Translation and Globalisation
Michael Cronin
Translation and Globalization

‘Michael Cronin is the most exciting writer today in the field of Translation Studies. This book tackles the most controversial issues of language policies in a global world and asks some challenging questions. It will fascinate the non-specialist and delight translators everywhere. I loved it.’

Susan Bassnett, University of Warwick, UK

‘Michael Cronin’s book is a valuable reference point in the current debate on the role of translation and translation studies. His innovative examination of the interaction of translation practice, the global economy and today’s multicultural and multilingual realities should appeal both to translation practitioners and theorists and to those working in a range of other related academic disciplines.’

Jeremy Munday, University of Surrey, UK

Translation and Globalization is a critical exploration of the ways in which radical changes to the world economy have affected contemporary translation.

The Internet, new technology, machine translation and the emergence of a worldwide, multi-million dollar translation industry have dramatically altered the complex relationship between translators, language and power. In this book, Michael Cronin looks at the changing geography of translation practice and offers new ways of understanding the role of the translator in globalized societies and economies. Drawing on examples and case studies from Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas, the author argues that translation is central to debates about language and cultural identity, and shows why consideration of the role of translation and translators is a necessary part of safeguarding and promoting linguistic and cultural diversity.

Translation and Globalization is essential reading for anyone with an interest in translation, or a concern for the future of our world’s languages and cultures.

Michael Cronin is Dean of the Joint Faculty of Humanities and Director of the Centre for Translation and Textual Studies at Dublin City University, Ireland. His publications include Across the Lines: Travel, Language, Translation (2000), winner of the CATS Vinay Darbelnet Prize 2001.
For Sylvia and Veronica
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1898 saw the publication of a novel by Samuel W. Odell entitled The Last War, or the Triumph of the English Tongue. Appropriately enough, for a work published on the eve of a new century, it looked to the future and reported back on what it saw. The new world is now the United States of the World and the ‘English race’ has conquered the globe. The triumph of the English tongue is made easier by the mobilization of 1,500 airships laden with bombs and an unquenchable primitive fire. Faced with certain death from the air, speakers of languages such as French, German and Chinese decide that translation is the better part of valour and they set about translating themselves into the language of superior airpower (Odell 1898). In Odell’s book of revelation, when the tongues of fire descend, the message is not to go out and preach in divers languages but to stay inside and speak one.

In writing a book on translation and globalization at the beginning of another new century, the temptation is to give in to the mood swings of apocalypticism and hype which grip Odell’s world and the writings of many commentators on the contemporary phenomenon of globalization. The effects of the dramatic changes in technology and in the organization of economies and societies at national and international level are wide-ranging and Translation and Globalization examines the specific consequences of these changes for translation and translators. However, the work goes further in arguing that translation, and by extension translation studies, is ideally placed to understand both the transnational movement that is globalization and the transnational movement which is anti-globalization. Translation is rarely suited to the binary reductionism of polemic (for or against globalization) and as we hope the following chapters show, that is the particular strength of the activity and why it is so important to contemporary self-understanding.

It is a truism in translation studies to point out that most of the work done in translation is in the area of scientific, technical, commercial, legal and administrative or institutional translation. The point is often made to put literary translation and theoretical writings on the translation of literature in their place. An unfortunate
consequence is a division of intellectual labour, where sophisticated, conceptually dense theories are brought to bear on literary practice with non-literary translation seen as the realm of no-nonsense, commonsensical instrumentalism. It is difficult to see, however, how translation studies could be taken seriously as a branch of human enquiry if all the discipline had to offer to contemporary attempts to understand the new global order was a number of fast-track solutions to maximize translation output and quality. Though these solutions are important at an operational level, they are of little help in allowing people to understand and analyse why translation is so important in late modernity.

Though both literary and non-literary translation are examined in this work, the focus is largely though not exclusively on non-literary translation. This is deliberate. The full significance of non-literary translation in cultures is drastically underestimated. This is not because, as is commonly thought, literary translation enjoys a monopoly of attention and prestige in the academy (it does not) but because the cultural and intellectual stakes of non-literary translation are rarely spelled out in any great detail and are generally referred to in only the vaguest possible terms (‘promoting understanding’, ‘encouraging trade’). The connections between changes in the world of work, business, politics, society and non-literary translation are only partially made. Translation studies in the non-literary area can appear to be condemned to a purely reactive mode. In other words, instead of realizing that its disciplinary time has come, so to speak, and that it has important things to say about change in the contemporary world, pragmatic translation studies is content, more often than not, simply to register change and to tailor translation courses accordingly. As a teacher of translation and external examiner for undergraduate and postgraduate courses in translation studies, I have been struck time and again by the marked predominance of literary topics in dissertation and thesis work and wonder whether this is not related, in part, to the relative absence of in-depth investigation of non-literary translation which relates it to larger questions of culture, society and language.

If we consider the relationship between translation and new technology to be one of the key features of translation in a global age, then we quickly become aware of one of the problems with literature in the area. Many of the commentators are themselves key players. The obvious advantage is insider knowledge. The disadvantage is that we are not always at much of a remove from a kind of neo-corporate Teflon-speak with its unquestioning acceptance of the profit motive and its unrelenting narrative of success. Politicians are aware of only part of the picture, and that is why we have political science and sociology. Translators and localization professionals have valuable but necessarily partial knowledge, and that is why we need a critical translation studies.

*Translation and Globalization* takes a broad look at translation in a world transformed by the forces of globalization, with three aims in mind. Firstly, the study
attempts to understand the specific role of translation in this particular moment of human history. Secondly, my hope is to show translation students and teachers that translation is not only useful but interesting. Thirdly, the work wants to demonstrate to others, the vast majority, who are not translators why translation is interesting and important. One may argue that it is possible to get others interested in an area not by telling them how complex translation is (which it is) but why it matters. It is by showing those outside the discipline (and within too, of course) that translation engages with questions which are of real importance for the past, present and future of humanity that they are likely to listen. The most cursory survey of the literature in political science, sociology and cultural studies, to name but three disciplines, would suggest that at present, nobody much is listening.

Chapter 1 examines the major changes in the economy and information technology over the last three decades which have impacted on translation. The changes have resulted in the emergence of a new kind of economy which means a radically altered context for translation activity. The chapter then explores different aspects of this context in terms of the goods produced in the new global economy and the relationship between culture and translation in translating for the Web. As technology features so prominently in any attempt to understand globalization, there is an analysis of the role of tools in translation activity, and the suggestion is made that it is neither possible nor desirable to marginalize the technical in any proper definition of what it means to be fully human. Hence, tools are not simply a convenient adjunct to the activity of the translators but are central to definitions of what they do and always have done. The chapter then considers the role of the social in conjunction with the technical as translation is identified not simply as a means of instant communication but as a channel of transmission over time. A repeated difficulty in charting the emergence of a new economy and new global order is to reduce all societies to a standard (usually Western) model, and Chapter 1 argues for the existence of many different kinds of modernity if we are to properly understand the functioning and consequences of translation. An essential element of plurality in the world is language difference, and the chapter highlights the limited possibility for genuine understanding and the vulnerability which results from aggressively monoglot views of the world. If all translation is a vivid demonstration of interdependency, then any real independence of spirit, it is argued, can only come about through a grateful acknowledgement of our many cultural and linguistic dependencies.

Chapter 2 deals with contemporary models of translation organization and asks what the role of the translator might be in the twenty-first century. The key concept investigated in the chapter is that of the network and how the properties of networks can be explored to describe features of translation activity worldwide. In particular, questions are asked about who gets included in and who is excluded
from translation networks. The concern with exclusion has been a powerful mobilizing factor for anti-globalization movements, and the chapter explores the relevance for translation studies of critiques that have been made of market utopianism and highly selective neo-liberal versions of pluralism. Although the received wisdom is that globalization spells the end of the nation-state, the chapter challenges this notion and looks at the particular relationship between translation and the developmental state. In viewing humans as citizens rather than consumers, any critical theory of globalization must look to restoring agency to people, and not simply view global trends and flows as abstract and overwhelming. One response is to reject gigantism in favour of a return to ‘smallness’, the championing of minority translation practice examined in Chapter 5. Another way of restoring agency to translators is to look again at their role as mediators in the contemporary world and to stress the transmissive as opposed to the communicative dimension to their activities. A more proactive view of the translator and translation also means interrogating the ends of translation in an era when the (technical, economic) means of translation have increased exponentially. Among those ends are the contribution of translation to genuine biocultural diversity on the planet. Revitalizing our notion of what the ends of translation are leads the chapter to conclude with an examination of a number of basic categories of translation thinking in a period of accelerated change.

Chapter 3 takes a close look at the changing geography of translation practice and at how translation in one small country, Ireland, has been affected by contemporary globalization. The chapter looks to the past initially, stressing that any attempt to look at the Irish experience must situate it in the context of a transnational translation history. It links the trans-national dimension to the experience of other post-colonial nation-states and shows how fundamental the diasporas are to any understanding of how post-colonial states now operate. The chapter then considers the specific technical and economic reasons for Ireland’s emergence as one of the most important centres in the world for the translation of computer materials. This dramatic transformation of the fortunes of the Irish translation community is related to the features of globalization described in Chapter 1. The extent to which the type of translation practised in late modern Ireland favours or militates against cultural diversity is then considered. Taking the issue beyond Ireland, the chapter uses the notion of censorship to ask whether the age of globalization has not witnessed a continued censorship or ignoring of translation experience. Although more obvious forms of censorship, such as physical assaults on translators or the banning of translated works, tend to attract public attention, less conspicuous and more damaging forms of censorship can go largely unnoticed. The censors are less likely to carry handguns than palm pilots and spreadsheets. One setting in the contemporary world where human beings are regularly confronted with language difference and the potential need to translate is the city.
more and more people become inhabitants of global cities, the issue of translation and indeed indifference to translation is raised in the context of an argument for a new, polyglossic civility.

Chapter 4 examines key features of globalization which impact on any future politics of translation, namely time, the rise of supra-national institutions and organizations, automation and the economic might of specific languages. The victory of time over space is often cited as a defining characteristic of modernity, in its early and late phases. Competitive advantage in translation terms generally means getting the job done faster than rivals, and doing this usually involves access to newer technology. The chapter considers the implications for translators of differential access to technology in markets and societies increasingly driven by considerations of time. Supra-national institutions such as the European Union or the World Health Organisation are not immune to temporal pressures, and the chapter examines the translational role of international organizations in the context of globalized information, surveillance and risk management. For any organization – local, national or international – to function effectively in a translation mode, there will be recourse to technology. Increasingly, this technology is seen in terms of automation of the translation process. The chapter analyses the impact of machine translation and computer-assisted translation on our thinking about translation and offers a more complementary and less confrontational way of reasoning about the relation between automation and creativity in translation practice. If literary translation is commonly perceived as the flagship of the creative, the marked imbalance in translation traffic, from economically wealthy nations to economically poorer ones, does not bode well for the openness and diversity promised by the more exalted champions of globalization. The chrono-stratification of languages, the invisibility of translators as mediators and the dangers of a new ‘clonialism’ (the spread of sameness) are examined in the light of debates about the gradual impoverishment of the aesthetic resources of the planet. An argument is made here for a more self-aware and activist dimension to the role of the translator in the age of globalization.

Chapter 5 looks at the world in a minor key. Current trends point to the alarming fragility of the linguistic ecosystem of the planet and the unprecedented rate of language loss. Not only are the majority of the world’s minority languages threatened with extinction this century but few languages are likely to escape the condition of being ‘minority’ languages if present developments go unchecked. The relative indifference of translation studies to the situation of minority languages is considered alongside the differing responses of a minority language to translation, seen alternatively as a threat or a godsend. The importance of considering minority languages in areas other than literary translation is stressed, as occasionally the tendency can be to see the minor as functioning solely in the artistic or aesthetic domain, and wider understandings of culture, as affecting all areas
of life, are not taken into account. The difficulty for communities in defending their languages against outside pressures is examined in the context of all resistance to translation being seen as uniquely regressive and essentialist. In particular, the chapter looks at how, in various areas such as training and research, the minority perspective might be brought to bear on translation studies. Consideration is also given to how, from a nomadic translation perspective, travelling in a minority language is a way of illuminating translation dilemmas in the contemporary world.

If speakers of minority languages are major consumers of translation products (if only to make sense of the world in their own language) then how do they maintain their identity in a world subject to any number of homogenizing forces? Does openness mean the end of diversity or does diversity carry with it the promise of openness? It is in this context that an argument is advanced in favour of a new translation ecology which attaches due importance to particularism and place without a reactionary retreat to ethnocentric smugness.

Martha Nussbaum has observed that ‘[c]ultivating our humanity in a complex, interlocking world involves understanding the ways in which common needs and aims are differently realized in different circumstances’ (Nussbaum 1997: 10). This understanding is inconceivable without the agency of translation. We cannot understand the ways in which needs and aims are differently realized if, due to language difference, we have no way of knowing what these aims and differences are. Our narrative imagination – our ability to try to imagine what it is like to be someone else from another language, another culture, another community or another country – is itself a mere figment of the imagination if we have no way of reading the books, watching the plays, looking at the films produced by others. In other words, if citizenship is seen as no longer exclusively defined by nationality or the nation-state (Delanty 2000), then any active sense of global citizenship must involve translation as a core element. However, translation should not be seen here in purely instrumental terms. Translation is important not simply because it gets us talking to each other or allows each of us to read what the other has written but because it gives us insights into why we sometimes find it so hard to talk to each other and why we may not particularly like or understand what the other has written. If contemporary reality is inescapably multicultural and multinational, then it makes sense to look to a discipline which has mediation between cultures and languages as a central concern to assist us both in understanding globalization and in understanding what it might mean, and why it is sometimes so difficult, to be a citizen of the world.

The Argentinian writer Pablo de Santis in his novel La Traducción (1998) presents the reader with an account of dastardly doings at a translators’ conference held on the Argentinian coast. One by one the guest lecturers on translation meet an untimely end. The hero of the novel, unusually, is a scientific rather than a literary translator, Miguel De Blast. The subject of his own lecture is a fictitious Soviet
neurologist named Kabliz. Kabliz interests De Blast because he worked on the case of a simultaneous interpreter who could not stop translating. Every time the interpreter heard a word, she felt an overwhelming urge to translate it. No longer able to live in one language, she found herself inhabiting a Joycean echoland. She is eventually ‘cured’ of her affliction through a mixture of drugs and hypnosis. The latter bring her back to a pre-Babelian childhood where words and meanings coincide in one language and the echoes are finally silenced. Miguel De Blast gives his lecture and survives the conference. But he knows that the echoes of other languages are always there, always troubling the unilingual visionaries of Odell’s millenarian fantasies. In *Finnegans Wake*, Noah and Babel are tutelary presences in the earlier part of the work and Joyce is haunted by a Dublin that keeps on doubling up – doubling up as other times, other places, other languages. The narrator asks: ‘So This is Dyoublong? Hush! Caution! Echoland’ (Joyce 1939: 13).

‘Dyoublong’ is the site of the troubled Joycean question, ‘Do You Belong?’ Translation on a planet which currently has more than 6,000 language communities is an increasingly complex and challenging answer to that question. The last thing we want in the Echoland that is our planet is to be condemned to the sounds of our own voices.
1 Translation and the global economy

In AD 828, two merchants arrived in the city of Venice with a corpse. The body was not any old body, however, but that of St Mark, the Evangelist. They had stolen the mortal remains of the saint from the tomb where he lay in Alexandria with the help of the Christian guards who were fearful for the fate of Mark under Saracen rule. The shroud was slit up the back, the body removed and the remains of St Claudian put in its place. The mortal remains were taken to a waiting ship where they were covered in quantities of pork and the dead saint was spirited away to a city which would make the lion of the Evangelist a symbol of its greatness in the centuries to come (Norwich 1983: 28–9).

Translation

Saintly body-snatching was not an uncommon practice in the medieval period. In The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity Peter Brown notes, 'A hectic trade in, accompanied by frequent thefts of, relics, is among the most dramatic, not to say picturesque aspects of Western Christendom in the Middle Ages' (Brown 1981: 88). It was, after all, preferable to bring the relics to believers than have large numbers of believers travelling long, uncertain distances to the relics, or as Brown puts it, 'Translations – the movements of relics to people – and not pilgrimages – the movement of people to relics – hold the centre of stage in late antique and early medieval piety' (ibid.: 90).

The act of translation may have saved on time but it did not save on distance. In other words, although the time it took for a pious Venetian to get to the Basilica was much less than it would have taken him or her to get to the Evangelist’s tomb in Alexandria, the distance between the believer and the relic when the believer was in the presence of the relic was just as great. The relic carried the miraculous aura of origin, confirmed by tales of divine intervention in allowing the translation to be effected, and nearness to its presence was a reminder of farness from its essence. The shrines containing relics were all closed surfaces, the faithful glimpsing fragments and shreds of the sacred through narrow openings. In Brown’s
words, the shrine housing the translated saint is replicating what he calls the ‘therapy of distance’ that is at the heart of pilgrimage (Brown 1981: 87). When pilgrims go on a journey, the principal discovery is not destination but distance. The spiritual value lies as much, if not more, in the wandering as in the arrival. The hermeticism of the reliquary makes the distance travelled palpable for those who have left and real for those who have stayed. In this chapter, we wish to explore the notion of a therapy of distance in the secular rather than the religious domain (see also Josipovici 1996: 65–78). In particular, we want to examine what this medieval practice of translatio might tell us about translation in the new global economy and about our roles as translators, teachers and theoreticians of translation in changing economic, political and cultural circumstances.

Venice was not unusual in being symbolically grateful to the dead. There are few cities which do not owe their prestige to mythical investiture by the presence of departed deities, emperors, saints or spirits. Régis Debray sees sepulchres as primordial mnemonics, an early stage in the elaboration of a symbolic dimension to human experience:

L’os, notre point fixe. Toute civilisation débute par des restes. ‘Tu es Pierre et sur cette pierre . . .’ Martyr, tu seras réduit à l’os; cet os sera mis en châsse; ce réliquaire attirera les pèlerins, qui bâtiront une église par-dessus; et toute une ville va grandir alentour.¹

(Debray 2000: 25)

The standing stone links the past, present and future. It reminds those who are of those who were before and indicates a future time when they will no longer be, but others will be there in their place, contemplating the same stone. In linking a tangible presence to an intelligible absence, the stone or tomb or reliquary is performing a primary symbolic operation. The monument as physical trace also makes the existence of individual human beings transindividual through objectification. It is the materialization of the inscription as monument which allows the subject to emerge for other subjects. Humanity, in other words, is not constructed as an idealist antithesis between subjects and objects with freedom lying in the realm of the subjective mind and necessity resting in the realm of objects. It is the object which allows the subject to emerge and it is in and through objects that our subjectivity is constructed and endures.

And this will be the second theme of this chapter, the relationship between translation and things. In the history of translation studies, the tendency at one stage was to dwell on translation and texts. Translation studies compared source texts and target texts to see what happened and used the results of the analysis to form prescriptive or descriptive laws (depending on the School) of systemic change. In more recent times, there has been a greater focus on translation and
translators. In part, this is due to the strong emergence of translation history as a sub-discipline in translation studies but there have also been the theoretical contributions of Douglas Robinson, Daniel Simeoni, Luise von Flotow and Edwin Gentzler (Robinson 1991; Simeoni 1995: 445–60; von Flotow 1997; Gentzler 2001). However, relatively little attention has been paid to translation and things. By things, we mean here all the tools or elements of the object world which translators use or have been affected by in their work down through the centuries. Though tools are routinely described in an instrumental fashion in the periodical literature of translation technology, thinking on the relationship between translation and the technosphere has been in the main underdeveloped. And yet like any other realm of human activity, it is impossible to conceive of translation outside the object-world it inhabits.

The standing stone is a reminder not only of time passing but of time past and how all that is human changes to dust. In the final section of this chapter, we want to explore what goes on in the afterlife of the soil and suggest that in translation terms our ends may very well be our beginnings.

The informational and global economy

So what kind of world is the contemporary context for our thinking about translation, distance and things? The dramatic slump in Western economies in the 1970s, with record unemployment and high inflation triggered by oil price increases in 1974 and 1979, led to a fundamental restructuring of economies in the developed world, with a strong emphasis on privatization and deregulation (see Castells 1980). The period also witnessed the advent of the information technology revolution that would dramatically transform work practices at local and international levels. The invention of the transistor (1947), the use of silicon for the production of semiconductors (1954), the invention of the integrated circuit (1957), and the creation of the computer on a chip, the microprocessor, by Ted Hoff of Intel (1971) laid the technological basis for the IT revolution (Castells 1996: 40–6). The emergence of PC software in the 1970s would allow the advances in microelectronics to bear fruit in the widespread dissemination of the personal computer (Rheingold 1991). In the agricultural mode of development, increasing surplus comes from increases in the amount of labour or natural resources (such as land) available for the production process. In the industrial mode of development, new energy sources (steam, electricity) are the principal source of productivity alongside the ability to distribute energy through appropriate circulation and production processes. As Christopher Freeman notes, 'The contemporary change of paradigm may be seen as a shift from a technology based primarily on cheap inputs of energy to one predominantly based on cheap inputs of information derived from advances in microelectronic and telecommunications
technology’ (Freeman 1988: 10). Manuel Castells, for his part, has described the economy that has emerged over the last two decades as informational and global. The economy is informational because the productivity and competitiveness of firms, regions and nations basically depend upon their ability to create, process and apply efficiently knowledge-based information.

Informationalism is directed towards technological development, in the form of the accumulation of knowledge and the move towards higher levels of complexity in information processing. The ‘informational society’ is to be distinguished from the information society in that all human societies rely for their cohesion and indeed survival on the communication of relevant information to their members but ‘informational’ refers to a particular way of organizing the economy and society. Castells makes comparisons with the use of the word ‘industrial’:

the term informational indicates the attribute of a specific form of social organisation in which information generation, processing, and transmission become the fundamental sources of productivity and power, because of new technological conditions emerging in this historical period. My terminology tries to establish a parallel with the distinction between industry and industrial. An industrial society . . . is not just a society where there is industry, but a society where the social and technological forms of industrial organization permeate all spheres of activity, starting with the dominant activities, located in the economic system and in military technology, and reaching the objects and habits of everyday life.

(Castells 1996: 21)

Information technologies range from microelectronics and computing to broadcasting, optoelectronics and genetic engineering. What is significant about the information technology revolution is the presence of a cumulative feedback loop between innovation and the uses of innovation so that information and knowledge are applied to further information processing and knowledge generation in a virtuous circle that is also a non-negligible factor of acceleration. Furthermore, as we use information in all aspects of our lives, the effects of informationalism are all-pervasive.

This new economy is global because the central activities of production, consumption and circulation, as well as their components (capital, labour, raw materials, management, information, technology, markets), are organized on a global scale, either directly or through a network of connections between different economic agents.

The informational economy emerged at the end of the twentieth century because the information technology revolution provided the tools or the material basis for this new economy. A world economy is of course nothing new. The
history of empires has shown us that capital accumulation proceeding throughout
the world has been with us for a long time (see Braudel 1967; Wallerstein 1974).
However, as Castells points out, ‘A global economy is something different: it is an
economy with the capacity to work as a unit in real time on a planetary scale’ (Castells
1996: 92 [his emphasis]). Another way of analysing recent transformations is to see
the economy as shifting from a Fordist to a post-Fordist mode of production or
from an industrial system dominated by mass production to one favouring flexible
production. For much of the twentieth century, the mass-production model was
paramount. It was based on the productivity gains from the economies of scale
realized by the mechanized, assembly-line production of a standard product. The
product in turn was sold into a market dominated by large corporations which
were structured on the principles of vertical integration and institutionalized
social and technical division of labour. With the economic slump of the 1970s,
diversification of world markets and the emergence of IT rendering obsolete
single-purpose production technology, Fordism was a paradigm which was gener-
ating diminishing returns. Hence, the advent of post-Fordism or high-volume
flexible production which combined high-volume output with easy-to-programme
computerized production units. These units could respond rapidly to changes in
demand (product flexibility) or technology (process flexibility).

Post-Fordism is the era of lean production, time-to-market, flexitime, the hori-
zontal corporation, the meteoric rise of sub-contracting and the exponential
increase in advertising budgets (see Harvey 1990). The main resources driving
the new economy are information and knowledge. Castells notes, ‘Because inform-
essionalism is based on the technology of knowledge and information, there is a
specially close linkage between culture and productive forces, between spirit and
matter, in the informational mode of development’ (Castells 1996: 18). The
relationship between spirit and matter in these new circumstances is not,
however, always a harmonious one. In a world of ceaseless change and the unend-
ing global flows of wealth, power and images, the search for specific identity,
whether religious or ethnic, as refuge and source of meaning becomes intense.
There follows, in Castells’ words, ‘a fundamental split between abstract, universal
instrumentalism, and historically rooted, particularistic identities. Our societies are
increasingly structured around a bipolar opposition between the Net and the Self’ (ibid.: 3
[his emphasis]).

Self and the Net

Has translation been affected by the fundamental changes in the way in which the
world does business? The answer of course is yes, but as always translation is a
figure less of certainty than of recurrent ambiguity. In the bipolar opposition
sketched by Castells translation occupies a typically both/and position. In other
words, translation partakes both of the Self and of the Net. It is linked both to abstract, universal instrumentalism and to specific, rooted identities. This is cold comfort for those who prefer the digital certainties of on/off, for or against culture, for or against modernization, for or against diversity, for or against homogenization. However, it is precisely translation’s analogue status which allows us to think out the world in its complexity rather than in the reductive simplicities of Manichaean polemic. Let us start with the Net, to be understood here in the broad sense of a worldwide, electronically mediated environment that underpins the operations of the new global economy. An area of substantial growth in the translation industry over the last two decades has been the activity of localization. So what is it? The Yearbook produced by the Localisation Resources Centre based in the University of Limerick gives a useful definition of software localization:

Software localisation covers many different aspects of industrial and academic activity, ranging from the manufacture of diskettes and CD-ROMs, through translation, engineering and testing software applications, to the complete management of complex projects taking place simultaneously, sometimes in a dozen different locations all over the world, involving people working in different languages and cultures.

(Localisation Resources Centre 1997: 7–8)

Localization clearly relates to the translation needs generated by the informational economy in an era of global markets. It is important at this point to make a distinction between internationalization, which is the design of a product so that it can easily be adapted to foreign markets, and localization, which is taking a product that has already been designed and tailoring it to meet the needs of a specific local market (Sprung 2000: xvi–xvii). The implications of the new economy in terms of volume growth in translation are striking. The world market for software and Web localization was estimated by Allied Business Research to be around US$11 billion for 1999 and expanding to US$20 billion by 2004. The number of full-time and part-time translators in the world was conservatively put at 317,000 in 1999 and continues to grow (Sprung 2000: ix). The scale of projects undertaken is commensurate with the rapid expansion in the size and global spread of business operations. One example was a project undertaken by Image Partnership, a multilingual project-management company based in London. They were responsible, along with the printer Ventura Litho, for producing 40 brochures, each of 56 to 88 pages, in 11 languages for 19 countries, with a print run of 800,000 copies. The whole project from initial design brief to delivery of the final printed copies had to be completed in 19 weeks (Hutchings 2001: 42). In the second version of the Microsoft Encarta translation, the project involved the localization of approximately 33,000 articles, 10 million words, 11,000 media elements, 7,600 photos
and illustrations, 2,000 audio elements, 1,250 maps/charts, 110 videos and animations, 1,500 Web links, 3,500 bibliographical entries and 25 articles monthly for the Yearbook Builder (Kohlmeier 2000: 2).

The rise of the World Wide Web means, of course, that localization is moving into different areas such as Web and e-commerce localization. Indeed, given that 91 per cent of the world’s secure sites are in English, translation for e-commerce is likely to continue to expand. The International Data Corporation reported that in 2001 over half of the world’s 147 million Internet users were non-English speakers and they estimated that by 2005 this figure would have risen to two-thirds. In 2003, the non-US portion of the e-commerce market would account for 46 per cent of a US$1.3 trillion market. The Atlas II project of the IDC predicted that, by 2003, 50 per cent of Web users in Europe, 75 per cent in Latin America and 80 per cent in Japan would show a distinct preference for native language sites (Myerson 2001: 14). The advent of digital industries centred around e-learning and other forms of content delivery across the Web has led some commentators to use the term ‘localization’ (Schäler 2001: 22–6). A crucial difference between traditional localization and Web site localization is that the former is project-based whereas the latter is programme-based. Web sites by their nature are never one-off projects. As Bert Esselink notes:

Most professional Web sites contain continuously updated and revised content, sometimes referred to as streaming content. Most of today’s professional Web sites are updated frequently, are provided in multiple languages, and offer a high degree of personalization. The main challenges in maintaining multilingual (or global) Web sites is [sic] internationalizing the site architecture, balancing global/translated versus local content, automating translation workflows, and keeping multilingual content in sync with the source language.

(Esselink 2001a: 16)

The motivations for software and e-localization are expressive of the specific connections between translation and the economy in the global age. Producing a localized version of a product means that new markets are opened up for an existing or potential product. While a domestic market may be stagnant or in decline, international markets may be buoyant and may also support a higher price level. A result is not only increased sales, but also as Ricky Thibodeau claims, ‘a localized product will help spread R & D dollars over a wider base, as a localized version can extend a product’s life cycle’ (Thibodeau 2000: 127). If translation is in what is often called ‘the critical path’ for the sales of particular products, it is because time-to-market is increasingly a global as opposed to a local phenomenon. The dissemination of information through globalized mass media or over the Web means
that potential customers in different parts of the globe are aware of new models as soon as they come out, for example, in the United States. Thus, as Suzanne Topping points out, in the case of digital cameras the crucial sales period is the first few weeks following product introduction. In the case of foreign sales, the equation is simple: ‘no translation, no product’ (Topping 2000: 111). The objective then becomes the simultaneous availability of the product in all the languages of the product’s target markets. In other words, it goes against the profit rationale of companies to have the localized versions appearing after the product launch in the original language. Instantaneous access to information in the original language generates demand for simultaneous access in the translated languages.

**Informational and aesthetic goods**

There is a further dimension to translation demand which not only relates to global information flows but is bound up with the changing nature of the objects produced in the new economy. Scott Lash and John Urry argue that the objects created in the post-industrial world are progressively emptied of their material content. The result is the proliferation of signs rather than material objects and these signs are of two types:

Either they have a primarily cognitive content and are post-industrial or informational goods. Or they have primarily an aesthetic content and are what can be termed postmodern goods. The development of the latter can be seen not only in the proliferation of objects which possess a substantial aesthetic component (such as pop music, cinema, leisure, magazines, video and so on), but also in the increasing component of sign-value or image embodied in material objects. This aestheticization takes place in the production, the circulation or the consumption of such goods.

(Lash and Urry 1994: 4)

The aestheticization referred to explains the prodigious rise in advertising budgets in the last three decades of the twentieth century and the strong emphasis on value-added design intensity in the production of clothes, shoes, cars, electronic goods, software and so on in late modernity. The increasing importance of the sign and the appearance of ‘informational’ and ‘postmodern goods’ has immediate implications for the translation industry. The centrality of information in the contemporary world is reflected in the changing nature of the documentation that translators are called upon to translate. Cornelia Hofmann and Thorsten Mehnert claim that the product-relevant information of tomorrow is going to be quite different from what is conventionally understood to be documentation at present. They note two developments forcing change. First, there is the integration of
User documentation was a separate source of information in the past, but it is becoming an ever more integrated product component (Hofmann and Mehnert 2000: 59). So product-based information can be part of online help in a piece of software or take the form of a ‘wizard’ that solves users’ problems or helps them to perform a particular task. Second, products themselves are more and more information-intensive: ‘[p]roducts require an increasing volume of information for proper performance and functioning’ (ibid.). Thus, a car with a navigation system will need large amounts of geographical data, or a pocket scanner which provides elementary translation will contain a considerable amount of linguistic information.

If information is often hailed as the basic raw material of the new economy and significant economic gains are to be made from the production of goods with a high cognitive content, then it follows that language itself is not only a key factor in the expression of that information but it is also a crucial means in accessing the information. Information-density in one language can imply, of course, a gravitation towards that language as people seek to have rapid admission to this valuable economic raw material (see Crystal 1997). Conversely, speakers of different languages can increase the pressure on translators and the translation industry to translate ever-increasing volumes of information more and more quickly. A dystopian scenario of the information–language nexus would see everyone translating themselves into the language or languages of the primary suppliers of information and so dispensing with the externality of translation. Another view, borne out by the statistics above on preferred use of Web sites in the native language and the exponential growth in translation in recent decades, is that translators are still indispensable intermediaries in the new informational economy and are likely to remain so precisely because information is so important. For many subjects in the informational economy, the language of (native) expression remains the preferred language of (individual) access.

Information alone is certain good and the second category of objects described by Lash and Urry, the primarily aesthetic or postmodern goods, bring with them their own translation imperatives. When Robert C. Sprung claims that ‘the most effective way to make a product truly international is to make it look and feel like a product in the target country . . . not merely give it a linguistic facelift by translating the words of its documentation or user-interface’ (Sprung 2000: xiv), there is a sense in which he is indicating the importance of the aesthetic alongside the more immediately obvious relevance of the cognitive. The decision to produce a Japanese version of an English-language e-commerce Web site selling custom-made golf clubs via the Internet was not simply a question of providing the Japanese customers with the appropriate information. As Susan Cheng observed, ‘Given the commercial nature of the site, language and presentation were critical. Almost all text and graphics would be translated in a culturally targeted way that
reinforced the site’s marketing message and merchandising functions’ (Cheng 2000: 30). The stress on translation in a ‘culturally targeted way’ suggests the primacy of functionally oriented, domesticating strategies in localization, though it is significant that foreignizing elements were retained in the presentation of particular product names, product descriptions and marketing slogans as these were seen ‘to have particular American appeal for the Japanese customer’ (ibid.: 31). In this way, the site provides the aesthetic comfort of the familiar with the aesthetic appeal of the exotic.

The hybridity of text-types in the translation environment of the informational economy is a factor that further indicates the changing relationship between translation and its markets. The Web leads to the breakdown of traditional divisions between technical and marketing material, each with its own separate type of documentation and specific means of communicating with clients. Hofmann and Mehnert note: ‘Information is distributed through intranets/extranets, and the content from different corporate functions has to be well synchronized and presented in a coherent fashion’ (Hofmann and Mehnert 2000: 60). This convergence of previously distinct types of documentation and means of distribution shows that it is increasingly difficult to separate out purely cognitive goods from purely aesthetic ones. Such difficulty is only to be expected if aestheticization increasingly takes place in the production, circulation and consumption of goods in the new economy. As we shall see in the discussion of automation and machine translation, translators may in fact be simply unable to cope with the geometrical expansion in demand for translated information, but the significant added-value component of the aesthetic in the production and delivery of goods and services in the informational economy points to their continued if not increased importance as linguistic and cultural brokers.

**Localization and culture**

How does the increased aestheticization of goods, informational or otherwise, tally with the globalization of their distribution and do translators have to sacrifice cultural nuance to customer deadlines? Do translators now operate on a planetary scale and at what cost? The planetary view of translation is succinctly expressed by Damien Scattergood, Localisation Technology Group Manager for Symantec, who declared in an interview: ‘Symantec’s Localisation Tools suite is EarthWorks. It’s a name coined from making our products work worldwide. Earth is our market’ (Localisation Ireland 2000: 10). Symantec’s best-known product is the Norton AntiVirus software, and rapid response to new viruses is crucial. The response is not only technical but linguistic. Same-day delivery of US and German products is a standard requirement. As Scattergood notes, ‘We’re pushing back barriers all the time. Time to market is a big priority. Our tools have a strong automation focus.’
I’m looking for edges all the time. If our engineer does something twice, I want to know why, and how our tools can remove the repetition’ (ibid.: 10). Speed, automation, and elimination of the slowdown factor of repetition are repeated concerns for the cost-conscious localization sector.

Another localization firm, SimulTrans, speaks about the implementation of localization programmes, ‘designed to streamline translation process and recycle as much as 75 per cent of text from previous translations’ (Localisation Ireland 1999: 5). As the volume of business grows, so does the pressure on translators to accelerate throughput and standardize working processes. This is not to say that localization does not take cognizance of cultural differences. On the contrary, much has been written about the need to be sensitive to cultural differences (Esselink 1998).

In an article on the internationalization of user interface design, Ultan Ó Broin mentions the need, for example, to avoid abbreviations or language-specific word-play, to use functional names and locale-neutral colours and to make sure that country-setting information such as dates, separators and time-formats should not be hard-coded (Ó Broin 1999: 10–12). Though the features of text we have mentioned are often overlooked by software developers and lead to localization problems later, they are not in themselves particularly difficult to identify, and once they have been identified they can be integrated relatively painlessly into product internationalization, that is products designed with a worldwide market in mind.

However, the tendency in literature on globalization to focus on specific, substitutive features of language and cultural difference can obscure more intractable problems of cultural dissimilarity. A case study of multimedia localization in the American firm Compuflex highlighted the difficulties that occur when a translation paradigm from one area of localization comes into conflict with other more complex and exacting translation paradigms. In the late 1990s Compuflex came under increasing competition from other Internet service providers and decided to produce a full multimedia entertainment service aimed at users in the home. The US company generated content in-house which was presented in the form of TV style shows (shows aimed at women, science fiction, news), using the language and stylistic conventions of US television. Compuflex also decided to localize the shows for different markets and it was the Irish branch which was responsible for coordinating the localization of the material. The experience was not a happy one. As Paschal Preston and Aphra Kerr note:

Initially the company followed established localization routines for software tools and CD-ROM reference titles and the work was conducted in the US. However, attempts in the US to localize the TV shows for the French and German markets proved highly unsatisfactory. National producers rejected the localized files, which they felt were patronizing and too American. In one
case the audio files for the French market employed actors who spoke French with US accents.

(Preston and Kerr 2001: 120)

The problems were twofold. Firstly, the primary conception of the global march of technology and of the role of consumer/users within it was fundamentally mistaken. In common with cyberhype and the more utopian academic speculation on new technology, the vision which is often presented is that of the free-floating, global consumer roaming through the global digital info-sphere, picking and choosing items from a planetary menu for private, ahistorical consumption. If IT allows us to surf to the ends of the earth (Earth is our Market), then it is technology, not culture, which dictates the image of the end user. In other words, although there are over 6,000 languages on the planet, there are only two systems of voltage, three railway gauges and one language for addressing air traffic control. Technology unites where culture separates. From this perspective, the instrumental capacity of the IT systems leads to representations of a world with placeless, instantaneous flows. And, in part, when we consider the speed, quantity and nature of financial translations on the planet, the vision appears plausible. However, cultures and places are resistant and, even in their persona as end users of advanced technology, human beings are very much of a time and place. Cultures in a sense enact the therapy of distance that is at the heart of the medieval practice of *translatio*, and translation in more ways than one becomes a meditation on the pilgrim’s progress.

The second difficulty in the Compuflex scenario is the confusion between ‘content’ translation and tools translation. The central concern of the American HQ was to localize at least cost and follow the model established by the localization of packaged office software. In this model, as we saw earlier in the case of Symantec and SimulTrans, the focus is on the economies of automation or near-automation of the translator’s task. The Content Editor for Compuflex described the difficulty for project managers in the Dublin office caught between the cultural needs of continental Europeans and the cultural incomprehension of the US headquarters staff. The French were hostile to any sense of American culture being forced on them and they and their German counterparts had different ideas of what were priority items on the programmes, what seemed worthless and so on. The Content Editor claimed that trying to communicate this to headquarters was difficult because ‘they’re all very technical people . . . you get a bit of a blank wall all the time, and they just say things like “just dub it out, dub it out and give it to them”’ (ibid.: 122).

Though head office wanted to impose a standard terminology across languages, the producers in different European countries wanted more varied, colloquial usage in the language of the different shows. Again, the economic and technical
imperatives of standardization from the core were running counter to notions of cultural appropriateness on the periphery. The ability to technically eliminate distance does not so much eliminate distance as displace it. The Dublin translation project managers found themselves in effect in the position of being therapists of distance, trying to manage the real, intractable distances which existed between the centre and the edges. A primarily instrumentalist approach to hardware and software tools in discussions of translation and localization can lead to a neglect of more fundamental content/translation issues which will only increase in importance with the shift to multilingual Web development and the full exploitation of broadband and cable capacities (see O’Brien 1998: 115–22).

**Communication and transmission**

The difficulty in debates around translation and culture in the global age is arguably a failure to distinguish between *translation as communication* and *translation as transmission*. Here, we are drawing on a distinction that Debray makes between communication and transmission where communication is a part of a much larger whole called transmission. If communication is primarily about conveying information across space in the same spatio-temporal sphere, transmission is about transporting information through time between different spatio-temporal spheres. The horizon of transmission is historical and it needs a medium of transmission (stone, paper, magnetic disk) to make its action effective. However, the importance of media can lead to their fetishization and thus to the neglect of a fundamental dimension to transmission, the presence of a social vector, or more formally, a materialized organization. The social vector is a body such as a school, university, church, state or family which provides the context for the transmission of ideas, beliefs or values across time (Debray 2000: 15).

Failure to understand the importance of social vectors leads to the false dawns of cyberhype. In everything from education to translation, a physical transfer of information is confused with a social transfer of knowledge. It is the social transfer which causes communication to become transmission and therefore to be enduring in its effects. This is one reason for the necessity of translator education, whether through the guardian-angel system or professional associations or universities. They provide the structure, transcending the personal and subjective, which causes knowledge to endure through time as well as to be carried through space. The constituent role of social vectors in transmission also explains why studying translation in isolation from its socialized conditions of production and reception may explain how translation works as communication in the immediate but will not tell us much about how translation works as transmission and, more particularly, how particular forms of translation leave enduring traces on societies.

One example of the latter might be the particular conjunction of medium
(printing) and materialized organizations (monarchy, church) which led to the lasting influence in English of the Authorized Version of the Bible (McGrath 2001). We say lasting but of course historical conditions and assumptions of cultural literacy change. A difficulty for educators of translators is that progress in synchronicity is often paralleled by a decline in diachronicity. In other words, students are increasingly adept at using the tools which allow for rapid information retrieval or the quick despatch of text but deep, historical knowledge of languages and cultures which takes time and effort is not always valued in a culture of informational ubiquity. This entails special responsibilities for translation schools which must make students aware not only of the synchronic possibilities of new tools but also of the transmissive dimension to translation. As we saw with the Compuflex example, this dimension is not confined to the high-art practices of literary translation but informs all areas of content-driven localization.

There is another more contentious dimension to translation practice in our age which is to do with the physical expression of language in the world. The American critic Sven Birkerts in The Gutenberg Elegies offers a pessimistic prognosis for deep reading in the electronic age. Part of his pessimism stems from the changed material status of the word, ‘Nearly weightless though it is, the word printed on a page is a thing. The configuration of impulses on a screen is not – it is a manifestation, an indeterminate entity both particle and wave, an ectoplasmic arrival and departure’ (Birkerts 1996: 154–5). Birkerts claims that the mode of communication of the message has a discernible effect on the status of the message in question and the quality of its reception:

The word cut into stone carries the implicit weight of the carver’s intention; it is decoded into sense under the aspect of its imperishability. It has weight, grandeur . . . it vies with time. The same word, when it appears on the screen, must be received with a sense of its weightlessness . . . the weightlessness of its presentation. The same sign, but not the same.

(ibid.: 155)

It is easy to see in Birkerts’ claims evidence of a cultural pessimism which is periodically retailed by the guardians of high culture. Whether the object of opprobrium is cinema, radio, television or the personal computer, spiritual, aesthetic and cognitive doom is always nigh. Indeed, as we shall see later in the chapter, a facile technophobia is often based on a wholly reductive view of human cultural development. However, it is worth noting that certain developments in or attitudes towards translation may have their origins in a de-materialization of the word. Reinhard Schäler, describing the rapid growth in the use of machine translation (MT) systems, claims that increasingly MT users are not concerned with the quality issues that exercise the minds of professionally trained translators:
This is especially true when companies have to deal with short turn-around cycles and frequent updates of technical texts, and when accuracy and consistency of the translation (features associated with MT output) take precedence over style, readability and naturalness, all associated with the traditional values and reference system of the human translators.

(Schäler 1998: 154)

One can contest the argument that quality is not an issue for MT users, as the professional association for localizers, the Localization Industry Standards Association (LISA), has been to the fore in promoting quality issues (Koo and Kinds 2000: 147–57). However, the short turn-around cycles and frequent updates are a reality. One consequence of this development is that particular kinds of translation are increasingly being done by machine and being used by non-translators. One study showed that 80 per cent of the users of the European Commission’s machine-translation system, Systran, were from outside the Translation Service (ibid.: 153). If the pressure in an informational and global economy is to get information as rapidly as possible, then the ‘gisting’ function becomes paramount in translation, a tendency which can be encouraged by the ‘weightlessness’ of the words on the screen with their evanescent existence. A less sophisticated if much-hyped version of automatic translation is the free, Web-based MT services (see Chapter 4) which offer to translate text, with often hilariously inept results. What is significant is not their unreliability but their availability. That is, the fact that these services are continuously solicited suggests that there is a lower threshold of translation acceptability which may be linked not only to the absence of cost but also to the ephemeral status of the electronic word. In a sense, what human translators have to do, and this is not the least of the paradoxes of the profession, is to demonstrate that ‘weightlessness’ is a weighty matter.

The message is the medium

It is ironic, therefore, that it was Nicolas Oresme, a translator, preoccupied by weighty questions of meaning, who would first give the word communication to the French language, whence it would migrate to the English language. By communication, Oresme understood the emancipation of the message from the medium in translation (Bougnoux 1991). Meanings were no longer bound to the utterances of origin. Centuries later, Marshall McLuhan achieved his own canonic status through the formulation that the medium is the message. He wanted to describe the nature of the new mass media and how they were profoundly altering our perception of reality. Just as printing modified human sensibility, so too had television in its turn. The mediascape described by McLuhan has, however, changed significantly in the decades since the publication of his major works. He
described an era of what might be dubbed Fordist television with huge national audiences watching the same programmes broadcast by a small number of state-controlled television stations.

For many countries today, in the era of a deregulated broadcasting with any number of satellite and cable channels available, McLuhan’s audiovisual environment is more memory than reality. And this has led media analysts to reformulate McLuhan’s basic concept. Video recorders, 24-hour radio, the Walkman, direct satellite broadcasting and cable television technologies all result in much more segmented, individualized patterns of media consumption. As Françoise Sabbah puts it:

the new media determine a segmented, differentiated audience that, although massive in terms of numbers, is no longer a mass audience in terms of simultaneity and uniformity of the message it receives. The new media are no longer mass media in the traditional sense of sending a limited number of messages to a homogeneous mass audience. Because of the multiplicity of messages and sources, the audience itself becomes more selective.

