

Updike: Master of Senses

A Translation of : “Trust Me”

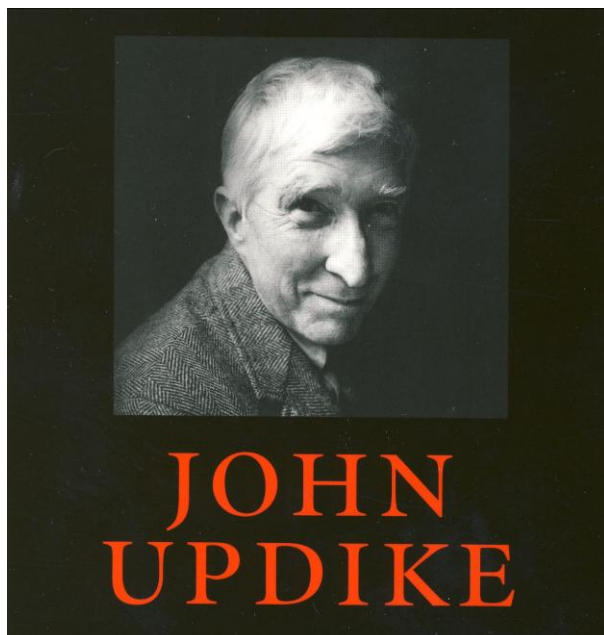


Photo: cover of *Cambridge Companion to John Updike*



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12 november 2010

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Introduction

This thesis will focus on the translation of John Updike's short story "Trust Me" (1987). I will first discuss the story and its themes against the background of the American middle class in the eighties and then move on to Updike's convictions and style, mainly focusing on the accurate descriptions in his fiction and how his convictions influenced his art. Finally I will discuss the translation problems that occurred while translating "Trust Me" and how I went about solving them.

John Updike

John Updike was born March 18, 1932 in Reading, Pennsylvania. He was the only child of Wesley Russell Updike and Linda Grace Hoyer. John was raised in Shillington against the background of the Great Depression and although both of his parents had a degree, the family was part of the lower middle class. When John was thirteen, his mother decided for them to move to her birthplace, Plowville, which greatly upset him. His father became a teacher at the local high school while his mother remained at home, where she desperately tried to fulfil her ambition to become a writer. He felt isolated from everything he loved and this time of isolation has become the inspiration for, among others, the story "Pigeon Feathers" (Greiner, 178).

When John was a teenager, he developed a great interest in comic books and popular fiction. His mother, who hadn't become quite successful, encouraged him to write and draw and pursue his dreams. John developed a real painter's eye and dreamt of becoming a cartoonist, but things went rather differently. Still desperate to get out of Shillington, John went to Harvard to study English Literature instead as soon as he got a scholarship.

Harvard shaped Updike's future, as he reveals in a 1996 interview:

Harvard had a good English department. It had already started giving creative writing courses, which I took and which I'm sure I learned something from. What mattered even more than the creative writing courses was the way the canon--as we later learned to call it--was paraded before one. Having gone to Harvard and, on the whole, having gotten good grades gave me a degree of confidence I don't think I'd have had otherwise. (Pinsker, par.25)

This statement also reveals that he learned to study other writers, which he would be doing from then on until the end of his life. He married when he was still an undergraduate and graduated in 1954.

After his graduation, he moved to England together with his wife and fulfilled his youth dream by studying at Oxford Ruskin's school for Drawing and Fine Art. His first daughter was born in England and after he finished his studies, he moved with his family to Manhattan, where he found a full-time job as a writer of editorials and reviews for the *New Yorker* Magazine. Many of the stories, poems, essays and reviews he has published, first appeared in this magazine and he would be committed to this magazine for the rest of his life.

After the birth of a son, he moved to Massachusetts, where he turned to more ambitious writing. His first book of poetry (*The Carpentered Hen and Other Tame Creatures*) and first novel (*The Poorhouse Fair*) were received very well, which inspired him to write his masterpiece *Rabbit, Run*. It was slightly controversial because of the elaborate descriptions of sex, but perhaps that only helped Updike to become one of the most notable authors of the United States. In 1963, Updike received the National Book Award for his novel *The Centaur*. Updike won numerous awards, especially for the Rabbit quadrilogy. On top of writing fiction, he also wrote many reviews, mainly for the *New Yorker*.

Updike produced over forty books in total, which he put down to his steady working rhythm in a 2001 interview: "You mentioned 400 words—which I don't really think is quite

enough. I think the quota I set for myself is three pages a day, which is closer to 1,000 words than 400. The idea was basically to do something every day, to advance that particular idea, and in that way you do accumulate quite a lot of manuscript” (Lopate, par.23).

Updike kept publishing until his death. He died of lung cancer 27 January 2009, at the age of 76.

“Trust Me”: How to Deal with Trust

The story is about Harold, a seemingly average middle-class American, who is trying to deal with a youth trauma. When he was little, he went to a pool with his parents. Harold accidentally slipped through his father’s arms, which extremely upset his mother. Her anger impressed and scared him so much, that he never trusted her again from that moment on. In fact, he developed a problem with trust in general, especially when it comes to women. Throughout the story, Harold desperately tries to make his loved ones trust him, but every time he tries he fails hopelessly, even though he cannot do anything about it.

The story begins with an elaborate description of Harold’s memory of the day in the pool and then jumps to Harold’s life as an adult. He is unable to understand his wife and generally just recognises the same deftness in her as his mother had. His incapability to win her trust results in a divorce. We then learn about his relationship with his daughter, whom he pleases to trust him while he adjusts her braces, but he hurts her terribly because he is so clumsy. When he finally manages to get a new girlfriend, he misjudges her skiing abilities, asking her to ski a slope she is not ready for. His naivety seems to know no limits, as he accepts a hash brownie from his seventeen-year-old son, who says that it would not do anything to Harold. On the way home, however, Harold experiences that it certainly does something to his mind and in panic he calls his girlfriend, Priscilla. She is not amused and lets him down, but Harold, in his naivety, waits for her to call back while he studies the slogan “In God we trust” on a one-dollar bill. Although these events are in themselves not that dramatic

and sometimes even funny, the underlying theme of damaged confidence shines through every single one of them.

As many of Updike's stories, "Trust Me" is also about middle-class protestant America. The story was published in 1987, in a time of radical changes and great new inventions in which the middle class underwent most of the change. The results of these changes, especially in domestic life, are still visible nowadays. Daniel Arkst, writer for the *Wall Street Journal* and *The Los Angeles Times* at the time, published an article in 1994 that observed the eighties: "Today's schools must cope with more languages, more single-parent households, more TV and more permissive child-rearing. What changed, in other words, was us" (Arkst, par. 40). Updike sharply observed the changes and embedded some of them in "Trust Me," the most clear ones of which are the emergence of the single parent (Priscilla) and the increasing number of separated parents (Harold). This made "Trust Me" a very topical story for a time where genuine confidence was ever becoming rarer and in Harold's case even disadvantageous.

Another theme is visible in "Trust Me," a theme that is basically visible in all of Updike's fiction and even a bit of a reflection of himself. This particular theme is the pursuit of happiness, which is also characteristic of the American Dream, as Michael Dirda, a Pulitzer Prize-winning critic observes: "Fiction, Updike knew, isn't about happiness, but about its pursuit. 'What is possessed is devalued by what is coveted. Discontent, conflict, waste, sorrow, fear – these are the worthy, inevitable subjects.' Americans, in particular, are full of such unassuageable yearnings and heartsickness" (Dirda, par.3). This theme makes "Trust Me" a reflection of many of the Americans. Updike attempted to hold up a mirror to America's face: "I was hoping to talk to America, like Walt Whitman, you know? Address it and describe it to itself" (Grossman, par.12).

Updike's Passions

John Updike had a firm faith in Christ and an irrepressible love for art. Both of these passions had an important influence on his style.

Firstly, Updike's personal search for bliss in religion has also become apparent in his work in a remarkable way. Updike wrote in a very honest way about anything, because he admired the way things were created. This sometimes resulted in his work being judged as controversial and unseemly, though he merely describes the world as it really is. Truth actually can hurt. This holds true especially for his elaborate descriptions of sexual activity, but to Updike, it was "a fascinating feature of creation. He described it without shame"(Johnson, par.2). The gospel granted him a certain freedom to be boundlessly creative, as he wrote in his essay "On Being a Self Forever": "Having accepted that Shillington blessing, I have felt free to describe life as accurately as I could, with special attention to human erosions and betrayals. What small faith I have has given me the artistic courage I have" (qtd. in Johnson, par.6). Updike was always modest and considered his literary talent as a gift from above. His writing was like praying to him, while indirectly pointing at his Creator and connecting beauty and grace in his work, while trying to find the best words possible (Webb, 504). The works of the religious thinkers Karl Barth and Søren Kierkegaard further established Updike's religious identity as he took on their dialectical view on religious issues, which holds that there are two defining oppositions that do not determine one outcome, but leave someone to determine their own conclusion. Updike loved the subjectivity of religion in this view and applied this principle to his fiction to avoid all-embracing conclusions that might rob his literature of its power, leaving the readers with a choice to choose which side of the story they endorse (Olster, 43). This means that every character, as in "Trust Me," has his or her reasonable motivations to act the way they do.

