⁶ By inserting 'had' in the source text, Lang grammatically speaking sees that Solomon, just an instance before he looks, had smiled and lifted his chin a little, before he turns back to the curling match. It is, however, barely possible for someone to see that someone *had* smiled or nodded *just* before they look. Visually, 'had' creates an image where Lang manages to catch a glimpse of a smile and a head gesture.

⁷ Considering the reason of Lang and Solomon's presence at the rink (debriefing), "he was supposed to be watching" should not be interpreted as 'what he *should* be watching'. After all, Solomon has not come to actually watch the game. It is more likely to mean that he stands there *pretending* to watch the game to not stand out, as he is actually having a conversation with Lang. "supposed to be" is then translated as 'zogenaamd'.

⁸ As "cross-over (turn)" is not included in the Van Dale dictionary, I searched the Internet for videos that show the turn concerned to find out what the "cross-over (turn)" looks like. A search in Google for 'schaatsen' and 'bochten' showed Wikipedia as one of the first resulting hits. Here, all kinds of terms are given, among others 'pootje-over' and 'overstap'. While looking up these words, it became clear that ice skaters are divided on the appropriateness of the term 'pootje-over', as the foot does not move *over* but rather *across the front of* the other foot. For this very reason, however, 'pootje-over' is very becoming of Lang, a skating layman who has to copy skating techniques from a six-year-old girl.

⁹ For notes on this translation, see chapter 2.3.1.

¹⁰ Because “cupped hands” has no Dutch equivalent, and because it calls up a similar image of ‘forming a ball with your hands’, I have opted for an adaptation of ‘gebalde vuisten’, “gebalde handen”. ‘Gevouwen handen’ has been considered, but it creates a different positioning of the hands, one where the fingers are twined, and would sooner be associated with prayer than with “cupped hands”.

¹¹ The source text shows an emphasis on “on the far side of the rink”. If this part of the sentence were incorporated in the main clause of the translation – ‘omdat ik helemaal aan de andere kant van de baan was gevallen’ – subject and verbs would be far apart. Also, there would be little to no emphasis on ‘aan de andere kant van de baan’. But here is where the joke lies, for Lang cannot answer Solomon's question and Solomon therefore has to wait (longer). For these reasons, “aan de andere kant van de baan” is placed in a sub clause after ‘the fall’, so that this part of the sentence is still highlighted.

¹² In Dutch, “zo veel”, as opposed to “allerlei”, makes Lang sound more sorrowful of not breaking his pelvis.

¹³ There has been some shuffling around of words in the second part of the sentence. The passive sentence of the source text would sound unnatural in a translation because of “take about a week and a half”, which is difficult to combine with ‘de waarheid’, an abstract term. After all, the truth cannot ‘take up’ time; in contrast, an

action can. By placing ‘deliver’/‘vertellen’, as a noun, in front of ‘de waarheid’, ‘het vertellen’ becomes the sentence subject. This in turn facilitates a combination with “take about a week and a half”/“zo’n anderhalve week in beslag nemen”.

¹⁴ Because ‘prompting’ is already fairly pushy, ‘a lot of’ turns it into a euphemism for ‘nagging’. After all, Lang is talking about himself. The same goes for ‘aandringen’ in Dutch: the normal expression would be ‘op aandringen van’. But by adding ‘veel’, it becomes ‘a nice way of saying’ he badgered Francisco into giving him what he wants.

¹⁵ In spite of a lot of searching on the Internet, there were no connections to be found between the PM and “the Green Thing”. As it happens, it would not matter if there were: ‘the Green Thing’ is a nickname given by the British Army, and is therefore (most likely) not used outside the British Army, and certainly not in another language. But as the translation is meant to convey the same reading experience as the original – mentioning a nickname says something about Lang’s experience, with weaponry, the Army – it is only appropriate to give “the Green Thing” a Dutch variant. The translation “het Groene Ding” is therefore based on Lang’s following speculations on the nickname’s origin.

¹⁶ The current translation of ‘presumably’, ‘vermoedelijk’, sounds slightly less certain than ‘waarschijnlijk’. While ‘waarschijnlijkheid’ is to do with what people can expect with high certainty, a ‘vermoeden’ is more limited to what particular people

'assume', and therefore is less certain in general. It could also be compared to a glass that is either half-full or half-empty. Only with 'vermoedelijk'/'waarschijnlijk' it is not the difference between a positive and a negative attitude; it is the difference in the degree of certainty with which someone asserts something. In this particular case, for Lang to 'assume' something so straightforward with a lower degree of certainty would contribute more to the humour of the text. Therefore, 'vermoedelijk' is used.

¹⁷ The diameter of bullets is measured in calibres, which is basically millimetres or inches. As this measurement is universal and both Lang and the Dutch use millimetres, the only 'translating' that needs to be done is to turn the point into a comma, after Dutch convention.

¹⁸ Here, 'wat' refers to "the competent recreational shooter" in general, and Lang considers himself to be part of that group of people. Therefore, 'wat' is used instead of 'dat'.

¹⁹ Although 'een gegarandeerde treffer te geven' is a possible translation, but "van een treffer te verzekeren" sounds a bit more natural and fluent in the sentence. 'geven' is somewhat awkward as well, as you cannot 'give' someone a hit. The Dutch 'geven' is more associated with the physical 'handing over' concept than does the English 'give'.

