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**Dissertation**  
**MPSTD ARTSGEN 780**

**The Role of Translators' Prefaces to Contemporary  
Literary Translations into English**

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation presents an empirical study of prefaces to literary translations and the role they play, and argues that a translation without a preface ought to be a thing of the past. An examination of a corpus of over 800 contemporary fictional works by major writers that have been translated into English from the principal world languages reveals that only twenty per cent include prefaces. Of these, only half, or ten per cent of the total number of books, actually discuss the translation or provide information about the source culture that might be unknown to the target audience. Translators are in a unique position to act as ambassadors between cultures because they have knowledge and understanding of both the source and target cultures of the works they have translated. Their prefaces are an excellent locus for disseminating their understanding to readers who may have preconceived and unrealistic perceptions or very little knowledge of the source culture. Furthermore, prefaces contribute to the visibility of the translator and his or her activity. Through an analysis of the contents of those prefaces that refer to the act of translation or the source culture, this study identifies the main functions served by the topics discussed by the translators and determines that the most predominant function is the promotion of understanding between cultures. The next most served function is that of promoting understanding of the translator's role and intervention in the text. Although translators' prefaces are relatively uncommon today, they have an important role to play as the voice of the translator—the key figure in promoting better understanding among peoples and nations.

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# **The Role of Translators' Prefaces to Contemporary Literary Translations into English**

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A dissertation presented as partial completion of the Master of Professional Studies in Translation to be evaluated by A/P Frank Austermuehl.

## **1. Introduction**

The future position of the translator is as difficult to define as the term translation itself. But the future role of the translator is less open to question. She must be seen as the key figure in promoting better understanding among peoples and nations. She must not be regarded as anonymous....She is "invisible" only when a communication is clear and leaves nothing to question. In other cases, where there is doubt or cultural bias...she should write a separate preface, explaining how she has treated the work, how she has interpreted any controversial key-terms...a translated novel without a translator's preface ought to be a thing of the past, and therefore the preface as well as the work should draw the reviewer's attention.

(Newmark 1983: 17)

### *1.1 The Purpose and Significance of this Dissertation*

The translation scholar Peter Newmark wrote those words over twenty-five years ago, yet translators' prefaces to literary translations into English are still relatively uncommon today. Not only is their appearance in translated texts uncommon, but it is also uncommon for them to be the main focus of texts about translation. Yet when translators or translation scholars do mention them, they do so in a positive way,

viewing them as an important way to increase the visibility of the translator and his or her activity.

As a translator and translation scholar, I have always eagerly read any prefaces accompanying translated texts that I have come across for insights into the process. What is written by an experienced translator about the problems and strategies of translating a specific text can be far more helpful in the search for solutions to translation problems than can be found in theoretical writings. But the role they play, or potentially play, goes far beyond providing assistance to other translators. That role, and its various functions, is the focus of this dissertation.

Although the issue of paratext<sup>1</sup> as it pertains to translation more generally has been the subject of various studies,<sup>2</sup> empirical studies such as mine focusing on the role of translators' prefaces have been rare, with the exception of two studies, one entitled "Translators' Prefaces—a Key to the Translation?" by Ritva Hartama-Heinonen (1995) and "Translators' Prefaces as Documentary Sources for Translation Studies" by Rodica Dimitriu (2009). Both articles, however, have a more narrow focus than mine and propose a different purpose for the translator's preface. Hartama-Heinonen argues for the prefaces' role as a support for evaluating the translation and Dimitriu contends they are valuable documents for translation scholars' theoretical research.

My dissertation identifies the main functions of translators' prefaces by analyzing their content and, of those functions, which one is most commonly served by the contents throughout my corpus. In particular, I investigate whether the contents of the prefaces that are being written help the translator to fulfill the role prescribed by Newmark of "the key figure in promoting better understanding among peoples and nations". I consider the attitudes to translators' prefaces amongst translation scholars and in the publishing world, how uncommon prefaces really are, and how negative attitudes towards translated works of literature can affect their inclusion. I demonstrate how crucial translators' prefaces are and why they should be included with translated literary texts.

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<sup>1</sup> The term "paratext" was first coined by Gérard Genette (1981) and is the subject of his book *Seuils* (1987), translated into English by Jane E. Lewin as *Paratexts* (1997). It is defined as the elements that surround a text, within and outside the book, that mediate between it and its reader: the titles, signs of authorship, dedications, prefaces, notes, intertitles, epilogues, and so on.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example: Şehnaz Tahir-Gürçağlar. 2002.