Secondly, Updike's love for art sticks out a mile in his work. Updike painted with words. This love occurred early in his life, when he lost himself in comic books and wanted to become a cartoonist. At Harvard, he illustrated and wrote for the *Harvard Lampoon*. Just like artists collect other art, Updike used to read any publication he could get his hands on, expanding his knowledge in almost every area possible. This enabled him to write about *anything*, enjoy it and create an oeuvre of unprecedented variation. Another property that characterised him as an artist, was his painter's eye, as he explains in an interview with *Humanities Magazine* in 2008: "It's not a natural thing to see what's there. What's natural is to represent what you know is there. And so this swinging back and forth now, between literalism and stylization, between representation and abstraction" (Cole, 8). Because of this tremendous ability to observe and put perceptions into words, Updike was able to create elaborate and lively descriptions.

Audience

Updike wrote to America and especially for the Protestant middle class in small-town America. This was remarkable, as Bill Ott, publisher of ALA's Booklist explains: "[the small-town middle class] had lost its place on most literary-fiction menus" (Ott, par.2). Updike persisted nonetheless, because he liked middles (Ott, par.2). His audience is nowadays much broader and his fiction is read by all kinds of people, regardless of class and education. The Dutch audience will also be very varied and it is therefore hard to determine their average prior knowledge of the American culture of the eighties. America's culture is broadcast all over the world and therefore we might at least assume that the Dutch audience picks up the broader part of the story and enjoy it even without precisely knowing the background. It seems therefore best to just explain the ending of the story, because the Dutch audience is not likely to be aware of the details on a one-dollar bill (more about this in the section

‘Translating Updike’s “Trust Me”’ below). The rest of the story is self-explanatory, and does not need much explanation in translation.

Updike: Master of Sensory Perception and Ambassador of the Middles

Many marvel at Updike’s exceptionally accurate descriptions that constantly appeal to the senses. He was able to combine vision with smell and sound with taste and make it sound natural too. The way Updike described the environment his characters lived in, has defined his success as a fiction writer. Updike’s secret was to combine the various human senses to create one, incredibly clear perception in the head of the reader. He often includes elements of sound, smell and sight in only one sentence, as in the following sentence from “Trust Me”:

“The chemical scent of the pool always frightened him: blue-green dragon breath” (Updike, 5). The reader almost smells the chemicals, sees the unnatural and frightening colour, and hears the ‘rumbling’ of the water as a dragon’s breath. Updike was able to make people experience the exact same fear as his characters. His appealing style enabled him to write beautifully about anything and make it, however trivial, interesting and he gladly transformed the mundane in a piece of beauty.

Updike is often associated with middles: He was a male white American Protestant writer writing about the middle class, for the middle class, dealing with ‘ordinary’ issues. Updike pointed at the oddities and peculiarities of the middle class’s domestic life, showing that there was more to it than might seem at first sight (Greiner, 177). Updike wanted his audience to open their eyes, look again and see the beauties and cruelties of the world. A passage from his short story “The Dogwood Tree” is a clear example of how he tries to achieve that goal: “There is a color, a quiet but tireless goodness that things at rest, like a brick wall or a small stone, seem to affirm. A wordless reassurance these things are pressing to give. To transcribe middleness with all its grits, bumps, and anonymities [...] (qtd. in

Greiner, 181). Updike draws on the senses of his readers to convey a deeper message and raise their consciousness of their physical and social environment.

Just observing and exactly describing what he experienced in his head did not distinguish Updike from all other twentieth century American writers. So what did? There was a stage in between observation and script that could be explained by Updike's love for art and the mystical, as Dirda describes: "Updike recognized that American literature and American art often occupy a realm between fantasy and reality, that they rely on mystery and symbolism as much as on apt observation, that our greatest novelists and painters are constantly edging into the magical and the dreamlike" (Dirda, par.9). So, Updike was able to create a certain suspense inside his descriptions and thus create an awareness that tells the reader that 'there must be more to this'; his descriptions carry a sense of the mystical in them. His fiction is full of epiphanies, from which the characters draw inspiration and energy to face life again, and provide for moments of bliss that heighten the quality of their lives (Olster, 23). The power of his work is not only that it is written so accurately, but also lies in the fact that he managed to include the invisible in his descriptions of the visible world and society.

The thing with Updike is not that he described the extraordinary, but described the ordinary extraordinarily. It all started when he was following drawing lessons from an artist who happened to live across the street in Shillington, Clint Shilling. In an interview with Bruce Cole, Updike recalls his own, personal epiphany at that time: "Having tried to draw the rainbow at the edge of the shadow of the egg taught me how much there is to see. And I've been blessed with fairly good eyesight. So the visual element plays a larger part maybe in my narratives than in many" (Cole, 52). After his epiphany, Updike watched the world with different eyes, producing wonderful fiction later in his life.

Characteristics and Devices

Updike fashioned his descriptions in a fairly recognisable way, using techniques that reappear everywhere in his fiction. The first thing that catches the eye is the incredible detail and accuracy of the descriptions and especially the use of modifiers. Secondly, Updike turned out to be a master of ambiguity, paradoxes and oxymorons, but does not overuse them, so as to surprise the reader every time again. Lastly, many descriptions add to, if not cause, the epiphanies of the characters. An extra device Updike used to create the epiphanies is the circle construction.

The first thing to keep in mind while translating Updike's descriptions is that he chose any word, any adjective, any noun with care; it had to have the exact right denotation and connotation he was aiming for. He read many other writers to learn more words that could exactly express the visions in his head. He developed an enormous vocabulary and it is fairly hard to find Dutch equivalents that would express the exact same impression. This might result in having to use more Dutch words to describe a single English word or having to use an alternative that does not convey the exact same image as the story does. On top of that, there is the present participle, which Updike often used as a modifier as in "the darkening element" (Updike, 4). The modifiers also seem to have a specific function in the text. They tend to be words that are outside of the readers' standard vocabulary. A phrase like "tessellated with cars" (Updike, 8) for example, might require some time to think about its meaning. The result is some kind of pause every now and then in the story, because the readers are forced to quit their emotional involvement with the story for one moment. Updike thus creates an intellectual distance between the readers and the situation his characters are in and creating a special sort of literary irony (Fleischauer, 277).

Furthermore, the large amount of ambiguity might cause more problems during translation, because it is not always clear in which direction Updike wants his readers to think.

Many phrases are either ambiguous, paradoxical, or oxymorons to make the mundane special. The uncertainty evoked by the readers is something Updike probably aimed for: “[T]he reader is dealt a spectacular but unfulfilling awareness of ambiguous meaning. [...] A distance is created between author and reader in this extended image, but it is not ironic distance as in the striking but indecorous adjectives” (Fleischauer, 279). The translator is obviously also a reader and is likely to experience difficulties while making choices. Ideally, a translation should encompass the ambiguity, but the differences between a pair of languages might prevent that. In that case, it is necessary to pick one direction to work with, but it is sometimes hard to make out which direction was the most important to Updike and to the story. One phrase that might be problematic is the following: “eerily stable” (Updike, 3). The question is if there is some kind of mysterious comfort in the stability of Harold’s father in the water, or if it is just suspicious. The word “eerily” wonderfully encompasses that feeling of doubt, and it might be hard to find a Dutch word that expresses that feeling just as well.

Lastly, the crucial epiphanies and their structure and position in the story should not be forgotten. The characters’ epiphanies elevate their lives and are often the core of the story, or closely related to it. Moreover, they might form the climax of the story as is the case Harold’s epiphany in “Trust Me”: “This much remained true: it had not been his fault, and in surviving he was somehow blamed” (Updike, 12). One device Updike often deploys to support the epiphanies, is the circle construction. In “Trust Me” are various cases of circle constructions; they are often literally repeated phrases of the passage on his youth trauma or references to it. While translating “Trust Me”, it is important to keep key phrases in mind and to watch out for references and repetitions, since they all have to match with the object they are referring to.

