

Translation transformation

Below are the texts used as the basis of the panel discussion at the Book Fair. As practitioners we all know that different translators will produce very different versions of the same text, and these two translations really brought the point home to the public. How do you think you might have dealt with this challenging source text?

Source text

Rondo capriccioso

Wors – Con brio

Praat met wildvreemdes in 'n Stellenbosse supermark en mens kan gou 'n diagnose maak van die buurt waar jy jou bevind. Hoe waterdig sy waan en wande is, hoeseer sy illusies na buite lek, watter aspekte blote verfraaiing van sy vooroordele is en waar sy gevoelighede sit.

Neem byvoorbeeld die situasie voor die worsrak in 'n upmarket supermark van Stellenbosch soos die Spar. Dit is 'n heelal van stralende lig en vervul van liefde en die verbruikers daar verteenwoordig die kroon van die skepping. Maar daar is te veel wors en daar is ook te veel soorte wors en hulle name laat selfs die mees goedgeelowige sterfling duisel.



Marius Swart, Michiel Heyns and Leon de Kock talking about the translation of literary works

Kameeldoring, Blokmanspesiaal, Helshoogte, Yuppie, Buppie, Mummie, Blog, Swartvark, Halleluja, Langbees, Short Fuse, Gourmet, Der Hirt auf dem Felsen, Incredible Connection, Koljander, Skarrelskaap, H. B. Thomskaap, Nuwe Afrikaner, Linksgemaalde, Regsgedraaide, Voortrekker, NGGemeente Brackenfell-Oos, Strandloper, Uitkamp, FoKof MusKiet, Binnebraai, Howzit Weber, My Boy Willy, Outeniqua, Ossewa-Brandwag, Sarie Marais, Viertrek en Ware Velskoen.

Mens sien hoe maal die mense voor die rak, oewerloos, radeloos, moederloos. Mens sien hoe vat-vat hulle aan die pakke, hoe wantrou hulle die name, hoe swymel hulle van momentele identifikasie, hoe weerstaan hulle die versoekings, hoe swig hulle voor die verlange na 'n agtergelate of 'n voorgenome self. Mens sien hoe kyk hulle op hulle horlosies, mens sien hoe bid hulle, laat hierdie wors aan my verbygaan, mens sien hoe hulle noodseine en hulpgeroep uitstuur op hulle selfone. Sommige hink op twee moontlikhede, ander is flink aan die jongleur met ses verskillende soorte, een mevroukje hang oor haar trollie, haar sinne verbyster, haar hele plan en voorneme gekelder deur die Babel van worsetikette.

En dis uit simpatie en uit vereenselwiging dat mens naderstaan. Want mens wil ook wors koop en jy dink, daar is geen probleem so ver of woes geleë wat nie deur innige gemeenskap en redelike konsensus opgelos kan word nie.

Jy skuifel dus tussen die skare in en takseer jou medeworkopers op hulle graad van ontredde. En met liefde in jou hart en uit opregte meegevoel spreek jy 'n dame aan wat veel sekerder lyk van haar saak as die meeste en 'n stabiele uitdrukking op haar gesig het. Vaste burg, dink jy, Nederduits Gereformeerde, sy sal alles weet wat nodig is om welgetroos en salig te braai. En met die mees wellewende toon, steek jy van wal.

Mevrou, u lyk vir my na iemand wat haar wors ken, kan u iets hier aanbeveel?

Gits, trek sy daar vir haar regop of jy op 'n kobra getrap het, haar in haar boudoir in haar vormdrag betrap het, haar kollektiegeld uit die bordjie gegaps het, of voorgestel het dat sy 'The Zipless Undertaker' van Erika Jong² lees.

Pardon, sê jy, ek het nie bedoel om u aanstoot te gee nie.

Geen versagting. Jy het oortree. Jy het 'n private domein geskend. Jy het advies gevra oor wors. Sy kyk jou dat jy agteruit-agteruit padgee en wens jy kan verdwyn in 'n sak brikette. Die heelal is duister, dink jy, en ons is diere oorval deur katastrofes. En jy verlaat die winkel sonder wors. Jy eet wortels en jy koop twee weke lank nie proviand nie.