²⁰ The distance in yards does not need to be exactly converted into metres. The most important thing is the high number, which suggests high reliability of the rifle. A

yard is 0.9144 m, therefore six hundred yards is 548.64 m. A decimal number is, of course, not very elegant, nor is a number like 'vijfhonderdvijftig'. As it is unlikely that six hundred yards is the exact distance at which the accuracy of the hit is guaranteed, it would be more logical to round the number up to six hundred metres or down to five hundred. To emphasise the rifle's reliability, I decided to round it up.

²¹ "being what they are" suggests that there is something very typical of "manufacturers' guarantees" that has to be taken into consideration. It indicates that Lang is 'speaking from experience'. His tone is negative, expressing his distrust of them because he claims they are as a rule far from accurate. It has therefore been translated as "kennende", which is often used in a negative way to point to something found to be typical.

²² For the same reason as in n20, the 'inch' is converted to 'centimeter'. Literally, an inch is 2.54 cm. But it would be strange to put this in a sentence; the 'inch' simply means 'very little', so the logical decision would be to round the number down. However, 'twee centimeter' sounds awkward, and seeing as the source text does not pursue the exact definition, the translation does not have to either.

²³ The meaning of 'format' in this context is somewhere along the line of 'model' or 'design'. In Dutch, however, something cannot be 'in demonteerbaar model/design'. It is therefore placed in front of 'Groen Ding'.

²⁴ “get hold of” suggests that Francisco has put some effort in finding this specific rifle, either because it is very rare or because it is illegal. In Dutch, ‘ritselen’ gives a similar impression. It is often used to indicate that something is obtained in an unofficial or questionable way.

²⁵ “as the makers would have you have it” is a somewhat condescending way of saying that you do not fully believe someone's claim. This already became clear when Lang referred to the manufacturers' guarantee. In Dutch, “als je de makers moest geloven” expresses the same scepticism towards the claim.

²⁶ Because Lang introduces the “covert sniper rifle system” as something the makers “would have you have it”, the system comes across as just a fancy name for something quite ordinary or ‘simple’. The idea is that this ‘system’ allows the ‘sniper rifle’ to be used in ‘covert’ operations. The translation should therefore sound more complicated than it is. In the source text, “sniper rifle system” is actually one word, one noun, and covert is the adjective. In Dutch this results in ‘geheim sluipschuttersgeweersysteem’, as compounds are written as one word. This could actually work quite well considering the seeming complexity, which is exaggerated by the long word. Lang implies that he finds the fancy name quite ridiculous, which is supported by the unnecessarily complicated name; the long name in Dutch is thus unnecessarily complicated and long. To make it even more ‘fancy’, ‘sluipschuttersgeweer’ has been replaced by ‘snipergeweer’, complying with

companies' growing tendency to mix English and Dutch words, and which is also more commonly used in Dutch, considering the number of hits in Google.

²⁷ Although "It comes in pieces" actually means that the rifle is 'available in pieces', this interpretation is a bit strange: the rifle is already in Lang's possession (or at least parts of it), and the essence of the rifle is that it is 'in pieces'. It can therefore be interpreted to mean 'consisting of parts', which translates as "hij bestaat uit losse onderdelen".

²⁸ For the translation of 'scope' I looked up rifle parts on the Internet. The results, online (gun) shops and a rifle maker, used 'richtkijker' to refer to the scope of a rifle. Another source is a Dutch documentary about weapons, *VARA Thema: wapens*, in which people show and talk about their guns. In this documentary, the shortened 'kijker' is used as an alternative. Considering this is the first mentioning of the 'scope', it would be more forthcoming to the reader to use 'richtkijker'. But later mentionings of 'scope' are rendered as 'kijker'.

²⁹ A lens is clearly on the front of a camera, which makes "on the front of" seem a bit redundant, though there it is. However, a sniper scope is of course bigger and longer than a camera lens, so Lang cannot be referring to the lens of the camera itself. This means the sniper scope is posing as a lens attachment that can be fixed on the front of the camera, making it necessary to maintain "op de voorkant van" in the translation.

³⁰ For the translation of 'mount', or any other technical term, the first thing to do is to know, or at least understand, what it is or how it works. The Van Dale dictionary describes it as a kind of stand to help keep something steady, in this case the scope of the rifle. A good way to find terminology that is commonly used by the initiated, is to search for rifle parts in Dutch online shops. Since we now know the Dutch term for 'scope', it is not hard to find accessories to that. 'Montageringen' or 'montageklemmen' are terms that often come up. Although 'mount' is less specific about the method of fixing the scope, the translation shows 'montageringen' as this would be easier to hide in a scope, which has the same round form as the mount.

³¹ Finding the Dutch word for 'bolt' is not hard, since the dictionary already gives several options. When looking up pictures of and texts on both 'bolt' and the Dutch words, it appears that 'sluitstuk' and 'sluittoestel' are the less common ones. 'grendel', on the other hand, is used more often; for instance on Sportschutter.nl, a website about shooting, with information on the handling and maintenance of firearms, and consequently using many terms for rifle parts.