(Sabbah 1985: 219)

Manuel Castells takes this argument a step further and argues that now the message is in fact the medium. It is the features of the message which shape the characteristics of the medium. So if the message is round-the-clock popular music then this will determine the type of visual formats which are used to present the programmes just as narrative styles for sports channels will differ from the conventions used in history channels. If the message drives the medium, then translators have to become as attentive to messages as they are to media. In particular, this transformation effected by the new media entails a greater, not a lesser, concentration on aesthetico-semantic contexts to media texts in a global era. Technical convergence through the diffusion of new technologies produces not less but more fragmentation of markets and it is in this multiplicity that translators will find new homes for old skills. Discussion of contemporary translation that does not take into account the changing relationship between translators and things, between translation and the technosphere in the informational economy, is neither possible nor desirable. But we must not ignore the transmissive dimension if we are to properly situate translators in this new object-world over time.

Translation tools

What then is the relationship between translation and things, or more properly, between translators and their tools? At one level, the very definition of translation relies on a particular understanding of how the translating activity relates to tools, namely, the writing instrument (stylus, quill, pen) and its material support (wood,
parchment, paper). The shift from an oral to a writing-based or chirographic culture entails the differentiation between the activities of translation and interpreting, the former being situated in the chirographic world of literacy whereas the latter is defined primarily by its intrinsic orality (Ong 1988: 5–15). The use of dictaphones and, more recently, speech recognition software in translation points to an oral dimension to translation activity, but even in these instances the orality is heavily mediated not only by the mode of expression of print literacy but by the further use of tools, whether in the form of recording apparatuses or computers. The tools of translation in earlier periods are not only the material objects that allow words to be permanently traced but they are the products of those tracings which in turn will assist translators in their tasks. By this we mean the word lists, the lexicons, the dictionaries, the previous translations, the material resources that will be marshalled by translators to facilitate or improve the translations they produce. Although in the age of informatics it has become commonplace to speak of ‘translation tools’, the term is arguably a tautology since translation since its inception has always implied a privileged relationship to chirographic and later print and electronic tools. Translation without tools simply does not exist.

If writing is a relatively recent invention, less than 6,000 years old, translation has shadowed it from its beginnings. The Sumerian–Eblaite vocabularies inscribed on clay tablets are estimated by archaeologists to be around 4,500 years old (Dalnoky 1977: 716). Along with King Ptolemy II Philadelphus, Demetrius, one of Alexandria’s most famous librarians, was particularly anxious to collect all the books of the known world. To this end, he calculated the library would need 500,000 rolls of parchment (Canfora 1988: 29). It was not enough, however, that books simply be collected. They were also to be translated if Ptolemy’s scholars and, by extension, his kingdom were to extract any benefits from their contents. The translation enterprise included the translation of over two million lines of Persian verse attributed to Zoroaster (ibid.: 33). Another notable translation exploit was the translation of the books of the Old Testament into Greek, which is recounted in the second-century Letter of Aristeas. In the following extract, we are given a brief description of the commencement of the project and of the average working day of the 72 translators:

After three days Demetrius took the men with him and crossed the breakwater, seven stades long, to the island [of Pharos]; then he crossed over the bridge and proceeded to the northerly parts. There he called a meeting in a mansion built by the seashore, magnificently appointed and in a secluded situation, and called upon the men to carry out the business of translation, all necessary appliances having been well provided. And so they proceeded to carry it out, making all details harmonize by mutual comparisons. The appropriate result of the harmonization was reduced to writing under the direction
of Demetrius. The sessions would last until the ninth hour, and afterwards they would break up to take care of bodily needs, all their requirements being lavishly supplied.

(Hadas 1973: 119)

The translation activity is presented as bound up with the technical environment which makes it possible. This environment extends from the built structure of the mansion where the translators work to the built structure of the library where the rolls will reside. It includes the unspecified ‘necessary appliances’, the inks, the writing instruments and the parchment that will allow the ‘harmonization’ to take material shape under the direction of the Alexandrian librarian. Aristeas reports that once the translation was completed and accepted, the secular and religious authorities declared, ‘Inasmuch as the translation has been well and piously made and is in every respect accurate, it is right that it should remain in its present form and no revision of any sort take place’ (ibid.: 221). A solemn curse will befall any who attempt to tamper with the translated text.

The injunction is typically that of a chirographic culture. In oral cultures, material is constantly modified as part of the dynamic relationship between the tellers of tales and their audiences. This is an element of what Ong terms the homeostatic dimension to orality: ‘oral societies live very much in a present which keeps itself in equilibrium or homeostasis by sloughing off memories which no longer have present relevance’ (Ong 1988: 46). In the account of Aristeas, those who alter the authorized version of the translation or even cite the text so altered are the objects of immediate retribution. Theopompus suffers a temporary bout of insanity lasting 30 days and the poet Theodectes is afflicted with a cataract when he tries to introduce biblical material from another translation into one of his plays. The efficacy of the curse implies the possibility of comparison. In other words, it is only if earlier or later translations of scripture can be compared with the Pharos translation that error or heresy can be identified. To do this the text must be stabilized by writing. It is the tools of the translator’s trade, the tools of a chirographic culture, which confer iconic status upon particular translations and indeed ultimately upon named translators, whether they be the 72 named translators in Aristeas’ Letter or St Jerome.

As we mentioned above, it is not only tools as part of the translation process which have been of fundamental importance to translators but translation products in turn are elevated to the status of tool and as such are fed back in a dialectical fashion into the process itself. It is the Greek translation of the Scriptures that the fourth-century evangelist Ulfila will use in his Gothic translation of the Bible (Delisle and Woodsworth 1995: 9). If he seeks to scrupulously follow its word order and syntax, this is because technically, the tools of writing and manuscript transmission make this a feasible translation aspiration. Similarly, when the Armenian scholars
Mesrop Mashtots and Bishop Dinth are sent in the early part of the fifth century by the patriarch Sahak Pertev to the court of Emperor Theodosius II in Constantinople, the object is to procure copies of the original Greek translation which are subsequently used to revise earlier Armenian translations of the Scriptures (Delisle and Woodsworth 1995: 12). The product of one translation process becomes a tool in the commencement of another. The necessary intertextuality of any translation operation implies a technical infrastructure of production and transmission which has always been coterminous with the act of translation. This technical interdependence is accelerated by the arrival of the printing press, whose success from a translation point of view lies in its ability to facilitate both the production and the transmission of texts.

The outcomes are summarized in an emblematic description of a translation workshop in Dublin in the mid-seventeenth century. The narrator describes the work routine of the people translating the Old Testament into Irish Gaelic:

And for the fitting of the copy of the translation for the press, he [William Bedell] never rose from the table after dinner and supper till he had examined a sheet and compared it with the original Hebrew and the 72 interpreters, together with Diodati his Italian translation (which he prized very much). His manner was this: his son Ambrose did usually read a chapter in English, my lord having one copy of the Irish translation and A[lexander] C[logie] another; after this he read the first verse out of Irish into Latin, and A.C. the next, and so to the end; and where was found any mistake of the English phrase or emphasis by the Irish translator, my lord did immediately amend it.

(Williams 1986: 50)

The ‘necessary appliances’ made available to the protestant divine William Bedell by the printing press include a Hebrew Bible, the Greek Septuagint, an Italian biblical translation and the English Authorized Version (in addition to the Latin Vulgate). The purpose of all this activity is the ‘fitting of the copy of the translation for the press’, namely the publication for the first time in the Irish vernacular of the books of the Old Testament (Cronin 1996: 51–9). The technical virtuosity of the printing press not only greatly aids the dissemination of translations themselves but it also results in a greater technical complexity at the point of translation production. The more translations in different languages there are to consult, the more translators become incorporated into networks of intertextual influence that are predicated on the economies of scale of the printing press. Travelling to a bookseller is after all less onerous than a journey to Constantinople.

Translation tools historically are not just other texts, previous translations or the technical infrastructure of chirographic culture and print literacy, they also typically refer to dictionaries and their precursors. It is not our intention here to
give an exhaustive description of the history of the dictionary – which has been
done competently elsewhere (for English see Murray 2001) – but simply to indi-
cate the particular status of the dictionary as tool. Oral cultures do not have
dictionaries, as words are defined in the context of actual habitat and the ongoing
present of the human lifeworld. It is print cultures which ‘have invented dictionar-
ies in which the various meanings of a word as it occurs in datable texts can be
recorded in formal definitions’ (Ong 1988: 46). Prior to the dictionaries of print
cultures there were of course multilingual word glosses and lexicons, some more
detailed than others. What is significant from our point of view is that the trans-
lator working with a primitive manuscript glossary or a multi-volume bilingual
print dictionary has been part of a tool-mediated environment which long pre-
dates the advent of new technology. Indeed, it is only by providing an adequate
understanding of how human beings relate to things and things as tools that we can
begin to understand the proper relation of translators to the technosphere.

Human societies have been variously distinguished from animal societies
throughout history by their capacity to exercise reason or to possess a soul or to
manipulate tools. In the case of tools, the argument is no longer held to be valid in
an absolute sense as certain classes of primates do use tools in particular ways
(Bourg 1996: 126–9). A distinguishing feature of human society is not so much the
existence of society as the existence of culture. As Régis Debray points out,
homo sapiens sapiens appears to be the only species capable of transmitting new modes of
behaviour and original intuitions from one generation to the next. The social organ-
ization of specific groups of primates may be complex but there is no evidence to
suggest that there is a significant advance in cultural sophistication over time. It is
the ability of humans to internalize and learn from experiences they have not per-
sonally witnessed and to benefit from ideas they have not directly produced which
constitutes in a sense their anthropological singularity (Debray 2000: 16–17). The
tools produced by humans become the inert form of living memory that allows
particular forms of knowledge to be transmitted across time. One can only trans-
mit what one can conserve. Crucially, however, this knowledge mutates and the
blades, the flints, the primitive hammers change to incorporate new advances in
the manipulation of these tools. For Dominique Bourg, this cumulative advance in
material complexity is indissociable from the function of language which allows
humans to report on events, behaviours or ideas that are distant in time and place
(Bourg 1996: 125–38). In addition, changes in human use and manufacture of
tools involve not only the adaptive pressures of the present but also the anticipated
needs of the future and the ability to stand outside the immediate lifeworld and
conceive of the world differently.

Foresight and imagination are of course two attributes of human language that
make this change possible. Thus, in human evolution there is an indissociable link
between language and tools that not only does not disappear with the advent of
technical complexity but is in fact strengthened by the phenomenon, as Bourg points out:

la sophistication technologique accroît la dépendance vis-à-vis du langage et de l’organisation sociale complexe qu’il permet. On peut en effet imaginer la transmission muette, par simple imitation, de savoir-faire élémentaires comme l’épluchage d’une patate douce. De telles transmissions sont attestées chez les primates. Mais lorsqu’on passe à quelque chose de plus complexe, faisant appel à une séquence relativement longue et précise de gestes comme par exemple la technique levalloisienne de la taille au silex au paléolithique inférieur, l’apprentissage sans langage devient difficilement imaginable.²

(Bourg 1996: 124)

We argued earlier that it is the object which allows the subject to emerge and it is in and through objects that our subjectivity is constructed and persists. Developing this thesis in the context of the preceding arguments on the fundamental complicity between language and the technical in human development, it is possible to see the construction of the humanity of human beings as a basically *exosomatic* phenomenon (Lotka 1945: 188; Bourg 1996: 118). In other words, the technical environment of human beings is consubstantial with our ability as speaking subjects to conceive of ourselves as human beings or beings of a particular kind in the biosphere. Anthropogenesis is bound up with technogenesis if only because the internal is made external through material media that allow human beings to externalize their memory in a social space (Debray 2000: 53).

Therefore, any attempt to discuss translation and its role in human society and culture must take into account the essential relationship between *technē* and cultural development. For this reason, conventional moves to separate literary from non-literary (predominantly scientific, technical and commercial) translation have a number of unfortunate consequences. First, the exosomatic dimension to human development is ignored and there is a tendency to privilege more idealist accounts of human engagements with language and culture. Second, the role of tools in the practice of literary and religious translation down through the centuries is either marginalized or wholly disregarded. Third, the tendency to view tools almost exclusively in the domain of new technology leads to predominantly descriptive readings of their use (what they do) and a subsequent neglect of the wider implications of their presence in the world of translation (what they represent).

One of these implications is that irrespective of the domain of translation activity, translators are engaged with a technosphere, whether that be the chirographic technosphere of pen and parchment or the digital technosphere of terminal and Internet connection. The point here is not to promote a purely instrumentalist
view of translation and language or to promote a naive form of technological
determinism but to see current developments in the context of a long translatorial
involvement with technologies external to the human body. If this is the case, then
we can see the relationship between translators and new technology in the informa-
tional society less as a schismatic break with a venerable craft tradition than as a
further stage in the development of an exosomatic dimension to human engage-
ment with translation.

**Material organizations**

To emphasize the relationship between translators and tools is not to fetishize the
tools per se but to explore the relations that exist. Industry publications may
describe at length the capacities or attributes of new pieces of software and this
will be useful instrumental knowledge for the translator but such writing tells us
little about the connection between translators and the technical environment they
inhabit. In this respect, Debray makes a useful distinction between organized
matter (*matière organisée*) and material organization (*organisation matérialisée*).
Organized matter in the form of a building (e.g. a church) can last only if it is supported
by a material organization in the shape of a socially constituted body committed to
transmitting a particular set of values (e.g. an institutional religion). When one
material organization goes into decline, the survival of organized matter, of the
physical object, may be ensured by another material organization (e.g. the state),
vector of a different set of values (national memory, aesthetic pride, economic self-
interest (heritage industry)) (Debray 2000: 29). Translations as organized matter,
text objects, have depended throughout history for their preservation and trans-
mission on the material organizations of church, army, academy, company, state,
 supra-national entities, which are socially constituted bodies with the express aim
of enduring beyond the present moment, even if their specific temporalities vary
widely (Delisle and Woodsworth 1995). Concentration on translation objects
alone, whether they be texts or tools, will not tell us a great deal about the role of
translation in society or why particular forms of translation endure and not others.

A practical example of the sets of relationships between translation, tools and
material organizations can be found in the experience of post-apartheid South
Africa. Under apartheid, the nine African languages spoken by the majority of the
population did not have official status (Wallmach and Kruger 1999: 276). Con-
versely, the 1996 South African Constitution specifies that the Republic of South
Africa has 11 official languages. Provision is also made for three minority indigenous languages, languages used for religious purposes (Arabic, Hebrew and Sanskrit), ‘heritage’ languages (German, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi) and sign language (Dollerup 2001a: 34). In South Africa itself, the language that is most widely spoken is Zulu (22.9 per cent), followed by Xhosa (17.9 per cent), Afrikaans (14.4 per cent), Sepedi (9.2 per cent), English (8.6 per cent), Setswana (8.2 per cent) and Sesotho (7.7 per cent) (Dollerup 2001a: 35). The commitment to a multilingual South Africa is a core value of post-apartheid politics, with clear implications for translation. These implications would have no substantive reality, however, were it not for a set of material organizations committed to the preservation and development of South Africa’s multilingual heritage. These organizations are, first, the state itself, which enacts laws to create institutions entrusted with the development of the Republic’s various languages, second, the institutions which both formulate and implement language policy in South Africa, and third, the universities which train translators and carry out research into language and translation issues specific to South Africa. The second group of organizations includes the National Language Service (part of the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology) which draws up language policy for various levels of government and monitors the implementation of language rights. The group also includes the Pan South African Language Board, established in 1995, whose main task is to promote the development of disadvantaged indigenous languages and sign language and to ensure adequate protection and appropriate respect for the religious and heritage languages (ibid.: 36). The third group includes universities such as Witwatersrand University in Johannesburg, the University of South Africa in Pretoria, the University of the Orange Free State in Bloemfontein and the University of Potchefstroom, and the researchers working in these universities (Kruger and Wallmach 1997: 119–26).

When apartheid was in force in South Africa, interpreting took the form of consecutive and bilateral interpreting, with the sole exception of international conferences where simultaneous interpreting was used. The advent of a genuinely democratic parliament in 1994 led to an immediate demand for simultaneous interpreting in the parliament. Similarly, in 1996 when the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established, the University of the Orange Free State provided around 35 simultaneous interpreters for the hearings of the Commission (Dollerup 2001a: 37). It was also decided to gradually extend a system of simultaneous interpreting to the provincial legislatures in South Africa. In a sense, the enhanced status of indigenous languages is bound up not only with their promotion through official bodies and legislation but with their incorporation into a technical environment, that of simultaneous interpreting systems. Another example is the combined use of radio and television so that the television can show the event broadcast in the original language while various radio channels
simultaneously broadcast the event in different languages (Dollerup 2001a: 37–8). Viewers can either watch the event in the original language or mute the sound and listen to the language of their choice.

In the South African context the level of sophistication of the technology used is less important than the connection between symbolic status and technical incorporation. This connection is often overlooked in accounts of language and translation. It is customary in the history of languages to conceive of the particular role and prestige of languages in terms of their ability or willingness to translate canonic texts into a language. Imperial Rome, Classical France, Tudor England and Romantic Germany accord translation a privileged role in their literary polysystem as a means of bolstering the position and standing of the vernacular (Delisle and Woodsworth 1995: 67–97). The emphasis on the nature of the texts translated, be they literary, religious or scientific, can obscure an equally important dimension to translation’s engagement with power – the exosomatic dimension. In other words, it is not simply the enfolding of culturally reputable texts into a language through translation that accounts for the improved status of a language but it is the extent to which a language is implicated in a technosphere with distributive and transmissive possibilities. Indeed, it is possible to argue that it is the relationship between translators and tools rather than the connection between translators and texts per se which is the decisive factor in the evolution of translation. The canonic status of certain texts may be contested over time for reasons of ethnicity, race, gender or class but less likely to change is the centrality of a technology of production and reception of translated work with related consequences for the languages in play. Though it is clear that changed political circumstances will shape translation policy in a country, it is not always made explicit how the use of particular tools is in itself status-enhancing.

If due cognizance is not always taken of the cultural significance of technology, this may in part be due to a recurrent dilemma at work in the relationship between translation and technology, a dilemma which mirrors an older antagonism between culture and science (Haynes 1994). As we noted earlier, there are over 6,000 languages in the world but only two systems of voltage and one universal time (Kern 1983). Technology brings together where culture sets apart. Irrespective of location, the same model of car, computer or mobile phone will work the same way. As Debray remarks:

Il n’y a pas pour l’ingénieur ou l’informaticien de lieu saint, ni de frontière sacrée, ni d’ombilic du monde – automobiles, ordinateurs et centrales électriques sont partout chez eux; leur fonctionnement n’étant pas liés à une terre, langue, ou religion particulière, ils peuvent se frayer leur voie aux quatre coins du monde.3

(Debray 2000: 56)
Cultures and languages are still largely associated with particular, spatially defined areas of the globe even if, of course, the international status of certain languages and the rise of globalized consumerism have challenged the ready equation between culture, language and place (Clifford 1997). On the one hand, there is the evolutionary logic of the tool which dictates the standardized, the normative, the homogenized and the universal, and on the other, the claims of the cultural which point to the specific, the anomalous, the exceptional and the local. Translation occupies a very particular space in this set of conflicting aspirations. At one level, translation’s *raison d’être* is its implicit ability to universalize, its capacity to take a text from one spatially bound language and culture and transplant it into a different language and culture. At another, it is translation which makes readers even more aware of the specific nature and depth of a particular culture either by displaying unknown riches in outward translation or by revealing hidden potential in inward translation. Arguably then, translation partakes of the generalizing drive of *techne* and of the particularizing drive of culture. The result is that its relationship to tools often runs the risk of being doubly misunderstood. For those committed to a technocratic view of human culture and efficiency, the tendency will be to underscore the generalizing role of translation and ignore translation’s commitment to particularity. Translation will be conflated with its tools, so that the instantaneous, borderless use of translation will be seen as concomitant with the universality of the application of the tools. On the other hand, for those who champion cultural difference, the particularizing role of, say, literary translation can be asserted as being irreducibly distinct from the technophile universalism of technical and commercial translation, ignoring the fundamental exosomatic contribution to the development of human culture and sidelining basic questions of mediation and transmission in the elaboration of specific literary polysystems.

**Multiple modernities**

Technology is not always seen as having a monopoly on the uniform, and culture, in certain manifestations, can be seen as a standardizing force. Stephen Greenblatt, in a vivid evocation of integration of his family into US culture, asks himself why his parents never bothered to teach Yiddish to him or to his brother. One reason, he speculates, is that the extermination of European Jewry by the Nazis meant that Yiddish had become irredeemably contaminated by the Holocaust. Greenblatt is not convinced by his own answer, pointing out that descendants of Swedish, Italian, Russian, Polish, Korean and Japanese immigrants abandoned their languages despite the fact that their forebears did not perish in concentration camps. Instead, drawing on the work of Philip Fisher (Fisher 2000), Greenblatt concludes that it was the extraordinary assimilative force of American enterprise capitalism
that drew the new immigrants into a common language and away from previous linguistic loyalties:

the material world in which they participated was a national culture whose immense transforming power over their lives derived precisely from its refusal of the local and the particular. This refusal was, of course, hugely to the advantage of the new arrivals, because in effect it made everyone an immigrant.

(Greenblatt 2000: 10)

The vision of the United States as a spectacular stage of creative destruction offered by Greenblatt and Fisher was taken by Marshall Bermann to be the defining characteristic of modernity itself. Looking in particular at the Faust myth, he tries to show how modernity and modernization were born out of the enormously disruptive and transformative powers unleashed by the industrial revolution so that nothing would ever again be as it was before. In Bermann’s words:

This atmosphere – of agitation and turbulence, psychic dizziness and drunkenness, expansion of experiential possibilities and destruction of moral boundaries and personal bonds, self-enlargement and self-derangement, phantoms in the street and in the soul – is the atmosphere in which modern sensibility is born.

(Bermann 1983: 18)

The notion of the weakening of traditional ethnic, religious, linguistic and historical ties and their replacement by the loose connections of consuming pleasures is as much a feature of certain representations of modernity as it is of specific representations of the effects of globalization (Luttwak 1999).

However, the danger is to assume that there is one particular culture, one kind of modernity – conveniently Western – and that this modernity will inevitably spread to the rest of the world. The Israeli scholar Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt contests this diffusionist vision of global development, claiming:

Modernity has indeed spread to most of the world, but did not give rise to a single civilisation or to one institutional pattern, but to the development of several modern civilizations, or at least civilizational patterns, i.e. of civilizations which share common characteristics, but which tend to develop different, even cognate ideological and institutional dynamics.

(Eisenstadt 2000: 40)

The result is not one modernity but many, what Eisenstadt calls ‘multiple modernities’ (ibid.: 38). Indeed, in the West itself, no single model of modernity has
prevailed and the modernization of Germany, for example, has been a radically dif-
ferent enterprise from the birth of modernity in Ireland. Castells demonstrates
how the development of business networks in Japan, Korea and China has been
fundamentally inflected by different, inherited forms of social organization and
value systems (Castells 1996: 172–90), and in their study of migration in the
United States and Germany, two British sociologists, Scott Lash and John Urry,
detail the decisive influence of national histories in the construction of modern
society and the economy (Lash and Urry 1994: 171–92). Accepting the thesis of
multiple modernities has obvious implications for translation activity if only as a
means of countering a monoglot diffusionism (English is the Language of the
Future) which masquerades as an absolute truth.

If societies develop differently, at different rates and in different ways, it is, in
part, because the more dizzying visions of global free flows of ideas, commodities
and, particularly, people are negated by the contemporary economic and political
realities. Connie Myerson notes: ‘Globalization does not, and never has, existed
in terms of a single world market with free trade’ (Myerson 2001: 13). Of the
500 largest multinational corporations, as listed by Fortune magazine, 434 operate
within a triad of the European Union, the United States and Japan. Many markets
remain highly regulated and labour movement is notoriously problematic. In
addition, although ‘the Internet is an excellent medium for communications and
entertainment for those people who can afford it, it cannot bring people, goods,
and services together physically’ (ibid.). Therefore, the geographical spread of
globalization and the extent of the penetration of the neo-liberal version –
prominent in localization writing – can be overstated. Hence, not every part of
the planet will experience globalization at the same time or in the same way, so
that within a context of multiple modernities it is more proper to talk not so
much about translation and globalization as about globalization as translation. This
is to suggest that there is no single model of globalization which is adopted willy-
nilly by different nation-states but that each country or community translates
elements of the global and informational economy into local circumstances. The
result is the nationally and regionally differentiated experiences of globalization
across the planet. Translation is not simply a by-product of globalization but is a
constituent, integral part of how the phenomenon both operates and makes
sense of itself. As we have already seen in this chapter, globalization has not
meant the demise of translation as an activity but, on the contrary, late modernity
has witnessed an explosion of demand for translation. However, it is not
simply economic self-interest which is placing translation at the centre of the
globalizing process but other issues which relate more properly to a politics of
recognition.

Globalization as a global movement has generated anti-globalization as a global
protest movement. Michael Bull notes that the ‘concern of anti-globalization
protesters with remote regions of the world, with the lives of people unlike themselves, and with species of animals and plants that most have seen only on TV is predicated on an unparalleled imaginative identification with the other’ (Bull 2001: 7). The ‘unparalleled’ nature of the identification is a matter of scale rather than essence. Human beings have imaginatively identified with other human beings before in human history but it is the number of human beings doing this – the scale of the identification – which has changed. If this trend is set to continue or indeed to increase, the question remains as to what kind of ‘imaginative identification with the other’ is possible. In view of the prestige of the visual or what is sometimes referred to as ‘ocularcentrism’ in the West (Jay 1993), one response might be that for many Westerners the identification might be predominantly visual. Watching ‘species of animals and plants’ on the television or visually displaying ethnic clothes by wearing them are forms of identification with the other, where the other is mute, either because they cannot speak (animals and plants) or because we do not hear them (‘people unlike themselves’) speak. However, it is difficult to see how any meaningful politics of recognition can forgo the question of language for very long. If the imaginative identification with the other is to be something other than the visual consumption of the exotic, then translation must be made present. It is only by engaging with the most complex form of symbolic expression at the disposal of human beings, language, that we can begin to get a sense of lives lived from different perspectives. There are limits, of course, to that identification and it is those limits which have been at the centre of debate in translation theory for over 2,000 years (Schulte and Biguenet 1992; Robinson 1997b).

It is precisely the long, historical involvement with debates around recognition, identification, transfer and transformation that makes translation theory as a body of thought particularly able to take on issues which are vital to the construction of a politics of recognition and reciprocity. When Rosemary Arrojo argues that ‘a theory of translation should attempt to empower translators-to-be and raise their conscience as writers concerning the responsibility they will face in the seminal role they will play in the establishment of all sorts of relationships between cultures’ (Chesterman and Arrojo 2000: 159), the injunction does not just apply to student translators. Rather, a theory of translation is too important to be left to translators alone. If the critique of homogenizing and oppressive forms of globalization is made in the name of difference and the right to difference, then it is imperative that we find a way of thinking about forms of identification that are not simply projections or assimilations. Translation enables us to do this both through the practice of translation itself, allowing others to speak and be heard, and through the theoretical questioning of the practice itself. The self-reflexive sensitivity to the dangers of misunderstanding, distortion and censorship in translation, present in much contemporary thinking on translation, means that a view of translation as naive, unmediated, transparent, instrumentalist communication is no
longer tenable. Therefore, translation theory and practice must be an integral part of any genuinely progressive politics of recognition.

A fundamental tenet of anti-globalization thinking is that local problems are global concerns and that our interconnectedness makes indifference a non-viable option. Environmental risks know no boundaries and the decisions of the European Central Bank can influence the household budget of a cattle farmer in New Zealand. One consequence of this globalization of political consciousness is that the map of political concerns does not always correspond to translation realities. As Diana Jean Schemo notes with respect to the situation of modern languages in the US:

With English increasingly becoming the world’s lingua franca, the study of foreign languages has suffered. Taxpayer pressure on school districts to cut budgets and focus on the basics of reading and math has short-changed language courses, and districts that are interested in teaching foreign languages report a shortage of qualified teachers. At the same time, the need for language proficiency has grown as security threats have fragmented and the ability to eavesdrop has expanded.

(Language International 2001: 6)

Only 8.2 per cent of American college and university students enrolled for foreign-language courses in 2000. That same year, nine students majored in Arabic, 140 in Chinese and a handful in Korean (ibid.: 7). The situation in the US is not dissimilar to the linguistic state of affairs in other English-speaking countries, with student numbers for most foreign-language courses falling, except in the case of Spanish (Nuffield 2000). Spanish is also the exception in the US where immigration from South and Central America is generating interest in the language. More generally, a decline in foreign-language literacy is accompanied by ever-greater demands for foreign-language competence. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has found itself increasingly unable to cope with over one million pages of material to be translated each year and countless hours of conversations to be intercepted and monitored. Robert O. Slater, the Director of the National Security Education Program in the US Defense Department, has described the shortage of translator-linguists as having become a chronic as opposed to an episodic problem (ibid.).

The dire predictions of informed commentators such as Slater would appear to have been borne out by the tragic events of 11 September 2001 and the apparent inability of the intelligence services either to foresee or to forestall the terrorist attacks on Washington and New York. There is little point in possessing sophisticated surveillance technology if you cannot understand the information you collect. Nor can you found an effective foreign policy on a linguistically blinkered
view of the world, which since 1989 has become more, not less, linguistically complex. For example, whereas previously diplomats would have survived in the Soviet Union with one language, Russian, they would now need to master at least 15 official languages to cover the same territory. The clear implication is that not to translate (or rather to demand that others translate themselves into English) may minimize inconvenience but it maximizes risk. The monoglot megastate has all the vulnerability of an inflexible, non-adaptive system, and as influence becomes global – superpowers are, one could argue, defined by their ability to affect the lives of others beyond their own borders – the resistance to that influence (whether legitimate or criminal) will more often than not be expressed in the language of the specific place and culture. That, after all, is part of the point, the defence of specificity against what is perceived to be an alien, threatening hegemony. An irony, with tragic consequences, is that those opposed to the global reach of a superpower may have a keener sense of the global significance of local lives than those who wield significant economic, political and military power. As Michael Bull observes, ‘If Americans fail to understand why their country is hated, it is often because they barely comprehend the extent of its influence. No one travels halfway around the world to kill themselves amid a people with whom they feel no connection. Even in the Arabian desert, America is uncomfortably close’ (Bull 2001: 7). Failure to acknowledge the necessary translation fact of international politics and security not only limits the efficacy of defence and foreign policies but, more worryingly, generates a politics of non-reciprocity where the translated react with the ultimatum of untranslatability. Letting the guns do the talking is one sure way of putting translators out of a job.

**Down to earth**

When guns do the talking, it is often in defence of local ‘blood and soil’. The power of identity can see the lower-case intransigence of ‘earth’ (soil/roots/place) opposed to globalizing perspectives of Earth our Market. However, if we interrogate the metaphor itself, its ambiguities reveal the specific importance of translation in late modernity in overcoming seemingly irreconcilable local/global tensions. One of the most influential commentators on the natural history of Latin America in the nineteenth century was Charles Darwin who wrote about the continent in his *Geological Observations on South America* (Darwin 1846). But it is his last work, published in 1881, the year before his death, which is of interest here. The work was entitled *The Formation of Vegetable Mould, through the Action of Worms, with Observations on Their Habits* (Darwin 1881). What Darwin demonstrated in this work was that the humble earthworm was a prodigiously active creature. Estimating that there were approximately 53,767 worms per acre, he showed that through their continuous digestion of the soil worms were effectively breaking it up,
ploughing it and thus making it available for new growth. In addition, because the worms cannot swallow coarse particles like lime or pottery or bones, they cover the surface with fine earth, thus protecting objects underground from exposure to the elements. As a later commentator, Adam Phillips, puts it, the worms ‘preserve the past, and create the conditions for future growth’ (Phillips 1999: 56). Crucially, it is destruction in the form of trituration, digestion, that makes new life possible, that discloses new possibilities in the tired earth.

Like Freud’s forays into the mind, Darwin’s achievement was to make visible work which normally goes on unnoticed. In his notes from underground, he showed how human agriculture was doomed without the concealed labour of the lowly, the hidden and the marginalized. Moving from the natural ecosystem to the cultural ecosystem, it is time cultural critics turned their eyes to what lies beneath the ground of cultures, the soil which nourishes their continued vitality. Descending from heaven to earth, we find in countless recorded cultures the ceaseless, ongoing process of transformation and conservation which characterizes the invisible, unacknowledged work of the legions of translators working on the planet. They are ritually accused of destruction, of distorting or betraying the original, but it is surely the creative destruction of invention and renewal. Translation without change is not translation but mere citation, leading only to the barren fields of subjection. So translators both ground a culture in their role as architects of vernacular languages and cultures and they creatively undermine and challenge these very cultures in their capacity as underground agents. They conserve the literature and culture of the past through the new translations that are demanded by each age in order for texts to continue their dialogue with the present. And they bring foreign elements, extraneous ideas and fresh images into cultures which, without the kick start of otherness, remain stalled in an eternity of mediocrity.

This does not mean, however, that the foreign elements do not generate their own unease. When the Italian–English translator and author Tim Parks wrote an article for The New York Review of Books on the difficulties of producing difference in translated texts, the title of his piece was ‘Perils of Translation’ (Parks 2000: 53–4). One of these perils for Parks was dependency on the foreign. The more a translator gets to know the source culture and language, the less able s/he becomes to render this difference in another language. The dependence of acculturation makes the independence of translation increasingly uncertain. But that independence itself is often characterized as unbecoming dependency. A clear example of translation perceived as promoting a dependent culture was the critical reaction of Irish-language writers to the state-sponsored Irish-language translation scheme for literary works in the late 1920s and 1930s. The translation scheme was seen to be promoting a derivative culture, dependent on foreign literary products (mainly in English), cultivating cultural cringe rather than native creativity and autonomy (Cronin 1996: 156–61). The scheme was indeed disad-
vantaged by the absence of any support systems for creative writers in Irish but the accusation that translation is the literary equivalent of the cover version has tainted the acceptability of translation in many periods and cultures. But is dependency necessarily a negative condition? Alasdair MacIntyre makes the following observation in his work *Dependent Rational Animals:*

> We human beings are vulnerable to many kinds of affliction and most of us are at some time afflicted by serious ills. How we cope is only in small part up to us. It is most often to others that we owe our survival, let alone our flourishing, as we encounter bodily illness and injury, inadequate nutrition, mental defect and disturbance, and human aggression and neglect.

*(MacIntyre 1999: 1)*

For MacIntyre, the history of thought from Plato to Moore has been curiously uninterested in the connection between human affliction and our dependence on others, and he claims that ‘when the ill, the injured and the otherwise disabled are presented in the pages of moral philosophy books, it is almost always exclusively as possible subjects of benevolence by moral agents who are themselves presented as though they were continuously rational, healthy and untroubled’ (ibid.: 3).

The denial of dependency leads to the fetish of autonomy and an obsessive concern with unconditional freedoms. If dependency and dependants are erased from the philosophical record, this may also explain the well-documented invisibility of translation and translators (Venuti 1995). To acknowledge the fact of translation is to suggest subjection, indebtedness. Legends of origin conceal the origin of legends. In the seventh century, the majority population of Alexandria gradually changed from being Greek-speaking Christians to being Arabic-speaking Muslims. As the Alexandrians translated themselves, they also translated their texts, beginning with administration and philosophy and going on to concentrate on mathematical and scientific works. From the late eighth century onwards, the centre of translation activity moves to Baghdad, the seat of power established by the caliph al-Mansur in 766. The translation was dynamic and creative so that when the work of Diophantus, a third-century Alexandrian mathematician, was re-translated after the discovery of algebra, algebra dominated the style, language and interpretation of the translation (Noël 1985). The translation of the Arabic texts into Latin would be a powerful contribution to the development of late medieval mathematics but it is precisely the contribution of these translations which is increasingly obscured in the Renaissance as Western Europe sets about the construction of Ancient Greece as Early Europe. When Regiomontanus claimed in 1463, ten years after the fall of Constantinople, that a manuscript of Diophantus existed containing evidence of algebra, the Arab contribution to mathematical development was being carefully concealed (Cifoletti 1996: 123–44).
Thus, Jean Borrel in his *Logista*, published in Lyons in 1559, can summarily dismiss the Arabs and the abacus schools as ‘ignorant propagators’ and assert that the main elements of algebra already existed in the Tenth Book of Euclid (O’Reilly 2000). The dependence of Western mathematics on Arab scholarship and translation is elided in favour of an unbroken continuity from Greek beginnings.

Modern historians of mathematics see the dependence as enabling and the translation enterprise as central to the shift in scientific thought in the twelfth century and beyond. Indeed, we might go further and argue that translation generally – and literary translation is no exception – shows the ethical value of dependency. Here it is important to distinguish between *dependency* and *domination*. In his work on *La Dépendance*, Albert Memmi presents the relationship between the dominant and the dominated as one where the dominated have no choice: their subjugation is not based on their consent. Conversely, in the relationship between the dependent and their providers (Memmi’s term is *pourvoyeur*), the relationship may be an unequal one but it does involve the consent of the dependent who see benefits in sustained contact (Memmi 1979: 28–32). The term ‘dependency’ has a dangerous ambiguity, the sense of a relationship that is sought and shunned, desired and condemned. By creating a certain dependent relationship to the source language and culture, literary translation suggests that culturally there is no independence without dependence and that the great unfettered Doer and Maker of the liberal imagination may be not so much transcending dependence as concealing it. Translation reveals our multiple dependencies and the connectedness underlying the consoling fictions of absolute autonomy. It may indeed be the sum of our debts that constitutes our true wealth as peoples.

Geoff Mulgan, a British thinker and social commentator, has written about the particular dilemma which faces us in our new millennium:

Our problem is that freedom to behave as we would wish, without regard for our effects on others, runs directly counter to the other striking fact of the contemporary world: our growing dependence on other people. The world may never have been freer, but it has also never been so interdependent and interconnected. Only a small proportion of the world’s population could now be self-sufficient.

(Mulgan 1998: 1)

Mulgan uses an old English word, ‘connexity’, to describe the novel situation of a world which is characterized less by sovereignty and separateness than by multiple connectedness. The human difficulty is in not allowing the impulse to freedom to destroy the capacity for interdependence. In this respect, the only worthwhile independence in an age of connexity is indeed one that acknowledges not so much dependence as interdependence. Moore’s Law, namely that computing power
doubles every 18 months, is generally well known. Less well known is what Mulgan calls Kao’s Law – after the Chinese-American thinker, John Kao, who made the claim that: ‘the power of creativity rises exponentially with the diversity and divergence of those connected into a network: in other words its capacity to innovate or create depends on dissonant and complementary ways of thinking, not on consensus’ (Mulgan 1998: 31).

Like most Anglophone thinkers on globalization, Mulgan does not mention either language or translation. And yet translation is all about making connections, linking one culture and language to another, setting up the conditions for an open-ended exchange of goods, technologies and ideas. What translation history tells us is that independence has often crucially been born of a dependence on the translation either of earlier emblematic texts from the culture(s) or language(s) of a people or of new ideas from a different philosophical or political tradition. Cultural independence is almost invariably then a matter of translatorial interdependence. And it is because they connect more and more places and people to the cultural network that translators are important. Kao’s Law also explains why translators need not only to connect others but also to connect to each other, whether in conferences or through international associations to other translators from different languages and cultures. Our cultural health and survival relies as much on our mutual connectedness as our physical well-being relies on safeguarding the planet together. But in our closeness, translation also reminds us that there is a therapeutic value in distance. In the next chapter we will consider how new ways of looking at translation must be found if we are to make sense of the changing forms of proximity and distance in the contemporary global age.
2 Globalization and new translation paradigms

George Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev are engaged in disarmament talks and they are locked in disagreement over whose aircraft should verify compliance with the terms of the agreement, those of the verifying party (US position) or those of the verified party (Soviet position). The Soviet interpreter, Igor Korchilov, mishears Gorbachev and translates Gorbachev as saying that inspection aircraft for verification purposes should be made available by the verifying party rather than the verified party. So startled are the Americans at this sudden change in position that they ask him to confirm his statement. He does but it is ‘verified’, not ‘verifying’, which is the correct reflection of the Soviet position. In his memoirs, Korchilov describes the acute embarrassment of the moment:

Everyone now turned their heads to look at me. At that moment I wished the earth could swallow me up. Someone once said that ‘good interpretation is like air – no one notices it until it is polluted.’ Nobody notices the interpreter as long as he is doing all right, but the moment he makes a slip, he becomes the focus of attention.

(Korchilov 1997: 261)

Translation and the de-materialization of space

The interpreter’s observation is a translation commonplace. Good work goes unrewarded, bad work gets noticed. No news is good news. In this respect, however, translation may be typical rather than exceptional. Hegel observed that the owl of Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, spreads its wings at dusk. It is at the end of the day, when things are partially invisible, that a new visibility emerges, the visibility of meaning or interpretation. Too much visibility can produce blindness, not insight. As Bauman observes, ‘[t]hings are noticed when they disappear or go bust: they must fall first out from the routinely “given” for the search after their essences to start and the questions about their origin, whereabouts, use or value to be asked’ (Bauman 2001: 121–2).
Our world becomes apparent to us when part of it goes missing or stops behaving as it normally did. As a rule, then, ‘[t] is awkward and unwieldy, unreliable, resistant and otherwise frustrating things that force themselves into our vision, attention and thought’ (ibid.: 122 [his emphasis]). So if the invisibility of translators has become, so to speak, more visible in recent decades what has disappeared or gone bust? What is behaving in a new or unpredictable way? What is it about the contemporary world which makes translation an awkward, unwieldy, frustrating phenomenon that is forced into our vision, attention and thought?

As we observed in Chapter 1, the global economy has undergone significant changes in recent decades. Over a longer time period, David Harvey has noted that in developed economies, ‘[r]eductions in the cost and time of movement over space have been a continuing focus of technological innovation’ (Harvey 2000: 59). Canals, railways, motorways, air and jet transport have made the movements of goods and people easier and reduced the constraints of distance. In the 1970s, the breakdown of the Bretton Woods system of international trade and exchange led to financial deregulation and the consequent explosion of equities markets (ibid.: 60). The removal of material obstacles to movement or the ‘de-materialization of space’ through advances in the telegraph, radio, telecommunications and the Internet has meant not only that financial transactions can take place on a worldwide scale but that economic activities can now be coordinated by financial and other institutions almost instantaneously over space.

Examples of the shift to the coordination of activities across different countries and time zones abound in the contemporary translation scene. In the case of a German company like Schneider, technical documentation for large systems is created in three different languages (French, German, English) at three different sites separated by thousands of miles. Both the coordination and the translation of dispersed information is made possible through the use of IT systems (Hofmann and Mehnert 2000: 66). Robert Sprung and Alberto Vourvoulias-Bush, in an article on adapting Time magazine for Latin America, note how the availability of a high-speed data network and Quark Publishing System software (QPS) allows not only space but time to be manipulated in the global translation industry: ‘[t]he high-speed network meant that anyone with access to QPS could work in the same “virtual office”. This allowed instant transfer of files between Time and translators. It also allows projects with intense deadline pressure to take advantage of time differences around the world, if a global team were assembled’ (Sprung and Vourvoulias-Bush 2000: 25). The IT systems which sustain the delocalization of translation work away from the centre are also an effective allegory of the mechanisms of control in the global economy.

If there is a geographical dispersal and fragmentation of production systems, there is also the increased ‘centralization of corporate power through mergers, takeovers or joint production agreements’ which transcend national boundaries.
(Harvey 2000: 63). Significant companies in the translation area such as Berlitz GlobalNET or SDL International are strongly committed to acquisitions as a way of acquiring expertise and market dominance. Thus in 2001, Berlitz GlobalNET acquired Leapnet, a company specializing in culturally adapted marketing strategies. Leapnet itself had earlier acquired YAR communications, a firm that had been started by the same individual who had set up Euramerica, a previous Berlitz GlobalNET acquisition. In 2001 SDL International acquired the machine translation division of Transparent Language and bought the localization business of Sykes Technologies (Freivalds 2001: 10). The centrifugal movement at the level of operations is compensated for by a centripetal movement at the levels of economic power and surveillance.

If translation today is profoundly affected by changes in political economy and cannot be considered apart from these changes, how are we to conceive of translation in a global age, and more particularly, what are those elements in translation which make it visible not at the dusk of an old century but at the dawn of a new one? A paradigm which helps to encapsulate many of the contradictory movements in the development of translation in the era of globalization is that of the network.

Networks and networking

In 1974, the invention of TCP/IP – the interconnection network protocol which allowed different types of networks to be connected – led to the development of a new type of computing with significant consequences for the organization of economic life (Hart et al. 1992). From the mid-1980s onwards, computers functioned not in isolation but increasingly in networks. Sharing computer power on an electronic network meant the ability to increase memory and processing capacity. The result was a decisive shift from ‘centralized data storage and processing to networked, interactive power-sharing’ (Castells 1996: 45). The demand for network computing was driven in part by the needs of a globalized economy:

Global competition is greatly helped by the ‘on the spot information’ from each market, so that designing strategy in a top-down approach will invite failure in a constantly changing environment and with highly diverse market dynamics. Information coming from specific time and space is the crucial factor. Information technology allows simultaneously for the decentralized retrieval of such information and for its integration into a flexible system of strategy-making. This cross-border structure allows small and medium businesses to link up with major corporations, forming networks that are able to innovate and adapt relentlessly.

(ibid.: 165)
In the world of the network enterprise, vertical bureaucracies give way to horizontal corporations and software development becomes one of the most dynamic sections of industry, as the networking need for the flexible, interactive manipulation of computers increases exponentially. If the paradigm of the network has found expression in information technology, business, and the physical and life sciences (through complexity theory (Coveney and Highfield 1995)), it has also featured in speculative essays on the future of translation.