Extract from *Oor draketande, soetjiespoepers, fynproewers en wors* by Marlene van Niekerk.
Published in *Stellenbosch* (citybooks, 2014).

Translations

Rondo capriccioso

Wors – Con brio

Speak to a total stranger in a Stellenbosch supermarket and you will quickly be able to make a diagnosis of the area in which you find yourself: How watertight the area's delusions and defences are, how far its fantasies stick out, which details are mere embellishment of its prejudices, and where its deeper sensitivities lie.*

Take, for example, the following situation: you're standing in front of the wors shelf in an upmarket Stellenbosch store such as the Spar. It's a universe of radiant light, filled with love. The consumers in this shop represent the cream of the crop. But there is too much wors, and too many kinds of wors, and their names are likely to send even the most amenable mortal into a spin of confusion.

Camel Thorn, Blockman's Special, Helshoogte, Yuppie, Buppie, Mummie, Blog, Black Sheep, Halleluja, Long Ox, Short Fuse, Gourmet, Der Hirt auf dem Felsen, Incredible Connection, Coriander, Straggler Sheep, H.B. Thom Sheep, New Afrikaner, Left- Ground, Right-Turned, Voortrekker, NG Church Brackenfell-East, Beachcomber, Gone Camping, FuQoff MosQuito, Indoor Braai, Howzit Weber, My Boy Willy, Outeniqua, Ossewa-Brandwag, Sarie Marais, Four Oxen, and The Real McCoy.

You watch as people circle the shelf without any anchorage. They're at their wit's end, as if they've been separated from their mummies. You see how they poke at the packages, mistrusting the names, and how they swoon with momentary identification. Now they resist various temptations, now they succumb to the longing for a past or future self. You see them steal glances at their watches, you catch them praying for help – please deliver me from this wors. You even see them sending emergency messages on their cellphones, calls for help. Some hobble between two choices, others quickly resort to trickery with six different kinds, while one young missus seems frozen to the spot, bent over her trolley, her senses dazzled, all her plans and intentions rent asunder by this wors label Babel.

It is, then, out of a sense of sympathy and identification that you approach the scene, also wanting to buy wors. You think: there is no problem quite so far gone or so desperate that it can't be solved by sincere communitarianism and reasonable consensus.

So you shuffle your way into the crowd and measure your fellow wors consumers by the degree of their derangement. It is with love in your heart that you address a lady who looks a lot more sure of herself than most of the others, and who seems to be maintaining a more or less stable look on her face. Here, you think, is a citadel of certainty, an NG-Kerk tannie, no less. She will

Of pussy-footers, fine-diners, dragon's teeth and sausage

Rondo capriccioso: Sausage – Con brio Dare to address a total stranger in a Stellenbosch supermarket, and in no time you'll achieve a diagnosis of the neighbourhood into which you've blundered. How watertight its presumptions and assumptions, how leaky its illusions, which attributes serve merely to window-dress its prejudices and where its sensitivities are located.

Take, for instance, the situation in front of the sausage counter in an upmarket Stellenbosch supermarket like the Spar. It is a universe of radiant light and replete with love, and its clients constitute the crown of creation. But there is too much sausage and there are too many kinds of sausage and their names are enough to reel the mind of even the most unflappable mortal.

Hickory, Chicory and Blockman's Special; Stellantia, Prudentia and Loquentia; Yuppie, Buppie and Mummy; Blackpig, Longpig and Short Fuse; Gourmet, Gourmand and Glutton; Parsley Sage Rosemary and Thyme, Inedible Connection; Lamb on the Run, Lamb on the Bone; New Afrikaner, Old Afrikaner, Medium Afrikaner; Superthick, Superthin and Superlong; Halaal, Kosher, Presbyterian and Vegetarian; Outeniqua, Tamkwa and Saqua; Voortrekker, Torch Commando and EFF.

