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Making Otherness Accessible.
Functionality and Skopos in the Translation of New Testament Texts

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RÉSUMÉ

Après la description du processus de traduction collective au moyen de « compétences partagées », le présent article examine des exemples d'éloignement culturel tirés de la version allemande de textes du Nouveau Testament par l'auteure. Une traduction fonctionnelle qui cherche à rendre l'étrangeté de ces textes accessible aux lecteurs d'aujourd'hui se doit de cerner très précisément son *skopos* et ses destinataires. Sur la base des exemples étudiés, l'auteure conclut que la traduction fonctionnelle de ces textes peut devenir un paradigme de la traduction en général et que la compétence traductive n'est pas indissolublement associée à une quelconque paire de langues et de cultures.

ABSTRACT

After describing a translation process under the condition of "split competence," the article analyzes cases of cultural distance, drawing on the author's experience in the translation of New Testament texts. A functional translation which strives after making the otherness of these texts accessible to modern readers, has to carefully define the skopos and the addressed audience, in order to give translation decisions a solid foundation. After the discussion of a number of examples from the New Testament, the author ventures to conclude that the functional translation of these texts can be considered a paradigmatic case of translation in general and that translation competence is not essentially linked to a language-and-culture pair.

MOTS-CLÉS/KEYWORDS

functional translation, split competence, cultural distance, New Testament

1. Preliminary Considerations

It is widely known that comprehension relies not only on what is said or written in a text but also on the previous knowledge and expectations of the recipients. The distance or "gap" between two cultures confronted in translation may therefore produce incomprehension

(a) when the lack of culture-specific background knowledge makes it impossible for the recipients to establish coherence between what is said and what they know, and
(b) when they have the impression that the nonverbal and the verbal behaviour of a person do not match because they cannot interpret the nonverbal behaviour correctly even though they seem to understand the verbal behaviour.

In the following paper, I am going to look at how previous knowledge and expectations interfere with coherence in the reception of New Testament texts because we

are separated from the source culture by a wide cultural gap. These texts refer to a world that could not be more distant in time and space, yet their comprehension is vital for the identity and unity of Christian communities today. Therefore, they are translated, and re-translated every now and again, into almost all of the planet's languages. Before discussing a number of examples from the New Testament and their translations into English, German, French and Spanish, I will briefly describe my theoretical point of departure with regard to the concepts of culture, functionality, and translation.

2. The "Cultural Gap"

In intracultural communication, the partners generally assume that their verbal or nonverbal behaviour can be interpreted correctly by their counterparts. Consequently, people do not normally give much thought to whether or not their nonverbal behaviour is intelligible, although they certainly seem ready to spend quite a lot of effort on choosing adequate forms of verbal behaviour to get their communicative intentions across. "International" authors like Nobel Prize winners may even try to write "internationally," that is, in a manner which they think is not too culture-specific, in order to find a broad international audience. Nevertheless, I would like to maintain that there always is a cultural distance (or "gap") between the source-culture author and his or her (verbal or nonverbal) forms of expression, on the one hand, and any target-culture audience, on the other, even though, in some specific cases, it may not be relevant to the particular communicative act in question or so small that it need not be considered. At any rate, I believe that translators should always be aware of the culture-specificity of any form of behaviour. Considering the existence of a cultural gap to be the normal case and its irrelevance or quasi-non-existence to be the exception may even be more practical in the translation process than assuming a kind of universal culture (at least in the area of what has been called average Western cultures), because the latter attitude quite frequently prevents us from appreciating the cultural differences that exist even between cultures generally considered next-door neighbours.

The concept of culture used in functional translation theory is based on a definition given by the American ethnologist Ward H. Goodenough (1964, 36):

> As I see it, a society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members, and do so in any role that they accept for any one of themselves. Culture, being what people have to learn as distinct from their biological heritage, must consist of the end product of learning: knowledge, in a most general, if relative, sense of the term. By this definition, we should note that culture is not a material phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people, behaviour, or emotions. It is rather an organization of these things. It is the forms of things that people have in mind, their models for perceiving, relating, and otherwise interpreting them.