The Israeli theoretician Lehman-Wilzig envisages a situation where in the 'completely networked world of the future, if a "personal" SATS [synchronous, automatic translation system] has a problem in translating something it will immediately send out a query to all other SATS around the globe (precisely as we do today with search engine questions on the Internet), to see whether any other SATS has a satisfactory translation' (Lehman-Wilzig 2000: 477). In a sense, the developments are already in train with the use by translators in recent decades of e-mail, bulletin boards, newsgroups and mailing lists. In her description of the Russian translation of Bill Gates' *Business @ the Speed of Thought*, Natalie Shahova mentions the difficulty she and her colleagues had with the English term, ‘knowledge worker’: ‘I posted a query about the contemporary meaning of the term to Lantra (an international forum for translators and interpreters) and found that even natives have different opinions’ (Shahova 2001: 32). The Russian translator may not have got a simple answer, but it was an informed one and near-instantaneous contact with native speakers of English was made possible by an IT network.

To move from the particular to the general, what are the more abstract characteristics of networks and what do they tell us about translation in the global age? Firstly, a network is by definition open-ended and therefore capable of being extended indefinitely. In this sense, the network is open and multi-edged rather than closed and centralized (Kelly 1995: 25–7). As a result, new elements can lead to restructuring without collapse. Secondly, networks have insides and outsides. The potential openness of the network does not mean that it is open to all. In this context, two roles are central, those of the *gatekeeper* and the *switch*. The gatekeeper decides who will or will not be admitted to the network. The switch decides what network will or will not be connected to another network. The roles can of course be conflated if an individual is also a network. Thirdly, the logic of the network is greater than the power of its individual nodes (Castells 1996: 193). In other words, the connectedness of nodes is what permits their flexible and dynamic response to changing situations but it is shared goals, values and end, which allow for a level of structural coherence in the network itself.

The network-based nature of the translation industry is evident from current practice where translation projects are managed across countries, continents, cultures and languages. It is the reticular nature of informatics networks that makes the scale and nature of the translation operations feasible. It is not only at the level
of large corporate entities that this evolution is apparent; it is also operative at the level of smaller organizations. Language Networks, a Dutch company founded in 1995, launched a translator database service that same year. Six years later, it had 19,647 subscribers, its main purpose being to connect freelance translators, localization and translation firms and end users. The Russian-born founder of Language Networks, Yuri Vorontsov, described the functions of the database service in the following terms:

We help different industry players find each other and provide an online platform on which they can build their relationships. Aquarius users can access our online resourcing and tendering applications, project management system, they can search for translators’ contact details and credentials through the search interface, ask questions and discuss professional topics on forums, and even chat.

(Esselink 2001b: 14)

In theory the database can be extended indefinitely and thus is an open, not a closed, system. It is the company itself, through the control of the subscription process, which acts as a gatekeeper with respect to individuals or as switch in the case of agencies or localization firms or client companies. The shared goals sustaining the network are competitive costs, quality, profit and gainful employment.

Crucial to any discussion of networks is that the notion of distance is defined not in territorial terms but as a function of proximity to nodes in a network. Distances between two points are shorter if they are nodes in the same network than if they are outside it or, as Castells puts it, ‘distance (physical, social, economic, political, cultural) for a given point or position varies between zero (for any node in the same network) and infinite (for any point external to the network)’ (Castells 1996: 470). The Chief Executive Officer of Language Networks sees the new virtual geography as transforming the business of translation because in his view both cost and quality are positively affected by this redefinition of distance and proximity:

The quality of the text, translated in the country of the target language, is usually higher and the price is usually significantly lower. Try to request a quote for Dutch–Mandarin in the Netherlands and China and you will see what I mean. The Internet has made it possible to break through these borders. Via the Internet, it is equally fast and cheap to send documents for translation to the most remote part of the planet and to the company next door.

(Esselink 2001b: 14)

Conversely, translators who have no access to computers, modems, properly functioning informatics and telecommunications networks and reliable electricity
supplies find themselves at an infinite distance from the virtual networks of translation exchange, irrespective of their linguistic competence or aptitude for the translation profession.

To be switched off the network is to be condemned to a form of structural irrelevancy which is as damaging economically and culturally as the colonial dependency of yesteryear. It is for this reason that any meaningful politics of translation must address not only what texts are to be translated and how they are to be translated but also who is to do the translation. In other words, it is mistaken to consider the political as simply the realm of controversies over the translation of canonical, high-culture texts. Debates around the reticular inclusion and exclusion of technical and commercial translators are just as vital for the livelihood of many present and potential translators in the world today as the contested translation (or absence of translation) of indigenous literatures. When Yuri Vorontsov informs us that many Chinese translators offered their translation services for free simply to get into business, his enthusiasm may be misplaced but his conclusion is hardly surprising: ‘It could be really exciting to create some kind of price map of the world with its hills and valleys, although we can all guess what it would look like’ (Esselink 2001b: 14). If those deep in the valleys are harder to see than those on the top of the mountains, the chances of seeing those at an infinite remove from the map of the known (reticular) world are zero.

If we should be more concerned with who does translation, this is partly because translators have, in a sense, come into their own in the new role-allocation of the market-based economy. A salient fact of the contemporary world is the penetration of the market economy. It is estimated that around 10–15 per cent of the world’s population were part of a market system at the beginning of the twentieth century, 40 per cent in 1970 and approximately 90 per cent at the century’s end (Mulgan 1998: 54–5). An implication of this development is a marked change in the relative weighting and distribution of roles in society. Geoff Mulgan observes that in traditional societies the vast bulk of those engaged in work of one kind or the other were occupied with the physical transformation of objects. Only shamans/priests, diplomats or traders were concerned with the management of relationships with the outside world.

In the contemporary economy in the developed world, activities are primarily concerned, as we saw in Chapter 1, with the transformation not so much of things as of symbols. Interaction with people (‘networking’) and with the external environment generally is a crucial element in the new dispensation: ‘[t]he labour market now places a high value on the “interpersonal” and intrapersonal skills, the capacity to think into another’s mind, to empathize not just to serve. Qualities are as important as qualifications’ (ibid.: 75). Hence, the legions of intermediaries and interpreters – from lawyers, accountants, journalists and project managers to entertainers, therapists, consultants and teachers – who deal with different aspects
of human relationships and who feature so prominently in the modern tertiary sector. If some of these intermediaries work as ‘lubricants of exchange’, mediating in some sense between people, knowledge, money, health or power, others are ‘interpreters’ who analyse information and are often called upon to make judgements on the basis of their analysis (Mulgan 1998: 75–6). Translators and interpreters occupy a particular position in that they have always been concerned with managing relationships with the world at large; in other words, they have exercised their profession as ‘lubricants of exchange’ and ‘interpreters’ in both the old and new economies. However, the singular expansion of the profession in the post-1945 period is further evidence of the pre-eminence of intermediaries in current economic arrangements. If, as Mulgan concludes, ‘the rise of exchange has left us with an unprecedented density of institutions, cultures, and people whose raison d’être is exchange and transformation, taking something and turning it into something else’, it is hardly surprising that there has been such a marked growth in translator and interpreter training in recent decades (Caminade and Pym 1995).

The endless possibilities of connectedness offered by the network paradigm can bring with them a dizzying rhetoric of enchantment as translators are invited to engage with the different languages and peoples of the world. Indeed, one of the most common questions translators are asked by those outside the profession is ‘how many languages do you speak?’, implying that the more languages spoken or the more linguistic connections made, the more credible is the person’s claim to be considered a translator worthy of respect. Though accomplished polyglots do exist in the profession, most translators in fact work with a limited number of languages, and assessing actual as opposed to imagined competence in languages is one of the recurrent problems of quality control in the IT age. In effect, the difficulties faced by translators and the real limits to their language abilities are bound up with other features of networks that are worth highlighting.

In work on the role of networks in self-organization, Stuart Kauffman demonstrated that while too few connections meant that networks were lacking in the ability to adapt and change, an excessive number of connections was equally disabling (Kauffman 1993). Maintaining all these connections in effect leads to a dissipation of time and energy, with the result that conformism, not creativity, ensues. This is the outcome playfully alluded to by Samuel Butler in his Satyr upon the Imperfection and Abuse of Human Learning where he notes:

For the more languages a man can speak,
His talent has but sprung the greater leak;
And, for the industry he has spent upon’t,
Must full as such some other way discount.

(Hazlitt 1910: 92)
The difficulty for translators and language intermediaries generally is that they are subject to what Mulgan has termed the ‘economics of attachment’. As he observes, ‘All attachments and memberships take time. We cannot be members of an infinite number of groups in the same way because attachments require not just “quality time” but also quantities of time, to learn about the people involved, their motivations and idiosyncrasies’ (Mulgan 1998: 98). Similarly, translators cannot be members of an infinite number of cultures or speak an infinite number of languages. To engage with a language or culture in a way that is both effective and meaningful for the translator entails the surrender of considerable ‘quantities of time’ to acquiring the language and immersing oneself in the culture. What we might call the ‘economics of translatorial attachment’ militates against the more facile versions of networking possibilities offered by Anglophone monoglossia. In other words, the general decline in foreign-language learning in the English-speaking world in recent years can be attributed in part to the ready identification of English as the sole language of globalization but also to the desire to maintain the benefits of connectedness without the pain of connection (Holborow 1999).

The tendency indeed in a world of space–time compression is to favour first-order exchanges over second-order exchanges, i.e. rapid transactions limited in time and involving limited contact over longer-term, multidimensional, complex engagements. The network underpinned by information technology brings Anglophones messages and images from all over the globe in minutes and seconds, leading to a reticular cosmopolitanism of near-instantaneity. This cosmopolitanism is partly generated by translators themselves who work to make information available in the dominant language of the market. However, what is devalued or ignored in the cyberhype of global communities is the effort, the difficulty and, above all else, the time required to establish and maintain linguistic (and by definition, cultural) connections. In this respect, translators find themselves in a somewhat paradoxical position. Part of their professional role is precisely to facilitate the proliferation of first-order exchanges, where someone does not have to spend years learning a language to do business in a foreign location because of the presence of the translator or the interpreter, and yet translators themselves are defined by their lifelong commitment to second-order exchanges. This is why their presence is always at some level troubling. Translators are both a reminder of the dependency of first-order exchanges on second-order engagement and they relativize the nature and value of first-order contact. That is to say, their own temporal investment in languages and cultures implicitly raises questions about the worth of attachments that may be extensive in reach but shallow in commitment. Technical proximity does not eliminate cultural distance.

Investment in languages and cultures implies, of course, a commitment which is increasingly problematic in an age of endless flexibility. In The Corrosion of Character,
Richard Sennett describes the advent of new practices that change people’s relationship to work:

‘Today the phrase ‘flexible capitalism’ describes a system which is much more than a permutation on an old theme. The emphasis is on flexibility. Rigid forms of routine are under attack, as are the evils of blind routine. Workers are asked to behave nimbly, to be open to change on short notice, to take risks continually, to become ever less dependent on regulations and formal procedures.

(Sennett 1998: 9)

This championing of flexibility in the economy is arguably part of a larger pattern in late modernity which is the disestablishment of fixed or relatively settled positions. If reformation and revolution put paid to feudal categories of belonging, they did not mean the end of wanting to belong. The difficulty in the era of ‘flexible capitalism’ is knowing what to belong to, how and for how long. As Bauman notes, “[d]isembedding” is now an experience which is likely to be repeated an unknown number of times in the course of an individual life, since few if any “beds” for “re-embedding” look solid enough to sustain the stability of long occupation.’ The result is that there is no prospect of a final re-embedding in sight; ‘being on the road has become the permanent way of life of disembedded (now chronically disembedded) individuals’ (Bauman 2001: 125). A notable feature of the network is, of course, to disclose new possibilities of re-embedding, as previous attachments become unwanted or uncertain. Its open-endedness is the open road for endless reinvention, further making the network an appropriate paradigm for our age.

Networks can of course be construed differently in this process and emerge as structures of closure rather than models of openness. By this is meant the construction of micro-networks of belonging, whether at the level of individuals, groups or nations, which are a reaction to the limitless and potentially threatening nomadism of macro-networks. Even those who acquire wealth and exercise power through networks of global enterprise are careful to constitute relatively closed networks of social contact where real-estate prices, expensive schooling and select membership of clubs keep the rich to themselves and the poor at the gates (Castells 1996: 416). Indeed, as the power of macro-networks grows, it is possible to posit the increased rather than the diminished importance of micro-networks as individuals and groups seek to maintain some level of social cohesion.

As we observed earlier, networks have insides and outsides and the role of switches and gatekeepers is to decide who gets in and who is left out. A function of translation is to decide in technological, religious, philosophical, cultural and linguistic terms what ends up being admitted to the micro-network of a specific
group or culture and what is pointedly excluded. Conversely, it is translation which will influence what is allowed out of the micro-network to connect up with other micro-networks or to be incorporated into larger, macro-networks of global recognition. An example of the former would be translation between minority languages on Europe’s Celtic fringe (Cronin 1996: 189), and of the latter, the international success of Latin American literature in the 1970s and 1980s.

The ability to opt in or out of networks or to be able to exercise the role of switch or gatekeeper is not a matter of individual choice but of structural necessity and politico-economic possibility. In other words, any discussion of translation and globalization must take into account the political and economic realities that indiscriminate use of the term often serves to disguise. Much of the more exalted language on the potential of globalization for the translation industry tends to accept both global reach and the realization of a neo-liberal utopia as axiomatic givens. Yet, according to Fortune magazine, 434 of the world’s largest multinational corporations operate within the privileged triad of the European Union, the United States and Japan. Their business strategies are regional rather than global. Furthermore, as Connie Myerson notes, ‘national governments continue to strongly regulate service sectors, limiting free-market access and increasing the amount of regulation’ (Myerson 2001: 13). Not only is the market not as free as is claimed but there is a tendency to confuse communication of information with realization of goals. The Internet may be very good at transmitting translated information but this does not mean that it can physically bring together goods, (certain) services and people. Hence, producing appropriately translated material in a foreign language may be the first step but it is not the only step. Myerson gives the example of a database:

now that you have an Oracle database with plenty of globalized content, how about setting up product warehouses in Slovakia, training staff to demo the product in another language, managing complex delivery logistics abroad, learning the market geography, finding out how to provide customer support in a country with no phone numbers, etc.?

( Ibid.: 13)

In a sense, the difficulty is the mistaking of the time-scale of one network for the time-scale of another.

Information, and indeed translation information, may circulate at increasing speed through informatics and telecommunications networks but the movement of goods and people (as workers, service providers or customers) is subject to the temporal and spatial constraints of the elements of other, more material networks, such as roads, airports, shipping ports and railways. This in turn involves more sustained translation contact as companies must seek out intermediaries to train
‘staff to demo the product in another language’, to manage ‘complex delivery logistics abroad’ and to ‘learn the market geography’, to take the examples cited above. It could be said that Myerson’s critique of the shortcomings of hype surrounding global translation strategies is a form of internal dissent. As a one-time consultant for Starbucks, American Airlines and McDonald’s Europe, her gripe is not with neo-liberalism per se but with the insufficient deregulation of national markets and the tendency to let IT utopianism mask global business realities. Similarly, when Rose Lockwood, the Director of Research at Berlitz GlobalNet, analyses the difficulties faced by companies wishing to develop e-business in Central and Eastern Europe (with the consequent need for translated material), she views privatization, deregulation and market expansion as key factors ensuring the growth of translation services in the region and thus maximizing the potential for globalization (Lockwood 2001a: 9–11).

**Market utopianism, Americanization and the developmental state**

The sanguine view of globalization professed by many of the commentators in the translation and language industries and the commitment of these commentators to a neo-liberal value system is not universally shared, as has been borne out by the international rise of the anti-globalization movement and the repeated critiques of market utopianism (Passet 2001). At one level, the anti-globalization critique is a classic one of the denunciation of inequality with resources unevenly distributed across the planet and among groups within societies. When one realizes that less than one-quarter of Russians have ever used a computer and that it is estimated that in Russia there are only three million active adult Internet users out of an adult population of 122 million (Lockwood 2001: 10), then questions of differentiated access to resources begin to complicate the more voluntarist visions of borderless futures. As Bauman points out, ‘[a]xiety and audacity, fear and courage, despair and hope are born together. But the proportion in which they are mixed depends on the resources in one’s possession’ (Bauman 2001: 122). It is easier to see a sea-voyage as a romantic adventure if one is on a comfortable cruise-ship than if one is sealed into a container crossing the English Channel.

The economic prospects for translators too are bound up with the resources in their possession as we saw earlier with the example of Chinese translators offering their services for nothing in order to gain access to the translation market. However, the critique of globalization is aimed not only at an economic order that leads to the uneven possession and dispersal of resources but also at the cultural fallout of the hegemony of specific languages or cultures. The US critic Timothy Brennan is vocal in his denunciation of what he sees as his own country’s unprincipled expansionism under a globalization masquerading as cultural plural-
ism and quotes The Economist’s cynical verdict that, ‘[g]lobalisation means having the odd business meeting in London or Paris’ (Brennan 1997: 6). In Brennan’s view, ‘there can be no talk of globalism without Americanization’ (ibid.: 125) but more worryingly the celebration of cosmopolitanism and the melting pot can paradoxically be a means of favouring and furthering imperial expansionism:

And it is here, I think, that the weakness of the cosmopolitan outlook lies – in the explicit failure to see cosmopolitanism as less an expansive ethos than an expansionist policy: a move not towards complexity and variety but towards centralization and suffocating stagnation.

(ibid.: 55)

In his analysis the traces of US popular culture to be found throughout the world from Nike trainers to Simpsons T-shirts to McDonald’s restaurants are held up as examples of a hybrid world, not to advance the cause of genuine and difficult cultural openness but simply to imply the fundamental rightness of US market penetration and cultural dominance. The culture must be superior, in effect, if everyone literally and metaphorically wants to buy into it. This is the argument advanced by Ben Wattenberg in his book, The First Universal Nation, where he claims that in the United States:

We don’t much read, watch or listen to their [Europe and developing world’s] stuff. Is it that Americans are provincial, insular, parochial boors? More likely it is that we have a taste for just what the rest of the world now enjoys.

(Wattenberg 1991: 211)

The statistics support Wattenberg’s observation of an imbalance though they do not tell us much about the motives. In 1990, Europeans were watching a fifth of the number of European films they had been watching in 1960 (Vulser 2001: 6). By 1993, EU citizens were watching 5,000 million hours of US television programming while US citizens watched just 180 million hours of EU programming, a substantial proportion of which came from the Anglophone United Kingdom (Verbatim 2001: 6).

Wattenberg sees the role of the US as in a sense continuing the ‘civilizing’ mission of the nineteenth century but this time under the banner of pluralism: ‘In America we now come from everywhere, becoming one people . . . vastly enriched by our pluralism’ (Wattenberg 1991: 24); and ‘Only Americans have the sense of mission – and gall – to engage in benign, but energetic global cultural advocacy. Hence, the doctrine of “neo-manifest destinarianism” to help form a world that is user-friendly to American values’ (ibid.: 204). David Harvey agrees
with Wattenberg on the outward reach of US political and economic policy though they would not share the same indulgent view of the outcomes. Harvey claims that ‘globalization is undoubtedly the outcome of a geopolitical crusade waged largely by the United States’ and he adds:

It [globalization] simply would not have happened in the way it has without the US operating as both a driving force and supervisory agent of the whole process. And this has also meant a certain confusion between specifically US needs and modes of operation (business methods, corporate cultures, traditions of personal mobility and consumerism, political conceptions of individual rights, the law, and democracy) and global requirements.

(Harvey 2000: 68–9)

Both Brennan and Harvey are anxious to identify agents and beneficiaries in the globalization process as the sheer scale of the informational society can tend to overwhelm commentators who see only a dizzying cartography of flows in a world without frontiers. More specifically, there is a concern that the notion of globalization can be used as a means of disempowering any form of resistance to processes which are presented as supra-national, massive and unstoppable. In this context, does any form of opposition to the relentless expansion of the market logic embodied in dominant forms of globalization simply indicate a kind of residual naïveté, a forlorn nostalgia for the now hopeless (and suspect) solidarities of local and national dissent? In a world that has seen the ravages of competing nationalisms on the battlefields of Flanders, on the streets of Belfast and in the killing fields of the Balkans, is any attempt to champion local or national sovereignty, a dangerous and retrograde step? Are translators, as incorrigible nomads who resist the confining lure of the local, not by definition sympathetic to the globalizing project?

The answers to the above questions depend in part, of course, on how we conceive of the local or the regional or the national and the importance we attach to the question of sovereignty in the translation context. They also relate to how we view the world. Either we see the world as entering a post-nationalist era with the irrevocable decline of the nation-state, its economic and political powers undermined by a combination of market forces and supra-national institutional arrangements (Kearney 1997) or we see the emergence of one megastate, namely the United States, with other states in a position of military, economic and cultural vassalage (Brennan 1997: 134). In view of the economic developments described in Chapter 1, it is not too difficult to see how economic sovereignty has indeed become more problematic for nation-states. States, for example, which favour a tougher fiscal environment to finance public sector initiatives in health or education may find firms or investors rapidly delocating to more hospitable tax regimes.
Furthermore, the nation-state itself is a fluid notion and, in many cases, historically quite recent.

In 1500, there were 500 political entities in Europe, by 1920, there were only 23 and the majority of states have been created since 1945 (Harvey 2000: 60). On the other hand, Manuel Castells has documented the inextricable link between economic development and the overall political project and sense of purpose of a nation-state. In his view, the anti-protectionist rhetoric of globalization often conceals the fundamental relationship between development and what he terms the ‘developmental state’. The developmental state is understood to be a state whose legitimacy is based on ensuring and sustaining high rates of economic growth for its population and making the necessary structural changes to guarantee such growth. However, Castells notes:

Ultimately, for the developmental state economic development is not a goal, but a means: the means of implementing a nationalist project, superseding a situation of material destruction and political defeat after a major war, or, in the case of Hong Kong and Singapore, after the severance of their ties with their economic and cultural environment. Along with a number of researchers, I have empirically argued in several writings that at the roots of the rise of the Asian Pacific economies lies the nationalist project of the developmental state.

(Castells 1996: 182–3)

It is not only the Asian Pacific economies which have benefited from state intervention but US advances in information technology and telecommunications would have been inconceivable without substantial funding from the US Defense Department and the co-option of largely publicly funded universities into a bid to win the Cold War against the Soviet Union (Tirman 1984). Thus it is that privatization and deregulation per se do not operate as developmental mechanisms.

In a world where established governments and multinational corporations have the ability to influence economic trends, countries which rely solely on the benign operation of market forces leave themselves vulnerable to extreme volatility in financial flows and various forms of technological dependency:

surprising as it may be to emphasize the economic role of states in the age of deregulation, it is precisely because of the interdependence and the openness of the international economy that states must become engaged in fostering development strategies on behalf of their economic constituencies.

(Castells 1996: 90 [his emphasis])

As we shall see in Chapter 3, state initiatives in education, taxation and telecommunications were instrumental in the establishment of the software localization
industry in Ireland and in the growth of the labour market for translators in the
country. Similarly, for other countries, it is not the blind operation of market forces
but the commitment of national governments to invest in language education,
translator training, the upgrading of informatics and telecommunications networks
which is going to determine whether translation will flourish or perish at national
levels and ultimately at international levels. In order for this to happen, of course,
there has to be a belief not only in the economic value of these activities but also in
their cultural value. In other words, the developmental state needs to see trans-
lation as part of a ‘local project’ which is also paradoxically a repudiation of the
potential ethnocentric narrowness of that project in its acknowledgement of the
necessary interdependence and openness of culture itself.

An example of how the relationship between translation and the nation-state
has come to be expressed in practice is to be found in the institutional arrange-
ments put in place by a number of European nations to promote the translation of
European literatures. The Ministère de la Communauté Française (Belgium), the
Danish Ministry of Cultural Affairs, the Finnish Literature Information Centre, the
Direction du livre et de la lecture (France), Inter Nationes (Germany), the
Direzione Generale delle Relazioni Culturali (Italy), the Foundation for the Pro-
motion of Translation of Dutch Literary Works (Netherlands), the Dirección
General del Libro y Bibliotecas y del Centro de las Letras Españolas (Spain) and
the Ireland Literature Exchange were by the 1990s all actively engaged in provid-
ing state support for the translation of national literatures into foreign languages.
The dual rationale for the support of the translation schemes was similar in all
cases (Cronin et al. 1990: 16–24). Firstly, it was felt that the market alone could
not ensure the translation and dissemination of different national literatures, par-
ticularly in view of the hegemony of English-language writing as a source language
in international translation publishing (Venuti 1995). In the Irish case, the argu-
ment was used in the context of Irish-language writing and Irish-published
English-language works. Secondly, it was claimed that both publishers and writers
stood to benefit economically from greater international recognition of their
work, recognition that would lead to enhanced sales, increased royalties, potential
film and television rights and so on.

A fundamental impulse behind the different schemes was and is the desire, of
course, to promote different national literatures but the effect is to create diversity,
not homogeneity, at supra-national level. In other words, though the international
publishing industry operates globally, geographical breadth does not guarantee
variety of translation content. It is the affirmation of difference (at national level)
that leads to the conservation of difference (at international level). In turn, it is the
existence of difference that makes problematic any easy affirmation of nationalist
superiority. It is much easier, in Wattenberg’s words, not to ‘read, watch or listen to
their stuff’ if the ‘stuff’ never gets translated and if it is the market which decides
that you ‘have a taste for just what the rest of the world now enjoys’ and that there is, therefore, no point in attempting to change your diet. Nation-states do not, of course, have a monopoly on the politics of translation difference, as borne out by the translation publication assistance programmes funded by supra-national bodies such as UNESCO and the Pilot Literary Translation Scheme operated in the 1990s by the European Union.

The recurrent difficulty with supra-national funding is, however, related to level of engagement. Cultural cooperation has enjoyed a much lower priority in the European Union than the removal of tariff barriers and the creation of a single European market so that the sums allocated to cultural affairs in terms of the overall EU budget remain paltry. If the economic vision of what Europe should be has found powerful advocates in the business sector and among administrative elites, a shared cultural project has been much slower to emerge and with the notable exception of the film and television sector (Eurimages fund and the MEDIA programmes), cultural initiatives have been under-resourced and poorly promoted. The onus still remains on national governments to actively engage with areas of cultural expression that otherwise remain at the mercy of implacable market pressures. Even in the relatively well-funded area of EU audio-visual support, supplementary national policies do make a difference. The elaborate system of state aid in France meant that in 2001 the hegemony of US cinema was not as pronounced, with French films taking 40 per cent of the domestic market share, whereas in Italy, Great Britain and Germany the national share of the domestic market varied between 13 per cent and 16 per cent (Vulser 2001: 6).

There is another argument that it is appropriate to explore in the context of globalization and the developmental state and that is the importance of appropriate scale in the elaboration of an adequate politics of translation. The global age is characterized in its most banal form by the rise of giant multinational corporations and by the local consumption of global goods and images. The wave of mergers and acquisitions in the translation industry alluded to earlier is apparent in the cultural sector through the emergence of global media conglomerates. These multinational companies have controlling interests in cinema, music, television, publishing and the Internet. The largest company, AOL Time Warner, created on 11 January 2001 through the merger of America Online and Time Warner, had an estimated turnover in 2001 of $38 billion and had over 80,000 employees (Leser 2001: 10). The second largest, Vivendi Universal, had an estimated turnover of $27 billion and a workforce of over 75,000 (Orange 2001: 10). One possible reaction against gigantism, whether at an economic level through the increased size of multinationals or at a political level through the emergence of larger political units, is to take refuge in smallness. As the need to take more and more on trust becomes necessary, if only because of the complexity of the technical infrastructure underpinning
modernity (Beck 1992), the corresponding tendency to distrust ‘bigness’ can become more and more marked. Mulgan sees evidence of this distrust and the return to smallness in a variety of phenomena which include ‘the revival of regional identities, dialects and minority languages, and the fragmentation of religions into smaller evangelical communities, with experience taking over from the sacrament and texts as their core’ (Mulgan 1998: 100).

**Agency and neo-Babelianism**

Desire for changes in scale can also result from insecurities. In times of threat or risk the tendency for groups can be to draw closer to each other rather than to fragment, to seek the comfort of familiarity and attachment in the face of dispersal or annihilation. We will consider in Chapter 5 the connection between translation, language and community in the context of a threat to a cultural ecosystem. But here, we propose to consider the reaction to gigantism not in terms of a reactive withdrawal into group solidarity but as a way of restating agency in political processes in general and in translation processes in particular. The words we use sketch out the problem: ‘processes’, ‘flows’, ‘networks’, ‘spaces’. These words and others try to account for changes on a scale that can often overwhelm analysts themselves. Joël de Rosnay describes the emergence of a new planetary organism which he dubs the ‘cybionte’, a contraction of cybernetics and biology. The nervous system of this organism is made up of the telecommunications networks and the information superhighways of late modernity and the symbiotic human exists as a constituent cell in this new macroscopic reality (de Rosnay 1975; de Rosnay 1995). For others, the Internet spells the end of localized collective identities in favour of a new planetary internationalism (Lévy 1997; Lévy 2000).

Exponential increases in processing power, the mergers and acquisitions frenzy of recent decades leading to larger and larger transnational corporations, the quotidian miracles of time-space compression with messages and money circulating the globe in seconds – all these developments can result in a curious abdication of critical responsibility. That is, the sheer scale of activity leads to a reading of contemporary developments as a set of agentless abstractions. The processes of globalization may be described but no economic or political beneficiaries are clearly defined. Globalization may be ritually invoked to show the folly of the nation-state attempting to curb the dominance of the market but what is made less clear is how some nation-states do substantially better out of a globalized market-system than others. The overarching determinism implied in this approach means that not only do the beneficiaries of ‘flows’ become invisible but the agents of resistance are deprived of both role and effect. They are resisting forces which not only dwarf them but render the cumulative effects of their actions meaningless.

Jean-Claude Guillebaud draws a telling analogy between the operations of the
market and an emergent form of genetic reductionism which sees humans as mere vehicles for the blind reproduction of genes:

Les gènes deviennent les agents affairés d’une sorte de ‘main invisible’ biologique. Leur vibrionnant égocentrisme scelle notre destin mieux que ne pourrait le faire l’ancien humanisme. Ce parallèle saisissant entre le ‘chacun pour soi’ des acteurs économiques et celui de nos propres gènes n’est peut-être pas dû au pur hasard. Il met en lumière une idéologie implicite fondée, dans les deux cas, sur le congédiement de l’homme au profit d’un processus sans sujet.¹ (Guillebaud 2001: 171)

In both instances, the human being is an object manipulated by processes, as opposed to a subject initiating transformation. The notion of politics in this scenario is rendered meaningless as both genes and cash flows undermine the ability of human beings to freely determine their political (and ontological) future. If structuralism evacuated the subject through the primacy of structure, certain versions of globalization submerge the subject in indiscriminate, universalizing flows. In a sense, the frontierless utopias of cyberhype and the deregulated paradise envisioned by the World Trade Organisation betray an incurable nostalgia for the Babelian project. A world community working in one language to reach for the skies is implicitly the uncompleted project of a particular kind of modernity.

This is not new, and millenarian globalization is the latest in a long line of global utopias. To take the twentieth century, there is a tradition of speculative prophecy going from H.G. Wells’ 1901 argument for a World State to G.A. Borgese’s Foundations of the World Republic (1953) and Richard Falk’s A Study of Future Worlds (1975) (Borgese 1953; Falk 1975; Brennan 1997: 138–55). All predictably predict the end of the nation-state but opinions differ on whether the community of terrestrial saints will be political or cultural. Saul H. Mendlovitz in a 1975 anthology claimed, ‘We are no nearer a world government than we were a century ago, but we are much nearer a world culture’ (Mendlowitz 1975: 5). The world now has more independent nations than at any time in its history. There are fewer empires than ever before. What is the unifying factor is ‘[c]ertain tastes in music, film, sports, and magazines’ which have ‘become almost global’ (ibid.).

If translation is regularly held to be the unavoidable consequence of events surrounding the construction of the tower of Babel, where does it stand with respect to what we might call the neo-Babelianism of our age? By neo-Babelianism we understand the desire for mutual, instantaneous intelligibility between human beings speaking, writing and reading different languages. Is translation the residual curse and continuing cause of ethnic fragmentation through its signalling of difference or is translation the way back to the industrious community of origin, all collaborating together on the ambitious project of human betterment, transcending
the given for the hope of something more? One standard neo-Babelian response is to see linguistic diversity per se as an obstacle and argue for the speaking of one language, preferably English. This is what might be termed *neo-Babelianism by default*. Gunther Höser, the managing director of the localization company WH & P, notes the prevalence of this view: ‘there is the dominant idea that English is the universal language understood by all modern and cultivated people, so localisation is not always considered a need but a plus, and sometimes just a legal obligation’ (Lee 2001: 9).

Implicit here is not that translation would disappear but that it would be transferred. In other words, translation is entirely carried out by non-English speakers. It is they who must translate themselves into English, so rendering translation invisible in much the same way as the separate linguistic loyalties (Scots, Welsh, Irish) of the footsoldiers in *Henry V* are concealed by the unitary English of Shakespeare’s play. The benefits of so doing would bring us closer to the mutual intelligibility of the Babelian construction site. It would be a form of translation to end translation and evidence of its popularity can be observed in international conferences and meetings right across the globe. Indeed, the widespread use of English is commonly taken to be one of the distinctive features of globalization and the Anglophone cultural hegemony of transnational corporations (Brennan 1997: 158). The move is highly paradoxical in that although more non-English speakers are translating into English than vice versa, this does not mean that the bulk of translation traffic is from other languages into English.

Though the situation is changing as we saw in Chapter 1, English is predominantly a source rather than a target language in translation terms. In other words, to arrive at the neo-Babelian future of one world/one (dominant) language, a dual translation burden is placed on those who do not speak the dominant language. Not only must they translate themselves into English but they must also translate from English into their own language. The translation task then is redoubled in intensity but, because of the nature and direction of the translation, it is erased from public view in the global parochialism of Anglophone monoglossia. What is interesting here is not the fact that the dominant language happens to be English (if history had been otherwise, the language might have been French or Chinese) but that neo-Babelian scenarios in dominant languages perform a double sleight-of-hand. They seek to eliminate the costs of translation by moving the debt across to the translated who then become invisible in the linguistic accounts of the powerful. Language in a global monoglossic scenario becomes a process without (resistant) subjects, whose agency is undermined by the overwhelming fact of political, economic and cultural dominance. At best, the linguistically weak may be granted the consolation prize of a dissident heteroglossism and, at worst, they may end up being fully translated because there is nothing left to translate (their native language having been rendered extinct).
There is of course another response to the Babelian fact and that is the growth in the translation industry we have noted in Chapter 1. In this perspective, the reach of global English is overstated and what Anglophone firms soon realize is that they may be able to buy anything in English but trying to sell everything in English is wrong-headed and self-defeating (Nuffield 2000). In addition, excessive emphasis on globalization as an Anglophone phenomenon ignores the foundational multilinguality of many international organizations and the multilingual federalism of the European Union. The practical consequences of both these factors are outlined by Kostas Samaras, the Business Manager of Archetypon SA, the largest localization company in Greece. Samaras charts the development of the Greek localization market from a market that largely served the localization needs of US firms who wanted to sell their software in Greece to a market which supplies multi-language services. Crucial to this development were the policies of the European Union. He argues that respect for cultural diversity is a constitutive element of the EU and that as a result linguistic diversity has been supported with significant outcomes for translators:

With the parallel increase of the volume of digital content and demand for it in the EU, the models of translation and localisation services move towards more centralised approaches where suppliers need to cover all language pair combinations from and to a single official language, 20 language pairs per country/language, or even all language pairs from and to any official language, 110 language pairs in total!

(Samaras 2001: 3)

A global age does not just mean an increase in translation from a dominant language. It also means a significant and sustained increase in translation between languages. Bilingual translation (English–Greek) is not enough. Multilingual translation is the sign of maturity for the Greek market.

Does neo-Babelianism disappear in this model, with translators reinstated as agents of plurality and subjects in control of the process of language exchange? The answer is more complex than it might seem at first and Samaras’ exclamation mark is telling. As we shall see in Chapter 4, the development of machine translation and the movement towards automation in localization are in part a response to the volume demands placed on translators. Informationalism in a multilingual world generates enormous pressures to turn around, or more properly, to translate vast quantities of information in an increasingly short period. The response to these pressures is what we might call neo-Babelianism by design. What this consists of is tersely outlined by Gunther Höser, when he argues that a widespread assumption continues to be that ‘translation doesn’t represent any added value. It is simply treated as a formal, uncreative task, which any unqualified person or even a computer or a
machine can accomplish’ (Lee 2001: 9). In this view, translation is not repudiated but neither is it greatly valued. The post-Babelian condition is accepted but only on condition that it can be engineered to produce a pre-Babelian illusion.

An example of designed neo-Babelianism is provided by the experience of the Microsoft company. David Brooks, the Senior Director of International Product Strategy at Microsoft, describes the dismay of Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates on learning of the rapidly rising cost of the localization of the company’s products. For Gates localization was ‘just a linguistic process’ (Brooks 2000: 43) and such a ‘process’ was susceptible to the standardization and cost reduction characteristic of any other element of the corporation’s operations. Brooks details the steps taken to rationalize Microsoft’s localization policies and notes that, ‘[b]y attacking the engineering complexity and skill level required for localization, Microsoft has made considerable progress towards Gates’ goal of making localization “just a linguistic process”’ (ibid.: 55). The rub is in the adverb, not in the adjective. ‘Linguistic’ processes are enormously complicated and have occupied some of the best minds for centuries but it is presumably not the intrinsic complexity of human language that Bill Gates has in mind when he uses the curt adverb of expressive dismissal, ‘just’. It is a conception of the translation process as secondary and capable of containment, de-dramatizing Babel through a vision of multilingualism as a minor hiccup in corporate planning. Evidently, the more successfully the ‘process’ itself can be automated, the more the translation problem can retreat to the margins of commercial attention.

In Gates’ reductive view of localization, we are at a great distance from I.A. Richards’ pronouncement that in translation, ‘We have here indeed what may very probably be the most complex type of event yet produced in the evolution of the cosmos’ (Richards 1953: 250). It could be objected that translating Microsoft product documentation into Chinese is one thing, while translating Chinese philosophical concepts into English (the subject of Richards’ comments) is quite another. This indeed may be why the Chairman will talk about ‘localization’ and the Linguist about ‘translation’. However, such a ready devolution of critical energies is questionable. Even allowing for the software engineering issues that are specific to localization and that are not the remit of translation studies, the tendency to make a distinction between ‘localization’ and ‘translation’ can lead to a number of negative and potentially damaging consequences not only for the manner in which translators conduct their business but also for the way in which translation studies is practised as a discipline and how translation features as a phenomenon in the age of globalization.

In the first instance, old dualities re-emerge as new polarities. ‘Literary’ versus ‘technical’ translation now appears as ‘translation’ versus ‘localization’. If literary translation becomes the metonymic embodiment of translation as a whole, the subject of careful, critical attention as an icon of cultural sophistication and lin-
guistic intricacy, then ‘localization’ like technical translation of yore risks being presented as joyless journeywork, ‘just a linguistic process’, with poor pickings for the adventurous scholar. Secondly, the use of the word ‘localization’ rather than translation is not wholly innocent. Translation has a long history of difficulty and approximation which is to its epistemic credit and commercial disadvantage. Localization, on the contrary, implies a wholly new process which engages effortlessly with the ‘local’, thereby eliminating any unpleasant imperial aftertaste left by agonistic conceptions of translation as conquest (Robinson 1997a). With its emphasis on target-oriented translation, wholly consonant with the more popular versions of functional and polysystemic theories of translations, ‘localization’ appears to be the corporate linguistic response to the ecological injunction to think global and act local. Thirdly, the ready association of CAT tools and machine translation with the localization process leads to an epistemic sleight-of-hand that seduces accountants as much as it misleads scholars. By this, we mean that as certain translation tasks become automated, this does not mean that translation becomes less complicated as a phenomenon but rather that there is a transfer in cognitive processing (in part) from the human translator to the tool.

The fact that certain specific types of translation are amenable to MT or that CAT tools can accelerate the localization process does not mean that understanding translation becomes any easier or that somehow translation is not as difficult as we were led to believe. It is more a question of the embedding of particular kinds of complexity in the tools at the translator’s disposal. The physics of lasers do not become any less complex because CD players are easier to operate. So, the embedding of complexity in a tool may render the complexity invisible but it does not make it non-existent. As we saw in Chapter 1, once we acknowledge the exosomatic construction of the translator and avoid simplistic distinctions between translators and their tools, then we can make apparent the particular arduousness of the translator’s task and the complicated nature of the phenomena which inform the translation of any kind of documentation, by whatever means the translation is done. What is being contested here is not so much the use of the term ‘localization’ to describe a set of activities in the software and e-services industry as the manner in which the term can be used once again to make invisible and depoliticize translation in the modern world.

Translators and mediation

The complexity of translation does not lie only in the process of translating the message but in the situation in which, in late modernity, translators as mediators can find themselves. For Michel Serres, translators are very firmly to be placed in the company of angels. The latter ‘figurent donc à merveille nos télégraphistes, facteurs, traducteurs, représentants, commentateurs . . . les armées de nos nouveaux
travaux\textsuperscript{2} (Serres 1993: 296). Translators in the modern world are obviously involved in the traditional angelic tasks of transmission, annunciation and mediation. For Serres, it is a notable truth that ‘les pires Anges se voient; les meilleurs disparaissent’\textsuperscript{3} (ibid.: 102). The fallen angels are the parasitic hierophants of the media where it is the messenger, not the message, that is all-important. Translators are generally accorded the grace of invisibility but whether this is necessarily sanctifying is a question that translators and theorists have asked more and more insistently in recent decades.

Through the impetus of post-structuralist, polysystem and feminist translation theories, more attention has been devoted to the importance of the translator’s signature, the active presence of the translator in the translation product and process, but translation studies itself has yet to emerge from relative disciplinary obscurity. Though, in view of the spread of its interests and the cogency of its concerns, the discipline of translation would seem to be powerfully equipped to have a substantial impact on intellectual debates centred around globalization, its impact on other academic disciplines investigating the topic, with certain notable exceptions, has been limited. It is in this context that we might begin to ask whether in the era of globalization the representation of the translator does not need to be fundamentally reconfigured. In other words, to paraphrase McLuhan once more, the Mediator may not only be the Message for the new century but it is also up to the Mediator to understand the full implications of the Message(s) of the century for the Media the world will use. Serres’ fallen angels may indeed be the world’s rising stars.

If angels appear in Jewish, Christian and Islamic writings, it is because messages are by definition mediated. Something is communicated by someone (the angel or person exercising the angelic function) to someone else. Reformation impatience with the angelic did not lead to the disappearance of mediation or mediators; instead, the burden of mediation now passed to the translators who were called upon in translation to mediate the Word of God to the faithful (McGrath 2001: 149–96). In deciding what messages should or should not be sent, both within languages and across languages, cultures establish a hierarchy of what is important and not important. A notable part of the prestige of druidic and bardic elites, priests and priestesses of different persuasions, clerks, scholars and academics was their elaboration and preservation of hierarchies of mediation.

The crisis for cultures and cultural gatekeepers is when control over what is to be mediated becomes problematic and hierarchies are challenged. Debray describes the consequences of the shift from print culture (graphosphere) to an audiovisual culture (videosphere) for traditional processes of mediation:

\begin{quote}
Du seul fait que les mémoires analogiques ne requièrent plus de qualification particulière pour accéder à l’archive, délèguent l’encodage et décodage à des
\end{quote}
machines (lecteur de cassette, appareil de projection, tourne-disque, ordinateur etc.), elles donnent une portée culturelle directe au pouvoir d’achat. Elles assurent également un avantage comparatif à l’information sur la connaissance (au document sur l’enchaînement, au parataxique sur le syntaxique, etc.), et donc, socialement, aux médias d’information sur les institutions du savoir.4

(Debray 2000: 48)

If the academy has in the past shown itself to be particularly hostile to the videosphere, it is partly out of nostalgia for lost privilege, no longer the mediator but the unmediated. Similarly, a nervousness surrounding the advent of increasing automation in translation and the proliferation of free, Web-based, MT translation services is not simply attributable to an often justifiable fear over poor standards and low quality but is related to what is perceived as a radical undermining of the status of the human translator as mediator. However, there is a sense in which the role of the translator is likely to become more, rather than less, important in the informational age if the translator is no longer seen as a communicateur but as a transmitter (see the discussion of translation as transmission versus translation as communication in Chapter 1). What then are the reasons for emphasizing the transmissive as opposed to the communicative dimension to the translator’s activities?

To begin with, a recurrent problem in economies driven by information is that there is too much of it. More information often results in less meaning. The number of e-mail messages continually increases in the in-box but there are no epiphanies, only stress and witlessness. Mads Haahr, the computer scientist and cultural critic, notes that, ‘[s]ubjected to large amounts of information and driven by the need/demand for continued acceleration, we are less inclined to spend the time and effort it takes to produce high quality information in response but rather more information of lower quality’ (Haahr 2001: 3). The outcome, not surprisingly, is that quantity grows while quality drops. The information overload can be seen as part of a larger problem in late modernity, namely, the inflation of means as against the uncertainty of ends.

Zygmunt Bauman remarks on the great surges in productivity in the modern period, the phenomenal increase in the means at the disposal of many (though by no means all) human beings. The difficulty is that ‘ends have become more diffuse, scattered and uncertain: the most profuse source of anxiety, the great unknown of men’s and women’s life’ (Bauman 2001: 125). In other words, we may be producing (and translating) larger and larger quantities of information but we may not quite know what to do with it. Similarly, new technologies have led to an exponential growth in our translation means, as evidenced by MT capabilities and CAT tools, but it is not always clear in a global age what our translation ends are. A
translator of medical instrument documentation into the official languages of the European Union, required by EU regulations, may wonder about the value of the exercise. The lack of clarity about the ends of translation can lead to a call for an end to translation. What is the point of translating at all? Alternatively, the means can be seen not to justify the ends. Why spend this money on translation when we could all be speaking the same language? Traditionally, translator training has concentrated on means, and ends have tended to appear largely in terms of functional appropriateness. That is, trainee translators are shown what they need in order to translate (means) and for whom they are translating (what is the aim, purpose, target, *skopos* or end of the translation). It is arguable that what needs to be equally stressed in the education of translators in a global and informational age is a definition of the ends of translation – but in a sense that goes beyond the simple enunciation of the functional objectives of texts. Ends here are to be understood in the broad sense of the role of translation in the culture, economy and body politic of the modern world. Hence, we would argue the importance in the decades ahead of dedicated courses on translation and globalization.

