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The Board of Magazine Governors

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THE BOARD OF MAGAZINE GOVERNORS

Overlooked by the government when members of the Board of Broadcast Governors were selected, your editor has nevertheless finally been rewarded for his long years of faithful service to the party. He has accepted a post as non-permanent member of the Board of Magazine Governors.

Last week our Board began the task of analyzing the perfume advertisements in the December 5 issue of the New Yorker. Our report has not been issued yet, because on the whole we found the assignment more difficult than we had anticipated.

However, pending completion of our work, this interim report in The Station Break (which will have exclusive rights to all Reports and Recommendations of the Board of Magazine Governors) should serve as a sop to your impatience and as evidence that advertising analysis in magazines — at least as far as the olfactory division is concerned — is no bed of, or attar of, roses.

Much of the delay was occasioned by wrangling within the Board's ranks, mainly over fine points of translation. There was general agreement that Corday's parenthetical rendering on Page 13 of "Toujours moi" into "Always me" was above reproach. But the talk became edgy at page 91 where Nini Ricci of Paris had helpfully translated its fragrance "L'Air du Temps" into "It's In the Air".

"But that means 'The Air of Times'," one Board member objected. "Literally, it does," agreed another member. "But it's idiomatic. After all, you wouldn't translate *coup d'état* into 'blow of state,' would you?"

"How would you translate it?" demanded the first member.

Several others chimed in, and feelings ran high. By the time they reached page 154, where a member pointed out that "Je Reviens," translated by Parfums Worth into "I will Return," was really in the present tense and should be rendered "I Return" or "I Am Returning," the atmosphere was charged with emotion.

Regrettably, too, linguistic fervor led the Board into some time-wasting blind alleys. For instance, they spent some forty-five minutes discussing the aptness of the phrase "*à votre santé*" on page 62, before someone noticed that the ad dealt not with perfume, but with ladies' tapered velveteen pants, sizes 10-16.

Other pitfalls quickly became evident. A fist fight was narrowly averted when one member submitted a three-page report on the line, "You can tell the difference in the dark," which appeared on page 28, and another sneeringly drew attention to the fact that the ad was for Booth's House of Lords Gin. As the Board Chairman put it, "After wading through gallons of fragrance a quarter of an ounce at a time, you get a conditioned reflex to a photo of any kind of bottled liquid."

The Board was shocked back into sobriety when one of its younger members, who had flunked French in high school, encountered the Guerlain advertisement for its "Ode Cologne" on page 85, and tried to slash his wrists.

But the biggest bone of contention seems to have been the Arpège ad, right on page one. The ad, which is simplicity itself, depicts a gloved hand pouring a brown liquid from a near-spherical black decanter into two cocktail glasses. The only copy is the words, "A great year — for Arpège," in print, followed by the name "Lord & Taylor" in an untidy script.

"What in tunket is Arpège?" one member asked.

"It's a French wine," said another member. "Comes from the valley of the Loire. Goes great with oysters."

"Yeah?" said a third member, turning the magazine upside down. "Then what's the name Lanvin doing on the decanter? Lanvin makes perfume."

"That's ridiculous," said the second member. "Who ever heard of pouring perfume into cocktail glasses?"

"It makes as much sense as pouring champagne into a woman's shoe," said a fourth member. After some lively debate, his remark was voted a non-sequitur, and stricken from the record.

"Five gets you ten that it's wine," said the wine fancier. "Look at that Lord & Taylor signature — whoever wrote it was obviously cockeyed. And then there's the copy: 'A great year — for Arpège.' Perfume doesn't come in vintages."

One of the cooler-headed members pointed out that it was time for lunch. "Ask the waiter for a glass of Arpège," he suggested. "If you get it, and if you can drink it, I'll pay for it."

The glass of Arpège cost \$23.75.

"That proves it was perfume," said the man who had offered to pay, sadly counting his change. "No wine ever cost that much."

"Nonsense," said the Arpège drinker with an aromatic sigh of satisfaction. "You don't get prime vintages for peanuts."

The Board considers the question still unanswered, and has effectively disposed of it by relegating it to the technical staff.

The last time we dropped in to see how members were doing, they were staring in bemused fascination at page 24, where one Jean Patou was proclaiming that his perfume "Joy" is "The Costliest Perfume in the world."

"Sheer genius," breathed one member.

"Why doesn't some enterprising radio station use that technique to sell its rate card?" asked another wistfully. "But of course, that is not in our jurisdiction, more's the pity!"

We tiptoed out. We may not be too bright sometimes, but we know when we're out of our depth. Let the permanent members handle the tough ones!

(The Station Break)

Walter A. DALES



† OÙ LE TRADUCTEUR PEUT-IL SE DOCUMENTER ?

Que de fois cette question surgit à l'esprit du traducteur devant un texte de nature technique ou scientifique! Peut-on compter que le traducteur de profession, qu'il soit bilingue ou multilingue, possède un bagage de connaissances approfondies dans les maints domaines de la technique et de la science, en plus d'être bien au fait des difficultés et de la stylistique de chacune des langues qu'il doit manier ?

Autrefois, on confiait la traduction des textes de nature technique — et cela se fait encore dans une large mesure — à des spécialistes de la technique en cause, dont les connaissances linguistiques, trop souvent, semblaient assez minces. C'est à cela qu'on peut attribuer l'usage croissant de faux-amis et de tournures non conformes à la syntaxe, dans certaines revues techniques de langue française. Il en est probablement de même dans le cas de maintes autres langues.

Cette tendance déformatrice a suscité des réactions plus ou moins vives en certains milieux, mais peu d'action concertée. Toutefois, il y a lieu de signaler un cas (il en est peut-être d'autres) où l'on a abordé cette question d'une façon très méthodique, sur le plan international. Il s'agit d'une étude effectuée en 1957 sous l'égide de l'UNESCO, avec la collaboration de personnalités de plus de cinquante pays, dont le Canada, qui était représenté par M. Jean-Paul Vinay, de Montréal, et Mlle Rankin, d'Ottawa. Le compte rendu de cette étude s'intitule: *Scientific and Technical Translating and other Aspects of the Language Problems, 1957*. Y sont exposées et discutées les opinions des collaborateurs au sujet de la compétence des traducteurs scientifiques, de la qualité des traductions scientifiques et des diverses façons de combiner les connaissances linguistiques du traducteur aux connaissances scientifiques de l'homme de science, de façon que la traduction ait toute la précision en même temps que l'élégance désirées.