You see them milling around in front of the counter, rudderless, motherless and distraught. You see them prodding warily at the packs, mistrusting the names, swooning in transient rapture, resisting the temptation, yielding before the yearning after an abandoned or an intended other self. You see them glance at their watches, you see them pray, let this sausage pass from me, you see them transmit emergency signals and calls for succour on cell phones. Some are vacillating between two possibilities, others are dexterously juggling six different kinds, one diminutive kitchen goddess is collapsed over her trolley, her senses overwhelmed, her total schema and agenda sabotaged by the Babel of sausage labels.

And it's sympathy and empathy that urge you to approach. Because you, too, want to buy sausage and you think, there is no problem under the sun or the moon or the stars that cannot be resolved by heartfelt Ubuntu and rational consensus.

So you shuffle through the crowds and assess your fellow-sausage-buyers according to their degree of discombobulation. And with love in your heart and in a spirit of sincere fellow-feeling you address a lady who seems more resolute than most, her countenance a bastion of certain certitudes. Mighty fortress, you think, Calvinist, she'll know all things needful to braai in

know everything there is to know about doing a braai in a blessed and uplifting manner. And so, in the most civilized tone imaginable, you sail forth.

Excuse me, but you strike me as someone who knows her wors. Is there something here that you might recommend?

Well, if she doesn't recoil as if you've stepped on a cobra, caught her unawares in her boudoir in nothing but a corset, stolen the money she's just dropped into the church collection bowl, or suggested that she read *The Zipless Undertaker* by Erica Jong.

My apologies, you say, I did not mean to offend.

But there's no mitigation. You have stepped over the line. Invaded a private domain. You actually went and asked for advice about wors. She continues to stare you down as you retreat backwards, step by step, wishing you could disappear into a bag of briquettes. The universe is a dark place, you think. We are mere creatures, overcome by catastrophe. And you leave the shop without any wors. You eat carrots and buy no provisions for a whole two weeks.

Translation by Leon de Kock

* How watertight the area's misapprehensions and manacles are, how much its illusions leak out, which details are mere decorative cover for its biases, and where it is most touchy about things.

bliss and blessedness. And in the most civilised tones imaginable, you launch your enquiry:

Madam, you look like somebody who knows her sausages, can you recommend anything here?

Oh my goodness, does she ever bridle and bristle, as if you'd stepped on a cobra, surprised her in her boudoir in her foundation garments, filched her widow's mite from the collection plate, or proposed a reading of Erica Jong's *The Zipless Undertaker*.

I beg your pardon, you say, I did not intend to cause offence.

No extenuation. You have transgressed. You have violated a private domain. You have solicited advice about sausage. She glowers at you so fiercely that you back off shuffle-shuffle, wishing that you could disappear up a bag of briquettes. The universe is murky, you think, and we are animals overtaken by catastrophe. And you leave the shop sausageless. You eat carrots and for two weeks you buy no provisions.

Translation by Michiel Heyns

Member impressions of the Book Fair

I admit I'm a below-the-radar member of SATI, but this year I thought I'd get involved. Gently, of course. So I volunteered for a slot of stand duty at this year's Book Fair in Cape Town . . .

I had the second slot on Sunday morning. I collected my pass and in I went. Since Capetonians are not known to be early risers, especially on a Sunday, the Book Fair was quiet. That suited me, because I had a chance to meet some of my fellow members (**Gretha Aalbers**, who organised SATI's presence, **Kirsten Hahnebeck**, who was in the slot before me, and **Annamarie Mostert**, who is also a PEG member, so our slots coincided).

The SATI stand was a bit quiet to start with, and most of the traffic that strayed into our remote corner of the hall seemed headed for the puppetry in the kiddies' corner – which also provided SATI and PEG with a few photo opportunities. But then we did have visitors with an interest in translation. Some stayed long enough to listen to what I had to say about the translation process and even accepted the literature I offered. One young man did so because he was pushed towards our stand by his mother – or perhaps she was just a very proactive career adviser. I don't remember many potential customers, so the goodie bags that had been filled with so much love and hope seemed a bit wasted.