Translation theory courses obviously deal with some of the larger issues raised by the activity of translation but the danger is that these courses can be sundered from the economy, politics and technology of translation, thus leading to perceptions of theoretical concepts as self-referential and bearing on texts to the exclusion of people and their material environments. In addition, the merit of courses on translation and globalization is that they can reasonably be offered to students in other disciplines who need to be made aware, as much as, if indeed not more than, translation students, of the importance of the translation paradigm in globalized contexts. Well-meaning platitudes about the existence of multilingualism and the consequent necessity of translation are unlikely to pass muster in a global order that shows a distinct drift towards the neo-Babelianism by default that we described earlier. In reflecting on the ends of translation, it might also be possible to see translation in a reflexive as opposed to a merely reflective mode (see Chapter 5). That is, translators rather than being simple accessories to the fact of information inflation (reflective mode) might consider whether it would be more fruitful on the basis of identifiable ends to take a selective approach to the information which circulates between cultures (reflexive mode).

It could be argued that such a project is hopelessly utopian and that translators do not make the decisions over what gets translated. It is governments, publishing houses and companies who decide. But on what basis do they decide? We saw in Chapter 1 that the desire to access new markets or regulatory requirements or the globalization of information provision are among the reasons for translation expansion in late modernity. In all these cases, circumstances propose, and the translator disposes. However, if we conceive of the translator as executive (making decisions) rather than executor (carrying them out), then we can argue that what
globalization entails is the need for groups of (double) agents who can self-reflexively mediate information flows between languages and cultures. Currently, when we think of a managerial dimension to translation activity it is often in the form of a project manager coordinating different elements of a translation job. However, this view, while realistic, arguably lacks ambition.

If a historian may be involved in everything from the definition of a country’s foreign policy to the development of heritage sites in local tourism projects, and an economist in everything from the setting out of strategic objectives for third-level institutions to the housing policy in inner cities, why should translators see themselves as the utilitarian prisoners of particular kinds of knowledge or sets of skills? When historians contribute to foreign policy formulation or economists look at the impacts of large housing developments, they are not generally seen to be betraying or misusing their knowledge base or professional expertise. So why should it be otherwise with translators? If by training they are taught to deal with a large number of different subject areas and to act as brokers between disparate languages and cultures (Cronin 2000b: 148–51), they are almost by definition capable of the polyvalency regularly practised by other disciplines in the social and human sciences. Nor does such an expanded conception of the role of the translator imply some kind of subterfuge or repudiation of a disciplinary formation. Historians, sociologists and economists are asked for their advice on a whole range of issues because they are historians, sociologists and economists, not because they are pretending to be something else. Thus, it is by revealing, not disguising, their identity as translators that translators can make a legitimate bid to make more central interventions in culture, society and politics.

To do this involves, of course, changing purely restrictive and instrumental views of translation practice and educating wider society as to what translators both know and can do. There is little chance of this happening, however, if translators and their educators do not also embrace a broader conception of the task of the translator. In addition, the ability or potential of new technology to perform more routine translation tasks implies the need not to consign human translation to the dustbin of history (which is the logical implication of reductive views of the translator’s role) but rather to concentrate on translation’s higher-level, value-added components. Translators like any other group of professionals in the social and human sciences are distinguished among each other not by what they must do but by what they can do.

**Fidelity and time**

What translators can do or think or say is partly determined by the theoretical concepts at their disposal and it might be asked how these concepts are affected by current economic, social and technical changes. If we take one of the oldest
notions relating to translation, that of fidelity, what is its usefulness in a global era?

When the Greek-speaking Jewish philosopher Philo Judaeus (15/10 BCE–45/50 CE) of Alexandria in *De vita Mosis* gives his account of the Greek translation of the Scriptures, he stresses the moral preparedness of the 72 translators for the task:

Reflecting how great an undertaking it was to make a full version of the laws given by the Voice of God, where they could not add or take away or transfer anything, but must keep the original form and shape, they proceeded to look for the most open and unoccupied spot in the neighbourhood outside the city. For, within the walls, it was full of every kind of living creatures, and consequently the prevalence of diseases and deaths, and the impure conduct of the healthy inhabitants, made them suspicious of it.

(Judaeus 1997: 13)

For Philo Judaeus, fidelity is a cardinal virtue and the physical and moral impurity of the infidel threatens the textual fidelity of the translators. They must remove themselves to the island of Pharos and in hygienic isolation all 72 translators are divinely inspired to produce the same translation where the ‘Greek words used corresponded literally with the Chaldean, exactly suited to the things they indicated’ (ibid.: 14). If translation has been faithful to anything over the centuries, it has been to the notion of fidelity itself. From Philo Judaeus to Vladimir Nabokov, the company of the faithful has been numerous. The stock commonplaces of literary pundits all bear on the dubious textual morals of translators. The ritual invocation of *belles infidèles*, *traduttori*, *traditori* and the omnipresent dictum of poetry being what gets lost in the translation suggest that translators are basically not to be trusted and that translation is a somewhat dishonest enterprise. However, the notion of fidelity itself is rarely questioned by the faithful.

As Adam Phillips points out: ‘Our survival at the very beginning of our lives involves us in something like monogamy. Our growing up involves us in something like infidelity (we challenge our parents, we betray them, we let them down)’ (Phillips 1996: 6). He adds, ‘Infidelity is our other word for change, the only change we can know about which is a change of belief. We thrive on our disloyalty to ourselves’ (ibid.: 8). If translators are agents of change in a culture, then it would seem that infidelity, not fidelity, must be their constant preoccupation. They must drift out of the window of the family home, let down the language of their parents and go to find other languages and cultures, practising a form of disloyalty to their former linguistic selves. However, fidelity is not a static essence but a dynamic concept, it is worth exploring how the concept can make clearer the function of the translator within the politics of transmission in the era of globalization.

All invention involves remembrance. The new is inconceivable without a notion of the old. When we think, we know we are thinking because we remember
having had other thoughts and it is our ability to think that we see as a constitutive
element of our humanity. As André Comte-Sponville points out, ‘toute la dignité
de l’homme est dans la pensée; toute la dignité de la pensée est dans la mémoire.
Pensée oubliéue, c’est pensée peut-être, mais sans esprit’ (Comte-Sponville
1995: 32). Therefore, the ability to think, the perception of change or progress,
the notion of self, all imply a form of fidelity to memory, to a personal or collective past.
In a sense, what we concern ourselves with in ensuring an infrastructure
of transmission in a society is guaranteeing the possibility for present and future
generations of exercising a fidelity to a past which is objectively past. The question
of translation and fidelity is often treated as purely intra-textual. Does the trans-
lation capture the full meaning, the ‘spirit’ of the source text? Time is a formal
consideration in that allowance must be made for the greater or lesser linguistic
difference between the period when the text was written and that in which the
translation is going to be published. However, time is arguably a more crucial cat-
egory for translation studies than is often commonly acknowledged. That is to say,
time is not simply of importance because it might impede communication (do readers want to read archaic versions of a text?) but because translation is one of
the principal ways in which societies remain faithful to a past or pasts, one of the
ways in which societies or cultures endure through time. If fidelity to memory
makes thought and innovation possible then in addition translation makes a signal
contribution to the forces of reflexion and renewal in society.

It is important here to disentangle the notion of fidelity from some of the more
rigid and unflinching versions of the concept, with their dangerous derivatives in
intolerance and ethnocide. Comte-Sponville points out that faithfulness is as much
about change as constancy:

Être fidèle, pour la pensée, ce n’est pas refuser de changer d’idées (dogmat-
sisme), ni les soumettre à autre chose qu’à elles-mêmes (foi), ni les considérer
comme des absolus (fanatisme); c’est refuser d’en changer sans bonnes et
fortes raisons, et – puisqu’on ne peut examiner toujours – c’est tenir pour
vrai, jusqu’à nouvel examen, ce qui une fois a été clairement et solidement
jugé. Ni dogmatisme, donc, ni inconstance.6

(Comte-Sponville 1995: 39)

Translation cannot long favour restrictive or bigoted notions of fidelity because its
transmissive dimension is always dual. An important function of translation has
been to promote specific regional, local or national identities (Delisle and
Woodsworth 1995: 25–100). This can be done through intralingual translation,
producing classics of national literatures in modern versions, or through interlin-
gual translation, importing prestigious foreign literary works into the national
canon. However, the interlingual can also destabilize as well as consolidate any
specific sense of cultural belonging. This is the central intuition of cultural relativism. Translation makes us realize that there have been and are other ways of seeing, interpreting, reacting to the world. So the past is not the exclusive property of our origins, and memory is not always about revanchism.

What translation does is to show that there is not only the past but there are pasts; in other words, that we must remain faithful to an experience of a common if differentiated humanity as well as to specific lineages in recognizable places. Furthermore, translation in common with all textual practices releases cultures from their points of origin. Once the core beliefs and values of a culture are consigned to writing, they can literally be transported to wherever the people professing that culture find themselves. Hence, the importance of the Book in Jewish diasporic culture. Translation unleashes an even greater nomadic potential in that the impact of a culture is no longer restricted to those of the same language community. The conditions of fidelity are no longer exclusively territorial or communitarian but elective and motivated. Translations can be used to defend an absolutist notion of fidelity (the role of the Vulgate in the Christian church) but such attempts are hopelessly compromised by time and duality, two constitutive principles of transmissive translation practice.

Any dynamic conception of translation fidelity cannot concern itself solely with the past, lest it be accused of a kind of backward-looking, memorial sanctimoniousness. To elucidate the connections between pasts and futures, it may be useful to draw on the distinction Geoff Mulgan makes between the guardian and trader syndrome. This distinction has its roots in the work of Jane Jacobs on the way in which systems of exchange and systems of territory and power have co-existed throughout human history (Jacobs 1993). The guardian syndrome is one which attaches value to ‘hierarchy, loyalty, prowess, ostentation, honour and exclusivity’, while the trader syndrome values ‘thrift, industry, optimism, voluntary agreements, honesty, invention and collaboration with strangers, and rights and duties associated with contracts’ (Mulgan 1998: 66).

It is not too difficult to see how translators throughout their history have acted as both guardians and traders. They have acted both as the zealous elaborators and protectors of national languages and literatures and as the indispensable intermediaries in the opening up of the world to the circulation of commodities, people and ideas. It is precisely in this both/and or analogue status (Wilden 1980b: 155–201) that translators create a relationship with time that has creative consequences for the future. What this relationship might be becomes clearer if we consider the more general relationship between change and the past in human societies.

It is possible to argue that historical change is often expressed in terms of a costume drama, the new kitted out in the trappings of the old, Napoleon as Roman emperor, Victoria as the new Elizabeth. The great leap forward is often jus-
tifed in terms of the long glance backward. The paradox of novelty masquerading as antiquity is, however, only apparent. The time of the scientist is not the time of the historian and puzzlement at the vivacity of the past is often based on the fallacious projection of irreversible technical time on to human and social time, which culturally speaking knows no such irreversibility. Debray dubs the unforeseen retroactive nostalgia of progress the ‘jogging effect’ (Debray 2000: 200). The arrival and subsequent spread of the motor car led to dire predictions of the wasting away of our lower limbs so that in due evolutionary course legs would wither and wheels take over. What has happened instead is that our towns, cities and countryside are filled with panting, perspiring humans determined to push their legs to their physical limits. Exhaustion rather than extinction is the order of the day. The ‘jogging effect’ is symptomatic of a whole host of phenomena in late modernity ranging from the exponential growth in the heritage industry to the vogue for genealogy and commemoration. Globalization in effect generates two forms of time, instantaneous time and what we might term mnemonic time.

Instantaneous time in translation is the time pressure indicated in Chapter 1, where space–time compression and time-to-market imperatives generate demands for an extremely rapid turnaround of translation jobs. This is the time most readily associated with global business. Mnemonic time in translation, on the other hand, is the time given over to translation tasks that aim to bring into the present of a society or culture a set of already existing texts (inaccessible because they were written either in the language of an earlier period (intralingual) or in the language of another country or people (interlingual)). Mnemonic time is distinguished from instantaneous time both because in most instances there is greater remoteness in historical time between the production of the original and the creation of the translation (even if this is simply a matter of a Harry Potter novel published two months earlier) and because the temporal investment is greater. Unrealistic deadlines produce dead lines (of poetry, of prose).

The examples of various literary translation projects (a number of them are discussed in Chapter 3) point to the operation of mnemonic time in translation practice. The translations of poetry, for instance, can often involve an extended time-scale.

The slow, circuitous routes that bring translators to particular kinds of work constitute the mnemonic time of translation which is constantly in tension with that other time of globalization, instantaneous time. If the latter is readily associated with the trader syndrome and the former with the guardian, the associations may conceal more than they reveal. Mnemonic time in translation is not simply a long-term investment in preservation, an anxious protection of an always disappearing past. It is, more accurately, a making available of materials out of which cultures and societies can construct a future. If such time is neglected, there may indeed be many communities, languages and cultures for which there is no future at all.
Diversity

Considering the translation future for languages and cultures involves tracking the shifting fortunes of these languages and cultures. The linguistic atlas of the planet is subject to continuous change and the changes cannot be ignored if we are to speculate on the present and future role of translation. It is currently estimated that there are about 6,000 oral languages spoken on earth. About half of these languages are spoken by communities of 10,000 speakers or fewer. Of these languages, half again are spoken by communities of 1,000 speakers or fewer. The linguistic communities with 10,000 speakers or fewer make up less than 0.2 per cent of the world population of 5.3 billion people. A relatively small group of languages of less than 300 have more than one million speakers each and this group accounts for 5 billion speakers or 95 per cent of the world’s population (Maffi 2001: 4). Thus, while nine-tenths of the planet’s speakers speak one of a small group of languages, it is indigenous and minority groups who are the carriers of most of the linguistic complexity of human culture. As has already been widely noted, the trends towards language extinction are alarming. Some commentators have predicted that 90 per cent of the world’s languages will have become moribund or extinct by the end of the twenty-first century (Krauss 1992). Others point to the fact that there are already 15 per cent fewer languages than when European colonization began over 500 years ago (Bernard 1992: 82–9). The Americas and Australia have been, and remain, particularly dramatic sites of language loss.

Globalization is frequently identified as a negative factor in language maintenance. The unchecked spread of market-based ideologies, the global economic and political influence of transnational corporations, the emergence of international tourism, the dominance of Western scientific and technical paradigms, and the global spread of Western popular culture are variously decried as agents of linguistic and cultural destruction. David Harmon notes bleakly that the ‘feeling of crisis is driven by the conviction that we will soon reach a momentous threshold, a point of no return beyond which a critical amount of biological and cultural diversity will have been lost, never to be regenerated on any time scale significant to the development of humankind’ (Harmon 2001: 61).

The crisis results from the fact that language is not only a bearer of the cultural knowledge and wisdom, the worldview and way of life of a particular community but that there is substantial and significant overlap between areas of linguistic and biological diversity on the planet (Harmon 1996: 89–108). The intricate and persistent relationship between environment, memory and language is stressed by Herman M. Batibo in his discussion of examples of linguistic diversity in Botswana:
One typical example is that of the Khoesan people, who manifest both linguistic and cultural diversity with rich indigenous knowledge accumulated over the last 20,000 or more years of their existence in the southern African subcontinent. The Khoesan cultural experience and indigenous knowledge, as encoded also in the respective languages, embodies a sophisticated understanding of animals, plants, the soil, the weather, traditional medicine, human relations, moral values . . . as well as tremendous knowledge of animal behavior, tracking and the ecosystem . . . Although these people were pushed into the hostile Kalahari desert, they have known, through adaptation, how to turn the near-barren environment into a sustainable ecosystem by creating a balanced use of scarce animals and plants in their surroundings.

(Batibo 2001: 318–19)

In this example, and others, there are eloquent pragmatic reasons for language maintenance which relate directly to the particular circumstances and surroundings of speakers. It is precisely the particular nature of language’s engagement with specific place and history that has dogged debates on the feasibility of translation. Maffi notes, not surprisingly, that, ‘local knowledge does not “translate” easily into the majority languages to which the minority language speakers switch’ (Maffi 2001: 6). However, seeing translation as solely a problem is to fail to take account of the potential translation offers for genuine biocultural diversity in the contemporary world. The potential expresses itself in three ways.

Firstly, there is the relationship between translation and diversity itself. Drawing on the work of William James, David Harmon argues that the ability to recognize diversity is constitutive of our humanity. It is our ability to make distinctions and separate out different objects and experiences which is a defining function of human consciousness (Harmon 2001: 64). This is, in part, because we can only recognize the figure of sameness against the background of diversity. If everything was the same, there would be no such thing as sameness. We can conceive of an identity for an individual or a culture because there are a certain set of core features of the individual or the culture that remain more or less the ‘same’ through the changing circumstances (diversity) of time. Hence, to find out what humans have in common, you have to begin by establishing what separates them: ‘[t]he paradox is that we can only grasp what is universal by first recognizing what is different’ (ibid.: 54). Translation contributes to diversity because it expands the range of texts and cultural experiences available to any given individual in a language (so making the individual aware of the existence of other cultures and languages) and because it is a classic language maintenance mechanism, expanding the range and possibilities of a language. Dispense with translation and diversity is seriously threatened. This is the point intuited if not stated by John Freivalds, the US Representative for the Latvian Development Agency, when he claims that
Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia are ‘proud, if not defiant to insist on the use of their very old languages in a digital environment, and although most educated Baltic citizens speak fluent English and Russian, they want to be educated and have products addressed to them in their native languages’ (Freivalds 2002: 3). Diversity universalizes, uniformity provincializes.

Secondly, translation is an important way of keeping all our cultural options alive and available. As Bernard notes, ‘any reduction of language diversity diminishes the adaptational strength of our species because it lowers the pool of knowledge from which we can draw’ (Bernard 1992: 82). Different languages provide humans with access to many different kinds of understanding and these are likely to be the basis for more complex, flexible responses to challenges and opportunities. As humans are limited in the number of languages they can acquire in any one lifetime, it is translation, however imperfect in its execution, which offers the potential for access to these varieties of understanding. Failure to translate, then, leads inevitably to what V. Shiva has called ‘monocultures of the mind’ (Shiva 1993). Such monocultures lack the resources to creatively overcome the cultural blind spots which prevent cultures from effectively dealing with problems – societal, psychological, aesthetic – which beset them. D.P. Pattanayak points up the vulnerability of the monoculture: ‘Ecology shows that a variety of forms is a prerequisite for biological survival. Monocultures are vulnerable and easily destroyed. Plurality in human ecology functions in the same way’ (Pattanayak 1988: 380). A human ecology which excludes translation seriously compromises its chances for survival.

A third translation dimension to the conservation of diversity is the role of memory, an element of translation practice that has been repeatedly emphasized throughout this book. Translation allows us to remember what has been done and said and thought before in other languages and in our own. Without it, we are condemned to the most disabling form of cultural amnesia and indeed Maffi sees memory loss as the greatest danger of late modernity:

One of the most essential tasks we have as individuals and groups in standing up against this tide is one of memory: to keep remembering who we are, where we come from, and where we want to go; not to let ourselves forget the wealth of diverse local and communal ways of living and knowing and communicating that humans throughout the world still have . . . or did have within the confines of our living memories; and let that remembrance, enriched by what we have learned in between, guide our path toward the future.

(Maffi 2001: 39)

The task of the translator is thus more real and important than ever, on a planet with an increasingly fragile biological and cultural ecosystem. As we enter a new
century and a new millennium, translation is now truly the business of all. The extent to which this business has challenged previously existing sets of economic and political relationships will be the subject of the next chapter.
3  Globalization and the new geography of translation

In 610 CE the Irish monk Columbanus was expelled from the monastic foundation he established at Luxeuil in Burgundy. His moral strictures on the reigning Austrasian family brought royal rebuke from Queen Brunhilda and King Theuderic and an order that he return to Ireland. Columbanus was spirited away by companions and eventually arrived in Bregenz in Austria. While waiting there we are told that the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a vision and ‘showed him in a little circle the structure of the world just as the circle of the universe is usually drawn with a pen in a book. “You perceive,” the angel said, “how much remains set apart of the whole world. Go to the right or the left where you will, that you may enjoy the fruits of your labours”’ (Fitzpatrick 1927: 85). Columbanus took this to be a sign to wait in Bregenz until the way to Italy was clear and after a time he left to found a monastery in Bobbio in northern Italy.

It is in manuscripts from this monastery that we find evidence of the very first Irish translation, a Greek–Latin translation of Theodore’s commentary on the Psalms that may have been produced in Ireland as early as the sixth century (Kenney 1929: 665). Columbanus’ vision of the global seems less prescience than recognition, a mirror held up to his own wandering as an Irish peregrinus in the Europe of his time. That this peregrinatio is shadowed by the practice of translation hints at the enduring nature of a connection that is sometimes annexed to the post-modern alone. This chapter will begin by exploring the relationship between translation and globalization in the specific national context of Ireland. There will be particular focus on localization, an industry in which Ireland is currently a world leader. The chapter will then go on to consider the implications of Irish developments for translation activities in other parts of the world, particularly in light of the changed role of physical space in economic development. The
chapter will ask what the implications are for translation theory of cultural and socio-economic developments that are brought about by the new geography of globalization.

**Global definitions and historical experiences**

Theoreticians of the global do not always agree as to what is understood by globalization. For Roland Robertson, ‘Globalization refers both to the compression of the world and to the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole’ (Robertson 1992: 8). Jonathan Friedman, for his part, claims that globalization ‘is about processes of attribution of meaning that are of a global nature’ (Friedman 1995: 73). Globalized institutional structures are one expression of globalization. As such they are a subset of the global system or global process that describes, in a global context, ‘the formation of centre/periphery structures, their expansion, contraction, fragmentation and re-establishment throughout cycles of shifting hegemony’ (ibid.: 74). The advantage of the global systemic approach is that it foregrounds historical contingency and avoids a diffusionist model of culture where globalization becomes synonymous with Modernity and the West – Western ideas gradually spreading to the rest of the non-Western world. Jan Nederveen Pieterse argues that the modernity/globalization approach is a ‘theory of Westernization by another name, which replicates all the problems associated with Eurocentrism, a narrow window on the world, historically and culturally’ (Pieterse 1995: 47). A proliferation of terms can produce discrimination in argument but it can also generate confusion. We will use the term ‘globalization’ in the sense of a critical theory of globalization that encompasses global movements and exchanges of people, commodities and ideas, and a politico-historical approach to changes in global processes.

The great Ottoman, Muscovite, Aztec, Inca, Mali, Ethiopian and Mwene Mutapa empires, the history of the Venetian and Dutch Republics, the metamorphoses of colonialism, all attest to a dimension to globalization that is geographically broad and historically ancient. Stuart Hall situates England in a long history of globalization that has been the experience of empire and he notes that ‘we suffer increasingly from a process of historical amnesia in which we think that just because we are thinking about an idea it has only just started’ (Hall 1991a: 20). One does not have to run an empire, however, to experience the global and theories of globalization open up another perspective, the diasporic. Pieterse argues that historiography to date has been dominated by the paradigm of the nation-state so that culture is nationalized and territorialized, but ‘[a] different historical record can be constructed on the basis of the contributions to culture formation and diffusion by diasporas, migrations, strangers, brokers’ (Pieterse 1995: 64–5). The experience of a non-imperial people of globalization can be as
economic emigrants, political refugees, mediators or indeed agents of empire. This experience frequently involves the transaction of translation. If this is the case, there are manifest consequences for translation history.

The perspective of globalization means that our translation histories are no longer confined to the internal experiences of the territorially bounded nation-state but include the manifold translation activities of a country’s diaspora. Our histories have become not so much national as ‘transnational’ histories. Irish translation history is a case in point. From the sixth century to the eighth, Irish monks were involved in the ‘re-evangelization’ of Europe and in particular in the promotion of education and instruction in the Latin language, both of which had suffered from the depredations of the nomadic invasions. Unusually for monks of the period, they were constantly on the move and established monastic foundations in France, the Low Countries, Germany, Switzerland and Italy (Whitelock et al. 1982; Shields and Wood 1989; Mackey 1994). This spiritual expansionism had translation effects. Firstly, there was an effect on interpreting: for example, Gallus (after whom St Gallen in Switzerland is named), an Irish companion of Columbanus, interpreted the German language of the local Swabians for his spiritual superior who could not understand it (Fitzpatrick 1927: 85). Secondly, there emerged an Irish tradition of text translation that reached its apogee in the ninth century in the period of the Carolingian renaissance. Three translators in particular, Johannes Scotus Eriugena, Sedulius Scotus and Martinus Hiberniensis, were active in producing influential Latin translations of Greek works (Cronin 1996: 12–15).

The second moment in the diasporic history of translation is the seventeenth century, when political and religious persecution led to the establishment of Irish Colleges in continental Europe. Translations into and from Irish were produced in Rome, Prague and Louvain, but it was St Anthony’s College in Louvain, established in 1603, that proved to be the most active translation centre. The acquisition by the college of a printing press in 1611 to publish texts in Irish gave added importance to its translation work, which had previously been limited by the distribution possibilities of the manuscript tradition. The Louvain translations and others produced on the European continent would have a significant impact on the development of Modern Irish.

The third moment in the deterritorialized or diasporic history of Irish translation is the most recent, although it is in many respects, from a translation point of view, the least well documented. This moment is the mass emigration of the nineteenth century that continued well into the twentieth century. The crucial event here is, of course, the Great Famine (1845–7), which was largely responsible for the halving of the population of Ireland in the nineteenth century. The famine affected mainly poorer areas in Ireland that were predominantly Irish-speaking. Many of those who did not die emigrated. Emigration was to mainly
English-speaking destinations (French-speaking Quebec was an exception) and for many this involved linguistic as well as cultural translation (Kallen 1993: 100–14). Aesthetically, Irish writers like James Joyce and Samuel Beckett would transform the diasporic experience of translation into literary invention but much remains to be done on the connection between emigration, language and translation in Ireland. A further dimension to the diasporic experience of language-shift is Irish involvement in missionary activity in the post-independence period in Anglophone West Africa. An Irish cultural commentator, Fintan O’Toole, describes how this missionary activity seemed at times like the Irish answer to Empire. On the back of the copybooks in his Christian Brothers school was a map of the world:

At the centre of this world was Ireland, and arcing out of Ireland like shooting stars were lines leading to Australia, North America, Argentina, Africa – the contours of a spiritual conquest that had begun in 1802 when Edmund Ignatius Rice founded the Christian Brothers in Waterford.

(O’Toole 1997: 75)

A globalization perspective on translation history has implications for both the past and the future. In our study of the past, it can allow hidden histories to emerge that are often neglected or obscured by histories that are bounded by the paradigm of the nation-state. These histories may often be non-textual and primarily involve interpreting but they are histories that remain to be written.

The future consequences of globalization for translation history are many, but one consequence is of particular importance for post-colonial states. In their study of late twentieth-century emigration from St Vincent, Grenada, Haiti and the Philippines to the United States, Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller and Cristina Szanton Blanc show how the political leadership of the emigrants’ home countries has expanded their vision of the nation-state into one of a deterritorialized nation that can encompass the diaspora. Before, to be a member of a diaspora was to see oneself as outside a territory, as part of a population that had been exiled from a homeland, where the state was clearly identified with a specific geographical place:

In counterdistinction is the deterritorialized nation-state, in which the nation’s people may live anywhere in the world and still not live outside the state. By this logic, there is no longer a diaspora because wherever its people go, their state goes too.

(Basch et al. 1994: 269)

In Ireland, in the 1990s, it was the President, Mary Robinson, who expressed most forcefully the notion of the Irish nation-state as inclusive of its diaspora, and the
Irish stand at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 1996, largely funded by Irish state agencies, was erected under the heading, ‘Ireland and its Diaspora’.

Transnational communities are used to effect political change in the home country as demonstrated by the role of emigrant groups in the US in the rise to power of Jean Bertrand Aristide and Cory Aquino and the decision by the Clinton administration to abandon the traditionally pro-British foreign policy of the White House and involve itself directly in the Irish peace process (O’Cleary 1995). There are of course limits to the state incorporation of the transnational community, and Ireland (like the other post-colonial nations described by Basch and her co-authors) is extremely loath to accord voting rights to emigrants. Nevertheless, the deterritorialization of the post-colonial nation-state is a phenomenon that is likely to grow rather than diminish in importance, if only because there is considerably more mobility among emigrant populations than previously. As O’Toole notes, ‘what used to be a voyage beyond the point of no return is now, increasingly, a series of temporary shifts’ (O’Toole 1997: 157). In nineteenth-century Ireland, the party held on the eve of an emigrant’s departure to North America was known as the ‘American Wake’. The name came from the certainty that the emigrants would most likely never return to Ireland and never be seen again by their relatives. In the late twentieth century, easier access, reduced travel times, cheaper air fares, the virtual community of the Web and other constitutive elements of contemporary space–time compression mean that home and away exist in greater proximity. Any discussion of contemporary translation practice in the post-colonial world must therefore integrate the reality of the deterritorialized nation-state.

Localization and hegemony

It is in the context of what has been said about the deterritorialized nation-state that we would like to examine the contemporary Irish translation experience. In his opening address to the Software Localisation Interest Group Conference on 14 October 1996, Aidan Stack, Manager of An Bord Tráchtála (the Irish Trade Board), noted the pre-eminent role of the software localization industry in the Irish economy:

The industry has demonstrated substantial growth since its inception in Ireland, and we now have a significant reputation globally, where Ireland has become centre stage as number one for localisation worldwide and there aren’t too many sectors of industry where Ireland is regarded as number one.

(Stack 1997: 33)

Together with on-screen help facilities and accompanying documentation, the
adaptation of software to the linguistic and cultural needs of different markets has been the core activity of the localization industry, as we saw in Chapter 1.

According to the Software Localisation Interest Group (SLIG) established in 1994, over 4,000 of the 12,000 people involved in the Irish software industry work in localization. Seven out of ten of the world’s largest independent software companies are based in Ireland. Among the leading software companies based in the country are IBM/Lotus, Novell, Symantec, Oracle, Informix, Computer Associates, Microsoft, Sun Microsystems and SAP. More than 40 per cent of packaged PC software and 60 per cent of business application software sold on global markets originates in Ireland. The software industry brought in its wake the localization companies and now firms such as Berlitz GlobalNet, SDL International, Lionbridge and Bowne Global Solutions have operations based in Ireland (Schäler 2001: 22). In 2000, it was indeed the activities of the localization industry which made Ireland the largest exporter of software in the world, overtaking the United States. An example of the type of ambitious translation project undertaken in the earlier period was given by Glen Poor from Microsoft, whose localization activities are based in Ireland. Localizing Windows and Office ‘95 was a US$10.5 million project involving the release of the products in 20 languages within 165 days of the US English version. A total of 134,000 words had to be translated for the Office documentation, 1.2 million words for Help and 263.5 person-weeks (average) were needed for the localization of the software (Poor 1996: 1). The advent of multimedia and the Internet provides further scope for development in this area. With the need for the multilingual adaptation of Web pages the Web is now seen as a site of exponential translation growth over the next decade and already by October 1997 the theme of the SLIG conference held in Dublin was ‘Localisation and the Internet Revolution’.

The role of Ireland as an important node in a new global economy of translation is related less to a mythically privileged relationship with the word than to a conjunction of economic and political factors which impact on corporate decision-making. David Brooks, the Senior Director of International Product Strategy for Microsoft, explained his company’s reasons for deciding to set up a dedicated software localization operation in Ireland in 1988:

The decision to locate in Ireland was based on Ireland’s physical proximity to continental Europe, the availability of a well-educated English-speaking workforce, a good telecommunications infrastructure, tax incentives and Ireland’s pro-business attitude.

(Brooks 2000: 50)

By 1992, the Strategic Review of the Software Industry in Ireland published by the National Software Directorate identified foreign languages, computing and
translation as key elements in the future development of the software sector in Ireland. As the report noted, ‘Ireland has become a world centre for software localization and manufacturing, and has developed a complete infrastructure for these functions. Approximately 600 people are engaged in localization, over 70 per cent of whom are graduates’ (National Software Directorate 1992: 2–5). It was further argued that the developing infrastructure of software manufacturing support services – translation, disk duplication, printing and so on – was a significant factor which enabled companies to establish and become operational quickly. Thus, translation moved from being a markedly marginal activity in Ireland to becoming an internationally traded service. In addition, localization presented the dual advantage of national competitive edge and potential for clustering, central features of the Industry Policy Review Group’s recommendations for the indigenous and overseas sectors in Ireland (Industrial Policy Review Group 1992: 70–6).

If Europe was to be conceived of as a multilingual entity then it followed that languages, translation and new technologies would be implicated in the push by US capital to diversify its export markets. The siting of Ireland at the language interface of global expansionism is in part based on what the French thinker Paul Virilio has called the shift from geo-politics to chrono-politics in modernity (Virilio 1977). In this view, it is the positioning of countries in technologically constructed time-zones rather than immutable physical landscapes or fixed territorial space which determines their military, economic and cultural fortunes. Ireland as a place has been profoundly affected by the revolution in speed that has seen time take precedence over place in the modern world and this chrono-politicization of the country has had important implications for the development of translation activities.

Physical location did not only determine the political fortunes of Ireland over the centuries, close to a powerful imperial neighbour, it also had far-reaching economic consequences. Physical proximity to a large market meant an over-concentration of activity in that particular market and over-reliance on low value-added exports of agricultural produce. In the 1950s agricultural and food products comprised three-quarters of Irish exports, and almost 90 per cent of Irish exports went to the UK market (Industrial Policy Review Group 1992: 29). In the absence of a large domestic market for goods, Irish export-led manufacturing was seen to be hampered by geographical distance from potential foreign markets. Hence, ‘peripherality’ would become a key element in Irish applications for EU funding from 1973 onwards. Ireland’s position on the edge of Europe was the commanding principle of economic disadvantage and EU structural funds were seen as compensation for distance. Ironically, it is this funding that will contribute to the undermining of the (financial) advantage of (geographical) disadvantage. A significant share of both European and central exchequer funding in the 1980s went towards the digitalization of the trunk transmission network. A latecomer to technological modernity, Ireland was able to exploit the latest version of tele-
communications technology to create the basis of a reticular or network-based economy. In other words, the combination of informatic and telecommunication networks would allow the reticular economy to overcome the obstacle of insularity and peripherality (Cronin 1993: 16–18). The establishment of the International Financial Services Centre in Dublin, the strong growth in call-centres, telesales, telemarketing and other allied services are all predicated on a network-based or reticular model of economic development. The reticular model relies on telecommunications and informatics networks to provide the necessary infrastructure for business growth.

The explicit commitment of Irish policymakers to such development was evident in the establishment by the Minister of Public Enterprise of an Advisory Committee on Telecommunications in June 1998 to advise the Minister on a strategy to position Ireland as a key global centre in advanced telecommunications, the Internet and electronic commerce. The Report of the Advisory Committee in November of the same year saw not absolute, physical location but relative, technological location as all-important:

Electronic commerce will migrate towards those countries which are to the fore in providing low cost, high quality telecommunications and Internet services, supportive legal and business regimes, and a highly entrepreneurial and technically skilled workforce. Given that neither physical size nor location primarily dictate success, Ireland can, with appropriate strategic positioning, sustain its position as Europe’s premier knowledge economy.

(Advisory Committee on Telecommunications 1998: 2)

The Irish economy is thus emerging as a prime example of reflexive accumulation in late modernity, where cognitive reflexivity is at a premium in order to sustain the supply of knowledge-intensive goods and services. Peripherality is no longer geographically, but now is chronologically, defined. It is defined by the speed with which information-rich (financial products, online support, telemarketing of producer and consumer services) and design-rich (popular music, Web design, advertising) goods and services can be delivered to potential consumers. The comparative advantage of (small) nations is to take the waiting out of wanting.

It would be a mistake, however, to see overcoming peripherality as the unique concern of a former European colony in Europe. The push to develop a broadband infrastructure (which allows for high-speed, high-volume Internet connections), to deregulate the telecommunications sector and to establish high-tech cyberparks has been proceeding apace throughout Asia (Castells 2000: 212–337). The Indian government has established over a dozen software technology parks, with Bangalore in particular emerging as a prominent high-tech centre. Other examples of emerging Asian cyberparks are Cyberport in Hong Kong, Cybercity in Shenzhen, Cyberjaya
near Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia, and another Cybercity can be found near Jakarta in Indonesia (Lockwood 2001b: 10). The situation does differ quite dramatically, however, from one Asian country to the next. While Singapore, Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan have 25 per cent of their population and more with Internet access, the figure is 15 per cent for Japan and 10 per cent or less for the two most densely populated countries in the region, China and India (ibid.). Thus, the potential for significant development of translation markets is there in many Asian countries and with English as a mother tongue for many Indians, it is easy to see how India too might emerge as a prominent localization centre. Japan already has a large translation market, the bulk of translation being into and out of English. In the area of localization, Carl Kay has commented that ‘most of the work is into-Japanese for clients outside Japan. Except for games and interfaces, Japan doesn’t export much software that needs localization from Japanese into other languages’ (Esselink 2002: 11). Kay also speaks of Chinese translation capabilities in the same vein as Yuri Vorontsov in Chapter 2, ‘Maybe somebody in Japan will harness the low cost translation talent in China the way they [the Japanese] have done in manufacturing’ (ibid.). Already, in Hong Kong, institutional pressures have created a significant cadre of translators in both public and private sectors. In 2000, there were approximately 1,162 translators and interpreters in the Hong Kong civil service (Ching-chih 2001: 114). Prior to the handover of the former British colony to China in 1997, the direction of translation was largely English–Chinese, mainly to do with the governance of the colony, but the subsequent direction of translation has been increasingly Chinese–English as China establishes trading links with the rest of the world (ibid.). Thus, the new virtual geography of translation could see dramatic changes in Indian and Chinese translation markets, in particular, in the twenty-first century.

It is not speed alone and the availability of indigenous talent, however, which determines the location of capital in the global translation economy. There is the presence of an attractive fiscal environment alluded to by Brooks in his references to ‘tax incentives’ and the commitment to the ideological assumptions of neo-liberalism in his evocation of Ireland’s ‘pro-business attitude’ (Brooks 2000: 50). The pursuit by the Irish government since the 1960s of policies favouring foreign direct investment led to a strong emphasis on zero or low tax rate regimes as means of attracting foreign businesses to set up in Ireland. From the late 1980s onwards, successive Irish governments embarked on an aggressive privatization and deregulation policy, notably in the transport and telecommunications sectors (Mac Sharry and White 2000). This was in line with European Union policy but, more particularly, neo-liberal economic policies were attractive to US investors who were responsible for almost three-quarters of all foreign direct investment in Ireland and were the prime movers in the software and localization industry.

The presence of the software localization industry in Ireland highlights a number
of fundamental issues relating to translation and globalization that have a bearing on how we conceive of translation in the modern world.

Jonathan Friedman (1994: 169) has described the dominant paradigm of capitalism in the Modern Age as that of the ‘world’s workshop’, where the periphery supplied the raw materials and labour and the centre manufactured the finished goods. In the shift from what Scott Lash and John Urry (1994: 2) call ‘organized’ to ‘disorganized’ capitalism, there is a decentralization of capital accumulation from the centre, where production is deemed to be excessively costly, to other areas of the global system. As a result, Friedman notes:

New, small and rapidly expanding centers emerge, outcompeting central production, leading eventually to a situation in which the center becomes increasingly the consumer of the products of its own exported capital.

(Friedman 1994: 169)

As new centres of accumulation emerge, this leads inevitably to a reconfiguration of centre/periphery relations. The localization industry in Ireland is largely the creation of North American capital investment by companies like Lotus, Microsoft, Corel, Claris and Symantec. The tax incentives offered by the Irish government to foreign investors are, as we have seen, regularly cited as one of the reasons for the growth of the industry in Ireland.

The decentralization of capital is the economic sine qua non of the emergence of the localization sector and the effect is that a translation periphery becomes a translation centre. For a small farmer from the west of Ireland to sail to New York in the 1880s was to go from one century to another in a matter of a few weeks but for the translator, translation manager or software engineer involved in localization in Ireland to go to the US is not to move to the centre: they are already in the centre in Dublin or Cork. Being central to the translation process does not always mean doing the actual translation in the country. In the case of a company such as Digital in the early 1980s, localization represented 30 per cent of the international business of its Irish operation; now it represents 70 per cent. Initially, almost all the translation work took place in-house. Now 90 per cent of the work is outsourced but significantly most of the translation work is outsourced to translation agencies based in Ireland (Localisation Ireland 1997: 11). On the other hand, Tom Grogan, Managing Director of International Translation and Publishing, has described the typical localization project as evaluated and managed from Ireland, translated in Japan, France and Italy, engineered in India and reviewed in the US (Grogan 1997: 52). In both instances, however, the Irish centre has a pivotal role to play in the translation process.

The periphery/centre shift in Irish translation was not only due to the capital decentralization strategies that are a feature of post-Fordist economic systems. The
advent of the reticular or network-based economy that has characterized the current phase of globalization was, as we have seen, another contributory factor. Ireland’s geographical position as a small island off the west coast of Europe had in the pre-Information Age greatly impeded the growth of an indigenous translation industry as translators were dependent either on the postal service or on being physically near customers in large, metropolitan centres which, in effect, leaving Ireland. The digitalization of the Irish trunk transmission network in the 1980s and extensive investment in the telecommunications system meant that the country was able to use informatics/telecommunications networks to offset its geographical isolation or peripherality (Cronin and Nolan 1991: 320–4; Cronin 1993: 16–18). If Ireland has moved from the margins to become a world centre in the global translation economy, the growth in localization highlights another feature of globalization that impacts on translation, the relationship between fragmentation and unification. Pieterse (1995: 62) contrasts the vocabulary of globalization-as-homogenization (imperialism, dependence, hegemony, modernization, Westernization) with the lexicon of globalization-as-diversification (interdependence, interpenetration, hybridity, syncretism, creolization, crossover). Friedman argues that: ‘Ethnic and cultural fragmentation and modernist homogenization are not two arguments, two opposing views of what is happening in the world today, but two constitutive trends of global reality’ (Friedman 1994: 102).

From his systemic viewpoint, cultural identity on the periphery is weak during periods of strong, modern identity in the centre, but when the modernizing project of the centre weakens, there is a dramatic increase in the political visibility of the cultural identities of the periphery. The very term ‘localization’ begs the question as to whether we have a translation practice that is unifying – disseminating software originated in US English throughout the globe – or fragmentary, that is, highlighting local identities and differences. The question then is whether localization is to be classified as translation-as-homogenization or translation-as-diversification.

In a *Financial Times* article on the localization industry in Ireland Julian Perkin claimed:

The localization process is a complex one and extends far beyond translation. Cultural sensitivities must be respected in the use of colour, style, forms of address, and the selection of images and graphical representations. Practical demands require the conversion of units of measure and standards such as weights and currencies. More fundamental modifications are often required, for example in financial software, which may be geared to particular systems of accounting and taxation.

(Perkin 1996)
Perkin has a somewhat narrow view of the translation process, as many of the issues he mentions as extending ‘far beyond translation’ are routinely dealt with in standard translation practice. However, he does stress cultural specificity in localization, a point that has also been highlighted by Richard Ishida, Global Design Consultant to Xerox Technical Centre in the United Kingdom. In a workshop at the SLIG 97 conference he spoke about cultural issues affecting the design of multilingual Web pages. These included data format conventions, measurement systems, work habits and methodologies and factors influenced by cultural background such as colour, folklore, symbolism and body language (Ishida 1998: 33–8). This sensitivity to cultural context would classify localization as tending towards the diverse, the centrifugal. Conversely, the market objective behind the rapid localization of Microsoft Windows XP is obviously to have as many people in as many countries as possible using Microsoft’s new software product.

In the globalized economy of signs and spaces, brand loyalty must not be culture-bound. Respecting cultural differences is primarily about getting everyone to use the same software. In this respect, translation can be seen as a powerful agent of economic and cultural homogenization. The concept of the ‘hegemonic’ that has been developed by Stuart Hall offers us a way of exploring the diversification/homogenization strategies that are at work in localization. Hall claims: ‘Hegemony is not the disappearance or destruction of difference. It is the construction of a collective will through difference. It is the articulation of differences which do not disappear’ (Hall 1991b: 58).

He argues in his analysis of Thatcherism that, contrary to what is affirmed by certain exponents of false consciousness theory, people are not culturally naive and that they know something about who they are. For this reason, ‘[i]f they engage in another project it is because it has interpolated them, hailed them, established some point of identification with them’ (ibid.: 59). The notion of hegemony through difference explains the homogenizing effects of translation through the preservation rather than the abolition of difference. To see translation as the guarantor of irreducible difference in a context of global sameness may be to misunderstand the nature of contemporary capitalism and global mass culture. As Hall observes:

in order to maintain its global position, capital has had to negotiate and by negotiate I mean it had to incorporate and partly reflect the differences it was trying to overcome. It had to try and get hold of, and neutralize, to some degree the differences. It is trying to constitute a world in which things are different. And that is the pleasure of it but the differences do not matter.

(Hall 1991a: 33)

Ireland could thus be seen as a local(ization) capital through which capital operates
in the new globalized translation economy – maintaining hegemony through difference.

**Countering hegemony in translation**

The hegemony is contested, as we have seen with the anti-globalization critique in Chapter 2, but not all forms of contestation are equally progressive, despite appearances to the contrary. The renewed vigour of religious fundamentalism, the continuing resonance of ethnic nationalism and sub-nationalism, the embattled canons of institutions of higher education, the hybrid experiments of world music are all variously held to be evidence of counter-hegemonic tendencies in the contemporary global system. The credo of the postmodern is not so much that the centre cannot hold as that it is not worth holding. For Friedman (1995: 84), fragmentation of identity is a logical consequence of the decentralization of accumulation. Pieterse sees the new world disorder as the outcome of globalization as hybridization, or as creolization (Pieterse 1995: 45). It would appear that, as a consequence, translation everywhere should increase as a constitutive element of this new global hybridity. The reality, of course, is that translation is on the increase but, as Lawrence Venuti has demonstrated, the direction of translation is overwhelmingly from and into English (Venuti 1995).