Translating Updike's "Trust Me"

In this section, I will discuss the most prominent problems I encountered during the translation of "Trust Me," describing the process of coming up with a translation that matches the level and beauty of Updike's elaborate and associative descriptions. Because Updike treated the written word as an art form, he often produced fairly complicated sentences and came up with a fine vocabulary that often surprises the translator as well as the readers. Moreover, Updike was very adept at figurative speech and ambiguity, which turned out to be quite a challenge. I will use Nord's four categories of translation problems (Nord, 147) as a guideline in this section, starting with pragmatic translation problems, followed by culture-specific translation problems and language-specific problems and finishing with text-specific problems.

Firstly, "Trust Me" is soaked with the American culture of the eighties, which causes pragmatic translation problems to be a big issue. Although American culture nowadays is broadcast everywhere over the world and most Dutch will be fairly familiar with it, the Dutch culture nowadays is quite different from America's culture in the eighties. On top of that, "Trust Me" contains some notions and references that might not be entirely clear to the average Dutch reader. The most prominent problem appeared right at the end of the story, where Updike refers to an American dollar bill. Most Dutch people have not studied a one dollar bill in detail and might fail to understand the concluding line of the story: "and read, over and over, the slogan printed above the ONE" (Updike, 12). The clue is that this line says: "In God We Trust." It was therefore necessary to include the slogan itself in the translation, so that Dutch readers would not miss out on the clue: "en las, telkens opnieuw, de slogan die gedrukt stond boven de "ONE": "IN GOD WE TRUST." The drawback here is that the Dutch sentence is far more obvious than the original and the translator is has to choose between two evils: either translate the original text without the addition of the slogan itself, which might

result in a disappointing ending for many Dutch readers who do not understand the reference, or add the slogan and sacrifice Updike's intended implicit ending. It is necessary to establish priorities and in this particular case, it is more important that the readers get the image than that Updike's style is maintained.

Secondly, the category of culture-specific translation problems contains the conventions used in conversations in a set of languages. Direct speech had often to be slightly adjusted and it was necessary to put in many markers to create a translation that would flow just as well as the original sentences in the source text did. One clear example is the conversation between Harold and Priscilla on the mountain: "There isn't any snow," she said. "Just ice" (Updike, 9). The translation became as follows: "Er is helemaal geen sneeuw," zei ze. "Alleen maar ijs." The markers "helemaal" and "maar" had to be added to make the utterance sound natural in Dutch, whereas it needed fewer words to sound natural in the original text.

Thirdly, the use of the present participle and intricate syntactical relationships of Updike's sentences form a major part of the category of language-specific translation problems. Updike is a master of stuffing as much information in one sentence as possible: "The words echoed in the flat acoustics of the water and tile and sunlight, heightening Harold's sense of exposure, his awareness of his own white skin" (Updike, 3). The major problem in such a sentence is the use of the present participle, which is common in English speech, but far less commonly used in Dutch. The second problem is that it refers to more than one thing. To translate "heightening" into "verhogend" would sound unnatural. It is therefore unavoidable to change the structure slightly. A slight change, however, has great consequences in Updike's watertight structure. Many words refer to more than one thing and this is also the case with "heightening." It refers to the clause "Harold's sense of exposure" and to the clause "his awareness of his own white skin," which functions as a clarification of

the first clause. These three elements must stay connected and the new structure in the translation needs to provide room for this. Looking more closely at the relationship between the elements in the sentence, it becomes clear that the first part “The words – sunlight” bears a causal connection with the rest of the sentence, in which all elements have equal value. It is therefore a suitable option to use the relative pronominal adverb “waardoor.” This choice resulted in the following translation: “De woorden echoden in de holle akoestiek van het water en de tegels en het zonlicht, waardoor hij zich nog sterker bewust werd van zijn blootstelling en zijn eigen witte huid.” Updike rather often shapes his sentences so that one word refers to more than one thing.

The last category of text-specific problems contains most of the translation problems. First of all there is Updike’s remarkable word choice. Many of his words are ambiguous. Moreover, Updike often made unusual word combinations to convey an image that appeals to more than one of the human senses. Another problem is posed by Updike’s figurative speech. Lastly, Updike’s stutter, as we shall call it, is essential to his style, but provides for serious translation problems.

To start of with Updike’s vocabulary, it is hard to always find suitable Dutch equivalents for Updike’s remarkable word choice. One needs only one sentence to illustrate many of the previously mentioned stylistic properties: “Harold was standing shivering on the wet tile edge, suspended above the abysmal odor of chlorine, hypnotized by the bright, lapping agitation of this great volume of unnaturally blue-green water” (Updike, 3). This sentence clearly illustrates the way Updike made use of the readers’ senses. His words make the scene tangible, visible, audible and even smellable, all in just one sentence. The challenge for the translator is to be creative enough to find Dutch equivalents that match these highly specific words and create a Dutch sentence that conveys a similar sensation and describes the

various sensory perceptions just as specific as Updike's. The first problematic word in this particular example is "suspended." "Suspended" literally means "hangen" or "zweven." To suspend, however, has another meaning, namely that of to "cease activities." The word "suspended" therefore might be ambiguous. The boy is floating above the scene, but also petrified with fear. The translator now has a few choices: one is to choose a literal translation because that is what is actually happening in the story; another is to choose a figurative translation and thus keep the associative nature of the clause; a final is to search for a translation that implies both meanings. The latter is the most ideal solution, but not always possible. The translator has to determine what his or her priorities are to discover what works. In this case, the figurative translation would produce a nonsense translation, so I went for a literal translation that more or less implies passivity. "Zwevend" is too active, "hangend," however, would seem to have the exact passive quality needed here

Another clause in this particular example that proved problematic was "the abysmal odor of chlorine." This clause is very typical to Updike's personal style; he is famous for making improbable and extraordinary word combinations, especially when it comes to adjectives (Fleischauer, 277). Updike leaves the reader wondering how an odour could be abysmal, since space is not a property of an odour. A smell is usually described in terms of type instead of space. It might be a bad or an unfamiliar smell, but smell does not imply something visible. Space, on the other hand, is a typical property of the visible. Updike therefore combines two senses into one perception. The question is how to convey a similar perception in Dutch. Moreover, there is a specific association to the word "abysmal" due to its etymology. The word is especially used in combination with oceans to indicate depths lower than 300 fathoms (MetaGlossary). It is therefore necessary to find the right spatial adjective to make this clause work without losing its association with ocean depths. Due to the latter aspect of "abysmal," it seemed best to make the Dutch word "afgrond" return in the

translation. The final translation thus became: “Harold stond rillend op de natte tegelrand, hangend boven de afgrondelijke geur van chloor, gehypnotiseerd door de heldere, klotsende beweging van deze machtige hoeveelheid onnatuurlijk blauwgroen water.”

Sometimes Updike also used complex figurative speech: “The Pan Am plane out of Rome was the most comforting possible – a jumbo jet wide as a house, stocked with American magazines and snacks, its walls dribbling music, with only a few passengers” (Updike, 5). In this example, “walls dribbling music” causes difficulties. The question is how walls can dribble music. The Dutch translation of “to dribble” is “druppelen,” but a literal translation does not work here, so Updike must have meant “to spread slowly.” It would be best if there was a Dutch word that also has an association with water, like “to dribble” has, and it must be applicable to both “walls” and “music.” It appeared that “druppelen” was a good option in this respect and the translation became as follows:

“Het Pan Am vliegtuig vanuit Rome was zo comfortabel als een vliegtuig maar kan zijn – een Jumbo Jet zo breed als een huis, voorzien van Amerikaanse tijdschriften en snacks, met wanden waaruit muziek druppelde en slechts een paar passagiers.”

Updike’s stutter

Updike had a personal quirk that also became present in his work: his stutter. Although it is a typical vocal property, Updike was not ashamed of it and let it shine through in his work by means of all kinds of interruptions, and with great effect: “Updike’s too, was a winding prose filled with interruptions and withholdings – mimicking his character’s consciousness” (Heddendorf, 490). One sentence in which his ‘stutter’ becomes visible is the following one: “The woods around them, perceived at so unusually slow a speed, wore a magical frozen strangeness, the ironical calm of airplane rivets” (Updike, 10). By putting a relative clause

between the subject and verb and thus creating some kind of a pause, Updike imitated Harold's stream of consciousness. Since Updike's stutter, as we called it before, is so essential to his style and adds to a pleasant reading experience due to the stable rhythm it creates, it should be maintained as much as possible in the target text. Achieving this, however, turned out to be harder than expected, as in the following example: "I thought you were," he said weakly. "Ready. I wanted to show you the view." In this sentence, Updike created pauses by using full stops. The problem here is that the word order in Dutch is significantly different from the word order in English. I thought you were ready normally would normally be translated as "ik dacht dat je er klaar voor was." The word order of "be ready" is reversed in Dutch. Updike's intentional pause, namely "he said weakly," does not display the same effect in Dutch as it does in English because of this reversion. The best thing to do in this situation is to be consistent with Harold's utterance so that the effect of Updike's original sentence is more or less maintained. The utterance before the pause is a whole sentence, so it has to be a complete one in translation as well. The final translation thus has become: "Ik dacht dat je dat wel was," zei hij zwakjes. "Klaar."