³² The comma is maintained to leave some breathing time between the two clauses. Otherwise the sentence would rush on in too high a pace. This also highlights the 'loop' in the first clause, which is the last component of the rifle and of the rifle part inventory.

³³ As results in the Van Dale dictionary have not been satisfactory, a search in Google resulted in an article by Dave Coustan on HowStuffWorks, an information database on various subjects. The workings of a shotgun are described, and a picture indicates the distinguishable parts of the weapon (3). The 'stock' is the part of the rifle which rests against the shoulder, and the 'fore-end' is the handle that is fixed underneath or around the barrel. Additionally, on comparing the English and Dutch Wikipedia page of 'stock', which links to the Dutch 'kolf', 'stock' and 'kolf' turn out to carry the same description. The English page shows an overview of the rifle parts as well, generally with the same rifle parts indicated in Coustan's image. A translation of 'fore-end', however, does not appear on the Dutch page. Searching for 'geweer' and 'onderdelen' in Google, the very first text summarises some of the main rifle parts (Martens and De Vries, 88). After ascertaining the definition of all, 'handbeschermer' turns out to be the Dutch word for the handle around the barrel. Furthermore, this word actually sounds like something that has nothing to do with the firing mechanism of a rifle, and is therefore 'inessential'.

³⁴ In Dutch, the plural form sounds more natural than the singular one.

³⁵ Adding 'meaningfully' is actually not necessary, as a lethal weapon is a weapon with the potential to kill someone, whether it be successful or not. After all, a weapon cannot be partly lethal. It is therefore simply to say that the weapon is effective in killing someone. This redundant wording is translated by inverting a common expression. In Dutch, 'dodelijk effectief' expresses efficiency, using 'dodelijk'

figuratively in the sense of 'very' or 'highly'. By reversing the word order, 'dodelijk' comes to symbolise the literal meaning of 'lethal', making the common phrase express a different meaning.

³⁶ What can be gleaned from "nugatory response profile to incoming amatory data" is that Lang finds the Americans overly complicated with their fancy wordings and exuberant number of analyses, and that he does not want to get friendly with them. To convey the same message, the translation has to use complicated words to describe something simple.

³⁷ In the source text, "now let's kick ass" is used as an adjective to 'phrases'. In Dutch, however, it would not look as natural if the inverted commas were kept, followed by 'zinnnetjes', which would have to be connected to 'erin' either by joining it to the phrase, or by using a dash. Joining the words would unjustly make 'zinnnetjes' a part of the phrase, and a dash would result in a clash of punctuation marks (an inverted comma followed by a dash). By removing the inverted commas and connecting the words by dashes, such a clash can be avoided. But "de-beuk-erinzinnnetjes" sounds a bit too contrived, so 'phrases' has disappeared from the translation. The diminutive form calls up a feeling of familiarity, making the phrase appear like a word people actually know and use.

³⁸ The organisation Lang associates with, The Sword Of Justice, operates with military precision, as if they were fighting a war. “op het thuisfront” fits this idea of a military operation.

³⁹ In this case, translating the English present participle directly into Dutch would result in an unnatural sounding sentence. A present participle is not a first choice in Dutch anyway, and a string of present participles would therefore not be the most elegant solution. To create a Dutch sentence with a verb form that can be repeated in the same sentence without sounding artificial, I have opted for the continuation of the construction of the first clause: the (implicit) repetition of ‘de verklaring’/‘waar’.

⁴⁰ The English ‘get up’ expresses more speed and activity than the literal translation ‘opstaan’, which gives more an idea of an indifferent movement. Because there is an element of suddenness and surprise in ‘get up’, the more active ‘opspringen’ is a more suitable option.

⁴¹ ‘Just remember’ has been changed to ‘Don’t forget’ because this makes the Dutch sentence more fluent.

⁴² The structure of the next two sentences has been changed from active to passive because the Dutch ‘kou’ is a de-word. This means that ‘it’, which refers to ‘cold’, cannot be translated as ‘het’. Keeping the original sentence structure would therefore not work in a Dutch translation, unless ‘kou’ were to be repeated. But it would have to be repeated several times, making it too prominent in the text. Although some

repetition could work out quite well – for instance, pretending ‘kou’ is a het-word, by translating the first and last ‘it’ with ‘de kou’, but keeping the second – but to apply it to all three instances would make it obtrusive. It is, however, advisable to translate the second ‘it’ as ‘de kou’ as the sentence would otherwise lack causality – cf ‘maar mijn vingers zouden dan ook vertragen’ or ‘maar ook zouden mijn vingers vertragen’, and “maar de kou zou ook mijn vingers vertragen”.

⁴³ Because ‘it’/‘the cold’ has been omitted from the translation, “the sound of the shot” cannot be ‘made’ by anything to do anything. Therefore another sentence structure has to come in its place. Without ‘het’/‘kou’, ‘het schot’ becomes the subject. One option would be to keep the ‘travelling’ aspect in the translation – ‘het geluid van het schot zou een grotere afstand afreizen’. Another one would be to reverse the idea of sound going a long(er) distance, and to take the perspective of ‘hearing’ the shot – “het schot zou vanaf een grotere afstand te horen zijn”. Comparing these two options, the second one has more rhythm to it, and comes a bit more naturally than the first.