In addition to contributing to the field of translation studies in a relatively unexplored area, this dissertation, and in particular the descriptions of the contents and the bibliography, can be useful as a reference tool for translators wishing to investigate the strategies employed by other translators.

### *1.2 Methodology*

The books included in this study are contemporary translations into English of literary fiction, as my concern is with the current perception and performance of translation. For my purposes, “contemporary” is defined as having been published between 1945 and today. I have included translations of original works that were written before 1945, but not new translations of works that have been translated before, because these present specific challenges. I have excluded dramatic fiction and poetry, as these present their own specific translation challenges.

I consulted the *Encyclopedia of Literary Translation into English* when choosing which books to use in the study. The encyclopedia has attempted to compile “a large-scale charting of English-language literary translation” and provide a survey of works by major writers that have been translated into English from the principal world languages (Classe 2000: vii). All works listed in the encyclopedia that met the above criteria and that I was able to access have been included in this study (a total of 810 books).

This dissertation examines all the prefaces that appear in these books that actually discuss the act of translation, specific to the work they are introducing or more generally, or that provide information the translator felt would be unfamiliar to the target culture. It does not examine literary criticism of the original work such as might appear in an original, untranslated text.

The term “translators’ prefaces” includes translators’ prefaces, introductions, notes, afterwords, or any other commentary preceding or following a translation written by the translator.



## 2. Translators' Prefaces—An Overview

### 2.1 Literature Review

#### 2.1.1 Translators' Prefaces as Support for Criticism and as Documentary Sources

Although the subject of translators' prefaces has been mentioned in various studies on translation, I have located only two articles in which the role of the preface was the main focus: "Translators' Prefaces—A Key to the Translation?" by Ritva Hartama-Heinonen (1995) and "Translators' Prefaces as Documentary Sources for Translation Studies" by Rodica Dimitriu (2009).

Hartama-Heinonen's article differs from my study because it specifically examines prefaces written by Finnish translators, whereas my study examines those written by English-language translators. Hartama-Heinonen's study includes fiction of all kinds, including poetry and drama, as well as non-fiction, while mine looks at prose fiction only. The publication dates of her corpus span from the 1880s to the 1980s, whereas my corpus includes only books published between 1945 and 2005.

In studying the purpose of translators' prefaces, Hartama-Heinonen concluded that not all prefaces are written for the ordinary reader of the translation. Some are intended "to forestall future criticism or to explain why the translator is not fully satisfied with his assignment" (34). The contents of the preface determine who it is intended for and, therefore, who will read it. In her study the contents included either information on the author and his or her work, or the translator's strategies and techniques, or both. She considered that the more the preface describes the actual translating, the less interesting it might be to the ordinary reader and the more interesting to the researcher.

Hartama-Heinonen found few references to translators' prefaces in translation studies but those that she did find were positive. Some theoretical writings, in particular those of Werner Koller and Hans J. Vermeer, support the main argument of her paper: that criticisms of translations should seek support from prefaces. Instead of just comparing the source text and the target text, they should take into account the translator's reasoning and decision-making in their assessments, and the preface can provide that information. She concludes:

The translator is the link between the original text and the translation, and for anyone who is interested in translations and their quality, prefaces might at

best offer a good starting point—perhaps a key to the translated text or even a window on the world of the translator.

(41)

Hartama-Heinonen does not state in her article that the *main* purpose or function of a translator's preface is or should be to provide information to assess the quality of the translation, only that it can be very helpful in that regard. My study concurs with this view. However, although neither of our studies investigates how ordinary readers feel about the information provided in prefaces, I hope that her assertion that the more it describes the actual translating, the less interesting it might be to them and the more interesting to researchers would be proved invalid should a survey of readers be conducted. If her assertion is true, then prefaces will not be able to fulfill their function of increasing ordinary readers' understanding of the translator's role, or the follow-on effects from that, such as increasing cross-cultural understanding.

Although much smaller—65 texts reduced to 20 with prefaces to my 810 reduced to 84—Dimitriu's corpus resembles mine with respect to publication dates, but the prefaces, although all published in Romania, are written in a variety of languages (Romanian, English and French) and by translators of a variety of nationalities (French, American, Romanian and English). Like mine, her study analyses the functions of the prefaces but with different results, mainly due to differences in the frameworks of analysis and the aims of our research. Her aim is to demonstrate the relevance of translators' prefaces to theorists, practitioners and trainees. Again, I concur with this view, and include their use as process documentation as one of the important benefits to describing and explaining the translation process in a preface.