If the former defence of the hegemony of English was unapologetically imperial, as in American language policy in the Philippines or British language policy in Ireland, the latter-day defence of English-language hegemony has all the semblance of radical critique. For example, Hall claims that English is the language of global mass culture but that it is international English, an English that has been broken and invaded by the languages that it has tried to hegemonize. The new international language is not the same as the ‘old, class-stratified, class-dominated, canonically secured form of standard or traditional highbrow English’ (Hall 1991a: 28). Tony Crowley in his *Language in History* looks at the fiction of a standard language within Britain itself and how a particular vision of class, nation and empire was articulated through hegemonic varieties of the language (Crowley 1996). Crowley also examines the language revival movement in Ireland that began in earnest in the 1890s, and is extremely critical of what he views as the essentialist and racist views of Irish-language activists of the period. He concludes with an analysis of an essay by Seamus Heaney on John Alphonsus Mulrennan which considers the cultural effects of the imposition of the English language on Ireland (Heaney 1978: 34–40). Crowley takes Heaney to task for his monoglossic view of the English language but notes approvingly Heaney’s celebration of Joyce’s decision to make the demotic English of Dublin the language of a new European art:

What Heaney describes here of course is the forging of heteroglossia,
process by which this Irish writer does not fall prey either to the blandishments of monoglossic Gaelic culture with its accompanying nostalgia and reverence for the epic past or to the terrors imposed by cultural domination by the monoglossic English language, the instrument of everyday humiliation. What occurs instead is a revelation of the heteroglot nature . . . of all languages and consequently all forms of identity. Rather than a secure form of purity, what Heaney ends with is the hailing of the creativity and novelty of a new form of language, inherited from the past and made new in the present. It is a language which scorns the policing of linguistic and cultural borders and even questions their very necessity.

(Crowley 1996: 199)

Crowley’s incorporation of the Bakhtinian notion of heteroglossia – the different kinds of language spoken within the one language – is a prelude to a lyrical evocation of the progressive and emancipatory possibilities of a ‘new form of language’. Like Hall, Crowley is attracted to the radical promise of English heteroglossia. However, it is not only revolutionaries who scorn ‘linguistic and cultural borders’. Despots from Napoleon to Hitler have shown an equally scant regard for borders, linguistic or otherwise. The question is whether in the global system a heteroglossic discourse of translation is not being used to evacuate a polyglossic reality of translation so that eventually heteroglossia and hegemony become synonymous – sameness through difference.

Borders not only exclude, they also protect, cherish and maintain. The irony of contemporary anti-essentialist critiques of language (borders) is that they can promote an essentialist expansionism that in the name of the heteroglot and the hybrid facilitates an assimilationist monoglossic hybridity that fatally endangers linguistic diversity – a diversity that is the polyglossic raison d’être of translation. Crowley describes the beliefs of the Young Ireland movement of the 1840s, a nationalist movement in Ireland which argued for the link between Irish language and Irish identity:

These beliefs, that languages are somehow naturally attached to specific groups, and that purer languages are superior, was . . . in many ways the logical extension of cultural nationalism. Yet they led to a set of opinions which were later to become hardened and much more exclusive by involvement in the discourse of racism.

( ibid.: 131 [his emphasis])

He then proceeds to enumerate statements by assorted language zealots that substantiate the racist thesis. For all the strictures on purity and monoglossia in his writings, Crowley is ruthlessly monoglossic in his methodology. Not one single
Irish-language work is allowed to inform his writings about the Irish language revival. The polyglossic impurity of the other is excluded from the panegyric to pluralism.

However, more broadly, Crowley’s depiction of the leaders of the language revival in Ireland is one that can be applied to almost any group seeking to revive, restore, maintain or protect a language. The figure of identity is constructed on the ground of difference. Identity without difference is inconceivable, a non-sens. Linguistic relativism, in both its weak and strong versions, acknowledges this. Languages draw their identity from their difference from other languages and, when one language is translated into another, something happens, our vision of the world shifts, subtly or dramatically depending on your degree of commitment to the thesis of relativism. Hence, it is perfectly predictable that the struggle for the recognition of linguistic identity is going to pass first and foremost by the affirmation of difference. The practical difficulty for many post-colonial countries is having the difference recognized and the requisite translation policies put in place. The theoretical difficulty is that these countries find themselves pilloried by progressive critics from the first world who see all proclamation of difference as closet essentialism. Post-colonial countries find themselves in the classic situation of the double bind as described by Gregory Bateson. Bateson used communications analysis, and specifically a theory of logical types, to develop his own theory of schizophrenia centred on the double bind, ‘a situation in which no matter what a person does, he can’t win’ (Bateson 1973: 173). The twentieth century has famously been the century of decolonization, and peoples in different parts of the world have struggled to remove themselves from the oppressive rule of foreign tyranny. The struggle still goes on in Chechnya and Tibet, to name but two locations on the planet. However, when countries finally manage to liberate themselves from their colonial overlords, they learn: ‘Even in their finest moments of resistance, post-colonial constructions of identity remain just that – post-colonial; their understanding of context and situation are framed by the language and positioning of the colonial experience’ (Basch et al. 1994: 282).

The summary dismissal of post-colonial identity by Basch and her co-authors is echoed in Tejaswini Niranjana’s rebuke to nativist thinkers for their hapless mimicry: ‘Confronted by European descriptions of a history of decline, degradation, and bestiality, the “native intellectual” attempts to discover a counter-history of a “wonderful past” that will provide the basis for a post-colonial national culture’ (Niranjana 1992: 166).

Linguistically, post-colonial nations then are caught in a double bind. If they do not rebel, their language will continue to be downgraded and eventually disappear. If they do rebel, they are benighted essentialists waving the banner of difference and replacing one ‘master’ language with another. The consequence of these post-colonial theoretical manoeuvres is the paralysis that Bateson attributes
to the disabling effects of the schizoid condition. Taking positionality into account, one wonders whether the double bind we have described is not the latest version of the long history of imperial condescension towards subject peoples. Intellectuals trained by or employed in universities of former and current imperial powers – while giving us the customary denunciation of imperialism – go to great lengths to demonstrate that the mere ‘native’ or ‘nativist’ in the post-colonial nation is once again a dupe. S/he will never learn. Thus, the West can remain reassured that post-colonial nations are not only economically dependent but theoretically inept.

The affirmation of difference is not, however, an endpoint but a beginning. The championing of Gaelic monoglossia gave way to a more differentiated view of the language where it was historically ‘creolized’, scholars detailing the contribution of Old Norse, French, Latin and English to the emergence of modern Irish (McCone et al. 1994). Hall argues: ‘the moment of rediscovery of a place, of a past, of one’s roots, of one’s context, seems to me a necessary moment of enunciation. I do not think the margins could speak up without first grounding themselves somewhere’ (Hall 1991a: 36).

Grounding oneself is almost invariably seen in post-structuralist theory as an essentialist exclusion of the other but it can in fact be argued that the only possibility for inclusion of the other is to have the ground(s) for inclusion. In Pascal Bruckner’s words, ‘je n’accorde l’hospitalité à l’étranger qu’à partir d’un sol où je peux l’accueillir’1 (Bruckner 1994: 43). Once the ground is established, the internal and external meiosis of otherness can take place. Otherwise, self and other are groundless notions. The translation implications of the post-colonial defence of polyglossia, of languages as different and grounded somewhere, are not always clearly understood in the context of globalization. Translation exists not because language exists but because different languages exist. The refusal to be translated is the pre-condition of translation. If everyone was to be translated there would be no further need for translation. We would all be always already translated. Bilingualism is predicated on monolingualism, and polyglossia without monoglossia is monoglossia. Translation that was only homogenization would self-destruct. The diversity, openness and creativity that are commonly attributed to translation in contemporary theory are possible not despite but because of groups or nations championing specific languages. If it is possible to show that all cultures and languages are hybrid, mixed, creolized, it is often forgotten that mixtures are mixtures of something. If all the ingredients are the same, you have uniformity, not diversity. Translation emerges at the moment of polyglossic difference, the bridge between two mutually incomprehensible languages. Each language may itself be mixed (what language is not?) but the mixture is not such that the language is intelligible to the speakers of the other language. Thus, rather than treating the linguistic policies of post-colonial nations as the baleful outcome of narrow,
nativist essentialism, the defence of local monoglossias can be seen on the contrary as the essential condition for the survival of translation-as-hybrity in a global age.

The censorship of translation experience

The attempt to do away with polyglossia in the name of heteroglossia is a variant on a practice familiar to translators over the centuries, censorship. In considering the implications of globalization for translation, it worth reconsidering how the notion of censorship can illuminate translation, not so much from the point of view of the historical record of translation but from the standpoint of contemporary practice and the places, the geographical spaces, where translation might or might not be practised. The very first trick Harry Houdini performed on the professional stage was known generally as the Substitution Trunk. Houdini himself preferred the name Metamorphosis for the illusion. This is how Houdini’s biographer Ruth Brandon describes Metamorphosis:

Houdini and his partner would bring a large trunk on to the stage. It was opened and a sack or bag produced from inside it. Houdini, bound and handcuffed, would get into the sack, which was then sealed or tied around the neck. The trunk was closed over the bag and its occupant. It was locked, strapped and chained. Then a screen was drawn around it. The partner (after they married, this was always Mrs Houdini) stepped behind the screen which, next moment, was thrown aside by Houdini himself. The partner had meanwhile disappeared. A committee of the audience was called onstage to verify that the ties, straps etc. had not been tampered with. These were then laboriously loosened; the trunk was opened; and there, inside the securely fastened bag, was – Mrs Houdini!

(Brandon 1993: 12)

Harry Houdini’s name was itself an illusion. His real name was Erich Weiss, the son of Hungarian Jewish immigrants, who, goaded by anti-semitism, had left Budapest to settle in Appleton, Wisconsin. The home language was German; Houdini’s mother never mastered the language of her country of adoption and until the end of his days Houdini spoke English with a distinct Central European accent. If Houdini’s family had been escapees from the Old World, then Houdini himself would make a living out of being a great escapologist in the New. All his life – and this, of course, is why Metamorphosis is appropriately the name of his first trick on stage – Houdini would try to metamorphose into, would try to translate himself into, American language and culture. From the dangerous confinement of origins, he would break out into the liberating spaces of the translated self. That this was
only partially successful would compel him to repeat daredevil feats of escape over and over again.

Translators, in periods of repression and political conflict, have indeed found themselves bound and handcuffed, and for the unfortunate ones there has been no escape. The censoriousness of an age is not an illusion, but a grim reality. There is a sense, however, in which all translators are escape artists and translation studies itself a branch of escapology, a study of the arts of linguistic, textual and cultural escape. One of the most common experiences for translators is that of blockage. The word or the expression or the equivalent allusion will not come, the textual whole somehow does not seem the right fit and try as you might, there seems to be no way out, the words refuse to come to your rescue. Often, in these moments, there is an intense feeling of confinement, of somehow being unable to release yourself from the hold of the source language’s words, text types or text worlds. Time was of the essence in Houdini’s tricks (often a matter of life and death) and for the professional translator with deadlines, the activity in the prison house of language can become increasingly frantic as the time for completion draws closer. Hence, the great emotion experienced by translators when they find solutions, what Arthur Koestler calls the ‘A-HA’ effect, when they effect the metamorphosis and stand triumphantly outside the trunk of source language (Koestler 1989).

Needless to say, the principal preoccupation of censors has historically been containment. There have been many examples in history of how translators have sought to escape the attention of censors and been physically forced to flee for their lives and of how the dissemination of translations has allowed individuals or peoples to liberate themselves from confining or oppressive forces in their society. From the fate of Étienne Dolet to the assaults on the Italian and Japanese translators of Salman Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses*, the retribution of censors or would-be censors on translators has often been public and violent. However, there is another form of censorship and another kind of violence directed against translators in the era of globalization which although less dramatic and less tragic in its outcome than the causes célèbres we have just mentioned, is much more widespread and more quietly traumatic, if only to judge by the number of times it is commented on by professional translators.

The Welsh writer and thinker Adam Phillips notes that:

> One of the ways Houdini both reassured his audience and mystified them at the same time was by trying to devise stunts in which he didn’t destroy the thing he was escaping from. Everything would look the same, except that he would now be outside rather than inside whatever it was.

(*Phillips 2001: 32*)

The audience would only see the outcome, the results of an invisible process. They
were not a party to all the ingenuity, all the trickery that went on in the trunk. And this of course, as Phillips says, defines magic, ‘an art-form in which success was the concealment of difficulty’ (ibid.: 34). Translation, too, is about the concealment of difficulty but the audience, unless the translators are interpreters, tend not to be impressed by the verbal conjuring tricks. When Eithne McCarthy, the managing director of an Irish translation agency, Abbey Translations, was asked to comment about the worst aspect of the translation profession, she gave voice to a complaint which is well-nigh universal:

It’s badly paid and undervalued as a profession. If you’re a doctor or an architect, people either love or hate your work, but at least they have an opinion about it. People don’t think of translators as professionals. You’re just a cost and good work is rarely noticed.

(Ó Cuilleanáin, 2000a: 11)

In a recent survey of the professional members of the Irish Translators’ Association, the most common complaints were low rates of pay, lack of feedback from customers and the poor public profile of the profession (Keogh 2000: 18–19).

Implicit in Houdini’s art is the claim that it is possible to do extraordinary things that make no difference, and implicit in the complaints of translators is that it is possible to do extraordinary things that get no recognition. The ingenuity, the skill, the elaborate linguistic lock-picking procedures are hidden from the client who in a sense cannot appreciate the artfulness of the escape, because being confined to one language, s/he does not know what confinement is.

As a result, for translators, there is a constant, unenviable censorship of experience. Customers and readers want product, they are bored by process. And this is where the translator and the magician differ. The magician is acclaimed because no one knows what goes on in the box but the translator is ignored because nobody wants to know what goes on in the box. In the sense that no one can remain indifferent to indifference, it is a most powerful form of censorship, translators vanishing into thin air through the successfulness of their own art. Geraldina Marcelli, an Irish-based Italian translator, describes the often intractable difficulties of translating medical Instructions for Use (IFU). Under EU law, medical equipment which is sold or distributed in the EU must be accompanied by the appropriate medical documentation in the 11 official languages of the Union. The work is complex and exact but the knowledge medical experts have of English often makes the work appear redundant. Marcelli concludes her article on medical Instructions for Use by claiming:

As a mental exercise it’s certainly worth trying, but the semi-isolation to which translators are confined often turns out to be extremely frustrating.
Unfortunately, these are the strange rules of our single European market, which place translators for medical equipment documentation then in something of a role analogous to our once formidable customs officers: putting a stamp on a piece of paper to let some product through.

(Marcelli 2000: 11)

One can disagree with the translator’s view of the ‘strange rules’ of the European Union and yet register the hurt, the despondency at the lack of appreciation for difficult work done. As Phillips remarks in another essay, entitled ‘On Translating a Person’, ‘[i]ndifference can be more pernicious – and more insidiously aggressive – than outright hostility’ (Phillips 2000: 127). It is significant that the medical translator uses the language of hostage-taking, speaking of being ‘confined’ in ‘semi-isolation’. The thing from which translators have most difficulty escaping is the insidious aggression of unconcern. Paradoxically, the frontline troops for many states in their censorship campaigns have been customs officers but the translator as customs officer here is not so much censor as censored, a disregarded functionary with a meaningless stamp rather than a zealot with a mission. In contrast to more spectacular forms of censorship, the soft violence of indifference is more pervasive, based as it is on a principle of compulsive attrition and animated less by willful engagement, a sine qua non of active censorship, than by a general refusal to engage with or be engaged by the translator’s task.

In Tristes Tropiques Claude Lévi-Strauss famously suggested that there were two strategies throughout human history for dealing with the otherness of others; one was anthropoemic and the other anthropophagic (Lévi-Strauss 1955). The first strategy was a strategy of isolation, separation, confinement, the barring of all contact between one people or culture and another. Its extreme versions were and are imprisonment, deportation and murder. The second involved the forcible ingestion of the other, the coercive assimilation of others so that they were no longer to be distinguished from the ingesting body. This latter strategy has expressed itself in everything from medieval crusades to Abbé Grégoire’s campaign against the regional languages of France to the training of the colonized in the educational systems of the colonizer. As Zygmunt Bauman puts it, ‘If the first strategy was aimed at the exile or annihilation of the others, the second was aimed at the suspension or annihilation of their otherness’ (Bauman 2000: 101 [his emphasis]). It is of course possible to consider the relationship between translation and censorship under these headings. In other words, at various moments in human history we have anthropoemic censorship and anthropophagic censorship. Anthropoemic censorship is the most commonly recognized form. When the Irish state after independence bans translations of works by Thomas Mann, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Alberto Moravia and those of most major European modernists, the censorship policy is clearly anthropoemic. The texts are a danger to
the body aesthetic and the body politic, to the minds and souls of those who would create a Catholic Ireland, sober and free. The texts must be expelled from the system, the translations censored and the customs officers kept busy looking out for ‘dirty books’, the generic shorthand for any text which fell foul of the censor (Carlson 1990).

Anthropophagic practices, on the other hand, have their ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ variants. The drama of the hard version was played out in many colonies and was exemplified in the Irish case by the testimony given by Douglas Hyde, the founder of the Gaelic League and first President of Ireland, to the Vice-Regal Inquiry into Intermediate Education in Ireland in 1899:

We found, wherever we went, and we went over about ten or eleven counties of Ireland, whenever we entered a house, the parents speaking one language and the children another. We found that if you addressed the children in their parents’ language they hung their heads for shame, and they slunk out of the cabin like whipped hounds, as if you had pointed to some blot on their escutcheon, or some crime they had been guilty of.

(Hyde 1901: 2)

When the language of a group is excluded from the public sphere, from politics, education and the realms of commerce, they are frequently left with little choice but to embrace the language of their secular masters and accept Caliban-like the trials of assimilation. And indeed there are radical critics of translation practice who see all translation as fundamentally a form of anthropophagic censorship. When everything is translatable, there is nothing left to be translated.

The ‘soft’ variant is exemplified in certain narrow, instrumental conceptions of localization, illustrated in Chapter 1 by the case study of Compuflex multimedia localization. The difficulty there was the conflation of ‘content’ translation and tools translation. The commercial and technological needs of standardization from the centre conflicted with notions of cultural suitability on the periphery. The soft variant differs in that no one is compelled to use the words of the master but they are in a seemingly paradoxical sense asked to speak the language of the master in their own words. If the hard variant of anthropophagic censorship wants to eliminate otherness through inward translation of the other, the soft variant wants to dissolve otherness through outward translation into the languages of others.

The dilemma is expressed succinctly by the Argentinian critic Alberto Manguel, who observes that ‘translating into the tongue of the conqueror always carries within the act the danger of assimilation or annihilation; translating into the tongue of the conquered, the danger of overpowering or undermining’ (Manguel 1998: 125–6).
The refusal to translate and the global city

It is precisely the fear of being annihilated, overpowered or undermined that can often dictate our attitude or conduct towards others. ‘Do not talk to strangers’ is a standard and valuable piece of advice imparted by parents, guardians and schools to young children. However, what may be protective of the world of childhood may become destructive of the world of adulthood if good counsel hardens into indifference or, more worryingly, intolerance. If we have discussed so far the ways in which in late modernity censorship informs or affects translation in its active mode, we now want to consider what happens when there is no translation. In other words, if censorship is potentially present when we do translate, does it go away when we do not? Is zero translation tantamount to a state of grace and any deviation an invitation to trouble? To answer these questions, we need to distinguish between the different effects of zero translation. At one level, every censor’s dream in situations of (real or imagined) conflict is an end to translation. The only good translator is one who no longer translates, the one who withdraws into wordlessness. This is the most obvious connection between the cunning of the censor, the silence of the translator and the exile of dissent. There are other less obvious forms of censorship practised through zero translation and we want to consider two before considering the wider implications of the refusal to translate.

In a study of translation and advertising in Hungary, Patrizia Bertini notes the tendency in post-socialist Hungary to produce certain kinds of advertisements solely in the foreign language, usually English, with no Hungarian translation. The prestige of the language transferred itself to the good (Bertini 2000: 5–8). Already, the ability to understand the advertisement admitted the reader to an exclusive membership, that of those who spoke the international language of business, science and social advancement. If censorship is primarily about restricting access, then a failure to translate can be a most effective way of accentuating social division and policing the boundaries of class through the creation of elites whose symbolic capital is conspicuously linguistic. The development is not new. Already in 1842, Nikolai Gogol in Dead Souls writes witheringly of his compatriots who use French to win friends and exclude people.

Snobs are not the only beneficiaries of language opacity. Nation-states can also believe that it is a good thing for the people to know a little but never too much. In her exemplary study of the translations of early Irish literature into English, Translation in a Postcolonial Context, Maria Tymoczko shows how post-independence translators in Ireland either failed to continue the translation project of the pre-independence period or knowingly censored the texts they were offering in English. Tymoczko details the paradoxes of a translation activity which in the name of championing national specificity in fact carefully elided, muted or changed the very elements which made Irish literature different from literature in the
English-language tradition. These elements include humour, naming conventions, sexual or scatological subject matter, unseemly behaviour in the case of heroes, belief in an otherworld occupying a different time–space continuum and the concept of the geis, a binding injunction which could be expressed positively or negatively depending on circumstances. In a classic anti-colonial manoeuvre, the translators found themselves trying to minimize the importance of these elements in an effort to make the literature conform to the horizons of expectation of the English canon, thereby reinforcing the cultural and aesthetic values of the dominant culture.

The undoubted masterpiece of early Irish literature is the Táin Bó Cuailnge, yet it was almost half a century after Irish independence that a full-length translation finally appeared in English. The problem, as Tymoczko notes, is that for a major national epic, it was ‘unliterary, raunchy and weird’ (Tymoczko 1999: 26). A cattle-raid seemed like an unprepossessing topic for a heroic narrative: the main hero Cú Chulainn at one point is found squatting naked in the snow picking lice from his shirt; another hero meets his death by literally having the shit shaken out of him, and the heroine, Medb, is alarmingly free with her sexual favours. The Táin clearly did not correspond to the conventional hero tales of other Western literatures, so that it was either ignored altogether, only incompletely translated or translated in such a way that unusual elements were relentlessly bowdlerized. Here, full or partial zero translation is a censorious practice with two audiences in mind:

1 The external, colonial audience which must not be given hostages to polemical fortune through providing literary evidence of the apparently wild and barbarous nature of the mere Irish.
2 The internal, colonized and post-colonized audience which must be presented with an image of the Irish past that corresponds to the moral and religious values of the decolonizing cadres.

In one of the whackier adaptations of the Táin, the scholar/translator Standish O’Grady has Cú Chulainn go into Dublin where he is mesmerized by ‘windows of bright glass’ before finally deciding to buy a toy chariot with horses, driver and warrior – and we are told solemnly, ‘the head of the fighting man nodded as the wheels went around’ (cited in ibid.: 187). The temporary city location of our hero allows us to ask what more fundamental questions concerning the direction of contemporary society are raised by the notion of translation and censorship in the context of urban spaces, spaces which by the end of the twenty-first century will hold 80 per cent of the world’s population.

Much energy is devoted to walling off the differences between people on the grounds that differences are now seen to be mutually threatening rather than mutually stimulating. The result is often ‘bland, neutralizing spaces, spaces which remove the threat of social contact’ (Sennett 1990: xii). So we have street walls faced in sheets of plate glass, motorways that isolate poor areas from the rest of the city and dormitory housing developments that stretch to edge-city infinity. For Sennett, the main challenge of late modernity is ‘to revive the reality of the outside as a dimension of human experience’ (ibid.: 13). A central feature of the reality of the urban outside, which Sennett does not mention, is language, or more properly, languages. If the chief characteristic of the capital city has been to establish a political centre and make the population subject to the notion of a common heritage, the metropolis, in Anne Querrien’s words, does not have the same unitary notion of centre to preserve and is composed of networks which put, in her words, ‘an incongruous mix of beings into circulation’ (Querrien 1986: 44).

The global city is increasingly as much a process as a place, where centres of production and consumption of advanced services, and their dependent local societies are connected in a global network (Castells 1996: 386). New York, Tokyo, London, Hong Kong, Osaka, Frankfurt, Zurich, Paris, Los Angeles, São Paulo or Dublin are peopled by those who live in and service these centres and their linguistic allegiances are plural rather than singular. The metropolitan plurality may lead to ethnic hostility and outright violence but a greater danger is arguably the kind of censorship of presence that we referred to earlier when discussing the status of translators. Zygmunt Bauman describes the purified spaces of the temples of consumption which proliferate both within cities and (more usually) on the outskirts. Variety and difference have not been exiled from these spaces; on the contrary, in a particular kind of way, they constitute the principal attraction of these centres with their world food malls and ethnic boutiques. But, as Bauman points out, ‘the differences inside, unlike the differences outside, are tamed, sanitized, guaranteed to come free of dangerous ingredients – and so be unthreatening’ (Bauman 2000: 99). Temples of consumption are sites of action (shop till you drop) not interaction (the role of security guards is to stop non-consuming youngsters congregating).

Neither Sennett nor Bauman mentions language in their discussions of the crisis of civility in late modernity, and the making invisible of a crucial element of human interaction in multilingual cities is ominous. There is a growing body of evidence to suggest that foreign-language learning in Britain, Ireland and the United States is experiencing a marked decline (Nuffield 2000). If we except English from the picture, the situation is not much better in many other countries throughout the world. Language-learning, without which translation is impossible, is, if nothing else, a form of prolonged interaction with another people, language and culture. It is difficult, unpredictable, occasionally humiliating and
often exasperating, like all worthwhile engagements with difference. Remove language and the risk is a multicultural sweetshop of tamed, sanitized differences, the dangerous ingredient of linguistic diversity corralled off backstage in kitchens and call-centres.

Marc Augé speaks of certain places as ‘non-lieux’, ‘non-places’ where a non-place is a space lacking the symbolic expressions of identity, relations and history. Augé has in mind places like airports, motorways, anonymous hotel rooms operated by hotel chains, public transport and so on (Augé 1992: 97–144). However, in the context of the consideration of the notion of censorship we would like to extend the notion to our urban futures more generally and argue for the importance of translation in combating the collapse of what might be defined as a polyglossic civility. What we wish to suggest here is that symbolic expressions of identity, relations and history are powerfully, though not exclusively, expressed through language. If we do not want our collective spaces to become in a very significant and full sense of the term, cultural non-spaces, then we must start thinking about how in a global age we get adults to start talking to linguistic strangers in our towns and cities. Sociologists, political scientists, economists and other architects of policymaking from the human and social sciences are often breathtakingly indifferent to the language and translation fact, so if we do not fight this censorship of indifference, nobody will do it for us and our metropolises will run the risk of being colourful juxtapositions of ethnic eateries rather than translation complexes where different language communities both translate and are translated. The bidirectionality is crucial, as otherwise we fall back on the asymmetrical complacency of the strong who may tolerate the products but not the process of translation. In other words, the dominant may put up with translations but not with being translators. Translation allows for a crucial shift from a collection of positivist objects inhabiting empty spaces of inaccessibility to communities of hermeneutic subjects who co-evolve interactively. Translation could make an important contribution to the rooted cosmopolitanism for which Timothy Brennan has argued (Brennan 1997). In addition, it would allow us to contest the pervasive censorship of a neo-liberal monoglossia expressed so succinctly in the American Express advertisement which graces many airports around the world, ‘We Speak Your Language’.

In the second paragraph of his opening to The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, Karl Marx speaks of historical change as a kind of costume drama, where peoples embrace the new in the outfits of the past, Luther presenting himself as a second Paul, the French Revolution looting the wardrobe of the Roman republics and so on. He then draws an analogy with language and translation:

In the same way the beginner who has learned a new language always re-translates it into his mother tongue: he can only be said to have appropriated
the spirit of the new language and to express himself in it freely when he can manipulate it without reference to the old, and when he forgets his original language while using the new one.

(Marx 1963: 1–2)

If translators have nothing to lose but their chains it is perhaps not so much in the way that Marx is anticipating here but in the manner prefigured by Houdini. Houdini’s trick was in effect to repeat the trick endlessly. Failure to repeat the trick was tantamount to social and in certain cases literal death. The achievement was not being free but getting free and once he had his freedom he sought confinement once again, in even more elaborate and ingenious forms. Translators similarly must repeat the metamorphosis trick endlessly; otherwise there is no work for them. But it is an unusual form of magic. Unlike many of their compatriots, they escape to a foreign language and culture. This makes them distinctive, and many translators in the world today, particularly those who translate from minority languages, remain in the escape mode. Others, conversely, return to the original space of confinement, the native language but which now becomes a difficult area of liberation from the pull of the foreign source text. Some excellent students of language but poor students of translation indeed cannot make the return journey; the reversal of the escape/confinement poles proves too difficult. If censorship is about blocking escape and enforced confinement, then translators as escape artists are curiously at home in this repeated dialectic of restraint and release.

Phillips notes that ‘Knowingly or otherwise we map our lives – our gestures, our ambitions, our loves, the minutest movements of our bodies – according to our aversions’ (Phillips 2001: 50). Acculturation, education, child-rearing is about teaching people what to avoid as much as what to embrace. To learn to discriminate is to exclude as well as include. The grounds for censorship can of course be subject to criticism, and particular forms of censorship can become objects of aversion for translators, but censorship, rather than disappear, is itself translated, transformed under a new set of historical conditions. This is why there is always plenty of room in the substitution trunk for new tricks in dealing with censors, official or unofficial, because societies define themselves as much by what they are escaping from as by what they are escaping to.

An Irish writer who famously turned his aversions into literature was Jonathan Swift. The form of *Gulliver’s Travels* allowed Swift to escape the direct wrath of powerful interest groups in British and Irish society, though obliqueness did not serve him well at the hands of his translators. In July 1727, he made known his feelings on the matter of translation in correspondence with one of the earliest French translators of the work, Abbé Pierre-François Guyot Desfontaines. The expression of Swift’s feelings involves a curious act of self-censorship:
Having denied that he came from Ireland and that he was in fact author of the book at all, Swift damn the alterations to his text with faint praise. Abbé Desfontaines is not like those presumptuous translators who lavish praise on a text in the hope that their own reputations will benefit from being associated with it. On the contrary:

vous avez senti vos forces, qui vous mettent au-dessus de pareilles precau-
tions. capable de corriger un mauvais livre, entreprise plus difficile, que celle
d’en composer un bon, vous n’avez pas craint, de donner au public la traduc-
tion d’un ouvrage, que vous assurez être plein de polisneries, de sottises, de
peurilites &c.1

(Williams 1962–5, III: 226)

Swift’s authorial self-censorship is a paradoxical prelude to his critique of Des-
fontaines’ censorship of the Swiftian authorial presence in the French translation
of *Gulliver’s Travels*. Gulliver like Harry Houdini knows what it is to be tied up in
knots. He also knows like the modern illusionist how conditional escape is, how
getting away can also mean getting lost. Translators, potentially primary actors in
the current changes affecting the planet, must not accept the most damaging form
of self-censorship, an indifference to their own importance.

This importance is not always easy to chart in rapidly changing circumstances.
Globalization has resulted in noticeable changes in the international economy of
translation. In the Irish case, we have seen a marked periphery–centre shift due to
access to global information and communication structures. However, it is not just
the present but the past and the future that has to be re-thought from a global per-
spective as we chart the translation implications of the diasporic movements of
peoples and the genesis of deterritorialized nation-states. Contemporary global-
ization with its accelerated time–space compression is often seen as the child of
digital technology. The technology need not, however, become the model for our
thinking. The communications theorist Anthony Wilden describes ‘digital thought’
as predicated on an on/off, either/or approach to thinking. He contrasts this with
an analogue approach which he sees as synonymous with a both/and approach to
thought (Wilden 1980b: 155–201). From a translation perspective, it is possible
to argue that globalization involves both homogenization and diversification rather
than the more dramatic oppositions of digital scenarios. Nor can globalization be seen as either the bullish ascendance of the powerful global centres or the inexorable decline of beleaguered peripheries. The translation topography is changing. The Joyce of *Ulysses* was haunted by fixed topographies, by the need to set down in exact detail the Dublin streets that exile might erase for ever. In *Finnegans Wake* the anxiety of recollection gives way to the ludic release of language and the map of Finnegan’s Dublin becomes a polylingual palimpsest, the ‘margin’ becoming indeed the ‘broadest way’ imaginable (Joyce 1939: 4). Translation scholars need not so much the angelic visions of a Columbanus as the resourcefulness of a Finnegan to explore further how their discipline on the margins is in fact the ‘broadest way’ to understand the global age and the changing economy and politics of translation and culture. It is to particular aspects of these politics that we now turn our attention.
In Irish writing down through the centuries, people are forever leaving the ground. They turn into birds, take flight, gather in lakes or on the tops of trees, mingling ecstasy with loss in their night-time songs. In the tale of the Children of Lir, the predictably evil stepmother turns the children of the King into three swans who wait 900 years for St Patrick to come and break the spell. During that time on lakes and on sea, they keep their beautiful voices to sing of their inhuman plight. In the medieval tale ‘The Destruction of Da Derga’s Hostel’, birds and people become so alike that they speak and breed together. The writings of William Butler Yeats and James Joyce are alive with the songs and movements of birds, real, imagined and mythical. But the most memorable crossover between the kingdom of the land and the kingdom of the air occurs in the ninth-century narrative known as Buile Suibhne Geilt or in English, The Frenzy of Sweeney. In this tale, King Sweeney who is deeply affected by the horrors of the Battle of Magh Rath (which took place in 637) and who has offended a holy man is cursed by the latter who says, ‘thou shalt be one with the birds’. We learn that ‘Turbulence and unsteadiness, restlessness and unquiet filled him, likewise disgust with every place in which he used to be and desire for every place he had not reached . . . He went, like any bird of the air, in madness and imbecility’ (O’Keefe 1913: 15).

Sweeney literally takes to the trees and roams the length and breadth of the island of Ireland. In Seamus Heaney’s translation of the text, we find Sweeney celebrating the new community of flight:

I prefer the elusive
rhapsody of blackbirds
to the garrulous blather
of men and women.
(Heaney 1992: 14)

The business of translators is to deal with the garrulous blather of men and women, as interpreters with its spoken form and as translators with its written
form. But translators are also, at one with Mad Sweeney, creatures of the air, haunted by the restlessness and unquiet of their age and filled like him with disgust for every place we used to be and desire for every place we have not reached. In this chapter we shall attempt to investigate the elusive rhapsody of translation in the global age and, more specifically, the redefinition of the role of the translator that is implied by changing economic, technological and political circumstances.

**Fluid modernity**

At a very basic level, translators are perpetually unquiet in that they must be perpetually on the move. This has a physical and a virtual dimension. The physical movement is the going away from the country of origin to the foreign country to learn the foreign language. When a professional translator, Susan Cox, was asked in an interview what she felt would be the optimal education for a young translator her advice was not untypical:

> If I were starting out again I would probably take a degree in languages and follow it up with a post-graduate qualification in translation. I would then go and live in the countries where my languages are spoken, find a job as an in-house translator and spend a few years developing speed, accuracy, technical expertise and gaining some insight into the business before going freelance. (Ó Cuilleanáin 2000c: 18)

In some cases, this movement is not possible. This can be due to political restrictions on travel, as was the lot of many translators in East European countries before the Iron Curtain was removed, or because the cost of living elsewhere is prohibitive (which limits the possibilities of relocation for translators from developing countries), or because of draconian immigration controls (which restrict the movement of labour). In this instance, translators have recourse to virtual travel: reading books, newspapers, magazines; listening to radio broadcasts; watching television programmes and videos; going to the cinema; and reading the backs of cereal boxes. The journey is prolonged in late modernity by e-mail, the Internet, participation in electronic discussion groups in the foreign language and so on. These journeys outwards are all the more important in that in many countries, contrary to a certain Anglophone orthodoxy on good practice in translation, a great deal of translation is into the foreign language from the mother tongue rather than the other way around. However, translators do need their mother tongue, and neglect of their language of birth is far and away the most common problem faced by students of translation (Seleskovitch 1998: 287–91). Attracted to translation by the lure of the foreign, the exotic, they forget that translation is a return ticket and that homecomings are as important as leavetakings. Translators
must, at some level, be homebirds, thus exploiting the full ambiguity of the English term. What all this points to is the incurable nomadism of the translation profession, whose members are involved, like Sweeney, in a constant coming and going, toing and froing, an endless *va et vient*, whether virtual or real. Their rhapsody is by definition elusive — an elusiveness that is replicated at the level of translation studies itself where it is only more recently that translation scholars have begun to look at translation process rather than translation product. It was much easier to examine the stable entities of source and target texts, as opposed to the fluid, dynamic and difficult-to-grasp process of what was actually going on in translators’ heads as they translated (Olohan 2000: 17–19).

Translators in their elusiveness are also, arguably, very much creatures of their time. The Polish thinker and writer Zygmunt Bauman has characterized our age as one of ‘fluid modernity’. He contrasts, in effect, ‘heavy modernity’ and ‘light modernity’. Heavy modernity is the age of huge factories, monumental railway stations and giant automobiles. Bigger is always better. Light modernity, in contrast, is the post-Fordist era. Here the emphasis is on the miniature, the mobile, the volatile. Crucial to the emergence of ‘light modernity’ is the emancipation of time from space. In other words, for millennia, the limits of ‘wetware’, that is, humans, oxen or horses, set natural limits to how fast we could travel. Napoleon Bonaparte on his campaigns did not travel faster than Julius Caesar. All changes with the invention of steam engines and mechanically propelled vehicles:

When such non-human and non-animal means of transportation appeared, the time needed to travel ceased to be a feature of distance and inflexible ‘wetware’; it became instead the attribute of the technique of travelling. Time has become the problem of the ‘hardware’ humans could invent, build, appropriate, use and control, not of the hopelessly unstretchable ‘wetware’ nor the notoriously capricious and whimsical powers of wind and water indifferent to human manipulation; by the same token, time has become a factor independent of inert and immutable dimensions of land-masses or seas.

(Bauman 2000: 111)

The reason we are now entering a new age is that the operation of our hardware has reached its natural limit. Messages can travel at the speed of an electronic signal so that they approach near-instantaneity in transmission. This mutation in our experience of time has profound consequences for translation, consequences that are more frequently noted than analysed in the literature on the subject.

Here are excerpts from working profiles of two translators: ‘Over 90 per cent of her jobs come in by e-mail, with the remainder by fax and none at all by the old-fashioned postal service’ (Ó Cuilleanáin 2000b: 12). ‘Nowadays, she receives and
returns almost every job by e-mail; even the fax machine in her office is mostly a silent relic of former times’ (Ó Cuilleanáin 2000a: 11).

This is a description of the changing role of technology in the work of Linda Devoy, a freelance translator, and Eithne McCarthy, managing director of Abbey Translations, both based in a city but working from home. The different modes of receipt and delivery of translations are almost a Brief History of Translation Time, the postal service displaced by the fax machine ousted by electronic mail. In a survey of the professional members of the Irish Translators’ Association it was found that, on average, almost all of the members replaced their PCs, fax machines, modems, printers and software every three years (Keogh 2000: 18). The acceleration of the time of transmission has led to the shortening of the lifespan of the technologies of transmission. If time is now a problem of the hardware that humans can appropriate and dispose of, then in order to maintain crucial time margins (taking the waiting out of wanting), translators must access the time-enabling hardware and software which by its very nature is subject to the relentless obsolescence of the new.

The economic implications are manifest. The technology costs money and those with the wherewithal to invest in increasingly advanced technologies can deliver the translation goods more quickly and thus enjoy a crucial competitive advantage in a world dominated by the paradigms of lean production and time-to-market.

As we argued in an earlier work (Cronin 2000b: 145–7) the new world of electronically mediated environments where networks are everywhere will produce its own zones of privilege and exclusion. With only 3 per cent of the world’s population having access to personal computers, many of the world’s translators will find themselves extra muros in what William J. Mitchell refers to as the new Cities of Bits. Technologies function in contexts and the machines alone are worthless outside of an infrastructure of support. Hence the necessity for high-speed data transmission lines (ISDN, broadband), a reliable national grid guaranteeing a constant power supply, and continuous investments in the upgrading of telecommunications facilities. The advent of new technology has effected a radical deterritorialization of translation activity. No longer do translators have to work in the offices of large companies or organizations based in large urban centres. Over 88 per cent of Irish professional translators now work from home and the rise of the informational economy has freed an island population from the disadvantages associated with a peripheral geographical location (Cronin and Nolan 1991: 320–4). Now, in theory, translators can work for whoever they want, whenever they want, wherever they want. This freedom comes, however, at a cost. The inbuilt obsolescence of time-based technologies, alongside important value-added spinoffs in the development of telecommunications networks, means that translators do not all enjoy the same privileges in Babel’s precincts.
Time, transmission and the supra-national

The prevalence of time-based technologies is based on our changed relationship to time. Once movement is no longer dependent on fixed tools of mobility such as human or equine legs then our relationship to time is one of variability. We can go as fast or as slowly as our machines will take us and distance covered now depends on artificial rather than natural means of transportation. One of the difficulties for human beings in late modernity is that humans are being conflated with their machines – and not just in cyborg or science-fiction fantasies. Writing on the translation of medical Instructions for Use, Geraldina Marcelli describes a typical problem:

We mustn’t forget that these texts are driven by compelling productivity needs that go hand-in-hand with the product they accompany. Indeed, most translations have to return to the customer within very tight deadlines and translators are typically expected to reach a translation average of 300 words per hour. (Marcelli 2000: 8–9)

When asked what were the principal drawbacks of being a translator, Susan Cox mentioned ‘unreasonable pressures and the constant chasing of deadlines’ (Ó Cuilleanáin 2000c: 17). Theoreticians of translation pedagogy have insisted on the paramount importance of speed in the training of translators. As Douglas Robinson is quick to point out, speed is everything for the professional translator and getting and assimilating information rapidly often makes the difference between poverty and solvency (Robinson 1997c: 2). So when he produces a manual for teaching translators, it is entitled appropriately, Becoming a Translator: An Accelerated Course. The complaint about the tyranny of unreasonable deadlines is almost universal in the profession even if there have been few attempts at analysis of the causes. One of the contributory factors is a fundamental failure on the part of translation users to distinguish between what we would term processing time and transmission time.

Transmission time has increased almost exponentially over the last two decades. Given the operation of Moore’s Law in computing, namely that the cost of computing halves every 18 months, there is every reason to believe larger and larger quantities of information will be sent more and more quickly. Processing time is, however, altogether more complex. Word processing packages, terminology databases, translation memories and other CAT tools have accelerated the output of translators generally, particularly for those working in specialist areas with a great deal of repetition (O’Brien 1998: 115–22). However, texts and languages are multiple, various and difficult. Legal concepts differ significantly from country to country; translators are given screenfuls of code with bits of text in between or
software strings without context and are told to translate. Medical translators have to deal with myriad abbreviations in reports, every single test reduced to a three-letter word, and there may be dozens of these in a single report. As one medical translator, Wivine de Beco, observed: ‘[s]ometimes I find myself obliged to chase up the normal range and compare it against the actual values so that I can narrow down the type of test it is and try and decode the abbreviation. Extremely time-consuming and not worth the few pounds I would get in return’ (de Beco 2000: 14). The time of translation is not the time of transmission. The difficulty is the assumption that translation is not a qualitatively distinct operation from the mechanism of delivery, a difficulty compounded by the availability of MT packages or services on the Web. In effect, the human processing of texts in human time that have originated from other human beings producing text in time is increasingly hidden or annulled by the technology of delivery, so that the time values are those of the machine not of the human being. Translators must therefore work out strategies of temporal resistance in the network society of global instantaneity, if only because texts and languages resist and act as decelerating factors.

The shift from the industrial to the informational society implies at one level the breaching of manageable limits in volume growth for human translators. This is particularly the case when the volume growth is placed within a time-frame, that is, when the material must be translated by a certain deadline, which in the global era is tighter and tighter. The growth in information is not confined, however, to the specific profit-imperatives of the private sector but is also present in the other major institution of the age of globalization, the supra-national institution. The twentieth century and in particular the period since the end of the Second World War has seen an unprecedented increase in the growth of international or supra-national organizations. In 1909 there were 37 intergovernmental and 176 international nongovernmental organizations but just 80 years later, in 1989, that number had grown to 300 intergovernmental and 4,200 international nongovernmental organizations (Goldblatt 1995: 28). The United Nations Organisation, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organisation, the European Union, the Council of Europe, to name but a few, are seen as evidence of the movement away from exclusive concentration on the sovereign nation-state toward models of political and economic governance which are deterritorialized in nature. Jonathan Friedman sees these global institutional structures as part of the globalization process and situates them in a wider, historical framework by claiming that ‘[g]lobal relations have always been most easily identifiable in terms of visible institutions, such as colonial administrations, transnational corporations, world banking, international labour organizations but also international religious structures of Christianity and Islam, the media corporations etc.’ (Friedman 1995: 75–6). The proliferation of supra-national organizations is in part linked to an eco-planetary consciousness symbolized by the ‘earthrise’ photographs of the Apollo space
missions and given concrete expression by very real concerns over the greenhouse
effect, acid rain, global warming and water pollution. The industries of the few
affect the lives of the many, and a salient characteristic of what Ulrich Beck has
called the ‘risk society’ has been the need to organize on a global basis in order to
protect the biosphere which sustains life on the planet (Beck 1992). If economic
wealth is dependent on external trade, environmental well-being is dependent on
external management of risk which implies cooperation with others. The category
of risk does not just apply to the environment as such and involves any number of
areas, from arms control to aviation to drug trafficking and prostitution.

The international organizations thus established both to exploit opportunities
and to manage risk generate large amounts of information if only because it is dis-
cursively that most organizations of this nature have an effect on the world. Few
possess a direct military capacity and even those that do, such as the North Atlantic
Treaty Organisation and the United Nations Organisation, are significant con-
sumers of translated and untranslated information. In this respect, major military
powers still operate in much the same way as the British Empire in the nineteenth
century. Thomas Richards refers to the British Library and the Ordnance Survey
as the essential constituents of what he calls the ‘Imperial Archive’ (Richards
1993). The British Empire in the nineteenth century covered a vast geographical
area. It was clearly impossible to control this empire by force, so information
became the dominant means of control. The Baconian equation of knowledge with
power gradually became the guiding dictate of imperial policy. Knowledge in this
sense did not supplement power: knowledge was power. The Ordnance Survey
and the information holdings of the British Library were therefore at the heart of
the imperial project of territorial expansion, surveillance and control. The discur-
sive effects of knowledge greatly exceeded actual military capacity (Cronin 2000a:
33–52). Similarly, the vast majority of international organizations are heavily
dependent on information both to inform and to give effect to their decisions. Any
decisions which are taken that lead to the signing of international agreements
and/or to the incorporation of appropriate measures into national law require the
preliminary information-intensive activities of meetings, conferences, discussion
documents, reports, media handling and so on. In addition, information in the
form of data on the operations and decisions of the organizations must be provided
to members, and as these supra-national entities function in a multilingual world
of increasing complexity, they must perforce manage projects and activities across
many different languages and cultures.