Having done my duty and consumed the coffee Kirsten had kindly bought me, I ventured to explore the rest of the Book Fair. Well, it didn't take as long as I was expecting, because there wasn't that much to explore – unless you needed printing quotes. In terms of books, it was rather lacklustre. I found the Pearson (= Penguin) and Protea Boekhuis stands the most inviting. The Oxford stand was interesting, but didn't have many of the dictionaries they are known for (and linguists would home in on). Perhaps we should talk to them before the next event. I specifically looked for the other Afrikaans publishers (Tafelberg, Human & Rousseau), but couldn't find them. Did they not bother to attend? No wonder the venue seemed underfilled.

I also attended the SATI translation slam, which I loved. **Michiel Heyns** and **Leon de Kock**, who have both translated work by Marlene van Niekerk to great acclaim, talked the audience through their (very different yet equally competent) English versions of a particularly tricky text about 'designer wores' written by Marlene. Fascinating stuff, which confirmed me in my resolve never to attempt literary translation!

Ziggie Keil

I attended the book fair on two of the three days. The vibe on these days was lively and buzzing. When I arrived on Friday, a group of primary school children was in attendance and from their enthusiastic response, I gathered they thoroughly enjoyed meeting the 'Gruffalo', read by Julia Donaldson. The programme for the three days of the fair was very interesting and varied. In the course of the three days, many award-winning and popular authors in numerous fields shared their experiences and took part in discussions. All the presentations I attended drew capacity audiences. As a former teacher and a language practitioner involved in manuscript development of school textbooks, I found the stand where the public could experience interactive learning activities very worthwhile. The presentation by Wendy Wharton-Hood of Pearson on integrated e-learning was very informative. The presentation about 'The Classroom of the Future' was also very well received by the audience. It was interesting to hear that Sweden has become totally paperless in schools and that South Korea is following suit. I assisted at the PEG/SATI stand for the first hour early on Saturday and even though it was very early there were people who stopped and enquired about the two societies and showed an interest in the language professions. I am delighted that the book fair has taken place again this year, after a one-year gap. It conveyed a feeling of optimism and confidence in the world of books: on paper or as e-pubs.

Marianne Peacock

Owing to my two pet peeves in life – sitting in traffic and finding parking – I decided to take the train to get to the book fair on 13 June 2014. Fortunately I had little faith in that big parastatal running the train service and left home early as said parastatal caused an hour's delay. Nevertheless, I made it in one piece and rushed through the CTICC's doors an hour before my turn to do duty at the PEG/SATI stand. As I announced my arrival at the ticket booth, the cashier came to me with a stamp and gestured for me to push up my sleeve. Me: "Seriously?" Cashier: "Yes, it's like a club, you know." So, duly stamped, I entered the club, aka book lover's paradise, aka the 2014 South African Book Fair. I have been to every book fair since its inception in 2006, and here are a few truths I have picked up along the way:

- There is still confusion about what the book fair is trying to be. Is it an industry trade expo? Is it an event to encourage the youth to read? Is it trying to be all things to all people?
- With a population of 52+ million, a best-seller is any book that sells a meagre 5 000 copies. Very few South African books even reach this number.
- Non-fiction (e.g. cookbooks, arts and crafts, sports biographies, self-help, business and finance, true crime, memoir, travel writing, current affairs) still outsells fiction in huge numbers.
- Fiction titles that do sell tend to fall into the following categories: crime, romance, chick lit and erotic novels (think of our own local *A Girl Walks into a Bar à la Fifty Shades* with an adventurous twist).
- Even though there were many interesting talks on fascinating topics, South African readers and publishers' peeps didn't seem to fill these halls to capacity.
- E-books are still not commanding a significant market share, although many educational publishers are throwing a lot of money at the cause.
- Self-publishing is still like swimming through shark-infested waters, as Brent Meersman from Missing Ink confirmed in his talk on the topic.
- The smaller publishers have to try much harder than the traditional larger publishers.
- It is interesting to note that publishing is 15% production and 85% marketing/selling.
- If you manage to speak to the right people, the book fair can be a great opportunity for making future work contacts.
- Many people are interested in the work we do as editors and translators, although making a living is not always easy. I do believe we should focus on a unique selling point and that there are opportunities for making a living as a language practitioner.
- The final good news: Even though you might moan and groan about rates, you as the editor are most likely still making more than the author.

Laetitia Sullivan