### *2.1.2 Venuti and the Translator's Invisibility*

The translation scholar Lawrence Venuti is one of the greatest advocates of the visible translator—one whose intervention in the text is apparent to the reader. He believes that the tendency for translators to be invisible is partly their own fault. They tend to be self-effacing because they are following the prevailing belief held by publishers, critics and readers that the best translation is one that reads fluently—as if it had

originally been written in the target language. This invisibility marginalizes the translator's role, mystifies the translation process, and blots out the alien nature of the foreign text and the differences between the source and target cultures.

We can follow the development of Venuti's thoughts on the translator's preface and its role in promoting translator visibility through his writings.

In his 1986 essay "The Translator's Invisibility", Venuti stated that, along with "the increasingly sophisticated literature on translation", the urgently needed task of demystifying the process "had been initiated by the prefaces that translators themselves have occasionally appended to their work" where they describe the "labour of transformation" of the text (1986: 181).

Venuti's introduction in 1992 to *Rethinking Translation: Discourse, Subjectivity, Ideology* gave the impression that he was not as optimistic about translators' prefaces and their contribution to the struggle to make translation a visible activity. He believed translators were so busy moving from text to text that they had no time for methodological reflection.

Translators are always hard at work, but they are producing translations, not translation commentary, criticism, or theory; they appear as aesthetically sensitive amateurs or talented craftsmen, but not critically self-conscious writers who develop an acute awareness of the cultural and social conditions of their work.

(1992: 1)

He found what they did write about their work was "casual, belletristic, limited to sporadic prefaces, interviews, invited lectures" (2).

By 1995 Venuti was trying to redress this situation and believed the translator's preface was an important tool in the struggle for visibility. In a chapter entitled "Call to Action" in his book *The Translator's Invisibility* he urges translators to "force a revision of their codes—cultural, economic, legal—that marginalize and exploit them" (1995: 311). One of the ways they could "work to revise the individualistic concept of authorship that has banished translation to the fringes of Anglo-American culture" is to present "sophisticated rationales" in prefaces and other writings for the innovative translation practices he entreats them to adopt.

Such self-presentations will indicate that the language of the translation originates with the translator in a decisive way, but also that the translator is not its sole origin: a translator's originality lies in choosing a particular foreign text and a particular combination of dialects and discourses from the history of British and American literature in response to an existing cultural situation. Recognizing the translator as an author questions the individualism of current concepts of authorship by suggesting that no writing can be mere self-expression because it is derived from a cultural tradition at a specific historical moment.

(1995: 311)

In his 2003 essay "Translating Derrida on Translation: Relevance and Disciplinary Resistance" he appears to have given up the promotion of the translator's preface. He wrote that a translation "requires yet another interpretation to make explicit its own interpretive force" (257), but if translators write their own editorial introductions or essays, they risk "the cynical charge of self-promotion that tends to be leveled at any translator who attempts to describe the choices and effects of his or her work". Because of the marginality of translation "forced upon it through a widespread preference for fluent discursive strategies that produce the illusion of transparency...the translator is expected to remain silent about the conditions of translation". Therefore, in order for the commentary to have the desired impact, it must be written by someone other than the translator.

Throughout his writings Venuti's main concern has been the geopolitical role of translation, as expressed in the following:

[T]ranslation is a cultural practice that occupies a tactical position today...[and] wields enormous power in the construction of national identities...The most useful form this recognition can take is the elaboration of the theoretical, critical, and textual means by which translation can be studied and practiced as the locus of difference.

(1992: 13)

Yet the suspicion [toward translation that is invisible] I am encouraging here assumes a utopian faith in the power of translation to make a difference, not

only at home, in the emergence of new cultural forms, but also abroad, in the emergence of new cultural relations.

(1995: 313)

The translator's preface can increase the translator's visibility, which in turn can increase positive relations between cultures. My study fully concurs with Venuti's viewpoint. I only take issue with his 2003 statement that commentary must be written by someone other than the translator to have its desired impact. As the one who went through the translation process and made all the decisions, the translator is the only one in a position to write commentary about the process.

### *2.1.3 References to Prefaces in Scholarly Works on Translation*

References to translators' prefaces in scholarly works on translation are generally very positive. Most view the main function of the preface as promotion of the visibility of the translator and an understanding of their role, and rue its unpopularity with certain publishers, critics and even readers.