This definition was first introduced into the study of cross-cultural communication and slightly modified in order to address issues of translation by the late Heinz Göhring (1978, 10), who was a cultural anthropologist and conference interpreter himself. He stressed the fact that in intercultural encounters the individual is free either to conform to the behaviour patterns accepted in the other culture or to bear

the consequences of a form of behaviour contrary to target-cultural expectations. This means that there may be situations in translation where it is essential to bridge the cultural gap and others where the translator is supposed to leave the gap open, insisting on the cultural distance between source and target culture, but making the other culture accessible by explaining its otherness.

In this sense, culture is a complex system. It can be subdivided into paraculture (the norms, rules and conventions valid for an entire society), diaculture (the norms, rules, and conventions valid for a particular group within the society, such as a club, a firm, or a regional entity) and idioculture (the culture of an individual person as opposed to other individuals) (cf. Ammann 1989, 39ff.).

However, the borderlines between cultural systems or sub-systems are notoriously difficult to define. A culture cannot simply be equated with a language group. For instance, the linguistic behaviour of the Scots and the English will be different in some situations and very similar in others. Or again, Dutch and Germans from the regions along their common border may differ in language but have similar value systems. The member states of the European Union have a common culture with regard to some respects, and different cultures (including languages) in others. In modern multicultural societies, we cannot even say that a town or a street represents a single homogeneous culture. Drawing on the ideas of Michael Agar, an anthropologist working as an "intercultural practitioner" along the border between the United States and Mexico, I have suggested a more flexible approach (Nord 1993, 20ff.), defining the "culture barrier" between communication partners belonging to two different groups as consisting of the "rich points" where different behaviour conventions may cause communication conflicts. These rich points may vary from lexical items through speech acts or gestures to values and fundamental notions of how the world works (cf. Agar 1991, 168). This means that, when confronted with a particular translation task, a translator must be aware of the "rich points" between the groups or subgroups on either side of the language-and-culture barrier, even though he may decide to leave the barrier where it is and try to help people on either side look over it and understand the "otherness" of what is happening over there.

3. Split competence in the translation of New Testament texts

The idea to use the translation of biblical texts as an example springs from personal experience. Together with Klaus Berger, who is a New Testament scholar at Heidelberg University and happens to be my husband, I was involved in a new German translation of the New Testament (DNT 1999). We translated from the standard Greek text (Nestle-Aland: *Novum Testamentum Graece*), and since I have very little knowledge of this language, we worked on the basis of "split competence." The theologian's field was source language and culture plus theological implications, and mine was target language and culture plus translation competence. Thus, among the two of us we could rely on the four competences needed for every translation task: source language and culture, subject matter, transfer, and target language and culture.

We worked in four phases:

a)   The source-culture and theological expert carried the message over the first half of the distance. He first produced a rough translation, in which he paid particular attention to

concepts and terminology, in keeping with the results of more than 30 years of research on the New Testament and early Christian cultures.

b) Then the translation and target-culture expert took over. I tried to understand and re-formulate, where necessary, the rough translation into a receiver-oriented German text. Very often the first version seemed incoherent to me. In these cases, I asked the expert for an explanation and more than once found that it had been precisely my lack of cultural background knowledge that had caused the problem. In quite a number of cases, it was my way of questioning that made Klaus aware of a cultural distance he had not noticed before. Considering myself as a (rather) prototypical representative of the intended audience (see below), I next tried to integrate the explanation into the trans-lation as smoothly as possible so as to avoid a schoolmasterly or lecturing tone, using the translation competence acquired during my own training as a translator for Span-ish and English and during the long years I have been involved in translator training myself.

c) The theological expert then revised the new German text and sometimes detected his-torical incongruities or heresies or other problems, which were related to the long his-tory the reception of Bible translations has lived since the days of Luther and other honorable translators, and which had to be solved in long, and sometimes heated de-bates.

d) It was only then that we decided on a final version that we both could live with (at least for the time being). By all means, we wanted to avoid compromising on a solution which did not fully meet the standards of both the theologian and the translator.