⁴⁴ Although ‘cross-hairs’ literally translates as ‘dradenkruis’, this word is not often used in Dutch, perhaps not even known by most. ‘vizier’ is used instead. It is a more general term – ‘an aiming device’ as opposed to the more specific ‘cross’ with which you aim – but it has the same function as ‘cross-hairs’: it suggests that Lang is aiming at the statesman.

⁴⁵ According to Jan Renkema (211), an adjective does not necessarily end in -e if the adjective signifies a function of the noun it modifies: Dirk van der Hoewe is a statesman *of* Europe, not *from* Europe. Additionally, 'eminent' is translated as 'prominent' and 'statesman' has become 'politicus', as these are more commonly used in Dutch than 'eminent' and 'staatsman'.

⁴⁶ With 'je' comes the choice between 'wilt' or 'wil', the one to refer to a specific person, the other to refer to a general definition of 'je' (Renkema, 187). Because Lang talks about something any sensible human being would want in such a situation, 'je wil' is more suitable.

⁴⁷ Instead of the cups 'stopping', the translation shows the reverse image of the cups 'no longer moving'. This benefits the fluency of the sentence, because the English idea would result in an artificial sounding Dutch construction, where the verb is located far away from the subject at the end of the clause.

⁴⁸ Instead of keeping the English word, the Dutch spelling 'fok' adds a more humorous tone. It sounds more like spoken language – 'fuck' is often pronounced as /fok/ in Dutch – which is the effect Lang wants to create.

⁴⁹ 'to cramp someone's style' means 'to limit someone in their movement', with 'style' referring to someone's performance. 'verkrampen' creates the image of 'failing to perform when it matters', and when something causes you to 'cramp up', it limits your movements, which fits the following analogy of "choking on the shot".

⁵⁰ 'waarschijnlijk' could have been placed in front of "choken op het schot", but the effect of and emphasis on "choken op het schot" would have been less than with 'waarschijnlijk' at the end of the sentence.

⁵¹ 'druk' is added to create a livelier image of a family laughing and talking loudly and busy preparing for their ski trip.

⁵² The shortened 'zonnebrand' gives the impression of spoken language. More than 'zonnebrandcrème' in full, it creates a livelier image of the family falling about, looking and asking for things.

⁵³ Lang gives an enumeration of things a family on holiday would typically argue about. Employing words that are used in dialogue, in spoken language – especially the pragmatic particle 'nou' – helps to create a livelier, more vivid image, bringing the ski room in the basement closer to the reader.

⁵⁴ 'settled down' suggests that Lang will spend a longer period of time there, and, in combination with "on the farthest bench I could find", it also emphasises his wish for privacy. It is therefore more than just the movement of 'sitting down', but rather an action of 'creating a private spot for himself'. Similarly, "maakte het mezelf gemakkelijk" shows Lang settling down as far away as possible from other people.

⁵⁵ Keeping the 'nylon bum-bag' and "(strapped) around my waist" as separate units would not work in Dutch: the verb 'gepropt' would come after 'nylon heuptas' – which is not in the diminutive form, as that would be less becoming of a man –

making the sentence structure somewhat awkward if 'die om mijn middel zat' referred to the 'heuptas'. Therefore, the two units are combined, creating "de nylon heuptas om mijn middel" – the indefinite article is replaced by the definite one to make it explicit that Lang has just the one nylon bum-bag around his waist, as opposed to the several an indefinite article would suggest.

⁵⁶ To create a bigger contrast between the two ski poles, I chose to repeat 'twee-'. The difference in weight is highlighted by the 'honderd – duizend' contrast and reflects what Lang thinks about the red dot, and with that the Americans. He feels that the Americans care more about 'playing spy' and the quantity of 'cool spy stuff' they use, than about the quality with which the plans are executed, keeping things as simple as possible, eliminating unnecessary elements, such as the red dot.

⁵⁷ Instead of using the more common 'gooien' or 'werpen', 'thrown' has been translated as 'gemikt'. It fits better with Lang's informal tone of voice throughout the text, and has a more playful and rebellious tone in it. In addition, the literal meaning of 'mikken' is 'to aim', which calls up an image of Lang consciously aiming the bullets at the opening of the window before throwing them out. In spite of having been given four rounds of ammunition, Lang decides he only needs three and therefore throws the other three out the window. The Americans are not very confident that Lang is able to kill the target with one shot, which once more proves Lang's point that the Americans care about quantity rather than quality.

⁵⁸ Contrary to Dutch writing conventions, Laurie capitalised 'Der'. Since speakers of Dutch are the target audience, it would be awkward if the 'D' were maintained.

⁵⁹ In Dutch, referring to a family happens by preceding the family name with 'familie', or creating a plural diminutive form of the name. Thus 'Smit' becomes either 'familie Smit' or 'de Smitjes'. By the same token, 'Van der Hoewe' becomes 'familie Van der Hoewe' or "de Van der Hoewetjes". In this instance, however, the plural diminutive form is preferred so that the diversity in person two sentences ahead – third person plural, second person, first person singular – can be maintained.