In all these cases, as the remit and power of international institutions increase,
so does their importance as information providers and users, with the result that,
as Andrew Jocelyne notes, ‘translation volume has grown exponentially across the
spectrum of international organizations’ (Jocelyne 2000: 81). Between 1985 and
1998, the amount of material translated by the Translation Division of the Organi-
The new politics of translation

The Translation Service of the European Commission translates over a million pages a year and, with 1,500 full-time professional translators, is the largest single translation organization in the world (Brace 2000: 219). Inscribed in the origins of many of the organizations is what Jocelyne calls ‘a foundational multilinguality’ (Jocelyne 2000: 82). The UN has six working languages; the World Bank, the IMF, NATO and the OECD have two (English and French); and the European Union in 2001 had 11 official languages and three working languages (English, French and German). The foundational multilinguality reflects the global configuration of forces in the period immediately after the end of the Second World War and the continuing prestige of French as a diplomatic language, a language which had been very much to the fore in the League of Nations (Roland 1999: 21–6). The extensive nature of foundational multilinguality in the case of the European Union is to do with the fact, as Cay Dollerup points out, that ‘where other organizations are primarily intergovernmental, the EU represents a cooperation at all levels between the Member States and the citizens’ (Dollerup 2001b: 37). The federal structure of the European Union may indeed prefigure emerging post-national political entities in late modernity and the specific translation challenges of a post-Babelian reality.

Cyborgs and machine translation

In considering the responses of the translation community to the constant acceleration in information output, translators and thinkers on translation would be well advised to treat translation as a relational rather than an essential concept. That is to say, it is not possible to define what the attitude of a translator might be to the translation process as if these attitudes were ahistorical absolutes existing outside a world with economic, cultural and political systems in a constant state of change. In a critical survey of the hype surrounding the globalization services industry, Connie Myerson makes the following observation:

> Everyone needs to accept that there can never be enough translators and project managers to meet the growing demand for content globalization. Technology and automation are the only scalable solution to the commonly repeated and boring production tasks, but there will always be a place for human intervention, dealing with exceptions, crises, new areas for evaluation and so on.

(Myerson 2001: 13–14)

For his part, Mike Anobile, the founder and Director of the Localization Industry Standards Association (LISA), claimed in an interview that ‘technology and process automation will drive the business, there’s no other way for the demand to be
The contention of Myerson and Anobile is reinforced by Bert Esselink’s description of the particular problems surrounding Web site localization. Most professional Web sites are updated at least once a day and the frequency of updates means that in the case of multilingual Web sites, all the language versions of the site must be kept in sync: ‘Updates in the source language, typically US English, should also be reflected in any other languages, preferably simultaneously. Obviously, this requires a quick turnaround time for translations’ (Esselink 2001a: 17). The economic logic at work here is that of post-Fordist concerns with space–time compression, time-to-market, and the unholy trinity of quality, price and deadline (Rickard 2001: 36–40). As we saw in Chapter 1, the exponential increase in information and its centrality to the informational society have created a situation not where there is no work for translators but rather where there is in fact too much.

In looking afresh at how we might conceive of the translator it may be useful to consider once more the notion of the translator as a kind of ‘third’ person, one who is equally at home in or who perceives the equal importance of the sciences and the humanities. Translators are, in this view, practitioners of a ‘third culture’, which includes not only the classic polarities of humanities and the sciences but many other areas of human enquiry (Cronin 2000b: 148–50). In other words, the interculturality of translation agents is not only to be located in their travelling between languages and cultures but is also bound in their necessary disciplinary nomadism. This argument can be taken further to construe the translation agents in the new millennium as translational cyborgs who can no longer be conceived of independently of the technologies with which they interact. In other words, it is not simply a question of translators dealing with material from technical and scientific disciplines; it is that their very identity is being altered by an externalization of translation functions.

When the American cultural studies critic Aluquère Rosanne Stone describes the central theses of her work, she inadvertently sketches out a new context for the work of many translators:

"The War of Desire and Technology" is about science fiction, in the sense that it is about emergent technologies, shifting boundaries between the living and the nonliving, optional embodiments . . . in other words, about the everyday world as cyborg habitat.

(Stone 1995: 37)

To an extent, it would be unusual if translation as a profession were to be exempt from the profound changes brought about by successive transformations in the mode of production. The industrial era witnessed the externalization of the hand through mechanization. A multitude of tasks that were formerly done manually
were now performed by machines. In the informational age, with the advent of programmable machines whose quantitative processing powers exceed those of the human brain, particularly in terms of processing speed, we have the externalization of the brain (Bourg 1996: 185). Hence, many tasks that were formerly done mentally by humans are now done externally by computers. Industry moves from manufacture to what Marc Humbert terms ‘cérébrofacture’ or cerebrofacture (Humbert 1993: 54). In this transition, as we noted with respect to informational and aesthetic goods in Chapter 1, the role of the worker becomes increasingly the manipulation of symbols rather than objects (it is the machines which produce/ handle/process the objects). As tasks are de-materialized, work becomes intellectualized. In value-added industries, fewer workers are needed, but with more qualifications. The connection between humans and their machines in the informational economy is more cerebral than physical, with the significant corollary that certain intellectual tasks can now be assisted by or carried out by computer. In Dominique Bourg’s words:

L’intellectualisation du travail ouvrier a pour réciproque la mécanisation du travail intellectuel. Celle-ci peut aller de la lecture mécanique (à l’aide d’un scanner) de curriculum vitae aux Systèmes experts en passant par la Conception assistée par ordinateur d’objets industriels.¹

(Bourg 1996: 245)

The insistence on technology and automation in translation is therefore only to be expected in the informational economy with its specific emphasis on cerebrofacture. Failure to acknowledge fundamental changes in manufacturing practices and their consequences for cognitive tasks leads to a dispiriting tendency to substitute anecdote for analysis when certain translators are discussing the impact of computer-assisted translation (CAT) or machine translation (MT). Although an understandable reaction to cyberhype, the endlessly recycled translation howlers from failed MT projects and the derisive dismissal of ‘pocket translators’ and free MT services on the Web are unhelpful both because they misrepresent the history or achievements of CAT and MT (Arnold et al. 1994: 6–12) and, more seriously, perhaps, because they blind translators and many of those who write about translation to the close connections between translation and the new economy in the global age. It is neither possible nor desirable to treat translation as a sui generis activity in isolation from the industrial, technological and economic history of societies. Translation, like every other sector of human activity, is affected by economic and technical developments and so the move towards automation, though it brings with it many problems as we shall see, cannot simply be rejected as the malevolent action of technocratic Philistines intent on the dumbing-down of culture.
Stock responses to the possible cyborg future of the translator can be predi-
cated on excessively conventional notions of what constitutes an acceptable
translation, what might be termed the deliberately unattainable ideal of the Fully
Automatic High Quality Translation of the Literary Text (or the unpronounceable
acronym FAHQLT) (see Hofstadter 1997). Robert C. Sprung views a lowering
of user expectation on the output end of MT as one factor contributing to its more
widespread use (Sprung 2000: xx). Users in the administrative departments of the
European Commission reported in a feasibility study that they used MT for
‘urgent translations that they might otherwise have sent to the SdT [Service de Tra-
duction/Translation Service], for browsing, and for preparing draft versions of
documents’ (Brace 2000: 220). The extent to which even these basic gisting activi-
ties are possible with the Systran MT system shows the degree of penetration of
cerebrofacture into the translation domain. Another approach to the automation
of translation is to consider not output but input. In the case of the Caterpillar
company in the United States, which produces construction and mining equip-
ment, natural gas engines and industrial gas turbines, the principal difficulty was
getting large volumes of information to both manufacturing sites and dealerships
outside the US. The dealership network operates in more than 35 languages, and
800 pages of new material are published every day, 110 tons of printed materials
being sent to dealers every month. These materials include operation and main-
tenance manuals, testing and adjusting instructions, disassembly and assembly
manuals, and specifications, alongside bulletins dealing with service procedures

In order to deal with the volume of translation, it was decided to combine
machine translation with controlled authoring. Technical authors of Caterpillar doc-
umentation use Caterpillar Technical English (CTE), a set of approximately 70,000
words and phrases to write documents, while at the same time using a grammar
that defines acceptable usage. Authors also write ‘information elements’ (IEs) that
describe a specific concept or procedure, rather than books or manuals, the advan-
tage being that these IEs can be recycled in many different kinds of documentation,
in both electronic and print forms. Translation memory (TM) is the other trans-
lation tool used for languages that are not automatically translated by the MT
system at Caterpillar. The signal advantage of the controlled-authoring approach is
to accelerate MT throughput and guarantee a more accurate, high-quality output.
The motives for these developments are of course commercial rather than linguis-
tic: ‘The company believes this system will give it a significant competitive advan-
tage as it continues to pursue new markets worldwide’ (ibid.: 202). The advantage
is not simply translational, making documentation available in a large number of
languages, but it is also chronological. As product development cycles at Caterpillar
shorten from 18 months to six, the importance of producing new product doc-
umentation rapidly is even greater.
If one generation’s religion often becomes the next’s literary entertainment, one generation’s futurology can frequently end up as the next’s conference anecdote. Translation attracts its own legions of soothsayers and in our own time it is the area of machine translation which has particularly excited visionaries. In 1996, a major Delphi survey involving 45 ‘futurists’ and technical experts predicted that accurate and rapid machine translation would be commonplace by 2012 (Halal et al. 1997). In forecasting the rise and rise of synchronous, automated translation systems (SATS), Sam Lehman-Wilzig claims that the ‘most obvious economic consequence will be the virtual disappearance of the translation profession. First textual translation will disappear, and ultimately oral translators’ (Lehman-Wilzig 2000: 484 [his emphasis]). In the heady speculation it is regularly and readily acknowledged that problems remain. How do machines deal with infinite word sequences, homographs and homophones, idiomatic expressions, non-equivalency, neologisms, the language of subcultures and incommensurability (Arnold et al. 1994)? If oral translation or interpreting is added to the picture, then there are the further difficulties of pause, spontaneous speech, hesitation fillers, accents, dialects, intonation, environmental noise, social context and non-verbal communication. For Lehman-Wilzig, it is advances in artificial intelligence (neural network, parallel processing and fuzzy logic) and, in particular, continued growth in computer processing power that will result in the widespread use of SATS. In addition, the economic benefits accruing from the resolution of interlingual communication problems will provide an important fillip for research and development in the area.

The omnipresence of SATS is partly predicated on dual aspects of IT development, mobility and miniaturization. The advent of wireless technologies would eventually allow SATS to function anywhere, and developments in nanotechnologies where the notion of the computer gives way to the concept of the chip (micro-computer) in any object mean that all future computers, radios and television sets could be ‘SATS Inside’ (Lehman-Wilzig 2000: 478). So the task of translation in the most intimate of situations would be devolved to miniature electronic prostheses:

As to face-to-face conversation between people speaking different languages, the ever-present, super-miniaturized cellular phone in their ear(ring) (literally) can double as the SATS – picking up the other conversationalist’s spoken voice and translating it directly into our ear(s). If both partners have such a medium, then that is all that is needed for full SATS discourse.

(ibid.)

Similarly, for tourists in a foreign land, a SATS embedded in their spectacles or contact lenses would translate signs in the foreign language into their mother
tongue. Even if progress has been made in the area of speech translation by the C-STAR II and JANUS groups (Interactive Systems Lab 2000a and 2000b), overly optimistic claims on automated translation ability invite scepticism. The doubts are compounded by the extremely uneven performance of MT programmes on the Internet such as Babylon, Babelfish (AltaVista) or Comprendre (Globalink). Claims relating to the demise of the translation profession are regularly confounded by statistics. There are now more translators working than at any other period in human history. The fundamental difficulty with a particular kind of technocratic utopianism in translation is the preference for substitutive thinking over relational thinking. That is to say, the notion of the machine fully replacing the translator or becoming a wholly adequate substitute for the translator is considerably less plausible than the emergence of translational cyborgs where the levels of interaction between humans and machines are deeper and more extensive, with the strengths of each relating to the other in an optimal and mutually complementary fashion. The digital scenarios of sea, sun and SATS may provide futuristic drama but it is the analogue script of both/and, machine/human complementarity that corresponds more closely to the evolving translation scene in the twenty-first century.

In conceiving of or anticipating change in translation in a global age, it is important nonetheless to be aware of two aspects of technical development. The first is what the technical historian Simondon calls the phenomenon of concretization. By this, he means the manner in which technical objects start life as the physical translation of an abstract system and through successive changes come increasingly to resemble individual and concrete objects, with their own internal coherence (Simondon 1989: 46). In the case of the heat engine, the evolution from steam engine to reactor involved the gradual integration of disparate elements and functions. Whereas in the steam engine, for example, combustion took place outside the piston in an adjoining boiler, in the internal combustion engine it occurs within the cylinder itself. In this respect, technical objects move closer to the holistic individuality characteristic of natural objects. Paradoxically, this concretization, which leads to the greater ‘naturalness’ of the technical, is based on increasingly complex scientific knowledge, informing models that are predicated on ever higher levels of abstraction. As a result, the more user-friendly the technology or the more ‘natural’ and interactive it appears to the user, the more complex and abstract is the science which produces it (as users discover to their cost when these technologies break down).

With respect to translation, these evolutionary patterns suggest that complexity is an inevitable component of rather than an obstacle to the production of advanced technological systems. In other words, it is precisely because translation is so complex and intractable that it will find its way into technologies that are increasingly easy to use if not to design. Further, the integrative thrust of technical objects means that the cyborg-like indeterminacy of the human and the non-human or the
naturally’ and the ‘unnatural’ in the translation process will become even more pronounced. Such a state may not always be a welcome one. In discussing the use of machine translation and translation memory at the Baan Company, Carmen Andrés Lange and Winfield Scott Bennett commented on a conspicuous gap in MT literature:

Nearly every article about MT focuses either on linguistic aspects or on how fast large amounts of text can be handled by MT. But they rarely explain how to motivate employees, and how to integrate MT into translation business procedure. Introducing MT does not imply that everybody involved is excited to be part of a highly sophisticated technical procedure.

(Lange and Bennett 2000: 208)

The difficulty Lange and Bennett observe is that translators can see post-editing work in an MT environment as tedious or ‘mechanical’. The translational cyborg here mutates into an early version of the robot, carrying out perfunctory and repetitive tasks. Thus, the perception is that rather than technology freeing up translators to engage in the more exacting or ‘creative’ aspects of the translation, the translators find themselves firmly situated at the ‘machine’ end of the human/machine continuum. Lange and Bennett comment that the ‘human factor will . . . remain a source of concern until professional translators are willing to use MT as a tool to assist them in their work’ (ibid.: 209). For that willingness to exist, however, it is necessary to organize and conceptualize the translation work in a particular way.

As we noted earlier, one of the effects of cerebrofacture has been to mechanize certain intellectual tasks. If tools are to assist rather than subjugate translators, then it must be made clear where their judgement or creative autonomy makes a difference and is decisive. In a sense, it is when translation is integrated into an exosomatic view of human development (see Chapter 1), where tools can deepen and define rather than remove our humanity, that translators are more likely to creatively engage with MT systems.

Kevin Warwick, Professor of Cybernetics at the University of Reading, notes how frequently in human myths and stories the monstrous is eventually the victim of superior human intelligence. If we are threatened in our science fiction existences by an extremely intelligent life form, the challenge is to find the weak point that will be the form’s undoing. Warwick argues that, ‘[u]nfortunately, in real life, this basic philosophy that humans must, despite everything be somehow better, somehow superior to all else, haunts much scientific thinking even today’ (Warwick 1998: 45). Cars and aeroplanes, however, are able to do things humans cannot do, precisely because they do not look like humans. One consequence of
human hubris is to assume that intelligence will always take the human form of the
brain and that the crude anthropic form of cinematographic robots is conclusive
evidence of their inferior state. However, it is not how humans do things but rather
what they do that leads us to attribute particular kinds of intelligence to them.
Warwick notes the following:

It is worth pointing out that the human characteristics of intelligence are
suitable to the human lifeform and fit well with the way we interact with the
world. The way in which we are intelligent is not some perfect form to be
equalled by another competitor who will only be regarded as a serious rival
when they do the things in the way that we do. Other species are intelligent
in their own ways which are intrinsically suitable to them, whether they be
another animal, a machine or an alien arriving from another planet.

(Warwick 1998: 17)

This cautionary relativism is worth bearing in mind as we look to the future of
translation in the contemporary world.

There is a danger in fetishizing translation as the final frontier for our human-
ity (how could a computer ever translate *Ulysses* or *À la recherche du temps perdu*).
This is not so much because MT specialists will finally deliver a perfect system
with optimal results and so prove the critics wrong. It is rather that, firstly, trans-
lation becomes wholly conflated with process rather than with contextual
outcomes and, secondly, an excessively anthropocentric view of intelligence leads
to a failure to perceive the multiple intelligences that are brought to bear on a
translation task, some of which while not operating in similar ways to human
intelligence are much superior in range and effectiveness. In other words, even if
MT was to graduate to the SATS perfection envisaged by the Delphi group and
Lehman-Wilzig, translation scholars would still be faced with the very real and
urgent questions of establishing who in the global, informational society is trans-
lating for whom and for what reason. Excessive preoccupation with process (look
at how complex translation is) can lead to a fundamental illusion, which is that
successful processes are always coterminous with desirable outcomes. For
example, Lehman-Wilzig believes that SATS would not reinforce the cinematic
hegemony of US cinema:

while Hollywood will almost certainly benefit (moderately; its international
market penetration is already very high), this does not necessarily mean that
the cinema of other nations will suffer. Quite the opposite: *SATS will open up
vast markets* (including the native English-speaking one, the largest outside of
China) *to all other national film and television productions.*

(Lehman-Wilzig 2000: 486 [his emphasis])
However, the technology of synthetic voice production, no matter how advanced, can do nothing about the economics of film distribution and the virtual stranglehold of a small number of distributors over what large sections of the world’s population get to see in their cinemas and on their television screens. Similarly, to think that, because world leaders could communicate with each other directly using hot-line SATS, international crises could be quickly avoided is to confuse understanding with acceptance. In Igor Korchilov’s interpreting memoir, *Translating History*, he describes the SATS-like setting of a meeting in May 1990 between Presidents Bush and Gorbachev and their top aides at Camp David. The US and Soviet representatives seated at a deck table had earpieces which relayed interpretation from the interpreters seated under a tree over 30 feet away. Using omnidirectional microphones, the Soviets and the Americans could thus talk to each other with simultaneous interpretation. The fact that there were no translation problems did not prevent the Americans and the Soviets from holding different points of view on a variety of subjects from Afghanistan and Cambodia to Cuba and El Salvador (Korchilov 1997: 275).

As we have seen, the forces behind greater automation of the translation process and renewed interest in machine translation are primarily economic (time-to-market) and institutional (the multilingual needs of federal entities like the European Union). Similarly, in considering the future impacts of a variety of tools on translation and translators, it is unwise and unhelpful to sunder technological developments from the political and economic contexts of language use, multilingualism and cultural identity. The virtual absence of a critical political economy from debates on translation technology feeds both a resolute technophobia, which ignores centuries of translators’ engagements with tools, and a slightly breathless technohype with its millenarian promises of frontier-less happiness.

**Literary translation and market time**

It would be mistaken to assume that the problems we have just described are confined to technical and commercial translation. The Irish poet-translator John Montague once described how he came to do his translations of the French poet Guillevic. He was on a car ferry going from Brittany to Ireland when the ship was hit by storm-force winds which lasted several days. The ship was forced to take refuge in Cornwall. Montague, for his part, took refuge in the bar of the ferry with the Gallimard edition of Guillevic’s poems and a copy book. Writing 20 years later, Montague in his preface to the English-language translations evokes the festive vertigo of the moment:

> Water, water everywhere and quite a lot to drink! Clearly I was on a roll, in more ways than one, inspired by the hidden congruence between my own
vision, and that of Guillevic, between somebody brought up beside the mega-
liths of Ireland, and another beside the stone alignments of Carnac.

(Montague 1999: 28)

What is noteworthy is that Montague publishes his translations 20 years after the
initial contact on the bateau ivre from Roscoff to Cork.

Another poet-translator, Michael Hartnett, speaks of the long apprenticeship of
passion that preceded his unsurpassed translations of the seventeenth-century Irish
poet, Dáibhí Ó Bruadair: ‘I have been obsessed by the work and mind of Dáibhí
Ó Bruadair and, though I certainly loved them and him, my obsession usually
expressed itself in frustration. And it has done so since 1954, when I was thirteen’
(Hartnett 1985: 9). Hartnett wrote the prefatory lines to his translations in 1985,
over 30 years after the beginning of the obsession. Contrast the protracted engage-
ment with text in the literary translations just described with the dramatic changes
in the world of the book. The shortened time-scale of the post-Fordist economy
has profoundly affected the whole industry of publishing, which in the English-
speaking world has been transformed by a whole series of mergers and acquisi-
tions throughout the 1980s and 1990s. In addition, bookshop retailing has been
subject to the same profit imperatives as other forms of retailing so the emphasis is
firmly on minimum stock and high turnover of ‘product’. As investors seek returns
on their money, the pressure on publishers is to go for high-volume, minimum-
risk titles that are guaranteed a market and that often have a substantial PR com-
ponent. Given that the maximum shelf-life for a book in a bookshop in Britain and
Ireland and the US is now around six weeks, publishers have an extremely short
period in which to make an impact. More titles are produced than ever before but
they are quickly edged off the shelf by the implacable laws of the market (Clark
2000).

Bernard Simeone has noted recently the paradoxical outcome for literary trans-
lators of this new situation:

au moment où l’exigence de qualité semble s’imposer en matière de traduc-
tion, grâce à l’attention attirée sur elle par les multiples rencontres publiques
dont elle est le thème, l’accélération et la croissance exponentielle de la pro-
duction éditoriale, francophone en particulier, amènent certains éditeurs à
considérer, de fait, la traduction comme une opération technique, une trans-
lation dont le but principal serait la rapidité, voire le caractère hautement
pragmatique.2

(Simeone 2000: 35)

The dominance of a market logic in the Anglophone world leads to a well-
documented resistance to translation itself (Venuti 1995; Venuti 1998). But even in
languages where translation is widely practised the stress is on accessible, readable books which favour a translation strategy of least resistance and maximum naturalization. The indifference of critics and reviewers to translation questions means that there can be little in the way of quality control for translations as target-language readability is the sole criterion of assessment. In addition, as Simeone points out, one editor will be responsible in a publishing house for a number of different literatures and languages. We are now in an age where we are spending more time than ever before pointing up the intrinsic complexity of translation but we have less and less time to make that complexity a textual reality.

**Chronopolitics**

The shift from a politics of space to a politics of time has other consequences for translation that go beyond the working conditions of translators, whether non-literary or literary, and affect the representations of languages themselves. To show how what Paul Virilio calls ‘chronopolitics’ (Virilio 1998: 32–48) impacts on translation, we can take the example of Hungarian. Until 1844, German and Latin were the two official languages of Hungary. From that year onwards, Hungarian became the official language of the country, which created certain terminological difficulties as previously it had been only the uneducated classes who had spoken Hungarian. In order to deal with demands for new terminology, German tended to be used for everyday terminology and Latin for more abstract or intellectual coinages. When the Communist system collapsed and Hungary moved to a free-market economy in the 1990s, Russian and German went into a rapid decline as a source of terminological influence and it was now the English language which was the source of almost all the new imports into the language. As Patrizia Bertini put it in an essay on translation and advertising in Hungary that we alluded to briefly in Chapter 3:

> This process leads to the creation of calques and the use of international terms rather than encouraging the use of the appropriate and correct Hungarian form – an operation that would take longer (and in business time is money . . .) and wouldn’t guarantee the same degree of efficiency and persuasion.

(Bertini 2000: 7)

In the current phase of fluid modernity, terminological creation in English is incessant, driven by technological developments and the reorganization of the global economic space. The faster the rate of technical innovation, the greater the inflation of language to account for these innovations and the more spectacular the growth of the English lexicon.
Space–time compression which is the result of the application of new technology helps to disseminate, at ever greater speeds, the language of machines, money and cultural capital. A significant outcome is what one might term the *chrono-stratification* of world languages. What we mean by this is that certain languages are on the fast track of lexical creation and other languages are in different time-zones, with consequences for the development and representation of those languages. One can argue that there is one time-zone for English, another for French, another for Hungarian and another for Irish Gaelic, each language defined by the time-lag between it and the language on the fast track, the outside lane. In Ireland, a country with one official language, English, in the optimal time-zone and the other, Irish, a minority Celtic language, in a more peripheral time-zone, the terminological gaps between the two languages are often quite stark. So what are the representational consequences of these time-lags? They can be grouped under the headings of past, present and future.

**Past**

The language in the more distant time-zone is typically presented as premodern and underdeveloped. It is seen as having no working vocabulary for modernity, never mind postmodernity.

**Present**

As illustrated by the Hungarian example, more peripheral languages can become victims of their own attempts to compensate for terminological deficiency in the present through having speedy resort to calques. The calques end up discrediting the translation process and are regularly cited, for example, by the Anglophone press as pointing to the terminal hopelessness of attempts to control the nature of the assimilation of English into other languages. Terminology creation takes time and calques are an understandable shortcut, but what they gain in time they often ultimately lose in credibility.

**Future**

Languages, like their speakers, are trusted if they inspire confidence, but if a language is not deemed adequate to the purposes of the present, then it is no longer the language of futurity. If you are worried about the present, it is difficult, in other words, to make plans for the future. For the young, in particular, it is the language in the advanced time-zone that carries with it utopian promise.

Representational consequences are of the utmost importance as it is representations which ultimately produce the market for translations and determine
responses to translation policies. For a strong language on the information superhighway, being translated can be seen as a slowdown factor, an unnecessary obstacle and an unwelcome expense on the road to frictionless circulation. For languages in less advantaged time-zones, there can equally be the temptation of zero-translation born not of ruthless optimism but of travel sickness. Trying to keep up, terminologically for example, with high-speed languages can prove exhausting, the sense of permanently lagging behind often compounded by a lack of resources and of political will and the absence of a general sense of urgency around language issues.

**Translator status**

If the image of languages is affected by the chronopolitics of globalization, how is the representation or the status of translators themselves changing in the global age? We might begin to answer the question by reflecting on the physical evolution of texts. In the space of 800 years we have moved from large, leather-bound volumes chained to the tables of monastic libraries to the diskette which can be slipped into a coat pocket. The trend in text is relentlessly towards the compact, the portable, the mobile. Typed messages or attached documents fly around the globe in minutes. The old Latin adage, *verba volant et scripta manent* needs to be reformulated. It is now the *scripta* as much as the *verba* which are flying through the air. And it is the mobility of the texts which mirrors the mobility of the angels of transmission in the form of translators. The US writer and art critic Rebecca Solnit in her account of a visit to Ireland in the 1990s reflects on the advantages of travel: 'Solitary travel radically reduces the self, pares it back to the proportions of the body, seals it inside the country of the skin. It’s good to know what is portable, independent, what survives translation to an unknown country' (Solnit 1997: 80).

Translation, then, is the outcome of the carrying over, the text which is sufficiently portable to be able to survive the journey. Obviously, one factor which makes the journey easier is if the load is lighter. This is the reduction, the paring down of which Solnit speaks. And because, in our times, power is associated with mobility, lightness too is a characteristic of social prestige, from the mobile phone and portable PC of the young woman in business class to the small leather rucksack and walkman of the young urban professional jogging to work. As Zygmunt Bauman notes: ‘Travelling light, rather than holding tightly to things deemed attractive for their reliability and solidity – that is, for their heavy weight, substantiality and unyielding power of resistance – is now the asset of power’ (Bauman 2000: 13).

So why are translators not the eagles of the professional aviary in the new economy? Why are they not the principal beneficiaries of globalization if movement and speed are its principal hallmarks? As we saw in Chapter 3, when the
translator Eithne McCarthy was asked to comment on the worst aspects of the
translation profession, she specifically mentioned poor pay and lack of recogni-
tion. These sentiments were echoed in a survey of the professional members of
the Irish Translators’ Association (Keogh 2000: 18–19). The difficulties of profes-
sionalization and the invisibility of translators and their work are, of course,
recurrent issues in the history of translation but why are things so slow to
improve? There are many reasons, and they can differ from country to country, but
it is worth concentrating here on a fundamental feature of translation which makes
translators the sacrificial victims of their own success.

As we saw in Chapter 2, translators are first and foremost mediators. They are
the medium by which texts from one culture and language are transmitted to
another. Translation is a subset of the larger sets of transmission and mediation. In
this respect translation has similarities to other forms of mediation and transmis-
sion in our society whether they be radio, television, the railway system or the
electricity supply grid. One of the foremost thinkers on these subjects is Régis
Debray. He has indeed championed a new discipline, mediology, whose purpose is
to study ‘l’homme qui transmet’ (Debray 2000: 2). Debray points out that the
more immediate or apparently self-evident an experience, the more difficult or
indeed undesirable it is to question it. Cinema, for example, appears to offer us
unmediated reality but only through the most complex of artifices. The evening
news which seems to offer an effortless access to the real is the construction of
hundreds of people assembling the programme for mass consumption. Debray
observes: ‘Plus contraignantes les médiation, plus hautaine l’immédiateté. Faire
apparaître des médiation, côté “technique”, là où n’en voit pas ou plus, côté
“culture”, sera donc le premier moment de la démarche, parfois déconcertant ou
scandaleux’ (ibid.: 70).

The principal aim of systems of mediation is to make themselves transparent
and the greater the simplicity of use the more complex the system of delivery. This
can be seen in personal computers which become more and more user-friendly as
they become harder and harder to repair. What you see is what you get, only if you
are not allowed to get at what you cannot see. When we plug in an apparatus or
turn the tap, we are connecting ourselves to increasingly complex systems of
public utilities. As another mediologist, Daniel Bougnoux, argues, ‘Le médium est
autoratant . . . Tout progrès médiatique enfouit le moyen terme et raccourcit le
circuit d’accès, et la médiologie fait la petite histoire de ces courts-circuits’ (quoted in ibid.: 159).

Translation studies is also about the study of short-circuits. Translation history,
translation pedagogy and translation text analysis seek to reveal the complexity of
the infrastructure which allows translation to happen in the first place, whether
this be at the level of the intrinsic linguistic difficulties of languages and texts, the
long and arduous formation of translators, the intricacy of cultural crossover, the
state of the publishing industry or the assimilation of technical advances. At times, such is the overwhelming imperative of transparency and immediacy in translation as in other media of transmission that translation practitioners and users may not welcome this analysis. Practitioners may have perfected the short-circuits or short cuts to such an extent that any analysis of their practice will seem unnatural or fastidious. On the other hand, just as filmgoers are reluctant to be shown that a great moment of cinematographic passion is being shot in a studio full of sound engineers and perches and cameramen and vision mixers, the end users of translation do not always welcome being informed of just how difficult and complex translation can be, particularly if this means paying proper rates for work done. The paradox is obvious. The better the translation, the more successful the medium and the more invisible the mediator. In effect, the medium is self-annulling and in pragmatic translation it is bad rather than good translation which makes the medium transparent. If conference interpreters are like newsreaders – the more visible mediators in our profession – written translators are inhibited by a widespread taboo against the uncovering of channels of transmission or the detailing of the artifice of media. The suspension of disbelief which is central to the function of much fiction is also at work in the transactions of translation. If power travels lightly, it does not always follow that everything which travels lightly is powerful. In traditional Christian iconography after all it is to Francis of Assisi, the mendicant friar who has taken a vow of poverty, that the birds of the air are powerfully attracted.

Translation and creativity

The Italian saint may have been unworldly in his ambitions but the defence of translation in contemporary society is usually utilitarian and instrumentalist. Translation promotes international communication and trade and the circulation of cultural goods whether in printed or electronic form. These arguments, notwithstanding the heavily biased flow of translation traffic, are important and valid. The difficulty is that they place the emphasis on the outcomes of translators’ activity rather than on the effects of translation on translators themselves. It is in this context that we would like to consider the cognitive consequences of translation. Edgar Morin has argued that all perception is translation:

La perception est une traduction. L’intéressant est que notre cerveau qui fixe tous ces processus de traduction, donc de perception, dont nous sommes inconscients, est enfermé dans notre boîte cranienne, il ne communique pas directement avec le monde extérieur, il communique par l’intermédiaire de nosappendices sensoriels et je pense qu’il y a un rapport dans toute connaissance qui est à la fois fermeture et ouverture, séparation et inheritance: dans
l’immédiateté, il n’a pas de connaissance possible. L’auto-connaissance de soi – Montaigne ou autre – nécessite une certaine distanciation de soi par l’esprit d’objectivation ainsi que d’autres examens de soi: il faut se détacher de soi.6 (Morin 1995: 343–4)

Morin emphasizes distance; the ethnologist François Laplantine, distance and proximity: ‘L’anthropologie consiste à rendre familier ce qui nous est étrange et étranger (la culture des autres) et à rendre étrange voire étranger ce qui nous est familier (notre propre culture)’ (Laplantine 1995: 497).7

Translators are by the very nature of their practice at a distance from their society, culture and language. This makes them objects of suspicion. It also means, however, that they generate knowledge in that the separation and distance that is an intrinsic part of the emergence of critical knowledge is embedded in the act of translation. This knowledge can be the internal knowledge of self or external knowledge. If translators are writers, this knowledge can find articulation in prefaces, essays, other literary forms, but one of the challenges of translation studies is to make the epistemic benefits of pragmatic translation more widely available in a form that is more speculative (what happened) than formulaic (‘how to’ translation recipes).

Translation is a return ticket: the voyage out is complemented by the journey home. As we noted at the beginning of this chapter, the translation démarche is essentially nomadic. The French mathematician Benoît Mandelbrot, the originator of fractal geometry, in his entry in Who’s Who claimed:

Science would be ruined if (like sports) it were to put competition above everything else, and if it were to clarify the rules of competition by withdrawing entirely into narrowly defined specialities. The rare scholars who are nomads-by-choice are essential to the intellectual welfare of the settled disciplines.

(quoted in Gleick 1988: 90)

Translators do not have any choice in the matter. They are nomads-by-obligation. They were multiculturalists ante verbum. Technical and scientific translators have ignored the Two-Cultures Divide for centuries. In the crossing-over, the risk-taking that genuine travel involves, the openness of métissage is a promise of creativity.

A feature of authoritarian regimes is their restriction of the right to travel. The result is cultural torpor and sterility, the terminal depression of the captive mind. For Marc-Alain Ouaknin, ‘guérir, c’est traduire, s’ouvrir à une autre dimension, sortir de tout enfermement dogmatique, théologique, philosophique, artistique’8 (Ouaknin 1994: 27 [his emphasis]). One wonders also whether there is not a relation between restrictions on women’s movements in certain societies and periods
and their presence in translation. The vocabulary of ‘fidelity’ and ‘infidelity’ is after all strongly linked to the notions of licit fixity and illicit movement. What exactly is the nature of the epistemic benefit that results from the open return of translation? The benefit we would argue is primarily bisociative. Arthur Koestler uses this term to describe a form of thinking where two radically dissimilar ideas are linked together in a sudden act of intuition that is famously mythologized in science as Newton connecting a falling apple to the laws of the universe (Koestler 1985: 643–9; Koestler 1989). Metaphor (‘the angry wind howled and raged’) and paradox (the Cretan Epimenes’ paradox that ‘All Cretans are Liars’), often the indices of aesthetic and scientific discovery, are also bisociative in nature, bringing together dissimilar images or concepts and holding them in bisociative synthesis.

Languages are uniquely constituted by their differences so that translation as an operation involving two or more languages has ipso facto considerable bisociative potential. It can be argued that, in teaching translation studies, more time has to be devoted to highlighting the epistemic specificity of translation as expressed in the concepts of distance, the nomadic and the bisociative. The danger otherwise is an excessive concentration on the importance of the products of translation for linguistic and cultural development (the Bible in English and German, for example) to the exclusion of a more comprehensive view of the creative nature of the process itself. Such a view leads to a re-centring of translation studies as a discipline in the contemporary world that is both an area of study with specific vocational concerns and a discipline whose potential importance for other areas of human enquiry is striking if often overlooked.

The Double and ‘clonialism’

The intrinsically creative nature of the translation process is often masked by doubts as to the legitimacy of the process itself and it is these doubts that we will now explore through the notion of the Double. Going to the office is not always a moment of high drama but so it turns out to be for Golyadkin, the hapless junior government official in Fyodor Dostoevsky’s The Double. The official views with consternation the newcomer to his section who is put sitting opposite him:

The man now sitting opposite Mr Golyadkin was Mr Golyadkin’s horror, he was Mr Golyadkin’s shame, he was Mr Golyadkin’s nightmare of the previous day; in short, he was Mr Golyadkin himself – not the Mr Golyadkin who now sat in his chair with his mouth gaping and the pen frozen in his grasp; not the one who liked to keep in the background and bury himself in the crowd . . . no, this was another Mr Golyadkin, a completely different one, and yet at the same time very like the other . . . of the same height and build, dressed in the same way and with the same bald patch – in short, nothing, absolutely nothing
was lacking to complete the resemblance, so that if they were placed side by side nobody, absolutely nobody, would have taken it on himself to say which was the old and which the new, which was the original and which the copy.

(Dostoevsky 1972: 177)

Doubles haunt the nineteenth century. From Victor Frankenstein and his Creature to Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, there is no escaping an other, who is both hideously different and ominously similar. Dostoevsky’s Double is the high point of anxiety, the paroxysm of sameness that threatens difference and, by extension, the grounds for identity. If everything is the same, nothing is different. Our own age has its own nightmare of double vision in the form of the clone. Artificial forms of life and doubles prey once more on the literary imagination. In the Dutch novelist Harry Mulisch’s *The Procedure*, the protagonist Victor Werker is the creator of artificial life in the form of the Eobiont (Mulisch 2001). His tortured itinerary is staked out by references to *Pygmalion*, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and the Golem.

For the French writer Alain Fleischer, the preparation of a conference on the theme of ‘Le Monde et ses doubles’ has unforeseen consequences. In *Quatre voyageurs*, the Irish, French, Hungarian and Portuguese scientists travel to California to do some preparatory work, and wake from a jet-lag nap to find that they inhabit the body of one of their colleagues (Fleischer 2000). For Marcel Blanc, Gary Green, Braquinho da Rosa and Zoltan Schwarz the experience is as illuminating as it is distressing. Like Golyadkin, they are absolutely (physically) like their colleague and absolutely (mentally) different. In Dostoevsky’s primal scene, the Golyadkins might be a government official and his disturbing double or they might equally well be a writer and his translator. After all, one of the routine definitions of the task of the translator is that she should produce a translation that reads like the original, so that, to quote Dostoevsky again, ‘absolutely nobody, would have taken it on himself to say which was the old and which the new, which was the original and which the copy’. So what can the notion of the Double tell us about translation, and more particularly, about literary translation in an age of globalization?

The darker side of globalization is usually presented as duplication. Different countries, different continents but same McDonald’s chains, same episodes of *Dallas or Friends*, same Disney films in the same multiplexes, same Microsoft Windows and same Britney Spears. This is doubling as chain reaction. The death of diversity then is the spread of the Double. The colonialism of the nineteenth century and its fear of the Double as the colonial subject who was too human for comfort gives way to what we might term the ‘clonialism’ of the twenty-first century with its endless replication of the same High-Street multiple in the pedestrianized zone and the same US sitcom on the television screen. Of course,
clonialism can only work in a multilingual world if the translators are there to service the reproduction of similarity. Without translation, for many there is nothing to understand and nothing to read. J.K. Rowling, Stephen King and Danielle Steele turn up unfailingly in bookshops across the planet because they have Doubles in the form of translators who produce that other double, the translated text. This is globalization-as-homogenization, a McWorld bereft of difference because under clonialism everything turns out to be a replica, a simulacrum, a copy of a limited set of economically and culturally powerful originals.

In this view, there is also a suggestion about the activity of translation that it is somehow vaguely fraudulent. Translation history indeed has many examples of fictitious translation, from Macpherson’s eighteenth-century Ossianic forgeries to a number of nineteenth-century ‘translations’ from the German by the Irish poet James Clarence Mangan. Mangan attributed the original poems to the German poets ‘Selber’ and ‘Drechsler’ who did not of course exist (Mangan 1836: 278–302). More recently, Andreï Makine, a Russian writing in French, discovered the benefits of translation as forgery. Having being unsuccessful in submitting manuscripts under his own name he then submitted La Fille d’un héros de l’Union Soviétique as having been translated from the Russian by ‘Albert Lemmonier’. The surname was in fact that of his French great-grandfather. It was published in 1990. When his second manuscript La Confession d’un porte-drapeau déchu, again presented as a translation, was accepted by Belfond in 1992 the fiction turned to nightmare as Belfond demanded the Russian manuscript to check ‘certaines formulations mal traduites’:

Evidemment le manuscrit russe n’existait pas, alors je suis venu chez l’éditeur avec ce que j’avais sous la main, quelque chose qui pouvait ressembler à un manuscrit et qui était écrit en cyrillique. Et très sérieusement, je faisais mine de me reporter, page après page, aux phrases russes correspondant aux questions de l’éditeur. J’ai cru l’épreuve terminée quand on me dit vouloir faire revoir la traduction à l’extérieur. Eh bien, vous me croirez ou non, j’ai traduit intégralement mon roman, du français en russe. C’était une véritable torture.9

(quoted in Van Rentergh 1995)

This translation parable of the arroseur arrosé does raise questions as to the nature of our activity. Are students of literary translation training to be master-counterfeiters? If we take Jean-René Ladmiral’s definition of the function of translation, ‘Ça sert à nous dispenser de la lecture du texte original’,10 we could argue that the end user of a novel who has no access to or knowledge of the other language has a copy that is as good as the original, in other words a successful counterfeit (Ladmiral 1995: 418). Translators may feel that this analogy belittles
their expertise but good counterfeiters are enormously skilful and bad translation bears all the hallmarks of shoddy imitation.

Is it possible to divide translation into translation as reproduction and translation as transformation? Can there be reproduction without transformation as distinct from effort (as we have said, great effort can be expended on a faithful reproduction)? To what extent do target audiences want the self-reflexive traces of transformation in translation or do they prefer, to quote the title of an English translation of an Umberto Eco collection of essays, *Faith in Fakes* (Eco 1986)? Or are these questions meaningless if we accord no ontological priority to the original and argue that simulacra are all we have? But what then are the pedagogical consequences? How to distinguish successful from unsuccessful simulacra? And indeed do the suggestions of forgery and the fear of a homogenizing clonialism lead to the still loudly proclaimed dismissals of translation as treasonable, unpoetic, inadequate?

Walter Benjamin is almost invariably quoted in translation studies for one piece of writing on the subject, ‘The Task of the Translator’. However, Benjamin, himself an active literary translator, has a passage in *One-Way Street* which is subtly revealing. He notes how the mode of travel affects our perception of place. A country road is a very different thing seen from a plane and experienced under our feet. The pilot is then compared to the common reader weaving his/her way dreamily through a text. The walker, on the other hand, is likened to a copyist who, subject to the discipline of a text, discovers whole inner worlds of detail. Benjamin concludes by claiming that, ‘[t]he Chinese practice of copying books was thus an incomparable guarantee of literary culture, and the transcript a key to China’s enigmas’ (Benjamin 1979: 50). In his analysis, the production of a copy – the double – is doubly revealing. The journey through the text reveals the text in all its complexity but the journeyer is equally embarked on an odyssey of self-discovery. At one level, Benjamin’s comment merely restates what is a well-known fact about translation. There are no more assiduous readers of texts than translators, and this is one of the reasons why translators complain so loudly and so long about the quality of the written language with which they often have to deal. At another level, the exaltation of the copyist points to a fundamental dilemma which brings us back to the realm of travel and the transports of love.

**Incompleteness and metonym**

One of the recurrent difficulties for European travellers to the Americas in the sixteenth century was to convey what they saw. The reality they encountered far exceeded in scale, diversity and beauty the language and descriptive models at their disposal. They could only plead inadequacy. When Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, the official chronicler of the Spanish Empire in the Indies, wrote his *Historia General y Natural de las Indias* (c.1535–49), he explicitly renounced the
attempt to give a complete description of everything he saw. In one passage, he
gives an account of an exotic bird brought to him by a Captain Urdaneta but
admits, ‘For what I said above, I must conclude that there will never be a painter
able to portray this bird. However, as I read my description above with the bird
beside me, I get the impression there is something valuable in what I have just said’
(quoted in Carrillo 1999: 61). As Jesús Carrillo points out, the notion of the irre-
producibility of life and of the superiority of the natural over any artificial
substitute was familiar to Oviedo from his immersion in Petrarchan literature, and
in particular, the idea of the lover being doomed to try to capture the essence of
the absent beloved. The literary conceit was vividly illustrated in a meeting in
1500 between Oviedo and Don Hugo de Cardona, a Sicilian nobleman of Catalan
origin in the service of the King of Naples. Oviedo was intrigued by de Cardona’s
chivalric emblem, which showed a painter painting a lady accompanied by a motto
saying that any attempt to represent the lady in question was hopelessly inade-
quate. It transpired subsequently that de Cardona obsessively collected portraits of
his beloved. Oviedo goes on to comment:

Laughing together one day about these portraits and making comments on
their different degrees of resemblance while looking at them, I asked about
his plans for all these persons or artificial women. After a loud sigh, don
Hugo answered saying: ‘God knows how much more I owe the living one
than the pictures, but it would be a crime nonetheless to touch them or to
stop loving them, because they reflect what I keep deep in my soul.’

(quoted in ibid.: 63)

The copies are not adequate to the original but they nonetheless reflect a deep
truth about the original. Like Oviedo’s descriptions of exotic species in the Indies,
they reveal divine perfection in their human imperfection.

The singularity of the original means the copyist’s task is properly infinite, the
journey of replication never-ending. And this is where the literary translator is
faced with a dilemma as timeless as that of the Petrarchan lover. Bernard Lorth-
olary, a German–French literary translator who is responsible for the German
titles published by Gallimard, noted in an interview that ‘les traductions vieillissent
plus vite que les originaux’ (Lortholary et al. 1998: 208). Lortholary claims there
is nothing wrong with this. It is not an admission of incompetence or failure. Clas-
sics in the musical repertoire are recorded over and over again and no one takes
exception so why should a similar situation not prevail in literature? The attempt to
create a true likeness can only succeed if it fails. The incompleteness of any trans-
lation is the very principle of its future creativity. To point to the limits of literary
translation as proof of the hopelessness of the enterprise – producing pale imita-
tions, cheap copies, treacherous double agents – is to confuse completion with
exhaustion. In other words, any translation is always a provisional answer to the question, ‘can this text be translated?’ To paraphrase Stanley Fish, the question is never ‘is there a translation in this class?’ but ‘are there translations in this class?’