Concluding Remarks

To summarise, "Trust Me" is a colourful short story to America and about America and it was sometimes necessary to make a phrase more explicit to prevent any misunderstandings.

Updike managed to captivate readers through the elaborate descriptions of the protagonist's experiences and provided the translator with quite a challenge to come up with sentences that describe the impressions just as accurately, while trying to maintain Updike's style. Some parts could be more or less literally translated, but it often appeared that the translator had to be creative to translate ambiguous phrases and intricate sentence structures. In the end it turned out it was best to follow Updike in his convictions and treat the story as an art form by

trying to visualise what he was trying to convey and translate that 'image' into Dutch, try to be faithful to his style and create a translation that Updike himself would have approved of.

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Appendix A: Translation

3

Vertrouw me maar

Toen Harold een jaar of drie, vier was, namen zijn vader en moeder hem mee naar een zwembad. Dat was vreemd, want zijn gezin ging zelden ergens heen, behalve naar de bioscoop twee straten verderop. Harold kon zich niet herinneren zijn ouders ooit nog in badkleding gezien te hebben na deze ongelukkige dag. Wat hij zich wél kon herinneren, was dit:

Zijn vader, zo goed als naakt, lag in het zwembad, watertrappend. Harold stond rillend op de natte tegelrand, hangend boven de afgrondelijke geur van chloor, gehypnotiseerd door de heldere, klotsende beweging van deze machtige hoeveelheid onnatuurlijk blauwgroen water. Zijn moeder, in een zwart badpak, waardoor haar lichaam er erg wit uitzag, bevond zich ver weg in zijn gedachten. Zijn vader vroeg hem te springen. “Kom op nou, Hassy, spring,” zei hij met zijn zachte, bemoedigende stem. “Je kunt het best. Spring maar recht in mijn handen.” De woorden echoden in de holle akoestiek van water en tegels en zonlicht, waardoor hij zich nog sterker bewust werd van zijn blootstelling, zijn eigen witte huid. Zijn vader leek griezelig stabiel en kalm in

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het water en het kind vroeg zich terloops af, terwijl het sprong, waar de man eigenlijk op stond.

En toen was het blauwgroene water overal om hem heen, ondoordringbaar en kolkend en toen hij probeerde adem te halen was het alsof hij een vuist in zijn keel geduwd kreeg. Hij zag zijn eigen luchtbellen opstijgen voor zijn gezicht, een enorme hoeveelheid, stijgend

terwijl hij zonk; hij zonk, zo leek het, een hele lange tijd, totdat iets hem opspoorde in het steeds donkerder wordende element en hem bij zijn arm vastgreep.

Hij bevond zich weer in lucht, op zijn vaders schouder, nog altijd naar adem snakkend. Ze waren niet meer in het zwembad. Zijn moeder kwam haastig op hen beiden af en sloeg, met een behendigheid opmerkelijk voor zo'n kwaad iemand¹, zijn vader in zijn gezicht, hard², naast Harold's oor. De klap leek wel over het hele zwembad te horen te zijn door alle andere badgasten; maar misschien was dit de akoestiek van zijn geheugen. Zijn gevoel van publieke vernedering te midden van sprankelende naaktheid – van elk vreemd gezicht dat zich naar hem toe draaide terwijl hij van zijn vaders natte armen in zijn moeders droge armen werd overgedragen – hield niet op nadat hij weer op adem was gekomen. Zijn moeders woede leek net zo goed tegen hem gericht te zijn als tegen zijn vader. Zijn voeten bevonden zich nu op gras. Gewikkeld in een handdoek, vlakbij zijn moeders knieën, terwijl de laatste brandende fragmenten water uit zijn longen gehoest werden, voelde Harold zich voor eeuwig te schande gemaakt³.

Hij heeft nooit geweten wat er eigenlijk was gebeurd; tegen de tijd dat hij ernaar vroeg, waren er zo veel jaren verstreken dat zijn vader het was vergeten. “Was dat niet om te janken,” zei de oude man, met zijn milde mengeling van melancholie en spot. “Het was zinken of zwemmen, en jij zonk.” Misschien was Harold iets te vroeg gesprongen, of was hij

¹At first, it seemed best to adjust the structure of the original sentence and turn it into “opmerkelijke behendigheid,” but it appeared that “remarkable” is connected to both “deftness” and “one so angry.” When it would be translated as ‘opmerkelijke behendigheid,’ it would only refer to ‘deftness’ and the double meaning of ‘remarkable’ would be lost.

²The word “loudly” could be used in combination with the verb “hit” in English, but the Dutch “luid” does not work quite as well with “slaan.” I therefore went for “hard” although it is not ideal. The reader’s first intuition is to think of the impact of the hit instead of its sound. “Hard,” however, could also be read as in the context of “hard geluid” and is, therefore, the best option.

³In this sentence, standing interacts with the clause “wrapped in a towel” as well as with the clause “near his mother’s knees.” It is common to translate a present participle with a “terwijl-“construction, but it appeared that this did not do any justice to the flow and readability of the sentence. On top of that, the original sentence guides the reader’s view from a specific detail, namely the towel, to the activity, the coughing. It therefore seemed advisable to leave “standing” out all together, since it is not so relevant; the reader can easily evoke the familiar image of the little kid standing wrapped in a towel without “standing.”

onverwacht zwaar gebleken en daardoor aan zijn vaders handen⁴ ontglipt. Merkwaardig genoeg bleef hij tijdens zijn opgroeien zijn vader altijd vertrouwen. Het was zijn moeder die hij niet vertrouwde, haar vlugge, trefzekere⁵ woede.

Hij leerde pas zwemmen in zijn studietijd⁶ en zelfs toen slaagde hij slechts voor het examen door zwemmend als een kikker⁷ de lengte van het zwembad op zijn

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rug te overbruggen, terwijl de badmeester een dikke stok hanteerde om vast te grijpen als hij in paniek zou raken en zou gaan zinken. De chemische geur van een zwembad joeg hem altijd angst aan: blauwgroene drakenadem.

Zijn kinderen, die waren groot geworden in een amfibische wereld van zomerkampen en *country clubs*⁸, werden met groot gemak zwemmers. Ze probeerden hem te leren duiken. “Je moet je hoofd naar beneden houden, pappa. Anders blijf je maar plat op je buik landen.”

“Ik ben bang dat ik niet meer boven kom,” bekende hij. Waar hij onder water vooral niet van hield, was het zien opstijgen van luchtballen rond zijn gezicht.

Zijn eerste vrouw was doodsbang om te vliegen⁹. Toch vlogen ze behoorlijk wat af. “Het is of dat,” zei hij tegen haar, “of afscheid nemen van de twintigste eeuw.” Ze vlogen naar

⁴The problem was: How to make this sound natural in Dutch? At First I tried different words for ‘grasp’ (greep, grip), but those did not quite do the trick. I therefore went for something more specific: hands. That way, the meaning of the sentence remains more or less the same and it sounds far more natural than any literal translation of ‘grasp’.

⁵The word sure-handed has not an obvious Dutch equivalent, so a bit of creativity was necessary here. It has the sound of “uncompromising deftness” and “trefzeker” seemed to be the most accurate expression of that meaning.

⁶I changed the negative structure to a positive one and added “pas” to make the sentence flow better, since “hij leerde niet te zwemmen” is an awkward construction in Dutch.

⁷“Frog-kicking” appeared to be impossible to translate into one Dutch word and I therefore chose to make a comparison of Harold’s type of swimming to a frog’s instead.

⁸“Country clubs” are a typical American phenomenon and instead of trying to find a Dutch alternative, I chose to put it into italics instead, because it adds to the atmosphere and environment Harold’s kids grew up in.

⁹A literal translation “voor vliegen” would be ambiguous and could mean as well being afraid of flies as flying, so I changed the phrase a little to prevent ambiguity.

Californië en terwijl ze daar waren, vlogen er twee vliegtuigen op elkaar in boven de Grand Canyon. Ze stegen op uit Boston de dag nadat spreuwen de motoren van een Electra hadden doen vastlopen zodat deze met zoveel geweld in de haven neerstortte dat passagiers door hun veiligheidsriemen in tweeën werden gesneden. Ze vlogen over Afrika en staken in de nacht de evenaar over; het land onder hen was een inktzwarte afgrond, die hier en daar oplichtte door vreugdevuren van de inheemse bevolking¹⁰. Ze landden op stoffige landingsbanen, waarbij de deuren van de cabine klapperden. Hij beloofde haar, zo hevig was haar angst, dat ze nooit meer met hem hoefde te vliegen. Uiteindelijk nam hun laatste Afrikaanse vlucht hen mee omhoog vanaf het Ethiopisch Hoogland¹¹, over de kale vlakte van de Libische Woestijn, naar de rand van de Middellandse Zee, en vervolgens naar Rome.