Although Peter Bush (1997), a translator and writer on translation and a firm proponent of the visibility of the translator, approves of the preface, along with the footnote and the translator's name on the jacket, as a way to help establish the translation as a translation (115), he sees publishers that want to "subvert while avoiding prefaces and footnotes for fictions" as the antithesis of the "theorists calling for translational strategies of cultural resistance" (116). By studying materials of translation such as prefaces, he maintains:

This will enable us to question the polemically over-eager characterization of swathes of literary translators as belle-lettristic assimilators (Venuti 1992: 2-3) and the constant desire of Translation Studies specialists to speak on behalf of professional literary translators, to rush to interpret their silence negatively, arrogantly to proclaim their errors and tell them how to do it better and faster next time....

(116)

Like Venuti, Carol Maier includes translators themselves in the list of who to blame for their unpopularity. She maintains that "translators' notes are often written

in apology, as asides, endnotes or footnotes, introductions or afterwards, rather than communications from the ‘space between’” (1995: 22). This is because translators are expected by readers and publishers to “provide the results of the translation rather than a record of their explorations” (22). Thus the “between space” of the translator’s activity becomes, instead of an area with potential for human interaction and exploration, a place of defeat and emptiness. (True to her convictions, the afterword by Maier included in this study is an extensive thirteen-point, twenty-nine-page exploration and discussion of the activity she undertook in her translation.)

While translators in general may not be contributing to their visibility, Maier and Françoise Massardier-Kenney (1996) found in their study of gender-related concerns in translation that “women-identified translators” (228) had an increased identity as translators, along with affinity with the authors whose work they are translating, which is evident in the strategies they use. They refer to Luise von Flotow’s assertion that a characteristic of feminist translation is the practice of prefacing and footnoting, amongst other approaches that increase the visibility of the translator. And they cite Helen Dendrinou Koliass’s explanation of these translators’ increasing involvement with the packaging of the texts:

How a work should be introduced, the amount of commentary that should accompany it, and the extent to which readers should be encouraged to encounter “foreignness” are questions asked by women-identified translators, who frame them in their prefaces and afterwords, in an effort to make translation’s mediation itself a topic for discussion.

(229)

Robert Wechsler (1998: 283-84), an editor of translated works, believes that the paucity of prefaces explaining the translator’s approach contributes to the low status of the translator in the public eye. Although prefaces might include background material on the author and the source text, they rarely provide background material on the translation or a discussion of alternative ways it could have been done. In support of Hartama-Heinonen’s argument above, he maintains that it is particularly important that a reviewer understand the role of the translator and this is best conveyed with a good translator’s preface or afterword. Wechsler holds up Lawrence Venuti as an exemplary and enlightening writer of prefaces and he provides a sample of his work.

Weschler accepts that not all publishers would approve of and probably never ask for such a preface, but believes that most small and university presses, as well as some of the more thoughtful editors at larger houses, would allow it and often even welcome it.

On a more optimistic note, in a discussion of Venuti's contributions to translation studies, Edwin Gentzler (2001) suggests that many of his ideas about translator visibility are beginning to be put into practice in the United States. Gentzler mentions Venuti's assertion that translators' prefaces are belletristic (38). Nevertheless, he includes the fact that publishers are "experimenting with new forms of presenting translations, including using additional supplementary material such as prefaces, introductions, interviews, footnotes" (43) as evidence that Venuti's ideas are being introduced.

Gentzler and Maier also discuss the importance of documentation of the translation process.

Gentzler (1998) describes the undergraduate course in translation that he developed. He believes that perhaps the most exciting advances in translation theory are in descriptive studies. Translation studies scholars are making strong advances in this area but have made few contributions to "process studies" (26). The documentation of process work allows the student a glimpse into the translators' minds and to gain understanding into how they make their decisions. Although Gentzler does not mention translators' prefaces as a form of process documentation, as shown by this dissertation, in many cases the information they provide does document the translation process.

Maier and Massardier-Kenney (1996) discuss how prefaces written by women in the past have provided valuable information about their role as translators. According to Margaret Hannay, one of the ways a few prominent Tudor women avoided restrictions on public writing and speaking was by translating religious works. The translations "were often accompanied by prefaces and dedications that, while overtly apologetic for daring to undertake such work, also offered the women an occasion to explain how they selected the authors they translated and what their strategies were" (233). A study done by Josephine Grieder of prefaces written by women translators of the eighteenth century "revealed that these translators/authors were conscious of the choices they made and that, while mostly minor, these choices sometimes were significant" (237).