If literary translation more than, perhaps, any other branch of translation studies is the target for terminal pessimism on the possibility of translation, it is because the difficulties seem both more obvious (metrical schemes in poetry, end rhymes) and more vocally expressed, notably by literary translators themselves. For example, Gerda Scheffel, a French–German translator based in Frankfurt, described the problem she faced translating the first sentence of Robert Pinget’s *Le Fiston*, which reads, ‘La fille du conducteur est morte.’ A German translation that would render the tone of the French would be ‘Die Tochter des Schusters ist tot.’ However, because the narrator Monsieur Levert tells us, ‘L’enterrement a eu lieu jeudi dernier’, the main import of the first sentence is not that the daughter is no longer alive but that she has died. Scheffel argues that, in this case, the German translation would be, ‘Die Tochter des Schusters ist gestorben’, which is rhythmically ungainly because of the three syllables in the participle. Pinget’s insistence on the absolute centrality of the first sentence in setting the right tone for a novel only added to the translator’s dilemma (Scheffel 1998: 94). Another translator of the same language pair, Ilma Rakusa, noted that in her translation of Marguerite Duras’ *L’Été 80* it was difficult to convey the growing tenderness between ‘l’enfant’ and ‘la jeune fille’ because das Kind and das Mädchen are grammatically neuter in German and, ‘avec la meilleure volonté du monde, il est impossible de faire naître quoi que ce soit d’érotique entre un es et un es’! (Rakusa and Viragh 1998: 131).

None of the above difficulties prevent the translations from being done, often highly successfully. However, it may be that the way we conceive of translation leads to an obstacle-fixated fetish of untranslatability that wittingly or unwittingly sponsors the colonialism we described earlier. Maria Tymoczko has written of the baleful effects of seeing translation as primarily a metaphorical process: ‘[t]ranslation has been conceptualized chiefly as a metaphorical process, a process of selection and substitution in which the words of one language are selected so as to substitute for another language’ (Tymoczko 1999: 279). If the crude versions of word-for-word substitution are ritually derided, this has not stopped translation from being seen primarily as a form of substitution or selection, with metaphor, sentence, cultural field, genre or text standing in for the hapless word. For Tymoczko, a metonymic perspective on translation is not only truer to what translators do but it is also more enabling as a vision of what they might and can do:

Translators select some elements, some aspects, or some parts of the source text to highlight and preserve; translators prioritize and privilege some parameters and not others; and, thus, translators represent some aspects of
the source text partially or fully or others not at all in a translation . . . By definition, therefore, translation is metonymic: it is a form of representation in which parts or aspects of the source text come to stand for the whole.

(Tymoczko 1999: 55)

The implication of the metonymic approach is that, ‘because a contiguity or a context cannot be replaced through simple or molecular substitutions; there is nothing ready-made to select as a substitute for the cultural Webs or syntagms of a source text’ (ibid.: 282). The task is rather to try to construct in the target text an alternative structure that through a new set of connections and contexts will capture some of the cultural specificity and aesthetic originality of the source text. There is no single or simple way of rendering the Irish notion of the *geis* or the Islamic concept of the *Fatwa* or the differences between male and female Japanese language into another language. They must always be differently constructed. In a sense, what is being contested here is translation as clonialism – translation as a binary, dualistic, substitutive process. If it is the irreproducibility of the original which gives rise to the compulsive reproducibility of portraiture in Don Hugo de Cardona’s case, each portrait is a metonym and therefore, by definition, incomplete, partial, a perpetual challenge.

A primary function of literary translation in a global age, it could be argued, is to replenish the intertextual resources of a culture. The more books get translated into a language, the more books get potentially read in that language and the more books there are to potentially influence future writers, readers (and translators) in that culture. Susan Sontag notes the potent influence of the eighteenth-century Irish novelist Laurence Sterne on the work of the nineteenth-century Brazilian writer Machado de Assis. Sontag claims this should not be a cause for surprise as she speculates that, ‘[w]hen looked at from the perspective of world literature . . . he may be the English-language writer who, after Shakespeare and Dickens, has had the greatest influence’ (Sontag 2002: 34). Intertextual influence can of course be direct or indirect. The writer may speak the foreign language and thus read the foreign text in the original language (direct) or else have recourse to translation (indirect). A feature of English in the current period is that it is both a source of direct intertextual influence as a language that is widely spoken and read, and a source of indirect influence as the world’s most widely translated language.

During the first half of the twentieth century, the first foreign language learned by young people in Europe was French; four-fifths are now learning English and one-fifth French (Anderman 2000: 48–9). For the large number of British or American novels that appear each year in translation in bookshops in the German-speaking world, only a trickle of titles make their way in the opposite direction (Hale quoted in Schäffner 2000: 32). In 1987, 32,000 of the 65,000 volumes translated in the world were from English. In the 1990s, over three-quarters of the
translated titles published in Brazil were from English while in the mid-1990s less than 3 per cent of all publications in the US were translations (Venuti 1998: 160). Cultural influence cannot be dissociated from economic power, and indeed cultural prestige further augments economic might because culture has become such an important selling factor in selling goods (see Chapter 1 and comments on ‘post-modern’ or aesthetic goods). More than 60 per cent of world economic production is accounted for by the speakers of three languages, English, German and Japanese. If we add French and Spanish, the figure rises to 75 per cent (Navarro 1997: 6). So what we get to read in translation in the era of global communication is significantly determined by the economic position of the source-language country. And this, in turn, affects what might be called the intertextual hinterland for any group of readers and writers, i.e. the writers who are likely to be able to exercise an influence on, provide inspiration for, give new direction to, a culture.

Fabio Pusterla, a French–Italian literary translator, argues that we translate, ‘non pas ce que l’on ne comprend pas, mais ce que l’on comprend si intensément que l’on en ressent l’absence’12 (Pusterla and Raffaeli 1998: 82). The conclusion to be drawn is that if you are not offered the possibility of understanding another language or culture, there will be no awareness of what you are missing. What you don’t know, in short, won’t influence you. The consequences for the development of different cultures of the serious imbalance in translation traffic lead to an extended notion of what constitutes the translator’s responsibility in the era of globalization. The translator’s responsibility is conventionally thought of in textual terms. The translator is responsible to the source text in giving a fair and accurate representation of its contents and to the target audience in providing them with a text that displays comparable ability and sensitivity in the handling of the target language. Accurate rendering of social, political and cultural contexts is implicit in the textual transformation, though generally noted in its absence rather than in its presence. However, the question might be asked whether, in the present circumstances, this is enough.

Is the responsibility of translators (particularly, but not only, in the English-speaking world) not only to translation as a professional activity but to translation as a cultural fact? In other words, textual scrupulousness is only certain good. There must be an activist dimension to translation which involves an engagement with the cultural politics of society at national and international levels. Translators arguably do this through representative associations in individual countries and in the international arena through the Fédération Internationale des Traducteurs (FIT). However, the absolutely legitimate defence of professional interests (rates of payment, royalties, copyright) can obscure the equally urgent task of getting societies and cultures to realize how important translation is to comparative self-understanding and future development. Indeed, the professional and the political are inextricably linked. The less highly a culture values translation, the less it is
going to want to pay its translators. The pedagogical implication is that we need to teach a more engaged, activist notion of what constitutes a translator’s responsibility and also that this responsibility be firmly situated in trans-national translation history so that any politics of translation is explicitly situated in identifiable historical contexts. Foresight is blind without the backward glance.

Jeremy Munday describes being asked to translate the novel *Memorias de Alta-gracia* by Venezuelan writer Salvador Garmendia for UNESCO’s collection of representative works of world literature. Munday claimed that ‘the instructions sent to the translator of these works explicitly mention that because many of the readers will be non-native speakers of the target language, the translator should endeavour to avoid overcomplex syntax and constructions’ (Munday 2000: 58). The target languages of the collection were Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish, so that the emphasis on easy, ‘fluent’ reading was not confined to the English language. Indeed, Munday points to French translations of American crime fiction (Robyns 1990) and Latin American translations of modern North American fiction (Munday 1997) as displaying similar tendencies in offering fluid, accessible, translated prose to the reader. If all this fluency is seen to be coercive of difference and a symptom of the dread uniformity of globalization, there is another development in literature which is complicating the reign of facility.

Commenting on the evolution of the Booker Prize, Frank Kermode noted: ‘The first nine Booker Prize winners included four novels by Indian novelists, or novels about India, or, failing India, other parts of the old Empire. Of the 30 or so winners of the prize to date, fewer than half are native English’ (Kermode 2002: 11). In the novels of Rohinton Mistry, such as *A Fine Balance* and *Family Matters* (Mistry 1996; Mistry 2002), the language of his Indian characters is given to us in English but it is an English in which countless Hindi words are left untranslated and cultural references left unexplained. Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* (Roy 1997) is equally demanding of the cultural literacy of the non-Indian reader. Similarly, Mona Baker notes that in Chinua Achebe’s *A Man of the People*, ‘a lot of the conversations switch into Nigerian English which is so much more difficult to understand’ (Baker quoted in Schäffner 2000: 35). Lawrence Venuti, for his part, has spoken of ‘translingualism’, in which ‘traces of the indigenous languages are visible in an English or a French text through lexical and syntactical peculiarities, apart from the use of pidgins and the sheer embedding of indigenous words and phrases’ (Zabus 1991; Venuti 1998: 174).

Translingualism and the embedding of indigenous words and phrases in writing from the post-colonial world constitute an ironic undoing of the fluency fetish in translation-resistant Anglophone culture. The preoccupation with the double as other in the nineteenth century was bound up with imperialist anxieties of proximity and contamination, and the fear was always that ‘they may be just like us’. The linguistic doubling (English plus the indigenous language) going on in these
hybrid texts is, at some level, the return of the linguistically repressed. If English is notably failing to translate foreign texts into the language, this does not mean that translation has gone away. Rather, the difference is now internalized in the English source text as opposed to being externalized in the foreign source text. Adejunmobi has spoken of ‘compositional translations’ (Adejunmobi 1998: 165) where African writers are using a European language but thinking in their native language, so that a form of translation is at the heart of the creative enterprise. The challenge for translators of these texts that are, in a sense, always already translated, is to retain their status as doubly translated texts – once from the indigenous language to English or French or Portuguese (the original as translation) and a second time from one of these languages to another language (the translation as conventionally understood). If an effect of globalization is to make a world language like English a literary lingua franca, translation as an unwelcome reminder of otherness, the bothersome double, does not go away, but rather sits at the desk opposite, facing into the future.

Golyadkin insists that his double is disturbingly like him, hence his distress, but also ‘completely different’. In the reign of similarity, Golyadkin anxiously searches for difference. The Babel story is not about the curse of languages, a divine punishment for human hubris, but about the defeat of colonialism, a human race all speaking the same language, attempting to colonize the heavens. As Schmuel Trigano has pointed out, the Flood and Babel are parables of the catastrophic consequences of indifferentiation, of the cancelling out of difference, diversity submerged in the flood waters of sameness or corralled into monolingual megalomania (Trigano 2000). If we began this chapter in the air we want to finish at sea. One of the most widely translated Irish tales in early medieval Europe was the ninth-century account of the miraculous sea-voyage of Saint Brendan, an Irish saint from the sixth century. The account was entitled Navigatio Sancti Brendani Abbatis. After many mishaps and adventures, Brendan and his companions arrive at the Paradise of the Birds to which they will continually return. Brendan is at first puzzled by the multitude of white birds that cover the great tree near the spring on the island. Brendan’s questions are answered by one of the birds who flew from the tree, ‘making a noise with her wings like a hand-bell’ (O’Meara 1991: 20). They learn that the birds are refugees from Lucifer’s fall but that having done no wrong they were sent to the island discovered by Brendan and the other monks. In the translation of John O’Meara, the bird sums up the tale of their lives thus: ‘We wander through various regions of the air and the firmament and the earth, just like the other spirits that travel on their missions. But on holy days and Sundays we are given bodies such as you now see so that we may stay here and praise our creator’ (ibid.: 21).

On this island, Brendan and his companions receive both comfort and instruction from the divinely inspired messengers of the air. If diversity in an era of
globalization is threatened by the tidal flood of indifference, translation may well be that magical island and translation, as its sometime inhabitants must ensure, the continuation of Sweeney’s elusive rhapsody. We will examine in the next and concluding chapter what the rhapsody sounds like when played in a minor key.
5 Translation and minority languages in a global setting

Buck Mulligan and Stephen Dedalus are on the top of the Martello tower in Sandy-cove, Dublin. Buck Mulligan has finished shaving and he extends the mirror in Stephen’s direction.

— Look at yourself, he said, you dreadful bard.

Stephen bent forward and peered at the mirror held out to him, cleft by a crooked crack, hair on end. As he and others see me. Who chose this face for me? This dogsbody to rid of vermin. It asks me too.

— I pinched it out of the skivvy’s room, Buck Mulligan said. It does her all right. The aunt always keeps plainlooking servants for Malachi. Lead him not into temptation. And her name is Ursula.

Laughing again, he brought the mirror away from Stephen’s peering eyes.

— The rage of Caliban at not seeing his face in the mirror, he said. If Wilde were only alive to see you.

Drawing back and pointing, Stephen said with bitterness:

— It is a symbol of Irish art. The cracked lookinglass of a servant.

(Joyce 1971: 13)

The opening section from James Joyce’s *Ulysses* can be placed alongside Charles Dickens’ description of the making of plate glass in an article he wrote with W.H. Wills for *Household Words* in 1851. Dickens and Wills describe the slow ascension of a cauldron of red-hot glass:

The dreadful pot is lifted by the crane. It is poised immediately over the table; a workman tilts it; and out pours a cataract of molten opal which spreads itself, deliberately, like infernal sweet stuff, over the iron table; which is spilled and slopped about, in a crowd of men, and touches nobody. ‘And has touched nobody since last year, when one poor fellow got the large shoes he wore, filled with white-hot glass.’

(cited in Armstrong 1996: 127)
Here we have two images of glass, one of the looking-glass, the glass as reflection and the other of the plate glass, a shop-window, the transparent medium. Plate glass is one of the great technological innovations of the nineteenth century and Isobel Armstrong notes in ‘Transparency: Towards a Poetics of Glass in the Nineteenth Century’ that ‘whereas “human labour” is “legibly expressed” for ever on other artefacts, glass, exasperatingly, erases this connection, its own invisibility making the conditions of its production invisible’ (ibid.: 128–9). The analogy with translation is telling and this chapter will pursue a connection with the poetics of glass – the dual themes of transparency and reflection – to draw attention to the valuable if fragile connections between translation studies and minority languages in the era of globalization.

**Invisible minorities**

Count Dracula, the Transylvanian marginal and accomplished linguist, also looks into a shaving mirror, that of Jonathan Harker in *Dracula*, but he does not see himself (Stoker 1993: 25). He remains disturbingly invisible. Speakers of minority languages looking into the disciplinary mirror of translation studies can also experience the troubling absence of the undead.

In the otherwise excellent *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (Baker 1998), there is no single, separate entry for translation and minority languages. There are informative and insightful historical entries on languages that have at various stages occupied a minor position in world culture but the absence of a specific theoretical focus on the translation problematic for minority languages is significant. In Douglas Robinson’s substantial and important *Western Translation Theory from Herodotus to Nietzsche* (Robinson 1997b) there are 124 texts by 90 authors. However, the source texts for the anthology are overwhelmingly confined to five languages, Latin, ancient Greek, English, French and German. Two texts were originally written in Italian, one in Finnish, one in Spanish and one in Portuguese. There are no theoretical texts from Dutch, Danish, Norwegian, Irish, Catalan, Breton or Welsh, to name but a few of the translation languages of the Western world. Not one of Europe’s lesser-used languages merits an entry in the anthology. The silence is all the more surprising in that minority-language cultures are translation cultures par excellence. Until recently, 70 per cent of the books produced in the world originated in four languages, English, French, Russian and German. If we take children’s literature for example, 3 per cent of the output in Britain and the United States are translations. This compares with 70 per cent in Finland, 50 per cent in the Netherlands, 50 per cent in Italy, and 33.5 per cent in Germany (O’Sullivan 1998: 5).

In post-colonial writings on translation, minority languages do not always fare any better. Tejaswini Niranjana’s *Siting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism and the*
Post-Colonial Context sees the problematic of translation in the post-colonial context as ‘a significant site for raising questions of representation, power and historicity. The context is one of contesting and contested stories attempting to account for, to recount the asymmetry and inequality of relations between peoples, races, languages’ (Niranjana 1992: 1). Niranjana further argues that ‘my concern is to probe the absence, lack or repression of an awareness of asymmetry and historicity in several kinds of writing on translation’ (ibid.: 9). Siting Translation, however, bears eloquent testimony to the continued operation of the ahistoricity, exclusion and essentialism it so deplores in conventional translation theories and colonial narratives. Throughout the study, references are repeatedly made to ‘European languages’ (ibid.: 164), ‘European descriptions’ (ibid.: 166), European attitudes, narratives and values. No attempt is made to ‘account for the asymmetry and inequality of relations between peoples, races, languages’ in Europe itself. The history of the evolving power relationships between the many languages in Europe is ignored and we are presented with the ahistorical, essentialist concept of ‘Europe’ with its implicitly homogeneous translation strategies.

The signal failure to account for the linguistic and translational complexity of Europe stems in part from the tendency of post-colonial critics to reduce Europe to two languages, English and French, and to two countries, England and France (for a more nuanced view see Bassnett and Trivedi 1998). Thus, the critique of imperialism becomes itself imperialist in ignoring or marginalizing the historical and translation experience of most European languages. When Eric Cheyfitz, in The Poetics of Imperialism: Translation and Colonization from The Tempest to Tarzan, refers to ‘Europeans’ and their need to feel that New World languages were ‘virtually a lack of language’ (Cheyfitz 1991: 164), one could argue that he is merely using a convenient form of geographical shorthand in that the colonial powers in the New World were all from Europe. The convenience is achieved at a cost. Those European countries or languages that were not involved in the colonial enterprise become synonymous with the very ‘lack of language’ attributed to the indigenous inhabitants of the New World.

If translation has traditionally suffered from lack of visibility then there is a sense in which translators working in minority languages are doubly invisible at a theoretical level. Firstly, there is the general failure to include theoretical contributions from minority languages in translation theory anthologies. The anthologies that have appeared in English under the editorship of Rainer Schulte, John Biguenet and Andrew Chesterman are further evidence of exclusion (Chesterman 1989; Schulte and Biguenet 1992). Secondly, there is not always a willingness to acknowledge that translation perspectives from the point of view of minority languages will not always be those of major languages. Advocacy of non-fluent, refractory, exoticizing strategies, for example, can be seen as a bold act of cultural revolt and epistemological generosity in a major language; but, for a minority language,
Minority languages in a global setting

fluent strategies may represent the progressive key to its very survival. Maolmhaodhóg Ó Ruairc, in his preface to Dúchas na Gaeilge, a study of Irish–English translation difficulties, describes the principal difficulty facing the translator of Irish:

Má támid neadaithe i ndomhan an Bhéarla, ní mór bheith san airdeall nach trí mheán an Bhéarla, faoi bhréagriocht na Gaeilge, a chuirtear friotal ar smaointe ár gcroi. Da mb’amhlaidh a bheadh, ba thúisce a bháfaí an tsainiúlacht Éireannach ná dá gearfionfadh an Ghaeilge féin. Ní fios an bhfuil sé ró-dhéanach cheana.1

(Ó Ruairc 1996: xiii)

Minority languages that are under pressure from powerful major languages can succumb at lexical and syntactic levels so that over time they become mirror-images of the dominant language. Through imitation, they lack the specificity that invites imitation. As a result of continuous translation, they can no longer be translated. There is nothing left to translate.

The defence of the particular, the promotion of the naturalizing strategy can be derided as the last refuge of the essentialist but it can be seen equally as the sine qua non of genuine hybridity. Indeed, it could be claimed that in this context, strong identities produce interesting differences. Rather than universalize one particular strategy in translation practice, it would arguably be more useful to oppose translation as reflection to translation as reflexion. The first term we define as the unconscious imbibing of a dominant language that produces the numerous calques that inform languages from Japanese to German to Irish. The second term refers to second-degree reflection or meta-reflection which should properly be the business of translation scholars and practitioners, namely, the critical consideration of what a language absorbs and what allows it to expand and what causes it to retract, to lose the synchronic and diachronic range of its expressive resources. The work by Maurice Pergnier (Pergnier 1989) on anglicisms is one example of how such an approach might work but more generally, like Stephen Dedalus on Sandymount strand in Dublin, translator scholars in minority languages must explore the limits of the transparent, the ‘limits of the diaphane’ (Joyce 1971: 42).

There is a certain urgency about exploring the effects of translation on minority languages because of the parlous state of many languages in the modern world. According to the UNESCO Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger of Disappearing up to half of the 6,000 languages spoken on the planet are endangered or on the brink of extinction. Some linguists claim that a language dies somewhere in the world every two weeks. In 1788, there were around 250 aboriginal languages in Australia; now there are 20. The arrival of Portuguese in Brazil led to the disappearance of 75 per cent of the languages spoken in the country, and of the 180
indigenous languages still remaining, few are spoken by more than 10,000 people (Wurm 1996). The role of translation in this process of linguistic impoverishment is profoundly ambiguous. Translation is both predator and deliverer, enemy and friend. What happens to a people when they lose their language is not that they lose language. *Homo linguae* is not silenced, s/he speaks another. The speaker is in effect translated into another language. Irish history between the seventeenth century and the twentieth is largely the story of that translation process. In the late sixteenth century, 90 per cent of the Irish population were Irish-speaking; now less than 10 per cent are fluent in the language and there are virtually no Irish-speaking monoglots left. Translation is never a benign process per se and it is misleading to present it as such. From the perspective of minority languages, we must distinguish therefore between translation-as-assimilation and translation-as-diversification. Language speakers can either be assimilated through self-translation to a dominant language or they can retain and develop their language through the good offices of translation and thus resist incorporation. In a report on efforts to save a North American indigenous language, Tlingit, spoken on Prince of Wales Island in the Gulf of Alaska, the journalist from *Time* magazine tells us that the Tlingit speakers try to record as much of the language as possible, ‘by translating just about anything they can get their hands on into Tlingit, from Christmas carols like *Jingle Bells* to nursery rhymes such as *Hickory Dickory Dock*’ (Geary 1997: 38). It is striking that translation (into English) which has reduced Tlingit to its marginalized, peripheral position should also be seen as one of the primary means for its survival.

**Minority languages and science and technology**

Songs and nursery rhymes are an integral part of certain cultures but so also, and increasingly, are science and technology. Indeed, it is often the latter that are seen as the chief determinant of the viability of a language in the modern age. Speaking to the Press Club in Dublin in 1896, W.J. Rolleston, a graduate of Trinity College Dublin, declared that Irish was not a suitable instrument for thought nor for a cultured people. The language had disappeared for all practical purposes and the Irish had willingly let it go. He then issued a challenge:

He said he would take a piece of prose from a scientific journal and give it to someone in An Conradh for translation. He would then give the translation to another Irish speaker for translation back into English. The English translation could then be compared with the original in the journal. *(Ó Fearaíl 1975: 5)*

Douglas Hyde, a future president of Ireland, translated the text into Irish and Eoin
Mac Néill translated it into English. Rolleston compared the English translation with the original and later declared publicly that he was satisfied that Irish was capable of being used in the modern world. The anecdote has the flavour of Jules Verne, the translation wager in the cigar lounge. However, it does highlight the significance of the relationship between translation, minority languages and science and technology. For Rolleston, accession to modernity was scientific. It was the ability to express the concepts of science that would define a language as a fit instrument for the modern age. He was not articulating an idle prejudice but the deeply held belief of many minority-language activists. The Breton author and thinker, Roparz Hemon, writing in 1926 declared:

Ma ne striver ket da zaskoriñ d’ar brezhoneg e wir lec’h evel yezh ar ouizegezh, al lennegezh, ar gelenmadurezh hag ar Stad, evel yezh hor seve-nadurezh en ur ger, ma n’anzaver ket splann n’eo ket ar brezhoneg ur gevrenn eus hor buhez vroadel, hogen ur benveg evit an holl, an istorour, an arzour, ar sonour, ar espernour, kenkoulz hag ar c’houer, ar micherour, ar c’hlasker-bara, ne dalvez ket ar boan stourn evitañ. Lezomp eñ diouzthu da vervel.2

(cited in Gwegen 1975: 76)

Many works of translation theory and history celebrate the messianic role of translation in its work of aesthetic rescue, from Luther’s Bible to Florio’s Montaigne to Pope’s Homer. For speakers of minority languages, however, the aestheticization of language can be profoundly disabling. Edmund Spenser’s Irenius in A View of the Present State of Ireland (1596) admits that Irish-language poetry in translation is ‘sprinkled with some pretty flowers of their own natural devise’ (Spenser 1970: 75), but if language becomes mere decoration or ornament then we are back to the specular exoticism of Orientalism and Celticism. The desired presence of the minority language in all areas of life, in all disciplines, the refusal of the aesthetic ghetto, demands a much greater reflection than hitherto on the role of scientific, technical and commercial translation in identity formation for minorities.

In this context, it is instructive to look at one area of contemporary life, the Internet. The former US Vice-President Al Gore told the following story on returning from one of his foreign trips: ‘Last month, when I was in Central Asia, the President of Kyrgyzstan told me his eight-year-old son came to him and said, “Father, I have to learn English.” “But why?” President Akayev asked. “Because, father, the computer speaks English”’ (cited in Lockard 1996: 4).

The President’s son is partly right. Current estimates are that 80 per cent of e-mail and data content are in English, a language that is not spoken as either a first or second language by three-quarters of the people on the planet (Geary 1997: 43). Writing on the omnipresence of what he calls ‘Cyber-English’, Joe Lockard claims: ‘Non-English speakers have remained the permanent clueless newbies of
the Internet, a global class of linguistic peasantry who cannot speak technological Latin. The overt language/classism that shapes the US English advocacy of mandatory English has long been an unstated de facto policy throughout most of the Internet’ (Lockard 1996: 5).

He argues that in terms of language hierarchy, a new language class emerges whose online syntax and vocabulary embodies metropolitan norms, distinguishing them from those whose cyber-English remains more limited: ‘in terms of transglobal class architecture, language/class is coming to represent the delineation between textual nation languages and supra-national cyber languages, a class division where advantage steadily accrues to those with a widely employed cyber language’ (ibid.: 2).

These distinctions at one level are not new. Aramaic, Persian, Greek, Latin and French, to name but a few, are languages which have had imperial functions and where social prestige was affirmed through mastery of specific language norms (Kiernan 1991: 191–209). The significance of the current situation lies in the spatial extent of cyber-English and the consequences of temporal compression (now tremendously quickened by the global cultural economy) for translation.

If the informational revolution has involved the globalization of English, then the very terms of our discussion here are altered. The issue of translation and minority languages is not a peripheral concern for beleaguered fans of exotic peoples gabbling in incomprehensible tongues but the single most important issue in translation studies today. The fact that major languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Russian and the languages of the Indian sub-continent have been relatively marginalized in translation studies points to the relative status of the concept of minority (for the Indian case see Simon and St-Pierre 2000). It is important to stress that the concept of ‘minority’ with respect to language is dynamic rather than static. ‘Minority’ is the expression of a relation, not an essence. The relation can assume two forms: diachronic and spatial. The diachronic relation that defines a minority language is a historical experience that destabilizes the linguistic relations in one country so that languages find themselves in an asymmetrical relationship. In the case of Ireland, English was a minority language for centuries (Seymour 1929). The ascendancy of the English language did not begin until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with Tudor and Cromwellian expansionist policies which sought not only the military but also the cultural and linguistic submission of the native Irish (Leerssen 1986: 292).

Military, social and economic forces, notably the Great Famine of the 1840s where Ireland lost half its mainly Irish-speaking population through starvation and emigration (Kallen 1993: 100–14), led to the erosion of the Irish language and the massive language-shift to English in the nineteenth century (de Fréine 1968). Therefore, the position of the Irish language changed from majority to minority status as a result of political developments over time. The spatial relationship is
intimately bound up with diachronic relationships but it is important to make a distinction between those languages that find themselves in a minority position because of a redrawing of national boundaries and those such as Irish which occupy the same territory but are no longer in a dominant position. Russian has now become a minority language in most of the Baltic Republics with the break-up of the Soviet Union. The change in borders left Russian speakers outside the state where Russian is the majority language. The spatial/diachronic distinction is useful in evaluating the radically different contexts in which minority languages operate from the perspective of translation. Languages that derive their minority status from spatial realignments find themselves in close proximity to countries where the language has majority status. Thus, in terms of opportunities for translators, publishing outlets for translations, readers for translated works and the proper development of translation studies, the situation is markedly different from the position of languages whose status is diachronically determined and which do not have a larger linguistic hinterland that provides a source of patronage for translation activity.

The Celtic languages on the European periphery (Breton, Welsh, Irish and Scots Gaelic) have traditionally suffered from this problem though efforts have been made, particularly in Wales and Ireland, to develop indigenous systems of patronage. It is important to stress the relational dynamic of minority languages if only to underline their significance to translation theory and practice. This significance is related to three factors. Firstly, languages and political circumstances change. The majority status of a language is determined by political, economic and cultural forces that are rarely static. All languages, therefore, are potentially minority languages. It follows that the historical experience of a minority language can offer useful insights into the translation fate of majority languages, should contexts change. For example, the French language in Canada for centuries found itself in a minority position after the English conquest and under the Canadian Confederation until recent times. The translational implications of such a position are of relevance to the future development of French in the New Europe.

If English emerges as the lingua franca of the European Union, which is increasingly likely with the membership of Austria, Finland and Sweden, and French continues to lose ground to English and German in Central and Eastern Europe, then the French language in a European confederation will find itself in a position not unlike that of its North American cousins. Secondly, translation relationships are based on figure/ground oppositions. Languages can be divided into those languages which are target-language intensive and those languages which are source-language intensive. An example of a TL intensive language would be English, where there is intense translation activity from English into other languages but where there is markedly less translation traffic in the opposite direction (Jacquemond 1992: 139–40). An SL intensive language would be almost any minority language,
where translations are largely from other source languages that enjoy majority status.

Thus, the figure of translation in a majority language emerges against the ground of translation in minority languages. The consideration of the translation practice or theory of English, French, German or Russian translators, for example, must be relational and analysed from the minority as well as the majority perspective. The ground has to be considered, otherwise the figure remains invisible. The concepts of asymmetry and hierarchy that motivate the following comments by Jacquemond must be applied not only to North–South translation processes but also, as we have indicated above, to Europe itself:

Because translation theory . . . has developed on the basis of the European linguistic and cultural experience, it relies on the implicit postulate of an egalitarian relationship between different linguistic and cultural areas and has yet to integrate the recent results of the sociology of interculturality in the colonial and postcolonial contexts.

(Jacquemond 1992: 140)

A third factor that informs the relational position of minority languages is the fact that it is precisely the pressure to translate that is a central rather than a peripheral aspect of experience. In this respect, for minority languages themselves it is crucial to understand the operation of the translation process itself as the continued existence of the language, and the self-perception and self-confidence of its speakers are intimately bound up with translation effects. Translation theory should not therefore be seen as an esoteric luxury indulged in by the mandarins of major languages but as a crucial means to understanding the position of minority-language speakers in relationships of language and power.

Conversely, the hegemony of English in the fastest-growing areas of technological development means that all other languages become in this context, minority languages. Major languages have much to learn from minority languages. As vocabulary, syntax and cultural memory come under pressure from English, dominant languages are simply experiencing what minority languages have been experiencing for many centuries and it would be instructive for the former to study the responses of the latter to assimilationist translation pressures. This, in turn, places an onus on translation scholars in minority languages to become more visible in translation studies debates.

Minority languages have a fundamentally paradoxical relationship with translation. As languages operating in a multilingual world with vastly accelerated information flows from dominant languages, they must translate continually in order to retain their viability and relevance as living languages. Yet translation itself may in fact endanger the very specificity of those languages that practise it, partic-
ularly in situations of diglossia. The situation of translation in the culture of a minority language is therefore highly ambiguous. The ambiguity is partly related to the functions of translation in the minority language culture. These can be broadly divided into the pragmatic and aesthetic functions. The pragmatic function relates to those aspects of translation that pertain to the routine, practical needs of the minority language. In Ireland, the pragmatic function primarily involves the translation of the proceedings and Acts of Parliament, the translation of official documentation and schoolbooks and the production of translated material for the Irish-language media (news reports, weather forecasts and so on). Responsibility for this function lies mainly with the translation section of the Irish Department of Education, known as *An Gúm*, and the translating and interpreting division of the Irish parliament, known as *Rannóg an Aistriúcháin* (Cronin 1993: 80–3). Allied to the pragmatic function are the terminological requirements of the language, which in Ireland are the responsibility of the terminological committee, *An Coiste Téarmaíochta*.

The most notable feature of pragmatic translation is that it is overwhelmingly unidirectional. In the Irish case, the source language is almost exclusively English and the pragmatic relationship is markedly asymmetrical. Translation is necessary at one level to ensure that Irish speakers can live full lives in the language, enjoying similar language rights to English speakers. Yet at another level the very condition of this existence is the translation fact with the attendant risks of massive source-language interference in asymmetrical contexts. This has the inevitable result that translation is not a marginal but a central activity in the development of the minority language. The task of translators is to produce a *reineSprache* but in a sense that is radically different from that intended by Benjamin. The translators attempt to respect the linguistic integrity of the target language, particularly at the levels of syntax and idiom (O’Leary 1929: 85). In so doing, however, they are open to the charge of ‘purism’, of the ‘ethnic cleansing’ of language, of a commitment to atavistic, originary essentialism. Translators in minority languages are thus placed in a classic double bind. If they allow the full otherness of the dominant language to emerge in their translation, inviting anglicisms rather than eliminating them, in the case of Irish-language translations, then the language into which they translate becomes less and less recognizable as a separate linguistic entity capable of future development and becomes instead a pallid imitation of the source language in translatorese. On the other hand, if they resist interference and opt for target-oriented communicative translations that domesticate the foreign text, the danger is one of complacent stasis. Translation no longer functions as an agent of regeneration in the target language.

The difficulty in debates on language and translation is to avoid what the Canadian sociologist Anthony Wilden calls ‘Freudian counter-insurgency’. Wilden claims that Freud’s Oedipal and paranoia theories ultimately blame the victims for
their own plight and he extends the remit of his analysis to cover other theories that blame the oppressed for their own oppression (Wilden 1980a: 148). Language relationships are asymmetrical. The powerless or those with less power will always appear to be on the ‘defensive’ to those in power. The French, for example, are ritually caricatured in the Anglophone press for their attempts to control the spread of anglicisms in the French language. A historical irony is that the charges of irredentism, passéisme and purism that are levelled against French legislators are precisely those that were advanced by defenders of France’s coercive linguistic policies towards minority languages over the years. Speakers of minority languages find that their relationship to translation is immediately problematic and that their responses often run the risk of misrepresentation as ethnocentric chauvinism.

In the often tense debates around minority language, identity and translation, theory or reflexion on the translation process can often be the first casualty. Dermot Bolger, in an introduction to an anthology of English translations of contemporary Irish-language poetry, is economical in his description of the translation policy of the anthology: ‘In giving my instructions to translators, I have stressed that, for this book, I am more concerned that the spirit of the original poem should come across and work as effectively as possible, as against merely producing a strictly literal line for line version’ (Bolger 1986: 9). In a later anthology published in 1991 under the title An Crann faoi Bhláth, the critic Declan Kiberd makes no reference whatsoever to the existence of language difference or the inherent difficulty of the translator’s task (Fitzmaurice and Kiberd 1991). Thus, the radically dissimilar lexical, syntactic and phonological structures of Irish are ignored, as are questions of allusion, resonance and intertextuality. Failure to signal language difference and the nature of the translation process leads to the illusion of transparency and disguises the degree and kind of transformation involved in the shift from a Celtic to a Germanic language. Furthermore, the poetic traditions in the two languages are markedly different, presenting other problems for the translator. In Lawrence Venuti’s terms, the English-language translators are using fluent strategies, obscuring difference through familiarity, sacrificing a sense of otherness to the reassurance of readability in the major language (Venuti 1992: 5).

The absence of a critical, self-reflexive activity in the translation enterprise has a number of consequences. Firstly, the absence of commentary on the linguistic transformations conceals otherness in minority-to-major language translations but it leaves the minority language vulnerable to extensive interference in majority-to-minor language translations. Secondly, the lack of reflexion is not simply a question of language shift but also relates to the way in which major-language culture is informed by the minority language in translation (e.g. in the area of song, modes of intention, semantic fields, national identity) and also how and in
what way the minority language is being altered by the translation process. Thirdly, translation theory itself remains hostage to the perceptions and interests of major languages. Although Ireland has been an independent state for over 70 years, it is only in the last ten years that a hesitant movement towards speculative inquiry in the area of translation has begun. Translation theory is not, however, a luxury that only major languages can afford. On the contrary, it is a vital necessity for minority languages in Europe and elsewhere that they understand in historical and contemporary terms the theoretical implications of inward and outward translation policies.

The undertheorization that has been noted in the case of Irish is not confined to that language. Translation conferences are generally noteworthy for the lack of attention paid to minority languages and the dominance of theories predicated on the historical experience and insights of the translation triumvirate, English, French and German. The hegemony is partly understandable as a consequence of a structural problem that often inhibits contributions from practitioners of minority languages. The problem is one of exemplification. If one wanted to speak on the ludic uses of translation in the prose writings of a contemporary Irish Gaelic novelist, Séamas Mac Annaidh, it would be necessary to provide examples of how English informs Mac Annaidh’s Gaelic and is then parodied to create a new hybrid language that energizes the speech of his young, urban characters. Reading passages from his work to contextualize, for example, lexical choices would enlighten few but the reader and other speakers of Irish Gaelic who as a group do not generally figure prominently in translation studies conferences. So the obvious solution is to translate the passage into English – but this is precisely the source language that is being discussed and the aim of the analysis is to assess target-language effects. It is, of course, possible to extrapolate general theoretical conclusions, although without textual evidence mere assertion becomes difficult to distinguish from convincing proof. Another approach is to select brief examples and use periphrasis to explain the consequences of translation strategies in the minority target language. The ensuing descriptive burden does little for economy and completeness in presentation, so that the translation scholar may find it easier to discuss in one of the lingua francas of international conferences, mainstream translation theories or works written in major languages.

Language competence and the desire to be mutually intelligible that guides the organization of international gatherings of translators impose their own constraints but it is worth reflecting on the Babelian paradoxes of our own coming together. The wish to communicate with each other, which more often than not leads to the adoption of English as the common language, sets up a dynamic within the world of translation studies itself where the power relationships are uncommonly similar to those prevailing in other areas of economic and political activity on the planet today. Translation theory must address the question, therefore, of its
own institutional translation. In other words, we need to consider more carefully, in Europe and elsewhere, how the fact of translating our research results and theoretical insights into the major languages (in the linguistic sense) of theoretical discourse circumscribes our field of inquiry or alters the reception and presentation of evidence.

Minority languages have traditionally seen the translation task as relating primarily to printed matter and the provision of interpreting services. Hence, in post-Independence Ireland a considerable effort was made through translation schemes to provide reading material in Irish (Mac Nioclás 1991: 109–20; Cronin 1996: 156–61). However, it is arguable that the minority status of language in the translation situation no longer relates to the number of speakers and the existence of a publishing infrastructure but to the implantation of the language in technological developments. The analysis of a language with a view to its eventual uses in machine-readable form demands both the availability of the necessary resources and the political awareness of the intrinsic link between language development and modernization. In the case of minority languages which are not dominant in their own national territory, commitment to technological advance has a strategic importance. For speakers of majority languages, the tendency can be to view the minority language from an ‘antiquarian’ perspective. The minority language is an heirloom, a relic from another distant, non-urban age spoken by peasants in picturesque surroundings (Ó Ciosáin 1990: 23–7). In nineteenth-century Ireland the translation strategies that frequently resulted from these antiquarian perspectives were Orientalist in their scholarly literalism (Ó Háinle, 1982: 37–58). The proper approach to a dead or dying language was embalment. The original was to be preserved in the thermafrost of exegesis. Maria Tymoczko has indeed argued that ‘to a very high degree philological approaches have remained the norm for translating the native texts of minority and non-Western cultures, including most postcolonial cultures’ (Tymoczko 1999: 269).

Thus, the involvement of a minority language with new technologies is not just a question of allowing its users to live a full life in that language in the early twenty-first century but it also challenges the antiquarian illusion, the notion that somehow minority languages are unable to cope with the complexity of modern life and technology. The informational revolution is changing our definition of the minority language in generating what might be termed translation differentials. These differentials can be classified into two broad types, intralingual translation differentials and interlingual translation differentials. An example of an intralingual translation differential would be the relationship between British and American English. The grammar and spell checkers, the online dictionaries and thesauruses, the synthesized voices produced by sound cards in multimedia upgrade kits and the reference material in atlases and encyclopedias that can be accessed on compact disks such as Microsoft Bookshelf have tended to be largely North American
in orientation. Spell checkers pick up British English spellings as mistakes and reference material gives several on-screen pages to various US presidents but only two paragraphs to the European Union. Users of British English are a minority on the new Anglophone electronic net and they constantly have to translate interlingually from American into British English and vice versa. The translation takes place not only at the level of orthography and idiom but also at the level of intertextuality in view of the strong cultural bias in intertextual resources available either on CDs or on the Internet.

The interlingual translation differential is more apparent as languages other than English try to make software resources available to the non-Anglophone world. Software localization is a significant growth area in translation but questions of intertextuality also need to be addressed if languages are not to find themselves with material that, though translated, reflects the cultural preoccupations and historical experiences of a different language and set of speakers. Developments in informatics, multimedia, MT and the Internet have translation implications insofar as they create their own translation imperatives. The differentials mentioned above mean that a language’s status is always provisional and that changes in technology, for example, can result in its becoming a minority language that is SL intensive as it imports more and more material into the language.

The translation ideal that permeates globalization-as-homogenization has often found lyrical expression in the literature of science fiction (Cronin 2000b: 127–57). In The Hitch-Hiker’s Guide to the Galaxy (1979), Arthur Dent finds himself aboard a Vogon spaceship after planet Earth has been destroyed to make way for a hyperspace bypass. Ford Prefect, an extra-terrestrial friend, puts a Babel fish into Arthur Dent’s ear so that he can understand the tetchy welcome of the Vogons. Arthur Dent looks up the entry for ‘Babel fish’ in The Hitch-Hiker’s Guide to the Galaxy where he reads that the ‘Babel fish is small, yellow and leech-like, and probably the oddest thing in the universe’ (Adams 1979: 49). After a pseudo-scientific description of its operation, Dent learns that ‘if you stick a Babel fish in your ear you can instantly understand anything said to you in any form of language’ (ibid.: 50). However, transparency has not brought bliss. The entry for the Babel fish notes bleakly ‘the poor Babel fish, by effectively removing all barriers to communication between different races and cultures, has caused more and bloodier wars than anything else in the history of creation’ (ibid.: 50).

Our translation schools might be seen at one level as aquaria for the Babel fish of the future but science fiction has to be distinguished from technological reality. For cultural as well as pragmatic reasons, minority languages arguably need to be as concerned about their technical, commercial and scientific translators as they are about their literary translators. Literatures in minority languages need languages that can service all areas of life and not simply the bruised ego of historical loss. They need to move out of the ghetto of self-aggrandizing antiquarianism and see
translation in all its dimensions as cultural, because culture is about a whole set of human activities, not one subset that is privileged by the gaze of the commanding other. A significant element of translation activity in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland was the translation/recovery of prestigious literary and historical texts (Cronin 1996: 91–166). To translate these texts was to counter the charges of ignorance and barbarity levelled against the Irish by earlier English propagandists and prove the antique excellence of Irish language and culture. The difficulty for a minority language in this situation is that it gets fixated on a symbolic combat whose terms have been defined by a more powerful other, so that minority-language translators confine themselves to the translation of high-culture texts and neglect all the other realms of human experience that constitute a culture.

Common conditions

Contrary to what is sometimes suggested by powerful others, difference does not have to result in the pathology of closure. A celebration of difference can lead to an embrace of other differences, the universalism lying not in the eradication of the other but in sharing a common condition of being a minor other. It is interesting, in this context, to study the fortunes of inward translation in Ireland, a country which speaks a major world language and one of Europe’s lesser-used languages. In the recent *Irish Guide to Children’s Books* almost half the Irish-language titles were translations. Though the source language of the majority of the titles was English, over a third came from other languages such as German, Italian, Swedish, Welsh and Russian. On the other hand, the number of children’s titles translated into English and published by Irish publishers has been negligible. Christine Nöstlinger’s *Elf in the Head*, published by Poolbeg in 1992, and three novels by the Belgian author Ron Langenus, published by the Wolfhound Press, are notable exceptions. Irish Anglophone publishers, like their British and US counterparts, are eager to sell and reluctant to buy translation rights (O’Sullivan 1998: 5).

Translation does not exist in a vacuum, of course. It is part of an interpretive community, a community that will have a greater or lesser degree of openness to foreign literatures and cultures. Dedalus, not Stephen, but a diarist for *The Sunday Times*, has commented on the shortlist for the IMPAC literary prize, which is in financial terms the largest literary prize in the world and is awarded annually in Dublin. He notes that one of the authors on the list is Guy Vanderhaeghe and adds, ‘crazy name, crazy guy’. He points out with leaden irony that the previous year’s winner was a Spaniard (‘No doubt you will all have read, possibly in one sitting, last year’s winner, *A Heart so White* by Javier Marías’) and concludes, ‘We shall only award the prize to impenetrable books, published abroad, that few can read’ (Dedalus 1998). This kind of critical prejudice makes the publication and reception of translations in a major language like English even more fraught than ever.
and is further demonstration that major is likely to mean minor in translation terms.

What about the other Dedalus and his shaving mirror? The cracked looking-glass of the servant might be the description of any minor-language speaker who sees himself/herself reflected in the language of the major other. This is the case of the Breton described by Gwegen who is persuaded to give up his old language clothes for the trendy fashions of the capital: ‘Un beau jour, poussés par la curiosité, nous nous sommes regardés dans une glace, et nous avons poussé un cri! L’habit “made in Paris” nous allait comme un sac! Les grands couturiers de la capitale avaient oublié de prendre nos mesures’° (Gwegen 1975: 73).

The mirror here is presented as the oracle of a language and political truth. If we stay with this image of the looking-glass, what kind of future can we see for minority languages in translation studies?