4.1. Defining the Translation Skopos

The Scriptures of the New Testament represent various text types: narrations and parables (in the Gospels), letters, prayers, theological arguments, songs, and the like. In many cases, a text-type or equivalence-oriented translation strategy would not hold water because most of the texts can no longer be used for their original func-tion. Therefore, we opted for a skopos-oriented approach. This means that we had to decide

a) which audience we wished to address, and
b) what purpose we wished the translation to fulfill for the addressed audience.

With reference to the first question, it may be wise to start by stating who was <u>not</u> meant to be the addressed audience:

- theological scholars who can be expected to know the source languages and cultures to a degree that they would not need a translation to bridge the "gap" between source and target cultures; and
- fundamentalists who take the view that only a literal translation can provide a faithful rendering of the substance of the "holy original."

Instead, the translation is directed mainly at

- laypersons with an interest in the basis of their Christian faith who very often do not find the existing translations comprehensible, especially when read aloud in Church, because they lack the cultural knowledge of the world to which the texts refer, and
- theological mediators (pastors, teachers, ministers, preachers, catechists) who are no longer familiar enough with the source language(s) and culture(s) to be able to prepare their classes or sermons using the original texts or a word-for-word rendering.

After the translation has been around for more than five years we may say that most readers of our translation belong, in fact, to these two target groups. But the translation is also meant for (and read by) a wider audience, such as

- laypersons or theologians interested in the relations between source and target text(s), who expect to learn more about the "information offer" (Reiss/Vermeer 1984) of the source text by analysing and comparing various translations, and
- persons living at the periphery of the Christian community, for whom the translation may offer a way to gain some insights into, or at least qualify their scepticism toward, the Christian religion, an attitude which is more often than not born out of incomprehension and lack of knowledge.

These considerations concerning the addressed audience led to the following decisions on the main communicative purposes we wished to achieve through our translation:

a) First, we wanted to present the culture in which the New Testament originated in such a way that readers from a German-speaking culture distant in time and space are enabled to understand and respect its *otherness*. This intention corresponds to the referential or representative function,
b) Second, the translation was intended to show where the New Testament texts in spite of their strangeness and ancientness have something to say to people living in a modern culture. This is a kind of appellative intention. We might call it *indirectly appellative* because a specific way of realizing the referential function is used to raise the reader's attention and curiosity for the subject in question.

At first glance, these two intentions seem opposed or even incompatible. At second glance, it becomes clear that they can be subsumed under the heading of "Otherness Understood."

4.2. Otherness Understood

It is interesting to note that early views on functional translation came from Bible translators, such as St. Jerome (*Letter to Pammachius*), Martin Luther (*Circular Letter on Translation*, 1530) or Eugene A. Nida, who in 1964 established the distinction between formal and dynamic equivalence in translation and in 1976 formulated his "sociolinguistic approach to translation," placing particular emphasis on the purpose of the translation, the roles of both the translator and the target-text receivers, and the cultural implications of the translation process (cf. Nida 1976, 64ff.).

The question of functionality seems to be more pressing in Bible translation than in the translation of other old texts like Homer's Odyssey or Shakespeare's sonnets, although the latter are also re-translated from time to time. In Bible translation, we have to take into account that the familiar sounds of traditional translations like the one by Martin Luther in German (even after several revisions) or the King James Version in English are like an old coat in which you feel comfortable even though it may not be the latest fashion.

But it is often this unquestioned familiarity that stands in the way of comprehension, as is shown by Example 1.

Example 1

Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians, chapter 1:
1 Paul, and Timotheus, the <u>servants</u> of Jesus Christ, to <u>all the saints in Christ Jesus</u> which are at Philippi, with the <u>bishops</u> and <u>deacons</u>. 2 Grace be onto you, and peace, <u>from</u> God our Father, and <u>from</u> the Lord Jesus Christ. (KJV)

Paul's Letter to the Philippians
From Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus – To all <u>God's people in Philippi who are in union with Christ Jesus</u>, including the <u>church leaders</u> and <u>helpers</u>: <u>May</u> God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ <u>give you</u> grace and peace. (GNB 1976)

Aux Philippiens
1 Paul et Timothée, <u>serviteurs</u> de Christ Jésus, à <u>tous les saints en Christ Jésus</u> qui sont à Philippes, avec évêques et diacres; 2 grâce à vous (soit) et paix, de la part de Dieu notre Père et du Seigneur Jésus Christ. (NTF 1922)