Het Pan Am vliegtuig vanuit Rome was zo comfortabel als een vliegtuig maar kan zijn – een Jumbo Jet zo breed als een huis, voorzien van Amerikaanse tijdschriften en snacks, met wanden waaruit muziek druppelde en slechts een paar passagiers. Het grote vliegtuig steeg op, en hij zonk weg in een *Newsweek*, met in het vooruitzicht een maaltijd, een dutje en een thuiskomst. Harold's vrouw vroeg na tien minuten:

“Waarom stijgen we niet?”

Hij keek uit het raam en ze had gelijk – de waterwereld

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onder hen werd niet kleiner; hij kon duidelijk kleine bootjes en de witte toppen van rollende golven zien. De stewardessen liepen met ongebruikelijke snelheid het gangpad op en neer,

¹⁰“Tribal” is an adjective that knows no equivalent in Dutch and thus required a “van de-“construction. On top of that, “stammen” sounded awkward and “inheemse bevolking” seemed to be the best clarifying option. “Fire” sounded somewhat too general in Dutch and I therefore changed it into “vreugdevuren”.

¹¹The Ethiopian Plateau (Ethiopisch Hoogland) is the name of a large area of mountains that covers the western half of Ethiopia and also forms the boundary between Ethiopia and Sudan. The height of the mountains lies between 1000 and 2000 meters at the boundary and between 3000 and 5000 meters in the eastern parts of the plateau (source: De Grote Bosatlas).

met ongewone uitdrukkingen op hun betoverende gezichten. Harold keek naar zijn handpalmen; ze waren klam en vlekkerig geworden, net als bij misselijkheid. Hoe ingespannen hij er ook naar keek, de zee week maar niet van de vleugels vandaan. De zon schitterde op het zeeoppervlak; een zeilbootje ging overstag.

De stem van de piloot begon vanuit het niets boven hen te kraken. “Dames en heren, er is een waarschuwinglampje gaan branden voor een van onze stuurboordmotoren en in overeenstemming met ons beleid van absolute veiligheid maken we een boog en keren we terug naar het vliegveld van Rome.”

Tijdens de dwarshelling¹² en terugkeer, die extreem lang leken te duren, namen de stewardessen plaats achterin en maakten hun veiligheidsriemen vast, bleef de man aan de andere kant van het gangpad *L'Osservatore* lezen, en deed Harold's vrouw, die altijd trouw de veiligheidsinstructies in acht nam¹³, haar hoge hakken uit en nam de spelden uit haar haar. Dus opnieuw verwonderde hij zich over de gedreven behendigheid van vrouwen in crisissituaties.

Hij hield haar klamme hand in de zijne en staaarde constant door het raam, de zee neerdrukkend met zijn blik, haar afwerend met zijn wil om te leven. Als hij knipperde, zouden ze vallen. Het vliegtuig koerste één bootje tegelijk terug naar Rome. Het zag eruit alsof de blauwe zee en de rimpelloze zilveren rand van de vleugel in elkaar grepen: Olympische oppervlakten die zich in stilte onbewust waren van de immense spanning tussen hen. Hij had vaak door een van deze bekraste ovale raampjes een bedrieglijke geruststelling gevoeld in de nauwgezette rangschikking van de klinknagels die de aluminiumplaten bij elkaar hielden. *Vertrouw me maar* spelde de metalen code; Harold had dat, net als zijn vrouw, in zijn hart

¹²Technical term used in aviation to indicate the tilt an aircraft makes while it is turning.

¹³The original text reads “a faithful student of safety instructions”. A literal translation was out of the question, and I changed the focus from a description of the type of person to a description of her activity.

geweigerd en deze weigering vormde binnenin hem een holle ruimte waar angst altijd vrij spel had.

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De 747 landde probleemloos weer in Rome en, na een uur vertraging, waarin monteurs het waarschuwinglampje overtuigden uit te gaan, vervolgde de vlucht naar Amerika. Thuis werd hun angst een verhaal, een grap. Hij hield echter zijn belofte dat ze nooit meer met hem zou hoeven vliegen; binnen een jaar gingen ze uit elkaar.

In de tijd dat ze uit elkaar waren, leek Harold zijn kinderen van het ene naar het andere huis te slepen¹⁴ terwijl hij hen stilzwijgend om vertrouwen bedelde. Het was net als jaren terug, toen hij zijn dochters beugel in haar mond had aangepast met een nijptang. Ze was pijnlijvend naar hem toe gekomen met een draadje dat in de binnenkant van haar wang stak. Maar toen hij zijn klunzige vingers in haar mond had, werden haar ogen groter uit angst voor nog hevigere pijn. Nonchalant verweet hij haar: “Je vertrouwt mij niet.” De joligheid van zijn stem onthulde een beslissende ruimte, een kloof tussen hun situaties: Het zou zijn blunder zijn, maar haar pijn. De pijn van een ander is niet die van onszelf. Religie, veronderstelde hij, probeert deze kloof te dichten, maar de kwelgeesten van elke generatie houden haar open. Zonder deze kloof zou medelijden ons verbrijzelen; de ruimte van onverschilligheid is waarin we ademen. Harold had deze noodzakelijke onverschilligheid gehoord in de lijjige stem van de piloot terwijl deze zei: “Dames en heren,” en in zijn vaders aansporende stem: “Spring.” Hij had het gehoord in zijn eigen geruststellingen terwijl hij ze uitsprak¹⁵. “Schatje, ik weet

¹⁴Translating “slinging from one rooftop to another” literally resulted in an incomprehensible sentence, since it is not a common Dutch expression and I therefore chose to describe the act the expression refers to instead of translating the expression itself.

¹⁵The verb “bestow” is usually used in combination with blessings or royal titles and is therefore often translated with “verlenen” or “schenken” or something along those lines. This does not fit the context and I therefore

dat je nu druk voelt, maar als je nou eens even stopt met bewégen... er is een scherp eindje – oeps. Tsja, je bewoog.”

Hij nam zijn vriendin mee naar de top van een berg. Harold had jarenlang geen vriendin meer gehad en moest opnieuw de delicate mengeling van bezorgdheid en uitdagendheid leren die bij romantiek¹⁶ horen. Zij, Priscilla, was oud genoeg om zelf kinderen te hebben en oud genoeg om zich breekbaar te voelen op ski's. Ze had de hele dag op de minipiste¹⁷ doorgebracht, waar ze bochten oefende en geleidelijk meer zelfvertrouwen kreeg, terwijl Harold wijd en zijd rondzwierf

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op de berg in het gezelschap van haar kinderen. Toen de middag tegen het einde liep, vloog hij naar beneden op haar af in een flinke wolk sneeuw. Ze vroeg hem dringend: “Neem de juniorlift zodat ik je mijn sneeuwploeg¹⁸ kan laten zien.”

“Als je hier kunt sneeuwploegen, kun je ook vanaf de top van de berg naar beneden komen,” zei Harold tegen haar.

“Echt waar?” Haar wangen waren roze van haar dag op de minipiste. Ze droeg een witte, gehaakte muts. Haar ogen waren babyblauw.

“Zeker weten. We gaan naar beneden op de beginnerspiste.”

Ze vertrouwde hem. Maar in de stoeltjeslift, terwijl de helling onder hen steiler werd en de door de wind geteisterde ijswereld van de hogere pistes zichtbaar werd, verscheen er een sidderende twijfel op haar gezicht en hij realiseerde zich, met die pervers gelukzalige

looked at the act of bestowing: the pronouncing of a blessing, or formal speech that accompanies the bestowing of royal titles, inspired me to use “uitspreken,” as Harold *speaks* words of reassurance.

¹⁶The first meaning of “courtship” that springs to mind is “verkeringstijd,” but it seems to imply more than just that in this context, so I picked the more general term “romantiek” to be sure to encompass everything. On top of that, it simply sounded better.

¹⁷“Minipiste” is the term which usually indicates the kids’ practice course, so that seemed the most suitable solution.

¹⁸Term used in skiing.

innerlijke verruiming die een slechterik voelt, dat hij het verkeerde had gedaan. De lift ratelde voort, steeds maar hoger. “Kan ik dit echt wel skiën?” vroeg Priscilla, met het vertederende kinderlijke verlangen¹⁹ om gerustgesteld te worden. In de sferen van medeleven stond hij weer aan de rand van dat zwembad. Het duivels ruikende water was een flink eind onder hen.