Peter Newmark<sup>3</sup> explicitly discusses the preface's importance as a way to promote intercultural understanding. Newmark believes the translator's visibility should increase when the cultural gap between the source and target text increases, and that the translator's preface can help the reader to cross that gap.

An impediment to the appearance of prefaces in fictional works is a prevailing attitude that they only belong in non-fiction texts. This issue is discussed by two writers.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (2005) believes that, as a translator of the "global South", she should prepare her texts as "metropolitan teaching texts because that, for better or worse, is their destiny" (95). However, this is an unpopular approach because there is an implicit assumption that "third world" texts need only a glossary. She recalls receiving a contemptuous notice from *Kirkus Reviews* for including a preface and an afterword in a work of fiction she translated. She contrasts this with the abundant praise she has received for providing the same for a volume of philosophical criticism.

Supporting this view of the negative attitude towards prefaces to translation of fictional works is Clifford E. Landers (2001). In his practical guide to literary translation he states that the translator of non-fiction enjoys several advantages including the fact that a preface is often permissible, thus allowing the translator a "wider latitude for explanation of the translational choices made" (103). He recommends submitting translations for publication to academic presses because they are more disposed to offer a preface in which to discuss peculiarities of the source text and some of the accommodations made (166).

A viewpoint that does not coincide with those above because it condones the translator's invisibility belongs to the editors of *The Translator's Dialogue: Giovanni Pontiero* (1997), Pilar Orero and Juan C. Sager, who state that, although the translator Pontiero would have agreed with Norman Shapiro that "a good translation...should never call attention to itself", he always wrote prefaces or afterwords for his translations, explaining the merit of the work in its own terms, "whenever the text warranted it and the publisher was agreeable" (xii). However, the preface by Pontiero included in this study went far beyond a discussion of the merits of the work: he gave

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<sup>3</sup> See the opening quote of this dissertation.



detailed explanations of the challenges he faced and the strategies he used in translating the work. It may be that he would not have agreed with Shapiro after all.

In his book *If This Be Treason: Translation and Its Discontents* (2005), Gregory Rabassa gives the impression he is ambivalent towards the need for prefaces in literary translations, or rather, more specifically, about whether they should include explications of the story. When asked by the publisher Knopf to write a preface to a novel he had translated, because they felt it would be difficult to understand, he disagreed with their assessment but was “glad to oblige” (74). Afterwards he wondered if it really was needed or whether the novel was more arcane than he thought, in which case his explication would be only one of many possible twists so the reader should be left to read it in his or her own way.

In summing up the review of the literature on translators’ prefaces, all suggest they should accompany translated texts, except for the unsure Rabassa. The most cited function of the preface is to increase the visibility of translators and their activity. Follow-on effects from this visibility include a way to assess the quality, according to Hartama-Heinonen and Weschler; provision of a locus of intercultural exploration and understanding, according to Venuti, Maier and Newmark; and provision of process documentation for future scholars, according to Maier and Massardier-Kenney and Gentzler.

#### *2.1.4 Publishers’ Attitudes towards Translations*

While the attitudes of most translators and writers on translation towards translators’ prefaces may be very positive, the attitude of English-language publishers towards translation generally is the greatest impediment to the appearance of prefaces in translated works.

There has always been an imbalance between literature translated out of English versus literature translated into English and now, in the United States particularly, there is even more of a trend against publishing translated literature, not only by commercial publishers but also by university presses (Kinzer 2006). Although it is difficult to find reliable figures on what has been translated into and out of English—an indication, and a symptom, in itself of the poor status of translation in the English-language publishing world—there is no question that the proportion of translations into English versus those out of English is extremely inequitable. According to a 1999 study of translation by the National Endowment for the Arts,

which gathered its figures from reviews published in all of the country's literary magazines, only 2% of all fiction and poetry published in the United States were translations, and this includes new translations of classic works (Allen 2006: 19). The current figure for books published in the United Kingdom that are literary translations translated from other languages is also 2%, according to English PEN ("International PEN Report on Translation and Globalization 2006"). A comparison of the number of translated works published in the United States with those published in Italy gives an idea of the inequality. In 2004, there were 4,982 translations available for sale in the United States (with a population of about 300 million), while there were 12,197 translations reported by Italy in 2002 (with a population of about 58 million) (Allen 2006: 18). Another example is the contrast between the 3,782 American books to which German publishers bought translation rights in 2002 and the 150 German books to which American publishers bought rights (Kinzer 2003).