⁶⁰ The game has changed during translation. Even though 'het vlooienspel', as 'tiddlywinks' translates, is known in the Netherlands, 'mens-erger-je-niet' is better known as the holiday game you play when circumstances keep you indoors. As the Van der Hoewes are a Dutch family, it would be more appropriate if they played ludo rather than tiddlywinks. Moreover, Lang does not literally mean that the family is playing a game, be it tiddlywinks or ludo, which offers some leeway to give 'the game' an alternate interpretation.

⁶¹ See chapter 3.2.6 for notes on this translation.

⁶² In Dutch, adding 'station' to 'kabelbaan' or 'kabelspoor(weg)' would result in an awkward word that would not be used in spoken language, or written language for that matter. Although the 'funicular railway' is a specific type of ski lift, it is more natural to refer to the more general, but also more common 'skilift'.

⁶³ “Walkman headphones” has not been translated as ‘koptelefoon van de walkman’ as Hugo is not carrying a Walkman, but is only wearing the headphones; hence ‘walkman-koptelefoon’.

⁶⁴ ‘to tut’ is an onomatopoeic verb which expresses disapproval, not directed at the object of disapproval. The Dutch language does not have such a verb, demanding a different approach. Using a disapproving expression as a starting point, ‘zuchten’ soon comes to mind: it not only expresses disapproval; it is also more commonly used as an expression of disapproval.

⁶⁵ This sentence is put in the present tense as Lang describes one of Hugo's character traits. It is therefore not something of the past but of the continuing present.

⁶⁶ It is not necessary to render the literal meaning of ‘shipping forecast’, which would be ‘weerbericht voor de scheepvaart’, which would be very long and would not fit in the sentence very naturally. The term has therefore been generalised to ‘weerberichten’.

⁶⁷ ‘reach across’ calls up an image of Latifa stretching out her hand and putting it on Lang's arm, as a gesture of comfort and sympathy. The hand is an essential part of the image, but remains implicit. The Dutch word would be ‘reiken’, which also implies a hand gesture. The problem, however, lies with ‘across’, which does not need an indirect object. In Dutch, an indirect object is necessary, even if the hand is made explicit – you cannot simply ‘je hand reiken’ in the same sense. As a solution,

the action of ‘putting a hand on Lang’s arm’ is made explicit. This does not take away Lang’s cynical tone; that tone resides in the word ‘actually’/‘nota bene’.

⁶⁸ Whereas it is common in English to put ‘mountain’ after the name of the mountain (the Danube river, the Schilthorn mountain), the Dutch language prefers it in front of the name (de rivier de Donau, de berg de Schilthorn) – although it is also customary to only mention the name. As some people might be unfamiliar with the Schilthorn mountain, keeping ‘berg’ would be more practical.

⁶⁹ Although it is possible to write ‘Piz Gloria restaurant’ as one word (‘Piz Gloria-restaurant’), this would divert some of the attention away from the name, which is exactly one of the identifiable elements that distinguish this restaurant from others, as Lang later explains.

⁷⁰ For the benefit of the sentence pace, ‘and’ is omitted from the translation, as ‘en’ would give the sentence too rushed a pace, whereas a Piz Gloria guest is supposed to sit back and relax. In addition, ‘een kopje’ is added, so that the last three clauses become increasingly longer, giving the sentence a less monotonous rhythm.

⁷¹ While ‘take in’ literally means ‘observe’, in combination with a view and relaxation, it comes to connote ‘enjoyment’; hence the translation ‘genieten’.

⁷² As ‘Mürrenians’ is not the actual name for people from Mürren, it would be just as permissible to make up a Dutch word. Initially, I looked up Dutch place-names with a similar sound and/or ending, and was able to conclude that the ending -aar is the

form most commonly used, not only in places with a similar sound or ending to Mürren (e.g. Buren > Burenaar), but with many other endings as well (e.g. Den Bosch > Bosschenaar; Den Haag > Hagenaar; Leiden > Leidenaar).

⁷³ Lang says this as if admiration were the only logical feeling; hence “kun je niet anders dan ...”.

⁷⁴ Lang uses the word ‘mountain stuff’ to mockingly describe the tourists’ indiscriminate fascination with and admiration of everything to do with the mountain. A translation like ‘bergdingen’ or ‘bergzaken’ would sound very flat, have no mocking tone to it. Using a more unusual word, like ‘berggoedjes’, livens up the text, and maintains Lang’s sarcastic note.

⁷⁵ Using ‘look’ as the translation instead of ‘voorkomen’ or ‘uiterlijk’, makes the text more informal and more like spoken language, which are some of the important qualities of Lang’s language.

⁷⁶ “om de een of andere reden” is moved to the front of the clause because this word order comes more natural in Dutch. For the same reason “a man called” is translated with the shorter ‘ene’.

⁷⁷ A ‘gantry’ generally signifies a kind of framework that hangs over a railway or supports a crane. There are various translations of ‘gantry’, ‘stellige’, ‘stelling’ and ‘rijbrug’ among others. In order to find a translation that fits the restaurant’s gantry, I looked up photographs of Piz Gloria. It turns out that in this particular case it is not

exactly a 'framework', but rather more a 'bridge' or 'walkway' from the main building to a viewing platform. Therefore, the translation 'loopbrug' is more in keeping with the actual situation.