Hij zei tegen haar: “Je hoeft dit gedeelte niet te skiën. Kijk eens naar het uitzicht. Het is adembenemend.”

Ze draaide zich om, verstijfd in het stoeltje terwijl het boven een afgrond schommelde. Met gehoorzame ogen staaarde ze naar de oneindige blauwgroene dimensies van beboste berg en bevroren meer. De parkeerplaats beneden leek net een kleine schotel met een mozaïek van auto’s. De kabel van de lift gleed onstuitbaar voort; de atmosfeer daalde in temperatuur. De dennenbomen rondom hen waren in groei achtergebleven en vervormd. Mist likte aan het ijs; ze bevonden zich in de wolken. Priscilla trilde aan alle kanten en kon op de top amper op haar ski’s staan.

“Ik kan het niet,” kondigde ze aan.

“Doe wat ik doe,” zei Harold. Hij gleed vlug een paar meter naar beneden²⁰.

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“Plaats je gewicht eerst op de ene ski, daarna op de andere. Kijk niet naar hoe steil het is, denk alleen aan het verplaatsen van je gewicht.”

Ze leunde achterover²¹, weg van de helling, en viel neer. Tranen welden op in haar ogen; hij vreesde dat ze zouden bevriezen en haar blind zouden maken. Hij raapte al zijn

¹⁹Dutch provides us with a common expression (“kinderlijk verlangen”) that beautifully captures the longer description in the source text.

²⁰The literal translation of this sentence “naar een paar meter onder haar” was not as smooth in Dutch as the original phrase is in English. It has the meaning of “zich lager bevinden” but somehow sounds like she is stacked on top of him. This could be a matter of taste, but to get this problem out of the way, I left out the phrase “below her.”

²¹The construction “to lean your weight” does not exist in Dutch. “Weight” is therefore left out in the translation.

liefde bijeen in zijn stem en wierp het haar toe²², om haar weerspanningheid, haar angst, te doen smelten. “Doe gewoon maar je sneeuwploug. Denk maar niet aan waar je bent.”

“Er is helemaal geen sneeuw,” zei ze. “Alleen maar ijs.”

“Het is niet glad aan de zijkanten²³.”

“Er staan bómen aan de zijkanten.”

“Kom op, lieverd. Het licht wordt flauw.”

“Straks vriezen we dood.”

“Doe niet zo gek, aan het einde van de dag²⁴ bestuift de skipatrouille de pistes nog. Plaats je gewicht op de neerwaartse ski en laat jezelf wenden. Dat móet je. Godverdomme, het is mákkelijk.”

“Makkelijk voor jóu ja,” zei Priscilla. Ze volgde zijn instructies op en begon heel voorzichtig te glijden. Ze raakte een kleine heuveltje en viel opnieuw. Ze begon te gillen. Ze probeerde haar skistokken weg te gooien, maar de bandjes hielden hen aan haar polsen vast. Ze schopte met haar voeten als een klein kind²⁵ in een woede-uitbarsting, en een skibinding liet los. “Ik háát je,” huilde ze. “Ik kan het niet, ik kán het niet! Ik was zó trots daar op de minipiste, ik wilde alleen maar dat je naar me kéék – voor één lullig minuutje naar me keek, dat was alles wat ik van je vroeg. Je wíst dat ik hier nog niet klaar voor was. Waaróm bracht je me hier boven, waaróm?”

“Ik dacht dat je dat wel was,” zei hij zwakjes. “Klaar. Ik wilde je het uitzicht laten zien.” Zijn vader had hem het plezier van het water willen geven, ongetwijfeld.

²²“To roll something toward someone” proved hard to translate. After trying to translate it literally and discover that it did not work in any way, I decided to interpret it instead and pick a Dutch expression that best suited the interpretation.

²³The translation “randen” to indicate the edges did not suit the context of a slope that is accompanied by trees on the sides. To make clear that it is about these sides instead of the ridges, I used a more specific translation.

²⁴“Last thing” is commonly used to indicate “last activity before leaving” or something along those lines. It is short and catchy, but tricky to translate since “als laatste,” which is just as short, is too vague. I therefore used a more explicit translation.

²⁵An infant could have many translations, depending on the intended age. It might mean “zuigeling” or “kleuter” or anything inbetween. It is not clear from the text which kind of child is meant, so it is translated with a more general, coordinate term: klein kind.

De schemering kwam over de berg. Tienere experts raasden langs in een lawine van achteloosheid, met nu en dan een nieuwsgierige zijdelingse blik. Harold en Priscilla besloten hun ski's uit te doen en naar beneden te lopen. Het kostte hen een uur, en hem een blaas op elke hiel²⁶. Het bos rondom hen, waargenomen op zo'n buitengewoon langzame snelheid, vertoonde een magische bevroren eigenaardigheid, de ironische kalmte van de klinknagels van een vliegtuig. Haar kinderen stonden al met tranen in hun ogen te wachten aan de rand van de leeglopende parkeerplaats. "Ik probeerde iets leuks met haar te doen," legde hij hen uit, "maar jullie moeder vertrouwt me niet."

In diezelfde hachelijke tijd, woonde Harold het zeventiende verjaardagsfeest van zijn zoon bij, in het huis waaruit hij was vertrokken. Terwijl hij zich haastte om de avondtrein te halen die hem terug naar zijn appartement in de stad zou brengen, zag hij een verse pan brownies die af stond te koelen op het fornuis. Dit was vreemd omdat de verjaardagstaart al opgediend was. Hij vroeg zijn zoon: "Wat zijn dit?"

De jongen lachte schijnheilig²⁷. "Hasjbrownies. Neem er maar een, pappa. Je kunt 'm opeten in de trein."

"Het doet geen rare dingen met me?"

"Neuh. Het is gewoon iets wat de andere jongens verzonnen hebben bij wijze van grap²⁸. Het is meer het idee; ze doen niks."

Harold hield als kind al van zoetigheid, had een voorkeur voor zetmeel; hij nam een van de grotere brownies en schrokte hem in de auto op terwijl zijn zoon hem naar het

²⁶Although the double use of "kosten" does not sound entirely natural, it does keep the pun line in.

²⁷The standard translation of "cherubical" is "engelachtig," but this translation does not evoke a clear image because it is only used sporadically in Dutch. "Schijnheilig" is more striking and it is clear what kind of face the boy puts on.

²⁸The original sentence contains a phrase, "for me," that has been left out here. Leaving it in the translation produced a sentence that did not flow as well as the original sentence. The phrase does not contribute that much to the sentence, so leaving it out did not cause any problems.

treinstation reed. In de trein leunde hij met zijn hoofd tegen het zwarte glas en koesterde de beklagenswaardige gedachten van een gescheiden man. Langzaam realiseerde hij zich dat zijn mond erg droog was en dat zijn gedachten zich niet alleen herhaalden, maar ook een intense, helder gekleurde vorm in zijn hoofd hadden aangenomen. Ze waren bovenop elkaar geperst, als lagen van leisteen, en levendig polychroom, als militaire onderscheidingslintjes²⁹. Toen hij vanuit de trein op het perron van het centraal station sprong, was zijn ene helft veel groter geworden dan de andere, dus moest hij flink overhellen of hij zou neervallen. Zijn lichaam vergezelde hem eerder, in verschillende achterblijvende delen, dan dat het hem ondersteunde. Lopend in wat voelde als een processie naar de ingang van het metrostation, door een menigte vreemden met capuchon en over een straat vol opgezwollen auto's, beredeneerde hij wat er was gebeurd: hij had een hasjebrownie gegeten.

Een helft van zijn brein bleef verstandig advies schreeuwen naar de andere: *Kijk in beide richtingen. Haal een dollar uit je zak. Nee, wacht, hier is een muntje. Stop hem in de gleuf. Wacht op lijn 16, ga niet met de Symphonylijn. Niet in paniek raken.* Elk proces leek een eeuwigheid te duren, terwijl zijn lintjesachtige gedachten zich vermenigvuldigden en heen en weer vlogen met de snelheid van een computer. Deze gedachten bleven optellen naar nonsens, merkte de andere helft van zijn brein op, terwijl deze instructies en complimenten riep gedurende zijn voortgang naar huis. De mensen in de metro staarden hem aan alsof ze deze luidruchtige innerlijke conversatie konden horen. Maar hij voelde zich veilig achter zijn gezicht, als achter een stalen masker. Wielen onder hem piepten. Een code van gekleurde lichtjes flitste langs de ramen.

²⁹The English phrase “campaign ribbons” refers to those military honours that have to do with campaigns (“veldtochten”). Such a specific translation did not work out for this sentence, because most people do not exactly know what these ribbons look like. It therefore has been translated with a more general term.