**Training**

Market demands, history and cultural proximity often lead to economies of scale that militate not only against translation into and out of minority languages but also against translation between these languages. Much more needs to be done to encourage translation exchanges between lesser-used languages on the planet, and translator-training institutions need to explore ways in which this can be done. These exchanges have implications for training. Translation, by definition, requires translators and the tendency in minority languages can be for more unusual language combinations to be handled by more or less gifted, well-meaning amateurs. Training of translators in a minority language can usually only be justified economically if a major language is involved, but translator-training institutions have to argue beyond the rationale of the accountant for more inclusive training programmes that have minor–minor language combinations.

**Research**

As we noted at the beginning of this chapter, minority languages are still largely invisible in translation studies. This problem needs to be addressed both at the level of historical research into the past experience of minority languages and at the level of theory itself. The special issue of *The Translator* devoted to the concept of minority was a significant step forward in Anglophone translation studies (Venuti 1998). There are many problems to which theory might direct its attention. For example, when an Irish-language poet wants to translate an Estonian writer, s/he will almost invariably have recourse to a crib in a language s/he understands, usually English. How then does the use of filter languages impact on translation practice in minority languages? Does the intermediate link in this instance vitiate
source-specificity? Can the practice be called translation or is it something else? In a different but related context, writers in a minority language have frequent recourse to auto-translation into a major language. They do this to facilitate writers/translator in other languages. Does this practice create a different translation dynamic from translation between two major languages? Does the frequent practice of auto-translation create not a literature-in-translation but a literature-for-translation. There are many more questions that might be explored in the context of minority languages that would make translation theory more inclusive than it is at present.

**Heteroglossia**

Caliban may have wondered at his own reflection and cursed Prospero for teaching him his language but knowing the language of the master made his revolt more widely articulate. Irish critics like Declan Kiberd see the Irish mass self-translation of the nineteenth century (from Irish speakers into English speakers) as the ultimate subversion, taking the language of the colonial ruler and using it to drive him out (Kiberd 1995). This process of colonial and post-colonial appropriation of major languages has been much studied for its impact on literary expression. The movement can be theorized alternatively as the *minoritization* of major languages through heteroglossia (Deleuze and Guattari 1975). This minoritization can of course become the basis of a movement in translation that affirms identity through minoritized translation. The Irish Literary Renaissance at the turn of the twentieth century was largely driven by a belief in the virtues of such minoritization (Cronin 1996: 131–43). Between 1906 and 1926, Lady Gregory, one of the pioneers of the Renaissance, translated four plays by Molière into Hiberno-English, as part of a project to make Hiberno-English a fit instrument for the translation of world literature (Gregory 1910; Gregory 1928). Lady Gregory’s translation work was conceived of primarily as an act of cultural self-confidence. Tudor England, Classical France and Romantic Germany had considered the translation of Greek and Roman classics to be part of the process of nation-building. Translating Molière into Hiberno-English would affirm national specificity and the literary potential of a language that would no longer be the comic signature tune of the Stage Irishman. As a major language like English spreads more and more widely, the phenomenon of heteroglossia is likely to figure even more prominently in discussions on translation and minority languages, and the heteroglossic translation practice of Lady Gregory will become more and more common.

**Retreat from language**

There is a final point of a more general nature and this has to do with the consequences for translation of the minoritization of language itself. Here, the prob-
lem is the very translation of modernity. In a 1961 essay, ‘The Retreat from the Word’, George Steiner argued that in the seventeenth century significant areas of human enquiry began to abandon the verbal for the mathematical:

With the formulation of analytical geometry and the theory of algebraic functions, with the development by Newton and Leibniz of calculus, mathematics ceases to be a dependent notation, an instrument of the empirical. It becomes a fantastically rich, complex and dynamic language. And the history of that language is one of progressive untranslatability.

(Steiner 1979: 33 [his emphasis])

The mathematicization of scientific knowledge is also, however, a story of radical and accelerated translatability. As Gillian Beer points out, the use of mathematics has ‘speeded up communication between scientists to a startling degree, as if the Tower of Babel had been built in a day once the workers found a common discourse’ (Beer 1996: 321–2). This mathematicization of enquiry has certainly resulted in that withdrawal from the word that Steiner sees at work, as much in the human and social as in the physical sciences, but it has also, in our view, determined the current hegemony of English as a source language in translation and as a target language in language teaching. The pre-Babelian promise of mathematics is mirrored in the reineSprache of English, as if the minoritization of all language becomes the majorization of one. The condition of mathematical transparency that allows topologists of different nationalities to gather together in a community of understanding around the blackboard or VDU is the globalizing impulse behind English the world language. However, this minoritization of language results in English becoming in translation terms a minority language in that it is not a language of translation but a language for translation (Venuti 1995).

This retreat from the word does directly affect minority languages, not just because the majority language is privileged but also because in the technoscientific area, minority languages increasingly become languages of reception rather than generation, locked into dependency like Joyce’s hapless bard. On the other hand, the increasing importance of knowledge-intensive, design-intensive production in the world of disorganized capitalism (viz. the importance of the expressive, symbolic function in popular music, advertising and tourism) could heighten rather than minimize the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity as a source of economic and cultural renewal in a global age (Lash and Urry 1994).

In *Ulysses* as night falls, Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus make their way into the backyard of 7 Eccles Street. There they gaze up at the ‘heaventree of stars hung with humid nightblue fruit’ (Joyce 1971: 619). Bloom’s thoughts turn to astronomy:
Meditations of evolution increasingly vaster: of the moon invisible in incipient lunation, approaching perigree: of the infinite lattiginous scintillating uncondensed milky way, discernible by daylight by an observer placed at the lower end of a cylindrical vertical shaft 5000 ft deep sunk from the surface towards the centre of the earth.

(ibid.)

Another earlier observer of the heavens, the British astronomer John Herschel, had seen the earth’s atmosphere as a transparent film that, like glass, bent the light so that the objects Stephen and Bloom gaze at are never quite where they appear to be nor are they, the viewing subjects, quite where they think they are. Isobel Armstrong points to another important conclusion of Herschel’s work:

Almost as important as this displacement of the viewing subject was the fact of the earth’s motion. This means that anything like the idea of the earth as a fixed point has to be given up. It is important he says in his work on the telescope, in 1861, to relinquish the notion of the earth as a foundation. Our motion in relation to that of another object has to be calibrated. With this we move to a world of continuous relational adjustments.

(Armstrong 1996: 144–5)

The notion of fixed points in translation studies is also deeply problematic. The power nexus between languages is constantly shifting, so that our translation relationships have to be endlessly calibrated. Moving away from foundational notions of translation, it will be in a conception of translation as a ‘world of continuous relational adjustments’ that minority languages will finally have a major role to play in the discipline of translation studies.

Travelling minorities: language, translation and the global

In considering the role played by minority languages in translation studies, it is necessary to consider how globalization has impacted on our thinking about minority and translation in the context of increased mobility. In *Globalisation: The Human Consequences* (1998), Zygmunt Bauman points up the duality of the modern age, the countless millions (locals) watching the chosen few (globals) live gilded, nomadic lives:

In the Panopticon, some selected locals watched other locals . . . In the Synopticon, locals watch the globals. The authority of the latter is secured by their very remoteness; the globals are literally ‘out of this world’, but their
hovering above the worlds of the local is much more, daily and obtrusively, visible than that of the angels who once hovered over the Christian world.

(Bauman 1998: 53–4)

The globals are celebrities from the world of politics, sport, science and showbusiness who appear on the planet’s multiple screens, alluring but inaccessible. In this section of the chapter, we will be examining a different but related phenomenon, the fate of the language panopticon in the age of the language synopticon. In other words, we will analyse the accounts of selected Irish-language locals as they observe other locals (the language panopticon) in a world increasingly dominated by one global language, English (the language synopticon). The primary reason for pursuing this particular line of enquiry relates to the fact that travel writing in a minority language offers us an exemplary case of the translation dilemmas faced by speakers of minority languages in a world increasingly dominated by the figures of flux and mobility. In effect, travel writing in minority languages has been subject to the phenomenon of minoritization at three levels.

Level 1: minoritization of language within travel

The critical literature on travel writing has, over the decades, strangely neglected the question of language in travel writing (Cronin 2000b). The omission is all the more curious in that even the most unreflective experience of foreign travel leads to the traveller having to find a coping strategy for dealing with the foreign language. The analogies with the invisibility of the translator in the history of translation itself are telling (Venuti 1995). Just as translators and their achievement are often ignored in critical commentary and book reviews, as if texts were magically and unproblematically transparent, the experience of travel can be presented as if the traveller enjoyed unmediated access to the foreign reality through an enigmatic process of simultaneous translation, rarely if ever described. The traces of the translator’s signature are carefully erased.

Level 2: minoritization of minority-language travel accounts

It is perhaps not surprising but nonetheless true that critical literature on travel writing is almost exclusively devoted to travel writing in major languages such as English, French, German, Spanish, Arabic and Portuguese. Minority languages tend to appear mainly in accounts of the response of indigenous peoples to the arrival of the traveller, invader or adventurer (speakers of major languages), rather than as languages which bear their own accounts of travelling experiences. When the languages are admitted into the critical pantheon, they feature as objects of ethnographic, antiquarian or philological analysis as evidenced, for example, by
Darwin’s references to the language of the Fuegians (Darwin 1986: 17). However, the notion that minority-language speakers could be travel writers in their own right is a fact that is largely ignored.

**Level 3: minoritization of travel writing in the minority language**

Polysystems theorists in translation studies have argued for the dynamic, relational position of translation as a form of writing in competition with other forms of writing in the literary polysystem (Toury 1995; Gentzler 2001). There are certain circumstances where translation tends to occupy a primary, central position as opposed to a secondary peripheral position in a culture. These circumstances obtain when a literature is in its infancy or when the original literature comes from a small or weak culture overshadowed by a larger or more powerful one or, lastly, when the literature is in a state of generic crisis. Imperial Rome, Tudor England, Classical France and Romantic Germany all provide examples of cultures which sought to rejuvenate their forms of literary expression through extensive translation from other languages and cultures (Berman 1984).

An explicit aim of the Gaelic Revival in Ireland at the end of the nineteenth century was to encourage the production of a modern literature in the Irish language (O’Leary 1994; Cronin 1996). This desire accounted for the attention devoted to translation activity in the early years of the Irish Free State, translation occupying a primary position in the Irish literary polysystem. Both the translation activity, however, and the literary competitions organized by *Conadh na Gaeilge* or the Gaelic League were hostages to a form of generic snobbery. Narrative prose fiction (the novel and short story), poetry and drama were the noble genres whose development would confer legitimacy on literary expression in modern Irish. Travel writing, as a minor, peripheral genre, simply did not feature in the literary canon of the language. Although travel writing, as we shall see, was produced, no critical article has been published on the subject of Irish-language travel writing to date. Generic respectability has been a long time coming.

As we stated earlier, it is a point of fundamental importance to recognize that the concept of minority is dynamic, not static. The relational definition of minority becomes particularly clear in travelling practices. Speakers of a significant world language such as Mandarin Chinese or Arabic may find themselves in a minority position travelling in many parts of the world. Thus it is possible to argue for the importance of the study of minority-language accounts not simply because they give expression to voices that are not usually heard but because, as more and more people travel to more and more places where they do not speak the language, the travellers or tourists will be implicated in or at least be aware of a situation of linguistic minoritization.
Remainders

The travel writer in a foreign country faced with the fact of interlingual communication may adopt a number of different strategies:

- **Mimesis**: this involves the direct reproduction of speech in the foreign language.
- **Defamiliarization**: this implies the use of lexical exoticism in the narrative, including isolated words or expressions from the foreign language in the text.
- **Periphrasis**: here the writer avoids direct speech in the foreign language by expressing everything that is said through indirect speech or a paraphrase of the contents. Periphrasis is a form of indirect translation.
- **Exclusion**: the writer simply decides to ignore the external language reality of a country and concentrates primarily on internal mental processes and responses to place. An example would be Giuseppe Conte’s account of Ireland, *Terre del mito* (1991).
- **Translation**: the foreign speech is translated directly into the language of the narrative.

The translation strategy in travel writing is generally the preferred procedure (although the periphrastic strategy, a form of indirect translation, is also significantly present). One of the paradoxical consequences, of course, of the translation strategy is that it often renders invisible the process of translation itself. The strategy also eliminates awkward questions about the real as opposed to the imaginary linguistic abilities of the traveller. Minority-language travellers are almost invariably engaged in translation strategies, direct and indirect, as few places or people outside their own language community provide the opportunity for untranslated language contact. For travellers who are speakers of minority languages, travel then becomes a constant exercise in translation.

In describing translation strategies in minority-language travel accounts it is useful to use the distinction between two types of strategies, a naturalizing and an exoticizing translation strategy. The distinction can be usefully exemplified by examining two extracts, one from Séamus Ó Néill’s 1951 travel account, *Súil Típeall*, and the other from Breandán Ó hUallacháin’s 1973 account, *Seal Thall, Seal Abhus*. On a visit to the burial place of the Habsburgs, the Capuchin crypt, Ó Néill asks the guide if he ever met the Emperor Franz-Josef:

‘An raibh tú ag caint leis ariamh?’ arsa mise leis.

‘Bhí, go minic’ ar seisean. ‘Ba fhear deas lách simpli Franz Joseph’.

(Ó Néill 1951: 15)
In this passage, the Austrian guide not only speaks Irish but he uses terms of endearment appropriate to a certain kind of Irish rural piety. The speech of the guide is naturalized to become the speech of a member of the travel writer’s own language community. It could be argued that the linguistic sleight-of-hand points to the inherently fictional nature of the travel narrative, that what the reader is asked for is a willing suspension of disbelief, an acceptance of the unlikely spectacle of Viennese guides confiding to tourists imperial nostalgia in Irish Gaelic. This pressure to suspend disbelief is even greater in the case of a language which is unlikely to be spoken in everyday situations outside the country.

As distinct from the naturalizing translation strategy described above, there is an exoticizing strategy which reflects a notion of travel animated by the pursuit of difference, whether this notion is wittingly or unwittingly invoked. The justification for departure is the promise of alterity and the trace of this otherness is, at some level, linguistically marked. The tension between naturalizing and exoticizing strategies generates what Lawrence Venuti after Lecercle has called the ‘remainder’ in translation, those elements in the target text which resist assimilation (Venuti 1998: 10). The nature of the tension is illustrated in a passage from Brendan Ó hUallacháin’s Seal Thall, Seal Abhus. Ó hUallacháin visits the Kodak factory in Rochester, New York. In the Kodak dark room, he is both impressed and disturbed by the notion of hundreds of young women working in almost total darkness. The factory guide is glib in his description of the young women’s accomplishments:

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\(\text{(Ó hUallacháin 1973: 72)}\)

At one level, we have here an instance of a naturalizing strategy, the Kodak guide speaking the marked, native West Kerry Irish of the narrator. At another level, however, a different cultural reality is revealed in the use of certain words such as ‘bábóg’ (doll), ‘bábóigin’ (little doll), ‘sicíní’ (chicks). These colloquial Americanisms, now seen to be derogatory terms for young women, sound strange in Irish and would have not been used either then or now in that context. Ó hUallacháin has not left the words untranslated. He has translated them but, by translating them, he makes us aware not only of their translated status but of the whole passage as an exercise in covert translation. In other words, it is the remainder, those terms that are not readily assimilated into Irish, which undermines a wholly
naturalizing strategy and makes the traveller visible as translator. The remainder is a reminder that the travel writer is elsewhere.

Asymmetrical relations

Each minority language is involved in a particular translation dynamic, a dynamic that varies from language to language. Spanish is the majority language for the Basques, Catalans and Galicians in Spain, Finnish for Swedes in Finland and English for Irish speakers in Ireland. The dilemma for the Irish-language traveller is that the hegemonic language on the island is also the hegemonic language of international travel and the language of many of the countries through which they travel. The issues raised by this specific language dynamic can be examined through consideration of a recent travel account by Manchán Magan, *Manchán ar Seachrán: Ó Bhaile Átha Cliath go Nairoibi i Seanchéas Airm* (1998).

Magan spends six months travelling down through Africa in the company of English speakers (British Anglophones, Australians, New Zealanders) and through a number of countries where English was the vehicular language. However, there are only two instances where English is directly quoted. The first is when the quote is used to complement a character sketch of Richard, a 60-year-old Englishman, who when the effects of his tranquillizers wear off would cry out: ‘Oh yes, I’m telling you . . . I’ve worked damn hard all my life to make myself what I am today. Now I’m going to learn how to let my hair down!’ (Magan 1998: 10)

The other instance is more exotic. Magan is party to an exchange in English and Irish which takes place in the Sahara desert at Tamanrasset where Charles de Foucauld had his retreat. While Magan is observing the sun rise, a Jesuit priest greets him:

‘Beautiful morning!’ a dúirt sé.
Bhíos cailte i mo smaointe agus níor fhreagraíos.
‘Have you come far?’ lean sé ar aghaidh.
‘Yeah, Ireland,’ arsa mise.
‘Oh, kunas a taw tew?’ a cheistigh sé ag gáire.
Ligeas scáirt ghaire amach asam agus cheartaios a fhuaímiú.
‘Go raibh maith agat, go raibh maith agat,’ arsa mise. ‘So who was this Charles de Foucauld [sic] guy anyway?’  

(ibid.: 37)

Given the amount of English to which Magan was exposed and the volume of experience (cultural, political, sexual) communicated to him in that language, there are markedly few traces of English in his account.

The dilemma for an Irish-language travel writer is the progressive imperative to
register difference and bear authentic witness to experience which comes into conflict with the politico-cultural position of the language of narrative. At the level of power, both within and outside Ireland, the Irish and English languages are radically asymmetrical (Cronin 1996). A consequence is that translation strategies in travel writing may not always have the same political implications. As we noted earlier, a domesticating strategy which is perceived as regressive, ethnocentric and appropriative in the case of a major language does not necessarily carry the same meanings for a minority language. If a language in a dependent position fails to translate, then the language itself loses its raison d'être as it absorbs the dominant language in a wholly unassimilated fashion. In fact, at a certain point the direction of translation is reversed, the minority language translating itself into the majority language and the minority language living the afterlife of the translation residue (the phenomenon of Hiberno-English in the latter half of the nineteenth century being a case in point).

In a sense, for travellers coming from a situation of fraught diglossia where one language is a major world language and a lingua franca of much international travel, the challenge for the traveller becomes one of describing this world in the language of the minority-language speaker rather than having it endlessly presented to them in the dominant language. The erasure of difference at a micro-textual level in the minority-language travel narrative may paradoxically be in the interests of the preservation of difference at a macro-textual level. In the context of minority-language travelling practices, naturalizing strategies can indeed preserve rather than endanger the planet’s linguistic ecosystem. This is particularly the case if an assumption implicit in modernity is that, at best, global monoglossia (everybody speaking the same language) and, at worst, global heteroglossia (everybody speaking varieties of the same language) best serves the interests of the market. Language difference, in this view, is presented as a kind of wilful, self-indulgent irredentism which acts as a decelerating factor in global flows of people, signs and commodities.

A classic consequence of nineteenth-century cultural nationalism is the equation of linguistic with national identity. Travellers are readily identified and categorized on the basis of the language they speak. Though proclaimed by many subaltern groups in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a rationale for insurrection, the ready identification of language with nationality has unsuspected consequences. Identification is almost invariably made in favour of more powerful groups. Belgian Walloons are taken to be French, the Austrians to be Germans, the Canadians to be US American, the Irish, Welsh and Scots to be English. The young and the old have different coping strategies for the identificatory confusion. Young backpackers put cloth ensigns on their rucksacks or on the sleeves of army surplus jackets while the older travellers go for the discreet semaphore of enamel flags on lapels. Again, for minority-language travellers who speak a major language, the
ready equation of language and nationality precipitates endless crises of identity when they are abroad. The rationale which causes them to defend a minority language, namely that claims to political sovereignty involve the right to linguistic separateness, often proves their undoing when they are on their travels.

A shocked Séamus Ó Néill entitles one of his chapters, ‘Shíl siad i Salzburg gur Shasanach mé’ (‘They thought in Salzburg that I was English’). In his search for lodgings in Salzburg, he meets a landlady who mentions an exorbitant price for a room and haggling begins. She is convinced that he is English because he does not drive a stretch limousine or scatter dollars in every direction; he cannot therefore be American. It is only after much halting explanation that she accepts that Ó Néill is in fact Irish. Another travel writer, Liam Ó Rinn, in an earlier period, in a different city, finds himself equally a victim of mistaken national identity. At one point in the narrative, Ó Rinn asks for directions from a White Russian out walking with his family. He informs the Russian in French when they fall into conversation that he is Irish and that Irish is his native language. The Russian ignores the linguistic nicety and proceeds to address Ó Rinn in broken English for the rest of the conversation (Ó Rinn 1931: 37–9). The ticket office at the Folies Bergère is another unlikely setting for linguistic confusion. Ó Rinn meets a Dutchman who spoke some French and English. Because Ó Rinn speaks English, the Dutchman assumes him to be an Englishman and berates him for what he sees as the woeful lack of interest on the part of the English in modern languages. When Ó Rinn protests that he is a speaker of the ‘Irish language’ the Dutchman dismisses it as a dialect of English and persists with his vocal critique of English linguistic shortcomings. Only references to Gaelic and a thumbnail sketch of the Indo-European family of languages finally make the Dutch critic dimly aware of difference (ibid.: 89).

The ready equation between language and identity by European cultural nationalism in the nineteenth century thus generated a rich terrain of confusion in the twentieth. For the Irish traveller to Europe for much of the century, an ability to speak the English language with fluency becomes the defining marker of identity. Cultural, historical and religious differences that come to the fore in travelling within the Anglophone area, i.e. when the Irish travel to other English-speaking countries, fade, to be overshadowed by the implacable fact of language when the travelling is in non-Anglophone Europe. The native language of the Irish traveller, in this respect (though not in others), is irrelevant. As Irish is not an international language – few foreigners speak it – Irish-language travellers will travel in English if they do not possess the requisite foreign languages. The convenience of a global language is offset by the endless potential for cultural misapprehension.

Leaving aside nationalist susceptibilities, the difficulty of misattribution is to create a false set of expectations or to conceal histories not normally on view. Thus, the Dutchman at the ticket office expects Ó Rinn to offer an explanation as
to why the English are less motivated than other nations by the prospect of learning foreign languages. Were the Irishman to oblige, the manoeuvre would be somewhat fraudulent, a view from the outside being taken as a perspective from the inside. The assumption of language dictating nationality further complicates the hermeneutic task of the Irish travellers in that their own history, less widely known, can only be invoked among specialists in discussion or interpretation. When the White Russian lambasts the Bolshevik regime as consisting of tyrants and thieves, Ó Rinn reflects on the upheavals of the Irish Civil War, which ended the year before his trip to Paris, but he does not give voice to comparisons between the Irish and Russian situation: as his Russian interlocutor is convinced Ó Rinn is English, these historical observations would make little sense. There is a distinct sense in a number of Irish-language travel accounts of the occlusion of Irish history, the erasure of cultural difference occasioned by the perception of language which gives birth to a certain uneasiness in European travel. Irish travellers find themselves repeatedly caught between a reluctance to glory in specificity or flag-waving and a genuine desire to be taken for what they are and not for someone else – not, in other words, as fraudulent messengers of a culture and a country they know increasingly by hearsay.

Travelling/dwelling

Minority languages can be seen as the quintessential and emblematic expression of the local in the era of globalization. However, minority-language travel accounts suggest that these oppositions may not be as clearly defined. Pamela Petro is an American who is deeply interested in the Welsh language. In Travels in an Old Tongue: Touring the World Speaking Welsh, she describes the frustration of trying to learn Welsh in a situation of widespread diglossia. Petro confesses that ‘whenever I try to practise Welsh in Wales I only get so far before English comes spilling in from all sides’ (Petro 1997: 4). Her solution to this predicament is to travel the world in order to meet Welsh speakers in countries where English is not the other language:

That was a plus. If they didn’t speak English, I’d have to speak to them in Welsh. That was scary. And even if they turned out to be bilingual Welsh expatriates, they and I might prove less likely to succumb to the high tide of English than we would in Wales, the nearest moon orbiting the planet England, where the gravitational pull of the imperial language is harder to resist. By visiting Welsh-speakers in places such as Norway and France, Germany, Belgium, Holland, Singapore, Thailand, Japan and Argentina, I’d have an unheard-of opportunity to use Welsh as an international language.

(ibid.: 6)
Going linguistically global for Petro is a way of reinforcing the linguistically local, the point of origin strengthened and made more complex by the movement away, the movement outwards. In other words, linguistically, departure is not always an act of betrayal.

When Breandán Ó hUallacháin visits Hartford, Connecticut he is impressed by the number of Irish speakers he encounters, mainly immigrants from the Aran Islands, Connemara and West Kerry. When he asks some of them why they and their children speak Irish in the United States he is told: ‘Nach gcloisimid na hIodálaigh agus na Gearmánaigh ag caint ina dteanga féin catáthu féin idir óg is aosta! Cén fáth nach labhróimis teanga ár dtíre féin chomh maith leo siúd, “ar siad go neamhaglach’7 (Ó hUallacháin 1973: 32).

For Ó hUallacháin in this instance travel serves one of its traditional functions, the distant gaze as a critique of proximity. The linguistic exploits of Irish expatriates are a living reproach to Irish people who are unable or unwilling to learn Irish. Through the experience of travel the extra-territorial experience of the Irish is brought to bear on the language territory of home in the hope of an ultimate reconfiguration. It is the workings of a particular kind of global panopticon that complicate the dominance of the monoglossic synopticon in Ireland itself. The practices of travelling complicate dwelling in the native, minority language (so few people speak it elsewhere) but the practices can also reinforce the native dwelling in language through comparisons with other peoples and the manner in which they dwell in their particular language or languages.

Translation ecology

As we have seen in our discussion of travel accounts, definitions are relational and concepts of major and minor are contextually defined. Therefore, the pressures on languages must not simply be viewed in macro terms. Though a language like English is undoubtedly exercising its own particular hegemony in late modernity, with specific translation consequences, the difficulties faced by many minority languages come not from international but from national languages. As Herman Batibo points out with respect to the world’s linguistically richest continent, Africa, ‘the biggest threat to the minority languages in Africa is not the presence of the colonial languages, such as English, French, or Portuguese (which normally remain the languages of the elite), but the predominance of the powerful indigenous lingua francas, which often give rise to what I have called “marked bilingualism”’ (Batibo 2001: 312). Marked bilingualism is characterized by the presence of two languages which have unequal power and prestige. Speakers tend to gravitate towards the more powerful and prestigious (major) language and abandon the language of lower social value (minority language). As the minority language is spoken less often, its
domains of use become more restricted and the language’s lexicon and linguistic structures suffer continuous impoverishment.

Batibo reports that in Botswana it is the declared national language, Setswana, which poses the most serious threat to the many minority languages in the country. Commenting on the linguistic fortunes of the Alune, an ethnolinguistic group based in the eastern Indonesian province of Central Maluku, Margaret Florey claims that, ‘[i]n the modern era, Malay/Indonesian is also the language of formal education, and parents are encouraged not to speak Alune with their children in order to enhance opportunities for success in school and, later, in the workplace’ (Florey 2001: 337). In the case of the Barí people of Venezuela, it was found that the better a speaker’s knowledge of Spanish, the poorer the speaker’s knowledge of the ethnobiographical lore contained in the Barí’s indigenous language (Lizarralde 2001: 275–6). These developments are not surprising as a well-documented feature of nationalism and the emergence of the nation-state is the imposition of a national language through the educational system and the various organs of the state (Anderson 1983). However, the high incidence of marked bilingualism (national language versus minority language) in many parts of the world means that an undue fixation on the European languages of former colonists in discussions of globalization can obscure the more important local dynamics of different language situations. Similarly, there is a danger in translation that, if we think global (macro translation flows), we may forget what it is to speak local (micro-linguistic tensions). But what then are the translation implications of a more localized view of minority languages in a global age?

In an examination of the relationship between cultural, linguistic and biological diversity in Native North America Eric Smith concludes:

high linguistic (and perhaps nonlinguistic cultural) diversity should be favoured by any factors that lead to localization of speech communities, whether this localization is due to environmental factors favouring isolation or self-sufficiency or sociopolitical dynamics favoring boundary definition in order to control resource access, marriage, and group membership.

(Smith 2001: 110 [his emphasis])

W.M. Denevan noted pessimistically that, ‘[d]espite recent population increases [in America], most Indian cultures have become extinct or nearly so. Many of those groups that have survived remain threatened with extinction for much the same reasons as in the sixteenth century: disease, inhumanity, misguided “salvation,” and racial and cultural mixing to the point of non-recognition’ (Denevan 1976: 7). Isolation, self-sufficiency, a refusal of racial and cultural mixing might indeed favour localization of speech communities and the protection of linguistic diversity, but at what cost? What Smith and Denevan are alluding to is a question that was raised in
Chapter 3, namely, is it possible to have a polyglossia without monoglossia and can there be anything left to translate if someone at some point has refused to translate or be translated? Are we left with a choice between an openness without diversity and a diversity without openness? The questions are very real for translation studies, as its defining rhetoric, and many of the arguments in this book, have constantly stressed the open-ended, relational, interdependent dimension to the role of translation in culture.

To begin to answer the questions is first of all to question the questions. It does not necessarily follow from a translation perspective that closure preserves specificity. Languages grow not only because of detailed interaction with a specific natural and cultural environment but because they come into contact and learn (translate) from other cultures. The problem for minority or endangered languages is not so much the fact of contact as the form of contact. Translation as a particular kind of contact is threatening and oppressive if the speakers of minority languages have no control over the translation process and cannot use translation as an enabling force but have to suffer it as a disabling intrusion. For this reason, translation as a positive force for language and cultural maintenance cannot be dissociated from a broader conception of the political process. Victor Toledo speaks of sustainable community development as an internal mechanism which allows a community to take control of the processes that affect it. He continues:

This definition derives from a general principle of political ecology that affirms that the fundamental reason why contemporary society and nature suffer generalized processes of exploitation and deterioration is the loss of control of human society over nature and itself. From this perspective, the history of humanity can be seen as a movement towards an even greater loss of control over the processes that affect people and their surroundings, in stark contrast to the paradigm of progress.

(Toledo 2001: 479 [his emphasis])

If translation has played such a crucial role in the consolidation and development of imperial and national languages, there is no intrinsic reason why translation should not be of benefit to minority languages. But in the context of globalization benefits will accrue only if we are to conceive of a translation ecology: a translation practice that gives control to speakers and translators of minority languages of what, when and – perhaps most urgently, in view of what was said earlier about ‘philological’ translations – how texts might be translated into and out of their languages. In a sense, this translation ecology relates to what Toledo describes as cultural control: ‘[c]ultural control – that is, the community making decisions that safeguard its cultural values – includes language, customs, knowledge, beliefs, and lifestyles’ (ibid.: 480). Cultural control can, of course, easily shade into cultural
coercion, the ‘community’ deciding what the ‘cultural values’ of its constituent members should be, and this has long been the criticism levelled against the more beatific promises of communitarianism (Mesure and Renaut 1999: 61–144). However, translation, as a way out of as well as a way into a community, means that any exclusionary definition of the community becomes more difficult to sustain as translation involves, by definition, outside points of reference.

In interpreting control as empowerment rather than constraint, one could argue that translation in a globalized world has the potential both to strengthen the localization of the speech communities of which Smith speaks and to allow for the engagement with others, without which we are condemned to, at best, mutual indifference and, at worst, reciprocal hostility. If we consider first the position of localized speech communities, the concept of isolation in a strictly physical sense seems increasingly problematic in view of the ability of modern forms of transport to overcome the obstacles of natural terrain. If language groups are to be allowed to live their own lives and use their own language, their separateness can no longer depend on the happenstance of geography. The right to autonomy and self-determination must be based in the cultural rather than the physical. Otherwise, difference is tolerated only as long as the road has not been built or the airstrip completed.

To acknowledge the right to a separate linguistic existence is to give political effect to what is a cultural act of recognition and a powerful element in recognition is the fact of translation. When the ethnobotanist M.J. Plotkin makes the following claim, he is implicitly summoning translators to his cause:

Since Amazonian Indians are often the only ones who know both the properties of these plants and how they can best be utilized, their knowledge must be considered an essential component of all efforts to conserve and develop the Amazon. Failure to document this ethnobiographical lore would constitute a tremendous economic and scientific loss to the human race.

(Plotkin 1995: 155)

The human race can only be made aware of the ‘tremendous economic and scientific loss’ if the ethnobiographical lore is translated into a language or languages it can understand. In other words, people find it difficult to value what they have no hope of understanding or to experience a sense of loss if they have not possessed a knowledge of that which they are said to be losing. When Margaret Florey makes a case for the importance of the linguistic specificity of the Alune, she describes the speech registers associated with specialized knowledge and tells us how the Alune distinguish in their language between nine stages of growth for pigs, according to the growth of the tusks and the speed of movement of young animals (Florey 2001: 328–31). In effect, she partially translates elements of the Alune language to
give the English-speaking reader some notion of the complexity of the knowledge base of the language and, by extension, why it is important to protect the language and others like it. Translation in ethnographic contexts is not without problems as Sturge (1997) has clearly demonstrated. Nevertheless, without translation, it is difficult to see how others will be persuaded of the inherent complexity and vibrancy of languages they do not speak, but which need their support against the designs of the more predatory forces at work in contemporary globalization.

In any meaningful translation ecology, translation cannot be unidirectional, however noble the intentions. Languages not only function to give us information about where we live, they also tell us about things taking place where we do not live. As Batibo intimates in the case of Botswana, ‘[o]ne serious dilemma that minority language speakers face, if they are not proficient in a majority language such as Setswana, is marginalization from access to vital knowledge and information concerning regional, national, and international affairs’ (Batibo 2001: 320). Ignorance is not political bliss and lack of knowledge of Setswana and/or English means that minority-language speakers cannot participate in regional, national or international affairs. Making knowledge and information available in minority languages is not only an effective way of extending the range and usefulness of the languages concerned but it also allows the regional, the national and the global to be made local in a way that is politically enabling and allows for the beginning of a recovery of control over people’s political, economic and cultural fates.

Clifford Geertz has remarked that ‘[i]magining difference (which of course does not mean making it up, but making it evident) remains a science of which we all have need’ (Geertz 1986: 120). If translation is a science of anything, it is a science of difference, for without difference there would be no translation. Geertz claims that one of the reasons we need to be able to imagine difference is that in the modern world, whether people like it or not, they are condemned to difference. That is, the remote, the different, the ‘exotic’ are no longer over the horizon but across the road. We are increasingly living ‘in the midst of an enormous collage’ (ibid.: 121), where peoples, culinary and musical traditions, forms of dress, furnishings and iconographies are all juxtaposed and thrown together. Understanding a mindset different from one’s own is no longer the specialist skill of the ethnographer but an everyday lifeskill of the urban dweller. As we saw in Chapter 3, one possible response to the discomfort of strangers is to stop talking to them. Cities are crowded with communities or ghettoes, depending on your view of people’s cultural need to be with their own. It is the formation of ethnic communities which explains in part the linguistic diversity of large cities, part of Geertz’s collage, and the substantial growth in community interpreting in recent years (Carr et al. 1997). It is indeed the perceived threat of this linguistic diversity that has led to moves in Britain and elsewhere to introduce compulsory (majority)
language and culture classes for newly arrived immigrants or for those applying for citizenship. To see language difference in purely negative terms is, however, to miss what may be a crucial element in the relationship between translation and globalization in this century.

Particularism generally has a bad press. Caring for specific things or people seems a lot more restrictive or even selfish than possessing a more generalized, abstract compassion or care for all of nature or all of humanity. Val Plumwood argues, however, that care for or empathy with particular aspects of nature rather than with nature as abstraction is essential if there is to be any depth or commitment to our concern: ‘[c]are and responsibility for particular animals, trees, and rivers that are known well, loved, and appropriately connected to the self are an important basis for acquiring a wider, more generalized concern’ (Plumwood 1994: 145–6). The difficulty with treating particular attachments as ethically suspect and promoting a genuine, ‘impartial’ identification with nature or with the good, however defined, is that you can end up promoting an indiscriminate identification which undermines your reason for becoming concerned in the first place, i.e. a desire to preserve difference. As Plumwood notes:

this ‘transpersonal’ identification is so indiscriminate and intent on denying particular meanings, it cannot allow for the deep and highly particularistic attachment to place that has motivated both the passion of many modern conservationists and the love of many indigenous peoples for their land.

(ibid.: 152)

The emergence of movements that are committed to ‘particular meanings’, whether of an ethnic, religious, ecological or political nature, is a well-attested feature of globalization – a centrifugal flight from the uniformity of the centre (Castells 1997). Translation, too, is arguably committed to ‘particular meanings’ in that translation does not take place between undifferentiated entities but between languages that originate in a particular place and possess a specific history. Translators have to care for the languages they translate if the work is to be of any merit. One of the most common difficulties experienced by trainee translators is that they suffer from a deficit of particular attachment to their native language and tend to neglect it or take it for granted and so fail to produce acceptable work in the language which is their own. We could argue moreover that notions of place and particularism which are often associated with minority languages can be considered in a way that is emancipatory rather than exclusive.

In the case of place, it is worth considering whether translation schools and scholars should look not only to the languages within countries but also to the languages without. If it is predicted that over 80 per cent of the world’s population will be living in cities by the end of this century, and migratory flows are unlikely
to cease, then Babel will be on our doorstep, everywhere. Thus, the city as place will become more and more linguistically complex and diverse, and a deep identification with place will require not a closing down of linguistic horizons but an opening up. As the capacity of any individual to acquire languages is limited either by time or by ability, translators and translations are indispensable in providing access to the cultural and linguistic wealth of polyglot, multicultural cities. The regressive aspects of place come into play when place is treated as a static, not a dynamic, entity. The challenge for translation schools is to make courses reflect the diversity of culture and language, not so much in places where they might be as in places where they are. So more schools in the Western world might start introducing languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Urdu, Hindi, to take just a few examples, on to translating and interpreting courses. Alternatively, courses might be taught to students on the history, position and nature of the different languages which are present in the cities in which they live and study. If we have emphasized the spatial with respect to place, it is worth emphasizing the temporal with respect to particularism.

A recurrent theme in translation history is that languages are always in a permanent state of indebtedness to other languages. This is why, as we argued in Chapter 3, translation histories are always transnational histories. They challenge the glorious isolationism of the more narcissistic, national linguistic narratives. In other words, the more we enquire into the particular circumstances of particular languages, the more we discover the multiple traces of borrowings, foreign contacts and wholesale appropriation. Translation history, in a sense, cherishes particularism, because the polyglot devil is in the linguistic and cultural detail. This does not mean that there is no distinctness, nothing, so to speak, to protect, promote or translate from or into. Rather, translation history becomes the investigation of the particular as constituted by forms of relatedness – but forms of relatedness that result in distinctness – and the latter is as deserving of our attention as the former. Jean Grimshaw expressed the necessity of this distinctness or difference precisely in terms of our relations to others:

> care for others, understanding of them, are only possible if one can adequately distinguish oneself from others. If I see myself as ‘indistinct’ from you, or you as not having your own being that is not merged with mine, then I cannot preserve a real sense of your well-being as opposed to mine. Care and understanding require the sort of distance that is needed in order not to see the other as a projection of self, or self as a continuation of other.  

(Grimshaw 1986: 182–3 [her emphasis])

The cracked looking-glass of minority may have much to reveal still about how translators can promote care and understanding on our fractured and fractious
planet. Translation studies, for its part, can make a powerful contribution to our understanding of how distinctness and relatedness can creatively interact in whatever new global order we create for ourselves.
Notes

1 Translation and the global economy

1 The bone, our fixed point. Every civilization begins with remains. ‘You are Peter and on this rock . . . ’ Martyr, you will be reduced to bones, and these bones will be placed in a reliquary and the reliquary will attract pilgrims who will build a church over it and a whole city will grow up around it.

2 Technological sophistication increases dependency on language and on the complex social organization allowed by language. It is possible to imagine how basic skills such as peeling a potato might be transmitted silently through simple imitation. There is evidence for this kind of transmission among primates. But when one deals with something more complex, involving a fairly long and precise sequence of gestures such as, for example, Levallois’ description of cutting with a flint in the early Palaeolithic period, it becomes difficult to imagine learning without language.

3 For the engineer or the computer scientist there is neither holy place nor sacred frontier nor centre of the world – cars, computers and electricity generating stations are at home everywhere. Their operations are not linked to a specific territory, language or religion and they can make their way to anywhere in the world.

2 Globalization and new translation paradigms

1 Genes become the busy agents of a kind of biological ‘invisible hand’. Our fate is sealed much more effectively by their bustling egocentrism than by old-fashioned humanism. The striking parallel between the ‘every man for himself’ outlook of economic agents and that of our own genes is perhaps not entirely fortuitous. Both cases highlight an implicit ideology based on the removal of the human in favour of a process without a subject.

2 Thus are wonderful images of our telegraphists, postmen, translators, representatives, commentators . . . the armies of our new kinds of work.

3 The worst Angels are seen; the best disappear.

4 Solely because analogue memories do not require any particular qualifications to access the archive, and delegate encoding and decoding to machines (cassette recorder, projector, record player, computer etc.), purchasing power has a direct cultural effect. These memories also ensure a comparative advantage to information over knowledge (to the document over the sequence, to the paratactic over the syntactic), and therefore, socially, to the news media over institutions of learning.
all human dignity lies in thought; all of the dignity of thought lies in memory. Forgetful thinking is still perhaps thinking but mindless.

For thought, to be faithful is not to refuse to change your ideas (dogmatism), nor to submit them to another authority (faith), nor to consider them as absolute (fanaticism); it is to refuse to change them unless you have good and cogent reasons to do so, and – because you cannot question things all the time – to hold to be true, until further examination, what has, at some point, been clearly and convincingly demonstrated. Thus, neither dogmatism nor inconstancy.

3 Globalization and the new geography of translation

I can only extend hospitality to a foreigner if I have a place in which to welcome her.

I have read the preface of [the first edition of your translation], and you will allow me to tell you that I have been much taken aback to find that there you have fostered on me a country in which I was not born, while attributing to me a book, bearing the name of an author who has had the misfortune to displease some of our Ministers, which I have never acknowledged as my own. (Translation by Ian Campbell Ross)

But you have felt your strength, which puts you above such precautions, and makes you capable of correcting a bad book, a more difficult undertaking than writing a good one, and have shown no fear in presenting the public with a translation of a work you acknowledged to be full of smut, foolishness and childishness. (Translation by Ian Campbell Ross)

4 Globalization and the new politics of translation

The intellectualization of manual work has as its counterpart the mechanization of intellectual work. This includes everything from the automated reading of CVs (with a scanner) through to expert systems and the computer-assisted design of industrial objects.

Just when quality is a major concern in translation, due to the importance given to the issue in public meetings where quality is the main topic, the acceleration and exponential growth in publishing, particularly in the Francophone world, leads certain publishers to consider translation as a merely technical operation, a primarily pragmatic operation even, a transfer whose main aim is speed.

The more constraining the mediation, the more imperious the immediacy. To make apparent on the ‘technical’ side the mediation which is not or no longer visible on the ‘cultural’ side, is the first step, occasionally disconcerting or scandalous, in the approach.

The medium is self-cancelling [. . .] Any progress in a medium conceals the medium-term and shortens the access route, and mediology gives the inside story on these short-circuits.

Perception is a translation. What is interesting is that our brain which regulates all these translation and, by extension, perception processes, of which we are unaware, is confined within our cranium. It does not communicate directly with the outside world. It communicates by means of our sensory appendages and I think that there is a relationship in all knowledge which is to do with closure and openness, separation and inherence. In immediacy, no knowledge is possible. Self-knowledge – Montaigne or
whoever – demands a certain distance from the self through objectification alongside other forms of self-analysis. One has to become detached from the self.

7 Anthropology consists of making familiar that which is strange and foreign (the culture of others) and of making strange, even foreign that which is familiar (our own culture).

8 to cure is to translate, to open up to another dimension, to leave behind all forms of dogmatic, theological, philosophical and artistic captivity.

9 Obviously, the Russian manuscript did not exist, so I went to the publisher with what I had to hand, something which looked like a manuscript and was written in Cyrillic characters. And with much gravity, I pretended to answer the publisher’s questions by consulting, page after page, the corresponding Russian passages. I thought the ordeal was over when I was told they wanted an external reader’s opinion on the translation. Well, believe it or not, I translated my whole novel from French to Russian. It was pure torture.

10 It saves us from having to read the original.

11 with the best will in the world it is impossible to make anything happen between an es and an es.

12 not what we do not understand, but that which we understand so well that we feel its absence.

5 Translation and minority languages in a global setting

1 If we find ourselves in an English-speaking world, we must guard against expressing our innermost feelings through English under a false Irish veneer. Should this happen, Irish distinctiveness would disappear even more quickly than the language itself. Maybe it’s already too late.

2 There is no point in fighting for the Breton language if we do not try to restore it to its true position as a language of knowledge, literature, teaching, the state and culture and we may as well let it die now if we do not state clearly that Breton is not a separate compartment of our life but can be used by everyone, by the historian, artist, musician, or economist as much as by the farmer, worker and beggar.

3 One fine day, piqued by curiosity, we looked at ourselves in a mirror and cried out saying that the outfit ‘made in Paris’ didn’t suit us at all. The great fashion designers of the capital had forgotten to take our measurements.

4 ‘Did you ever talk to him?’, I said. / ‘I did, often’, he said. ‘Franz Joseph was a nice, kind, simple man’.

5 ‘Technical work, very technical work. Surely, boy. Each doll works her machine in the darkness just by the touch of her fingers. Think about that, boy. Each one of those little dolls is worth a lot to Kodak. I’m telling you they’re worth something. It takes nine months for us to train each one of the dolls for the Dark Room. No machine could do the work as quickly and skilfully as those chicks.’

6 ‘Beautiful morning!’ he said / I was lost in my thoughts and I did not answer. / ‘Have you come far?’, he continued. / ‘Yeah, Ireland’, I said./ ‘Oh, kunus a taw tew?’ he asked me laughingly. / I burst out laughing and corrected his pronunciation. / ‘Thank you, thank you’, I said. ‘So who was this Charles de Fouchard [sic] guy anyway?’

7 ‘Don’t we hear the Italians and the Germans, the young and the old, speaking to each other in their own language! Why shouldn’t we speak our own language as well as them’, they said boldly.
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