Carta a los Filipos
1 Pablo y Timoteo, <u>siervos</u> de Jesucristo, a <u>todos los santos en Cristo Jesús</u> que están en Filipos con los <u>obispos</u> y <u>diáconos</u>: 2 la gracia y la paz de parte de Dios, nuestro Padre, y del señor Jesucristo <u>sea con vosotros</u>. (NAC 1975)

Brief an die Philipper
1 Paulus und Timotheus, <u>Sklaven</u> Jesu Christi, schreiben diesen Brief an alle <u>Christen</u> in Philippi, auch an alle, <u>die dort Aufsicht führen</u> und <u>andere Dienste leisten</u>. 2 Von Gott, unserem Vater, und vom Herrn Jesus Christus <u>geben wir</u> Gnade und Heil <u>an euch weiter</u>. (DNT 1999)
[*Paul and Timotheus, <u>slaves</u> of Jesus Christ, are writing this letter to all <u>Christians</u> at Philippi, and to all <u>those who are in charge and who are doing service</u> there. <u>2 We are passing on to you</u> the mercy and salvation given by God, our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ.* My back-translation]

The passage illustrates our translation strategy in various ways.

a) St. Paul and Timothy live in a society that knows both slaves and servants. In modern societies, there are still servants but the concept of *slave* is known as belonging to other times and places. Therefore, the question whether Paul and Timothy consider themselves slaves or servants cannot be answered without some theological reflections. Calling themselves slaves of Jesus Christ (which is the literal equivalent of the Greek word used in the original), they refer to the status of a person that is somebody else's property, and this is a different relationship than the one between servant and master. Thus, in this context, the word *slave* emphasizes the strangeness of the culture, whereas the translation by *servant* transfers the situation to a modern context.

b) By paraphrasing the functions of bishops and deacons and referring to them as leaders and helpers (similarly to what is suggested in GNB 1976), the translation aims at avoiding intuitive (and unjustified) equations between source and target culture and once again stresses cultural difference.

c) In contrast, calling the addressees *saints in Jesus Christ* is a question of linguistic and not so much of cultural strangeness. Although the expression sounds familiar because it is used in most existing translations, it cannot be considered as meaningful for a modern lay readership. The use of the word *Christians*, which is even clearer than "God's people who are in union with Christ Jesus" (GNB 1976), makes the text easier to understand, adapting the linguistic form to modern usage without changing the meaning of the expression, thus allowing the audience to identify themselves (to a certain extent) with Paul's audience.

d) Finally, the reference to St. Paul's authority to literally "pass on" God's grace and peace (cf. DNT 1999) may give the reader an idea of the Apostle's role in early Christian society, which is not conveyed by the mere wish "May God give you…" (cf. GNB 1976).

4.3. Cultural Knowledge and Text Functionality

In this section, I would like to discuss a few examples illustrating some specific aspects of our translation strategy. We will first look at a few passages where culture-specific background knowledge has to be integrated into the translation in order to make the text work in the target culture. Then we will look at some examples of non-verbal behaviour that must seem incoherent to modern readers who are not familiar with its culture-specific meaning.

4.3.1. Strange names for strange phenomena or familiar names for unfamiliar things?

First, we will look at the well-known story of the man who had been lying ill by the Bethesda pool for 38 years (Jn. 5,8).

Example 2

Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. (KJV)

Jesus said to him: Get up, pick up your mat, and walk. (GNB 1976)

Jésus lui dit: «Lève-toi, prends ton lit et marche.» (NTF 1922)

Díjole Jesús: Levántate, toma tu camilla y anda. (NAC 1975)

Da sagte Jesus zu ihm:»Steh auf, nimm deinen Strohsack und lauf!«Kaum hatte Jesus das gesagt, da war der Mann gesund. Er nahm seinen Strohsack und konnte wieder laufen. (DNT 1999) [*Jesus said to him: Get up, pick up your straw mattress, and walk. Hardly had Jesus said these words, when the man was well. He picked up his straw mattress and was able to walk.* My back-translation]

It is difficult to imagine somebody taking his "bed" and walking home. GNB translates "mat," which is exactly what people used to sleep on in ancient Palestine, like they still do in many parts of Asia. In German, however, "Matte" recalls the green or black synthetic material young people sleep on when they stay overnight with a friend. Therefore, we have translated *straw mattress*, which was also a very frequent kind of "bed" at the time.