Hij bevond zich weer in lucht³⁰, terwijl hij de drie straten van het metrostation naar zijn appartement liep. Er brandde iets in zijn keel. Hij voelde zich misselijk, en bleef heggen en vuilnisbakken uitkiezen om in over te geven, wanneer het daartoe zou komen, wat niet gebeurde, niet echt. Het leek een bevestiging van een gigantisch duister plot dat zijn sleutel in het slot van zijn deur paste en dat achter de deur een kamer vol verbazingwekkend vertrouwd meubilair lag. Hij nam de telefoon, die de glans en tweedimensionale grootte van een billboardafbeelding had, en belde Priscilla.

“Hoi, liefje.”

Haar stem steeg in toonhoogte. “Wat is er met jou gebeurd, Harold?”

“Klink ik anders dan?”

“Behoorlijk ja.” Haar stem was zo scherp als de stekels van een stekelvarken, zwart met witte punten. “Wat hebben ze met je gedaan?” Zé – zijn kinderen, zijn ex-vrouw.

“Ze hebben me een hasjbrownie gevoerd. Jimmy zei dat ik er niets van zou voelen, maar in de trein werden mijn gedachten heel klein en intens, en op de weg vanaf het station moest ik mezelf blijven coachen in hoe ik van daar naar hier moest komen.” De beschermende, betrouwbare helft van zijn brein complimenteerde³¹ hem dat hij zo overtuigend klonk.

Maar er was iets wat Priscilla niet aanstond. Ze huilde: “O, dat is walgelijk! Ik vind het helemaal niet leuk, ik vind géén van jullie leuk.”

“Geen van wie?”

“Je weet best wie.”

³⁰This sentence might sound somewhat out of the blue, but it is a reference to the earlier passage in which Harold remembers his youth trauma. The phrase “he was in air again” is exactly repeated here and therefore translated exactly as it was in the earlier sentence.

³¹A literal translation of “congratulate” would not work, since the Dutch word “feliciteren” is not particularly used the same way as it is here in English.

“Dat weet ik niet.” Ook al wist hij het wel. Hij keek naar zijn handpalmen; ze waren vlekkelig. “Schatje, ik denk dat ik moet overgeven. Help me.”

“Dat kan ik niet,” zei Priscilla, en hing op. De klik klonk als een klap, dezelfde echoënde klap die ooit explodeerde vlakbij zijn oor. Behalve dat zijn vader zijn zoon was geworden, en zijn moeder zijn vriendin. In ieder geval was dít waar: het was niet zijn schuld geweest, en bij het overleven kreeg hij op de een of andere manier de schuld.

Zijn handpalmen, minder vlekkelig, zagen er bleek en gerimpeld uit, als oncomfortabele kussens. In de zak van zijn trui vond Harold het opgeborgen dollarbiljet waar hij van had afgezien bij het draaihek van het metrostation, een eeuwigheid geleden. Terwijl hij wachtte totdat Priscilla bedaard was en terug zou bellen, keek hij naar de achterkant, bestudeerde het symbolische oog boven de afgestompte pyramide, en las, telkens opnieuw, de slogan die gedrukt stond boven de “ONE”: “IN GOD WE TRUST”³².

³²American readers understand this line immediately because they often hold one dollar bills and know exactly what they look like and thus know at which slogan Updike aims. Dutch readers, however, do not have one dollar bills all the time and cannot evoke its image in detail. They probably do not know that above the image of “ONE” in the middle of the bill is the slogan: “IN GOD WE TRUST.” The slogan itself is therefore added to the final sentence, so Dutch readers pick up on the circle construction, the reference to the title and the central theme of the story, as well as the deeper religious meaning of this detail.

Appendix B: Original Text

3

Trust Me

When Harold was three or four, his father and mother took him to a swimming pool. This was strange, for his family rarely went places, except to the movie house two blocks from their house. Harold had no memory of ever seeing his parents in bathing suits again, after this unhappy day. What he did remember was this:

His father, nearly naked, was in the pool, treading water. Harold was standing shivering on the wet tile edge, suspended above the abysmal odor of chlorine, hypnotized by the bright, lapping agitation of this great volume of unnaturally blue-green water. His mother, in a black bathing suit that made her flesh appear very white, was off in a corner of his mind. His father was asking him to jump. "C'mon, Hassy, jump," he was saying, in his mild, encouraging voice. "It'll be all right. Jump right into my hands." The words echoed in the flat acoustics of the water and tile and sunlight, heightening Harold's sense of exposure, his awareness of his own white skin. His father seemed eerily stable and calm in

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the water, and the child idly wondered, as he jumped, what the man was standing on.

Then the blue-green water was all around him, dense and churning, and when he tried to take a breath a fist was shoved into his throat. He saw his own bubbles rising in front of his face, a multitude of them, rising as he sank; he sank it seemed for a very long time, until something located him in the darkening element and seized him by the arm.

He was in air again, on his father's shoulder, still fighting for breath. They were out of the pool. His mother swiftly came up to the two of them and, with a deftness remarkable in

one so angry, slapped his father on the face, loudly, next to Harold's ear. The slap seemed to resonate all over the pool area, and to be heard by all the other bathers; but perhaps this was the acoustics of memory. His sense of public embarrassment amid sparkling nakedness – of every strange face turned toward him as he passed from his father's wet arms into his mother's dry ones – survived his recovery of breath. His mother's anger seemed directed at him as much as at his father. His feet now were on grass. Standing wrapped in a towel near his mother's knees while the last burning fragments of water were coughed from his lungs, Harold felt eternally disgraced.

He never knew what had happened; by the time he asked, so many years had passed that his father had forgotten. "Wasn't that a crying shame," the old man said, with his mild mixture of mournfulness and comedy. "Sink or swim, and you sank." Perhaps Harold had leaped a moment before it was expected, or had proved unexpectedly heavy, and had thus slipped through his father's grasp. Unaccountably, all through his growing up he continued to trust his father; it was his mother he distrusted, her swift sure-handed anger.

He didn't learn to swim until college, and even then he passed the test by frog-kicking the length of the pool on his

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back, with the instructor brandishing a thick stick to grasp if he panicked and began to sink. The chemical scent of a pool always frightened him: blue-green dragon breath.

His children, raised in an amphibious world of summer camps and country clubs, easily became swimmers. They tried to teach him how to dive. "You must keep your head *down*, Dad. That's why you keep getting belly-whoppers."

"I'm scared of not coming up," he confessed. What he especially did not like, under water, was the sight of bubbles rising around his face.

His first wife dreaded flying. Yet they flew a great deal. “Either that,” he told her, “or resign from the twentieth century.” They flew to California, and while they were there two planes collided over the Grand Canyon. They flew out of Boston the day after starlings had blocked the engines of an Electra and caused it to crash into the harbor with such force that people were cut in two by their safety belts. They flew over Africa, crossing the equator at night, the land beneath them an inky chasm lit by a few sparks of tribal fire. They landed on dusty runways, with the cabin doors banging. He promised her, her fear was so acute, that she would never have to fly with him again. At last, their final African flight took them up from the Ethiopian Plateau, across the pale width of the Libyan Desert, to the edge of the Mediterranean, and on to Rome.

The Pan Am out of Rome was the most comforting possible – a jumbo jet wide as a house, stocked with American magazines and snacks, its walls dribbling music, with only a few passengers. The great plane lifted off, and he relaxed into a *Newsweek*, into the prospect of a meal, a nap, and a homecoming. Harold’s wife asked, after ten minutes, “Why aren’t we climbing?”

He looked out of the window, and it was true – the wate-

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ry world below them was not diminishing; he could distinctly see small boats and the white tips of breaking waves. The stewardesses were moving up and down the aisle with unusual speed, with unusual expressions on their glamorous faces. Harold looked at the palms of his hands; they had become damp and mottled, as during nausea. However hard he stared, the sea beneath the wings did not fall away. Sun sparkled on its surface; a tiny sailboat tacked.

The pilot's voice crackled into being above them. "Folks, there's a little warning light come on for one of our starboard engines, and in conformance with our policy of absolute security we're going to circle around and return to the Rome airport."

During the bank and return, which seemed to take an extremely long time, the stewardesses buckled themselves into rear seats, the man across the aisle kept reading *L'Osservatore*, and Harold's wife, a faithful student of safety instructions, removed her high-heeled shoes and took the pins out of her hair. So again he marvelled at the deft dynamism of women in crises.

He held her damp hand in his and steadily gazed out of the window, pressing the sea down with his vision, stiff-arming it with his will to live. If he blinked, they would fall. One little boat at a time, the plane edged back to Rome. The blue sea visually interlocked with the calm silver edge of the wing: Olympian surfaces serenely oblivious of the immense tension between them. He had often felt, through one of these scratched oval windows, something falsely reassuring in the elaborate order of the rivets pinning the aluminium sheets together. *Trust me*, the metallic code spelled out; in his heart Harold, like his wife, had refused, and this refusal in him formed a hollow space terror could always flood.