When publishers do translate foreign works, they often try to downplay the foreignness.

In 2003 Canadian publisher House of Anansi Press decided to stop carrying the translator's name on the cover of books that originate in French (Conlogue 2003). According to editor Martha Sharpe: "It's an acknowledgement that it's hard to get a readership to embrace a book that's translated. The more we talked to reader and booksellers the more we realized that [translation] is a strike against the book in the marketplace." Canadian publishers have been printing translators' names on the cover since the 1970s when translators became militant on the issue but there is no legal obligation to do so. Sharpe further explained that by removing the translator's name the readers will be more likely to glance at a book before finding out that it was not originally written in English. Otherwise they might dismiss the book, as do many moviegoers who refuse to attend a subtitled film.

The British publisher Faber also decided to remove the translator's name from their book covers, as did the publisher Orion with Carlos Ruis Zafón's bestseller, *The Shadow of the Wind* (Ariaratnam 2006). Faber's editorial director for fiction, Lee Brackstone, oddly enough claims that this marketing strategy would help to move away from "the sense of worthiness and staidness" that once characterized this market sector, despite the fact that it hides its foreignness. Fiction buyer for the UK bookstore chain Waterstone's Rodney Troubridge believes that publishers do not want to acknowledge that books are translated. "They want people to assume that everything's

written in English.” Gary Pulsifer, publisher of Arcadia, agrees that there is an underlying discomfort with the book trade’s current approach to foreign writing. He maintains that “[w]hilst there’s more visibility nowadays, there’s still a good deal of resistance [to works in translation]”. Literary agent Toby Eady believes corporate publishers tend towards “repetition and safety”, which makes it difficult for them to get enthusiastic about translations.

In an article that examines current theories of globalization and questions their lack of attention to translation, Esperanca Bielsa refers to Venuti’s view that the dominance of Anglo-American culture is expressed not only in the low number of books translated into English but also in the domesticated form in which they are translated, where the aim is a fluid and transparent text (2005: 9). Bielsa believes transparency and invisibility also characterize the role of globalization because the conception of instantaneous communication implies translation’s invisibility. “The human factor is finally eliminated.”

If the number of translations being published is very low and getting lower, and if the translations that are being published are hiding the fact that they are translations, then prefaces will most certainly become even more unwelcome than they already are, especially when they foreground the differences between the source and target cultures and expose the translator’s role and intervention.

## *2.2 General Purposes of Prefaces in this Study*

The content of the prefaces in this study can be slotted into various categories according to the subject-matter. There are discussions about the translation of language and literature generally: its definition, its limitations, the ever-present choice involved for the translator, the universality of themes and the differences of languages; and about the translator: as a reader, and his or her subjectivity and responsibilities. Contextual information about the specific work being introduced includes its cultural and historical background and how the work was received in the source culture; the author’s status in the country of origin; and how the translator came to learn of and translate the work. Information addressed to the readers of the translated work includes varying degrees of admonishment about the readers’ responsibilities, particularly to discard their preconceived perceptions of the source culture, and the pleasure for the translator to introduce the work to them.

Discussions about the translation process vary from the general to the specific. General matters include the translators' goals, for example, to sound as if written in English originally, or to elicit the same response as the original did; the translators' dissatisfaction with the finished work; and their overall dilemmas and strategies, such as to translate literally, go after the essence, or carry over the foreignness. Information is given about what institutions and people gave the translators assistance; what parallel texts they consulted; and how some worked co-operatively with the original author. Specific problems on how to render such elements as the style, dialect, culturally specific items, names, word play, etc, were discussed, as well as the strategies the translator employed to deal with them.

The content can also be categorized according to what function it serves, which is the main focus of this dissertation. See Appendix C for a breakdown of topics according to their function and the frequency of their appearance in prefaces.

The function that is most served by the content is the foregrounding of differences of cultures and languages. This supports Venuti's advocacy of the preface as a means of counteracting the blotting out of the alien nature of the foreign text and the differences between the source and target cultures, brought on by the translator's invisibility. The next most served function is promoting understanding of the source culture. Both these functions lead to the broader function of "promoting better understanding among peoples and nations" that Newmark propounded. Following these two functions comes that of promoting understanding of the translator's role and intervention in the text—the goal most often cited by the writers in the literature review above. Next is the function of helping critics assess the quality of the translation, which was the focus of Hartama-Heinonen's article. The final function is being used as process documentation for future scholars.