In this case, the traditional translation does not really interfere with comprehension, since we may expect the readers to imagine some kind of portable bed like the *camilla* of the Spanish translation. But it is precisely this familiarity that makes the audience feel too much "at home" in the foreign culture and may cause misunderstandings on other occasions.

Example 3 (Context: You are the light of the world…, Mt. 5,15)

Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. (KJV)

No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bowl; instead he puts it on the lampstand, where it gives light for everyone in the house. (GNB 1976)

On n'allume pas non plus une lampe pour la mettre sous le boisseau, mais (on la place) sur le support, et elle éclaire tous ceux qui sont dans la maison. (NTF 1922)

…ni se enciende una lámpara y se la pone bajo el celemín, sino sobre el candelero, para que alumbre a cuantos hay en la casa. (NAC 1975)

Und wer ein Licht anzündet, wird keinen Topf darüber stülpen, sondern es auf den Leuchter stellen, damit es allen im Haus hellen Schein gibt. (DNT 1999)
[*Somebody who lights a lamp will not put a pot over it but place it on a lampstand to make it give light to everyone in the house.* My back-translation]

According to the *Dictionary of Contemporary English*, a bushel is "a measure, esp. of grain; about 36.5 litres." According to what I saw some time ago in a maritime museum in Durban, South Africa, a bushel could be a a brass container very much like a pot. In a German encyclopedia, the corresponding *Scheffel* is represented as a kind of basket. Spanish native speakers tell me they have no idea what a *celemín* looks like. The reference to such a strange object puzzles the reader and may divert their attention from the real point Jesus wants to make in the situation. Since it is neither the form nor the material of the object that is alluded to in the parable but its function to hide something which should be visible, referring to a pot or a bowl would be perfectly sufficient. Translating *put a pot over it* instead of *put it under a pot* makes the presented scene even more natural.

The last example of this section refers to a word, *porneia*, which in the New Testament covers a wide range of social phenomena, from immoral behaviour, adultery and prostitution to marrying gentiles. The King James Authorized Version consistently translates *porneia* by *fornication*; NTF 1922 renders it as *fornication*; most German versions – including the modern *Gute Nachricht Bibel*, which in many other respects corresponds in style to the English *Good News Bible* – use the old word *Unzucht*, which is marked as obsolete and has, today, a connotation either of juridical or precisely biblical language, referring to phenomena like intercourse between persons of the same sex (a paragraph which was abolished in German criminal law many years ago), between adults and children, between humans and animals, etc. DNT 1999 uses different words to translate *porneia* according to each context, whereas the other translations very often try to use the same target-language word wherever possible. GNB 1976 usually refers to *immorality* or *immoral behaviour*. By using this general term, almost a euphemism for the phenomena the original texts refer to, the severity of the biblical law is reduced to a general principle of human ethics, and the readers might wonder whether St. Paul is just a preacher of morality (e.g., in English) or a narrow-minded enemy of sexuality (e.g., in Spanish).

Example 4
Mt. 15,19: DNT 1999: Sexgier [*sexual greed*]; GNB 1976: do other immoral things; NTF 1922: débauches; NAC 1975: fornicaciones.

1Cor. 6,9: DNT 1999: Lüstling [*lecher*]; GNB 1976: people who are immoral; NTF 1922: les impudiques: NAC 1975: fornicarios

1Cor. 6,18: DNT 1999: Lasst euch auf keinen Fall mit einer Dirne ein! [*Never get involved with a prostitute!*]; GNB 1976: Avoid immorality; NTF 1922: Fuyez l'impudicité; NAC 1975: huid la fornicación

Hebr. 13,4: DNT 1999: Gott ist ein strenger Richter über Lüsternheit… [*God is a severe judge over lecherousness…*]; GNB 1976: God will judge those who are immoral…; NTF 1922: débauches; NAC 1975: los fornicarios