⁷⁸ If you 'slap' someone, it can mean actually hitting someone, or you could be reprimanding someone. The narrator suggests, however, that Francisco has had to do it several times. The 'need' to slap points more in the direction of a simple rebuke. After all, a physical measure is not a necessity. And given Francisco's usual rational approach to everything, it would be more befitting of him to use words instead of force. Hence the translation "op z'n lazer geven".

⁷⁹ "zonder enige reden" is moved to the front. Otherwise, it would be too far removed from the actor, to whom it refers. For further notes, see chapter 3.2.6.

⁸⁰ A translation that literally follows the English wording – 'wanneer het tijd was' or 'wanneer de tijd gekomen was' – does not sound very fluent or natural in Dutch. Instead of putting 'the shot' in a prepositional phrase, it has become the subject of this clause – "als het schot eenmaal gelost moest worden".

⁸¹ I have not opted for a translation with 'omdat', because this way the sentence links up better with the text between dashes. The reason omission works better is that the word order does not have to be altered all too much – cf 'omdat ik niet wilde' > 'wilde ik niet' (two words move) and "ik wilde niet" > "wilde ik niet" (only one word moves).

⁸² Ski slopes are divided by colours, representing the severity of each slope. Black is the most difficult one. In Dutch, the slopes are also indicated by colours, and black also represents the hardest slope.

⁸³ Although slaloming is the normal way to go down a ski slope, 'traversing' is not rendered as 'slalomde' because Lang talks about 'side-slipping' and 'edging' his way down the slope, suggesting he is descending at a slow and careful pace. He makes sure not to take up too much speed to ensure a safe and gentle descent. 'Oversteken', as opposed to 'slalommen', implies a more gingerly approach.

⁸⁴ For the translation of "falling over and not-getting-up-again" I used the common Dutch phrase 'vallen en opstaan', only the 'opstaan' part is adapted to 'niet-meer-opstaan'. The meaning of the expression has been changed but the original meaning still shines through. The effect is an element of irony: instead of falling and getting up again, as part of a learning curve, Dirk and Rhona are said to possibly not be able to get up again – because they got hurt, or worse – confirming that they are indeed very bad skiers.

⁸⁵ Here is an instance of free direct speech. What Lang would have said is quoted literally in the text, without quotation marks or a reporting clause. The effect is a kind of bond between Lang and the reader: Lang drags the reader into his own thoughts, making the reader agree with him, and believe him when he says that anyone else would tell Dirk to give up. It underlines Lang's worry that Dirk might

not show up, and Lang would not have the opportunity to shoot him. The translation therefore also shows this free direct speech, to create a bond between Lang and the reader, and communicate his worry.

⁸⁶ Francisco is not saying he has confidence in *Dirk*, but rather that he is confident that Dirk will do as he predicted he will. 'Dirk' then represents the execution of the plan: if Francisco is not sure of Dirk, he cannot be sure of Dirk's next actions, and he certainly cannot be sure whether everything will go according to plan. In Dutch, 'vertrouwen hebben in' means that you have faith *in someone* or *something*, as opposed to being confident *about* it. If the translation were 'Maar Francisco had vertrouwen in Dirk', it would seem as if Francisco has confidence in *Dirk*, not the plan. The definition of the source text can, however, be reproduced by reversing 'be confident about'. Instead of 'being confident', Francisco has 'no doubts' about Dirk, which can be explained in both ways. "Maar Francisco twijfelde niet aan Dirk" can both mean that Francisco has faith that Dirk will venture up the mountain, or that he has no doubt that Dirk will do as predicted.

⁸⁷ 'meende' is a bit formal and makes Francisco sound conceited. It is very befitting of his character, since he puts a lot of confidence in his character profiles.

⁸⁸ The 'penalty' Lang refers to is not a fine but a monetary 'punishment' for not doing what they set out to do. In English, a 'penalty' can be associated with a wider array of things (e.g. a judicial punishment, disadvantage) than in Dutch, where words like

'straf' or 'boete' are associated with something more serious (judicial punishment).

The translation is therefore more neutral ("een fors bedrag"), but still has the 'reluctant' aspect to it ('neertellen').

⁸⁹ Batting your eyelashes is a typical flirting technique. Lang's choice of words ('batting eyelashes', 'heaving bosom') is also typically employed for the description of scenes that are erotically charged. Although 'met je wimpers knippen' is used in Dutch, it is not employed for this translation. If it were, then the verb 'knippen' would have to act as an adjective to modify 'wimpers' ('knipperende wimpers'), which physically shows the same action, but lacks the air of seduction. So, instead of showing a certain movement that implies seduction, the translation shows seduction that implies a certain movement.

⁹⁰ In this case, and that of 'bravoure', the words are a bit poetic. The narrator emphasises Dirk's foolishness for falling into the cliché of a man being enticed into doing something for a desirable woman.

⁹¹ 'een drankje beloven' sounds more natural in Dutch than 'een drankje (voor haar) kopen' or 'haar drankje betalen'.