In the detailed description and analysis of the prefaces I will examine what function each topic fulfills. Where the translator discussed specific problems they encountered in the translation process and the strategies they used to deal with them, all five functions were involved to varying extents. More general topics had more specific functions but still were not mutually exclusive.

I have concentrated on five functions, although there may be more minor ones as well that I have not mentioned. Nor have I analysed the content according to the translators' purposes, although they mostly overlap with the functions, such as expressing their admiration for the author and justifying their choices to ward off

criticism (for example, Dorothy S. Blair (1985) explaining that “any shreds of exoticism” that “may cling to the style” were a result of her “deliberate faithfulness” to the author and not due to negligence (xiv)).

### *2.3 Data*

The initial corpus of the study consisted of 810 books (see Methodology, section 1.2 above, for how these were chosen) translated into English from 29 different languages. Of those, 80% had no prefaces whatsoever and 10% had prefaces that did not discuss the act of translation. Only the remaining 10%, or 84 books, included prefaces that did discuss translation. For a breakdown according to language and/or culture (for example, French appears in four language entries: French, French-Canadian, Francophone: African/Caribbean and Francophone: Arab/Maghrebian) of the total number of books, those with prefaces discussing translating, those with prefaces not discussing translating and those with no preface, see Appendix A.

## **3. Detailed Description and Analysis of Translators’ Prefaces**

What follows are descriptions and analyses of the information that the translators in this study chose to discuss in their prefaces. They appear in the order of frequency with which the topics were discussed, with the most common first. (For a chart showing the full list of topics, the frequency of their appearance and what percentage of prefaces included them, refer to Appendix B.) Each topic is analysed according to its five possible functions:

1. foregrounding differences of cultures and languages;
2. promoting understanding of the source culture;
3. promoting understanding of the translator’s role and intervention;
4. helping critics assess the quality of the translation; and
5. useful as process documentation.

There are two topics vying for the position of the most commonly discussed: the cultural and/or historical background of the source text and the translator’s debts and acknowledgements. Both these topics were included in 38% of the prefaces—well above the next most common topic (29%).

### *3.1 Cultural and Historical Background of Story*

The preponderance of information about the cultural and historical contexts of the stories is evidence that translators believe it important for the reader to increase their understanding of the source culture through information that would normally be common knowledge to a native of the source culture. Not only does this help the reader understand the story better, it allows the translator to share his or her fascination with and affection for the source culture.

Along with detailing the historical background, sometimes going back centuries, the translators explained cultural attitudes in such areas as religion, sex, women's rights, and class systems, which in many cases differ markedly from those of the target culture.

### *3.2 Debts and Acknowledgements*

While debts and acknowledgements can be found in prefaces to all kinds of writing, what is unique to translations is the debt to the author of the original texts. It would be a rare thing for a translator not to question his or her understanding of the author's intent in certain areas of a text. This topic contributes to understanding the translator's role and, in cases where the translator had contact with the author, helps critics assess the quality and is useful as process documentation.

Some translators in this study had the invaluable good fortune to be able to question the author directly (Stock (2004), Aylward and Liman (1986), Fulton and Fulton (1985)). Ji-moon and Pickering (1997) felt especially privileged as the author normally did not like to discuss the "meaning" of his works.

Hurley (1987) used the ideas of the original author in his acknowledgements. Describing his task as one of "transporting the creature over a sea of perilous crossing" to become "a new-naturalized thing" in an "ultramarine existence" extended the metaphors found in the original text.

Although the original author was deceased, Filkins (1999) was still able to get closer to her thought processes by contact with her brother.

The humility of translators is often evident in the prefaces. Many wanted to take responsibility for any imperfections or deficiencies.

Also evident is the camaraderie amongst translators. There were those who had profited from the work of other translators and wished to express their appreciation. Other translators of Japanese literature had lightened the task of

Chambers (1994). Brownsberger (1983) included in her acknowledgements another translator who had started the project and turned it over to her (360). Maier (1994) acknowledged that the afterword she wrote was inspired by the “engaging annotations” of another translator.