Rev. 2,20: DNT 1999: Mit ihrer Lehre verführt sie diejenigen, die mir gehorsam sind, dazu, Mischehen mit heidnischen Frauen einzugehen. […*she misleads those who obey me into marrying gentiles*]; GNB 1976: …she misleads my servants into practising sexual immorality; NTF 1922: pour qu'ils s'adonnent à fornication; NAC 1975: extravía a mis siervos hasta a formicar

In some other cases, the lack of cultural background knowledge does not interfere with comprehension but lessens the appellative function of a passage, as in the following description of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21,18-21). The source-culture readers knew all the precious and semi-precious stones that are mentioned, whereas target-culture readers cannot be expected to be familiar with the colour and quality of most of them. This is why we decided to explicitate their colours in order to make the readers aware that it is their beauty and not their immense value that is important for the author. GNB 1976, which also aims at comprehensibility, differs from DNT 1999 in that the latter emphasized the appellative function, whereas the former treats the text like a technical description.

Example 5a
The wall was made of jasper, and the city itself was made of pure gold, as clear as glass. The foundation-stones of the city wall were adorned with all kinds of precious stones. The first foundation-stone was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh yellow quartz, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chalcedony, the eleventh turquoise, the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls; each gate was made from a single pearl. The street of the city was of pure gold, transparent as glass. (GNB 1976)

Example 5b
The city wall is made of jasper, and the city itself of gold that is as pure as glass. The foundations of the city wall are of great beauty, for they are built out of precious stones in many different colours. The first foundation-stone is jasper, the second blue sapphire, the third red agate, the fourth light green emerald, the fifth reddish brown onyx, the sixth yellowish red carnelian, the seventh yellow-gold quartz, the eighth beryl as green as the sea, the ninth shining yellow topaz, the tenth chalcedony, shimmering green-golden, the eleventh deep red turquoise, the twelfth purple amethyst. The twelve gates are twelve pearls, each gate is made from a single pearl. The main street of the city is of gold as pure as glass. (DNT 1999, my back-translation)

The German translation has a specifically poetic touch because the adjectives describing the colours are compounds (*hellgrün*, *rotbraun*, *gelbrot*, *goldgelb*, *meergrün*, *gelbglänzend*, *goldgrün schimmernd* etc.), most of which cannot be imitated in English.

4.3.2. Strange behaviour in familiar situations

In face-to-face communication, the presence of other than verbal means of expression is obvious. We can distinguish **paralanguage**, that is, the way people speak (voice quality, loudness, pitch) and the independent, word-like utterances they produce (like *hum*), **kinesics**, that is, the way people move, their body-language, gestures, manners, postures, eye and face movements, whether or not they look into each others faces, **proxemics**, that is, the distance they keep in relation to each other, and whether (and where) they touch each other in the course of the communication, **chronemics**, that is, the behaviour in, and the concept of, time, including such aspects as the length of pauses in conversation, the conventions of turn-taking, or general norms of "punctu-

ality," **chemical and dermal reactions** like sweat, tears, blushing, goose-pimples, and **object-mediated or bodily generated sounds**, such as the slamming of a door or the sound of footsteps, or the noises we make (or refrain from making) when we are eating (cf. Poyatos 1993: 137ff.).

Some forms of behaviour (such as the blushing of a young girl at the sight of the boy she is in love with) may seem to be universal, but, as a rule, any form of (intentional) behaviour is determined by culture-specific conventions.

If these forms of behaviour are obvious in face-to-face communication, they are not as visible, although equally existent, in written communication, where, as Poyatos (1983: 290) puts it, the "multisensory and intellectual world imagined by the writer is reduced to the morphologico-syntactical representation which is the written text, that is, a visual form of expression." The reader has to reverse the process, amplifying the visual signs, "by mentally bringing them back to life and turning the written words into intimate imagined sensations of optical, auditive, tactile, olfactory, kinesthetic, and dermal experiences" (Poyatos 1983: 292). The "channel reduction" that takes place in writing down something felt, seen or heard, is followed by a "channel amplification" in the act of reception. What is "brought back to life" is the situation described in the text, where agents (fictitious or real) are involved in communicative or non-communicative actions. It is fairly obvious that the ability to "bring back to life" something written down in a text presupposes that the reader has experienced analogous situations, where people have acted or reacted in a similar way. The following example refers to Mary Magdalene's nonverbal behaviour after finding the tomb empty (Jn. 20, 1-18). The underlined passages are incoherent for a reader who does not know how to interpret her gestures and body movements.