⁹² The rhythm of the translation has changed from that of the source text. In the source text, there is a short audible pause between 'grinning' and the clause following it. Because of differing punctuation in Dutch, there would generally be fewer commas if all the words from the original sentence were maintained. This

means that the short pause would disappear, undesirably giving the sentence a much higher pace. By omitting the 'en' between 'te roken en te grijzen', the pace is slowed down, and the short pause is moved forward. Incidentally, the first 'en' would have set the pace for the rest of the sentence. But now that the first one has been omitted, the second 'en' is automatically slowed down, which gives the sentence a more contemptuous tone, befitting Lang's opinion of Hugo.

⁹³ This comma is kept because Lang is reminding himself in particular. Reminding Hugo is more 'incidental' and of secondary importance.

⁹⁴ Unlike the previous instances of British weights and measures, this particular case cannot be as easily translated. Half a mile is about 800 metres, which cannot be rounded up or down without a great difference with the original distance. Also, because Lang is from here on keeping track of Dirk's position, the distances here have to be more precise. For these reasons, 'half-a-mile' is translated as 'achthonderd meter'.

⁹⁵ In a Dutch translation, four words has a better rhythm than three, and it gives the words a greater sense of completeness (cf 'Ik. Ga. Dood.' and "Ik. Ga. Hier. Dood.").

⁹⁶ Since 't er beter afbrengen' already implies a certain task that is done better by one person than another, 'the descent' does not have to remain explicit.

⁹⁷ The commas before and after "en dicht te houden" are maintained, as this clause is not part of the main clause, but rather 'additional' information: if Lang switches off

his breathing from three hundred yards, it is only logical to conclude that he keeps it switched off from three hundred yards onwards, until the shot is fired. In this respect, “and keep it switched off” is only an explicit statement of a logical consequence, and the commas can and should therefore be maintained.

⁹⁸ ‘exhaled’ and ‘gently blowing’ have been combined into “ademde voorzichtig uit” for a more fluent sentence than for instance ‘Ik ademde uit via de mondhoeken, (en) blies voorzichtig weg van de kijker.’

⁹⁹ The specified number is not reality per se; Dirk does not necessarily fall about fifteen times; it could just be an indication of Dirk's inexperience with skiing. It is simply irrelevant and not common practice for an assassin, while taking an aim, to count the number of times someone falls. The number could therefore be translated as ‘zoveelste keer’ or something like it. It might, on the other hand, also be meant as a real number. The latter definition of ‘fifteen’ seems far-fetched, but that is exactly what makes this interpretation the more appropriate one. Lang has characterised himself as being rebellious, going against the grain, doing things his own way. Mentioning a specific number gives the impression of detail, much like other cases where Lang goes into details. For him to keep count, generally to be as detailed as he is, is his way of procrastinating: Lang has his doubts about the mission, and counting the number of times Dirk falls, for instance, leaves him with no time to think about the assignment. In keeping with Lang's form of resistance – which means being detailed, which means keeping count – the target text shows the specified number.

¹⁰⁰ The translation of this sentence has been much about considering what Lang is trying to say and what the English words really mean. First, there is 'find oneself (doing something)', which suggests that you find out that you are doing something ('erachter komen dat', 'ontdekken dat'). Then there is 'to wonder about', the translation of which is simply 'iets afvragen'. If these definitions were taken as the real meaning, the Dutch sentence would become wordy, and not to mention hard to construct into something logical ('ik kwam erachter/ontdekte dat ik me afvroeg over lawines'). Fortunately, this is simply Lang wordily saying that he suddenly thought about avalanches: "suddenly found myself" in practice means 'suddenly doing something', the 'doing something' being 'wondering about', or otherwise put 'consciously thinking about'; combining these two elements makes up 'suddenly think consciously about', which is less wordy, and, more importantly, much simpler to render into Dutch.

¹⁰¹ In Dutch, a 'parka' is more commonly used for what Lang calls an 'anorak'.

¹⁰² The distinction between Dutch word order and English word order (cf. Dutch Subject-Object-Verb and English Subject-Verb-Object) requires the verb "onder controle te krijgen" to be moved to the end of the sentence. The impact of the succession of 'breath-vision-panic'/'ademhaling-zicht-paniek' is however maintained: 'paniek' is still the odd one out in this sequence of words, and comes unexpectedly, emphasising Lang's momentary hysteria.

¹⁰³ Other translations than ‘Verman je’ are possible and have been considered – ‘beheers je’, ‘hou jezelf in de hand’. However, the current translation was preferred. For one, its brevity makes it easy to voice. In addition, its ‘meaning’ comes closest to that of the source text: even though ‘beheers je’ is equally brief and easy to express, it sooner suggests that the addressee has to prevent himself from doing something drastic, instead of simply controlling his mental state, as in Lang’s case.

¹⁰⁴ Instead of lowering his head “below the level of the drift”, the target text reads “achter de sneeuwhoop”. The reason for this translation is that the “level of the drift” would come across as wordy and not sound as fluent as the source text (“tot onder het niveau/(opper)vlak van de sneeuwhoop’), which can be ascribed to the longer Dutch words, and the fact that prepositions are more prominent in Dutch than they are in English. ‘level’ is not translated in any case, as this is the primary cause of the wordiness. Instead, the scene is observed from another perspective: you see Lang’s head not disappearing below the *surface* of the drift, but behind the drift *as a whole*. As a result, the number of prepositions and long words in the translation are kept to a minimum.