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The 747 landed smoothly back in Rome and, after an hour's delay, while mechanics persuaded the warning light to go off, resumed the flight to America. At home, their scare became a story, a joke. He kept his promise, though, that she would never have to fly with him again; within a year, they separated.

During the time of separation Harold seemed to be slinging his children from one rooftop to another, silently begging them to trust him. It was as when, years before, he had

adjusted his daughter's braces in her mouth with a needlenose pliers. She had come to him in pain, a wire gouging the inside of her cheek. But then, with his clumsy fingers in her mouth, her eyes widened with fear of worse pain. He gaily accused her, "You don't trust me." The gaiety of his voice revealed a crucial space, a gap between their situations: it would be his blunder, but her pain. Another's pain is not our own. Religion, he supposed, seeks to close this gap, but each generation's torturers keep it open. Without it, compassion would crush us; the space of indifference is where we breathe. Harold had heard this necessary indifference in the pilot's voice drawling "Folks," and in his father's voice urging "Jump." He heard it in his own reassurances as he bestowed them. "Sweetie, I know you're feeling pressure now, but if you'll just hold *still*... there's this little sharp end—oops. Well, you wriggled."

He took his girl friend to the top of a mountain. Harold hadn't had a girl friend for many years and had to relearn the delicate blend of protectiveness and challengingness that is courtship. She was, Priscilla, old enough to have her own own children, and old enough to feel fragile on skis. She had spent the day on the baby slope, practicing turns and gradually gaining confidence, while Harold ranged far and wide

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on the mountain, in the company of her children. As the afternoon drew to an end, he swooped down upon her in a smart spray of snow. She begged him, "Ride the baby chair, so I can show you my snowplow."

"If you can snowplow here, you can come from the top of the mountain," Harold told her.

"Really?" Her cheeks were pink, from her day on the baby slope. She wore a white knit hat. Her eyes were baby blue.

"Absolutely. We'll come down on the novice trail."

She trusted him. But on the chair lift, as the slope beneath them increased and the windswept iciness of the higher trails became apparent, a tremulous doubt entered into her face, and he realized, with that perversely joyful inner widening the torturer feels, that he had done the wrong thing. The lift rumbled onward, ever higher. "Can I really ski this?" Priscilla asked, with a child's beautiful willingness to be reassured. In the realms of empathy, he was again standing on the edge of that swimming pool. The evil-smelling water was a long way down.

He told her, "You won't be skiing this part. Look at the view. It's gorgeous."

She turned, rigid in the chair as it swayed across a chasm. With obedient eyes she gazed at the infinite blue-green perspectives of wooded mountain and frozen lake. The parking lot below seemed a little platter tessellated with cars. The lift cable irresistibly slithered; the air dropped in temperature. The pines around them had grown stunted and twisted. Mist licked off the ice; they were in the clouds. Priscilla was trembling all over, and at the top could scarcely stand on her skis.

"I can't do it," she announced.

"Do what I do," Harold said. He quickly slid to a few

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yards below her. "Put your weight first on one ski, then the other. Don't look at the steepness, just think of your weight shifting."

She leaned her weight backward, away from the slope, and fell down. Tears welled in her eyes; he feared they would freeze and make her blind. He gathered all his love into his voice and rolled it toward her, to melt her recalcitrance, her terror. "Just do your snowplow. Don't think about where you are."

"There isn't any snow," she said. "Just ice."

“It’s not icy at the edges.”

“There are *trees* at the edges.”

“Come on, honey. The light’s getting flat.”

“We’ll freeze to death.”

“Don’t be silly, the ski patrol dusts the trails last thing. Put your weight on the downhill ski and let yourself turn. You *must*. Goddamn it, it’s *simple*.”

“Simple for *you*,” Priscilla said. She followed his directions and began gingerly to slide. She hit a small mogul and fell again. She began to scream. She tried to throw her ski poles, but the straps held them to her wrists. She kicked her feet like an infant in a tantrum, and one ski binding released. “I *hate* you,” she cried. “I can’t do it, I *can’t* do it! I was so *proud* on the baby slope, all I wanted was for you to *watch* me – watch me for one lousy minute, that was all I asked you to do. You *knew* I wasn’t ready for this. *Why* did you bring me up here, *why*?”

“I thought you were,” he said weakly. “Ready. I wanted to show you the view.” His father had wanted to give him the joy of the water, no doubt.

Dusk was coming to the mountain. Teen-aged experts bombed past in avalanches of heedless color, with occasional curious side-glances. Harold and Priscilla agreed to

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take off their skis and walk down. It took an hour, and cost him a blister on each heel. The woods around them, perceived at so unusually slow a speed, wore a magical frozen strangeness, the ironical calm of airplane rivets. Her children were waiting at the edge of the emptying parking lot with tears in their eyes. “I tried to give her a treat,” he explained to them, “but your mother doesn’t trust me.”

During this same perilous period, Harold attended his son's seventeenth birthday party, in the house he had left. As he was rushing to catch the evening train that would take him back to his apartment in the city, he noticed a fresh pan of brownies cooling on the stove. This was odd, because birthday cake had already been served. He asked his son, "What are these?"

The boy smiled cherubically. "Hash brownies. Have one, Dad. You can eat it on the train."

"It won't do anything funny to me?"

"Naa. It's just something the other kids cooked up for me as a joke. It's more the idea of it; they won't do anything."

Harold as a child had a sweet tooth, a taste for starch; he took one of the bigger of the brownies and gobbled it in the car as his son drove him to the railroad station. In the train, he leaned his head against the black glass and entertained the rueful thoughts of a separated man. Slowly he came to realize that his mouth was very dry and his thoughts were not only repeating themselves but had taken on an intense, brightly colored form in his head. They were squeezed one on top of another, like strata of shale, and were vividly polychrome, like campaign ribbons. When he swung down from the train onto the platform of the city station, one side of him had grown much larger than the other, so he had to lean sharply or fall down. His body did

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not so much support as accompany him, in several laggard sections. Walking in what felt like a procession to the subway entrance, through a throng of hooded strangers and across a street of swollen cars, he reasoned what had happened: he had eaten a hash brownie.

One half of his brain kept shouting prudent advice to the other: *Look both ways. Take out a dollar. No, wait, here's a token. Put it in the slot. Wait for the No. 16, don't take the Symphony. Don't panic.* Every process seemed to take a very long time, while his ribbonlike thoughts multiplied and shuttled with the speed of a computer. These thoughts kept adding up to nonsense, the other half of his brain noticed, while it called instructions and congratulations throughout his homeward progress. The people in the subway car stared at him as if they could hear this loud interior conversation going on. But he felt safe behind his face, as if behind a steel mask. Wheels beneath him screeched. A code of colored lights flew past the windows.

He was in air again, walking the three blocks from the subway to his apartment. Something in his throat burned. He felt nauseated, and kept selecting hedges and trash cans to vomit in, if it came to that, which it did not, quite. It seemed the confirmation of a gigantically abstruse theorem that his key fit in the lock of his door and that beyond the door lay a room full of dazzlingly familiar furniture. He picked up the telephone, which had the sheen and two-dimensional largeness of an image on a billboard, and called Priscilla.

“Hi, love.”

Her voice rose in pitch. “What’s happened to you, Harold?”

“Do I sound different?”

“Very.” Her voice was sharp as porcupine quills, black

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with white tips. “What did they do to you?” *They* – his children, his ex-wife.

“They fed me a hash brownie. Jimmy said I wouldn’t feel anything, but on the train in, my thoughts got very little and intense, and on the way from the station I had to keep coaching myself on how to get from there to here.” The protective, trustworthy half of his brain congratulated him on how cogent he sounded.

But something was displeasing to Priscilla. She cried, “Oh that is disgusting! I don’t think it’s funny, I don’t think *any* of you are funny.”

“Any of who?”

“You know who.”

“I don’t.” Though he did. He looked at his palms; they were mottled. “Sweetie, I feel like throwing up. Help me.”

“I can’t,” Priscilla said, and hung up. The click sounded like a slap, the same echoing slap that had once exploded next to his ear. Except that his father had become his son, and his mother was his girl friend. This much remained true: it had not been his fault, and in surviving he was somehow blamed.

The palms of his hands, less mottled, looked pale and wrinkled, like uncomfortable pillows. In his shirt pocket Harold found tucked the dollar bill rejected at the subway turnstile, extremely long ago. While waiting for Priscilla to relent and call back, he turned to its back side, examined the mystical eye above the truncated pyramid, and read, over and over, the slogan printed above the ONE.