Example 6a

Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been taken away from the entrance. She went running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and told them, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" *[3-10: The two disciples accompany Mary Magdalene to the tomb, one after another, they look into the tomb and find the linen wrappings, but no trace of Jesus' body. Then they go home.]* Mary stood crying outside the tomb. <u>While she was still crying, she bent over and looked in the tomb and saw</u> two angels there dressed in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head and the other at the feet. "Woman, why are you crying?" they asked her. She answered, "They have taken my Lord away, and I do not know where they have put him!" Then she turned round and saw Jesus standing there; but she did not know that it was Jesus. "Woman, why are you crying?" Jesus asked her. "Who is it that you are looking for?"
She thought he was the gardener, so she said to him, "If you took him away, sir, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" <u>She turned towards him</u> and said in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (This means "Teacher.")
"<u>Do not hold on to me</u>," Jesus told her, "because I have not yet gone back up to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them that I am returning to him who is my Father and their Father, my God and their God." (GNB 1976)

Example 6b

Or, le premier jour de la semaine, Marie la Magdalène vint, dès le matin, comme il faisait encore sombre, au tombeau, et elle vit la pierre écartée du tombeau. Aussi courut-elle trouver Simon Pierre et l'autre disciple, (celui) que Jésus aimait, et elle leur

dit: «On a levé le Seigneur du tombeau, et nous ne savons pas où on l'a mis.» […]
Cependant Marie se tenait près du tombeau, dehors, pleurant. <u>Tout en pleurant, elle se
pencha sur le tombeau</u>, et elle vit deux anges en habits blancs, assis, l'un à la tête, et
l'autre aux pieds, (à l'endroit) où avait reposé le corps de Jésus. Et ces (anges) lui dirent:
«Femme, pourquoi pleures-tu?» Elle leur dit: «C'est qu'on a enlevé mon Seigneur et je
ne sais où on l'a mis.» Cela dit, elle se retourna et elle vit Jésus qui se tenait (là); et elle
ne s'aperçut pas que c'était Jésus. Jésus lui dit: «Femme, pourquoi pleures-tu? Qui
cherches-tu?» Elle, pensant que c'était le jardinier, lui dit: «Seigneur, si c'est toi qui l'as
emporté, dis-mois où tu l'as mis, et je l'enlèverai.» Jésus lui dit: «Mariam!» Elle, <u>se
tournant,</u> lui dit en hébreu: «Rabbuni!» – Ce qui veut dire «maître.» – Jésus lui dit: «<u>Ne
me touche pas</u>; car je ne suis pas encore monté vers le Père. Mais va trouver mes frères
et dis-leur (que) je monte vers mon Père et votre Père, (vers) mon Dieu et votre Dieu.»
(NTF 1922)

Visualizing the scene, we find it rather surprising in two instances. First, we cannot
understand why Mary is bending down to look into the tomb although she had been
sure that it was empty when she first found the stone removed and had witnessed
Simon Peter and the other disciple finding the tomb empty. Second, we may wonder
why Jesus tells her not to hold on to him (in GNB) or to touch him (in NTF) although
she has merely turned towards him and called him Master or Teacher.

From the original text it becomes clear that she actually does not "look into" the
tomb intentionally (in order to verify something she had been assuming), but the
sight of the two angels *hit her eyes* while she was crying. The apparent incoherence of
the passage kept puzzling me until I remembered mourning scenes in the Middle
East. There, nobody would *stand crying,* rather a woman mourning the death of
somebody dear to her shows strong body action, bending forward and backward.
This recollection is confirmed in works about Palestinian mourning rituals, where a
bent back is an indispensable prerequisite. Moreover, the verb describing what Mary
is doing does not mean *to stand (on one's feet)*. It is a generic verb meaning *to be
located*. Nevertheless, all the German and English translations I looked at tell us that
she *stands* outside the tomb. If we imagine her bending forward or down in grief
while she is crying, it is obvious that, in doing so, she accidentally sees the angels in
the tomb.