¹⁰⁵ *No, No Nanette* is one of Burt Shevelove’s most successful musicals, and is known in the Netherlands under this title as well. It is therefore not necessary to change anything about the title, capitalisation included.

¹⁰⁶ A semantic translation of ‘whiteness’, ‘witheid’, does not sound natural in Dutch, and is more a reference to the quality of the surface (white) than to the white surface itself, which is meant here. Moreover, English seems more liberal when it comes to grammar and the use of nouns, and often sounds better if words are unusually employed. Hence the translation ‘witte vlakte’.

¹⁰⁷ ‘mouth’ is personified so that it is not Lang himself actually tasting blood. It instead implies something that is beyond his control, a kind of instinct or reflex.

¹⁰⁸ One of the advantages of the English usage of the present participle is that it can be used in a number of ways that can create what appears to be a sentence fragment – an incomplete sentence that lacks at least one element that makes up a grammatical sentence, like a subject or a verb. One such way is replacing a part of the sentence with the present participle. In ‘Moving faster’, ‘Moving’ replaces both the subject and the finite verb – the full sentence would be ‘Dirk was moving faster’. In Dutch, such a strategy can be simulated by using the present continuous ‘aan het + infinitive’ construction, similarly leaving subject and finite verb implicit: ‘(Dirk was) snelheid aan het maken.’

¹⁰⁹ “have a go at” means ‘try something’. I chose to render it as ‘uitproberen’ because it suits Lang’s sarcastic tone better. For more detailed notes, see chapter 2.3.1.

¹¹⁰ This sentence shows several instances of ‘it’ that cannot be simply rendered with ‘het’ or ‘hem’ or even repetition. On the one hand, ‘it’ refers to ‘breath’, which

translates as 'adem', which is a de-word, and which cannot be referred to with 'het'. On the other hand, since all three instances of 'breath' are used differently ('draw a breath', 'pinch off his breath', 'hold his breath'), requiring different words in Dutch, it rules out the use of 'hem' or repetition of 'adem' as possible translations. The ultimate translation therefore shows an explicit formulation of 'it', making the target language sentence a bit longer, but in keeping with Lang's acts in the source text.

¹¹¹ Although the source text usage of 'traversing' does not make up the most grammatical or logical sentence, it is not very conspicuous either, because of the implicit reference to 'the slope' and 'line of fire'. In Dutch, 'Dirk was nu aan het kruisen' would not make much sense, unlike in the original text, for it lacks a direct object that is traversed. Taking the objects of the following sentence does not work here, because the verb forms are not used in the same way. A different approach will have to be taken. I have then looked at the elements that I want to keep in the translation. The repetition of 'traversing' is a very obvious, but nevertheless important one: it connects the first and second sentence by showing the same movement, and it highlights the unusual contrast between traversing the 'slope' and traversing the "line of fire". I have thus chosen to redistribute the repetition of the verb: "Dirk was traversing now" is left out, and the second sentence is split up into two. The repetition of 'kruiste' can then be found in the immediate proximity of the direct object that is being traversed, and the unusual contrast between traversing the 'slope' and traversing the "line of fire" still stands.

¹¹² First, I looked up the definition of “taking up the slack” (squeezing the trigger until you feel resistance, not yet firing) by entering it into Google. Knowing that it has to do with the trigger movement, the moment before the shot, it is possible to refine the search in Dutch by describing the firing technique. By entering ‘schiettechniek’ – “taking up the slack” is generally a firing technique – several websites came up, WS De Graafschap among others, where the term ‘drukpunt’ was mentioned, referring to the point to which the trigger can be squeezed without actually firing. Another word that has come up several times is ‘schotanalyse’. Entering this term resulted in various texts wherein the pulling of the trigger is analysed and the term ‘drukpunt’ is also used. It turns out that the Van Dale dictionary has an entry ‘drukpunt’ as well, with this very definition.

¹¹³ These fragments could actually be one sentence, only with the commas replaced by full stops. This creates longer pauses so that the reader can call up a fuller image of Dirk's actions. The reader can picture his every movement separately, instead of seeing them as one fluent movement. The sentence is, like Dirk, struggling.

¹¹⁴ “with the knowledge” suggests that Dirk somehow knows something is going to happen to him, and that this shows in his breathing. He is thus breathing ‘consciously’, ‘deliberately’, in other words ‘welbewust’.

¹¹⁵ In Dutch, ‘gasp’ consists of several words: ‘naar adem happen’. This necessitates a different sentence structure. Keeping the prepositional phrases would then result in

awkward sentences – e.g. ‘en hapte naar adem, met de moeite, met de angst, met de wetenschap’ or ‘en hapte met de moeite, met de angst, met de wetenschap naar adem’. The prepositional phrases have thus become adjectives, so that the sentence runs more smoothly.

¹¹⁶ Lang distinguishes between ‘squeezing’ the trigger and ‘pulling’ it, the former being a slow, gradual movement, the latter being a quick, rough one. In Dutch, there is only one expression for it, ‘de trekker overhalen’. It is therefore necessary to show the distinction using other devices. In this case, an adjective is added to ‘overhalen’, to indicate the slow movement, which in itself implies a gradual movement.