From the (familiar) way he calls her name, Mary realizes that the man whom she
took for the gardener is Jesus. Therefore, she turns towards him (but why would she
"turn towards" him, if she had been talking to him before?) and calls him "Teacher."
Jesus' reaction to her behaviour shows that he wants to keep her at a distance and
prevent her from touching him ("Touch me not," in KJV). So, what was she going to
do? Was she going to hold him in order to make him stay, as GNB 1976 suggests? But
she has been his follower long enough to know that she would not keep him from
"going up to the Father" by holding on to his sleeve. It is more likely that she was
going to embrace his feet to express her worship for the person whom she assumes
was resurrected in order to sit on God's right. This interpretation is supported by a
number of other texts, e.g., Mt. 28,9 (KJV: *and they came and held him by the feet, and
worshipped him*). But how can the modern reader guess that this is the missing link
in the scene? DNT 1999 therefore "bridges the gap":

Example 6c

It was Sunday, the first day after the Sabbat, very early in the morning. It was still dark, when Mary from Magdala came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been taken away from the entrance. She went running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and cried, "They haven taken the Lord from the tomb, and nobody knows where they have put him!" *[3-10: The two disciples accompany Mary Magdalene to the tomb, one after another, they look into the tomb and find the linen wrappings, but no trace of Jesus' body. Then they go home.]*
Mary remained outside the tomb, crying bitterly, <u>bent down in grief</u>. When <u>she looked up, she suddenly saw</u> two angels in shining clothes sitting in the tomb, right where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head and the other at the feet. The angels addressed her, "Good woman, why are you crying?." She answered, "They have taken my Lord away, and I do not know where they have put him!" Then she turned round and saw a man standing there. It was Jesus, but she did not know that it was him. He asked her, "Good woman, why are you crying? Are you looking for somebody?"
She thought he was the gardener, and answered, "If you took him away, sir, please tell me where you have put him, so that I can go and get him." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" <u>She made a step towards him to worship him on her knees</u> and said "Rabbuni!" (This is Hebrew and means "My Teacher!") But Jesus begged, "<u>Do not worship me yet</u>, for I have not yet gone up to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them that I am returning to my Father, to your Father, to my God, to your God." (DNT 1999, my back-translation)

5. Conclusions

To conclude, I would like to sum up a few considerations with regard to the cultural gap in Bible translation.

As long as the biblical texts are not translated in their canonical function as the fundamental texts of a religious community, we may state that Bible translation is an activity that does not differ substantially from the translation of other texts belonging to a culture distant from our own in time and space. In this context, I do not consider the translation of biblical or religious texts as a translation type in its own right, as is put forward by some translation scholars (e.g., Wilss 1977).

Many of the New Testament texts belong to text types or genres which cannot achieve their original communicative functions for a modern audience. Therefore, a translation of these texts cannot be based on equivalence postulates. What is needed is a target-oriented strategy where a new skopos is defined independently of the intended functions of the source texts. If the overall skopos is subsumed under the concept of "Otherness Understood," the appropriate translation type will be a documentary-exoticizing translation (cf. Nord, 1997, p. 48ff.) respecting the culture-specific features of both the text world and the communicative intentions of the author(s) and trying to make them accessible for a target-culture audience.

The translation of biblical and early Christian texts is also a "normal" translation in that it requires profound factual knowledge in addition to cultural and linguistic knowledge plus translation competence. Since translators rarely manage to achieve a sufficient depth of knowledge in this complex field and theologians rarely combine their factual knowledge with a professional translation competence, teamwork may be advisable even more than in other fields of specialized translation.

The last aspect may be relevant for translator training. The experience of this translation task has confirmed what I always suspected but was never able to prove.

There is a general translation competence, which is *not* inseparably linked to the language and culture pairs instrumental in acquiring translation competence during training. Once acquired, this competence can be transferred to other language and culture pairs, provided the necessary knowledge of the domain and its concepts and terminology as well as the necessary linguistic and cultural competence is there (not necessarily in the same person!).

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