### *3.3 Reception of Original and the Author’s Status in the Country of Origin*

The next most common topic of discussion (35% of the total), how the original text and its author was received in their own country, points again to a desire to increase the reader’s understanding of the source culture and, more specifically, of the author, and to draw attention to cultural differences.

The prefaces included tales of authors being persecuted or their work being banned because of the subject-matter, or even because of the language they were written in, as happened with Catalan literature. The popularity of the source text, or changing popularity according to the changes in society, was discussed, along with the fluctuations of the author’s writing career.

### *3.4 Treatment of Names of Persons and Places*

Proper names have always posed a variety of problems for translators, and an explanation of what those problems are and how they dealt with them is high on the list of topics discussed. At 21% of the total, it is the most discussed topic in the category of specific problems the translator faces at the word level. The information provided fulfills all five of the functions.

The most common problem faced by the translators in this study was the translation of names from languages that do not use the Roman alphabet, or from languages where the pronunciation of the alphabet differs from that of English. Translators provided explanations of the Romanization system they used and/or pronunciation guides.

Translators from languages with systems of names that differed from English gave explanations of these, such as how personal names are ordered in Japanese and Korean, and the Russian system of patronymics and diminutives.

The issue of replacing a personal name by its anglicized version was discussed by two translators. Claxton (1986) did not anglicize French names because “their owners belong intrinsically to Montreal’s long-disadvantaged French-speaking majority” (5), but Depolo (1959) did use English equivalents of Croatian names where they existed.

Honorifics and titles that do not have equivalents in English met with different treatment by translators. Although often omitted in translation because they cannot be translated into a language that lacks similar forms of address, Maier (1994), Mason (1963) and Cohen (1983) retained the Spanish terms of respect *Don* and *Doña* because they considered them important aspect of the novels. Aylward and Liman (1986), however, changed or simplified characters' titles, "according to the logical context and stylistic requirements of the English text", because many of these titles "not only sound awkward in English, but are actively misleading" (11).

There were two references to the translation of nicknames. Kim-Renaud (2005) transliterated rather than translated Korean nicknames because translations would have been long and clumsy, and their specific meanings were not significant since people do not think of them when using the names. With humourous Italian nicknames, Harrs (2003) set herself the challenging task of trying to find English equivalents that reflected their double meaning.

The translation of place names does not present as many problems as that of personal names. The few references to them reflect varying issues. Aylward and Liman (1986), in the interests of simplifying the text, omitted certain Japanese place names in the English text. Brownsberger (1983) felt it important to mention that the Russian places mentioned were real (360). And, the place names in *Doctor Zhivago* often had meanings relevant to the text so Hayward and Harari (1958) usually translated them in footnotes (5).

### *3.5 Introducing the Author to English-speaking Readers*

Seventeen of the translators expressed their enthusiasm for introducing the author of the original text to English readers. Some simply wanted to share literature they loved (Venuti (1984), Calderbank (2003)). For others, the stated motive was to increase cross-cultural understanding and to foreground cultural differences. Chang (1980) believed that it is "through such translations that new links of understanding and communication between peoples can surely be forged". For most both were goals. Golini (2004) hoped that her translation would "inspire in the reader of stories, in the students of women's studies and cultural studies, and in the research scholar alike" a love of the writer's work similar to her own (x). The information also promotes understanding of the translator's role.



Criticism of the fact that the work had not been translated before was common. Martin (1988) hoped that the publication in English of *Men of Maize* would assist in the process of the emergence of “this great novel” from obscurity and the assumption of “its deserved status” (v). Citing the motto of a former professor—“Translate or die!”—Chang (1980) wrote that his translation was his “little contribution” to the “long overdue development” of bringing modern Korean literature into the international scene (xi). Rosenthal (1992) expressed the hope that authors like Català would “begin to receive the recognition they deserve in the English-speaking world”. Barraclough (1978) was more generous in her attitude towards English speakers, who “deserve a chance to become acquainted” with the author.

Several translators hoped that their translations would inspire readers to delve deeper into the literature of the source culture. Three translators believed so strongly in the importance of the works they had translated that they did not restrict their hoped-for audience to English readers.

### 3.6 *Style, Register and Tone*

The issues of style, register and tone, all elements of *how* the story is expressed, are the most frequently discussed of the more general challenges the translator faces at the text level. The topic appears in seventeen prefaces (20% of total) and fulfills all five functions. A few translators decided that the task of rendering the same style in English was impossible (Sousa (1988), Caws (1987)), but they wanted the reader to have an idea of what they were unable to render, thereby contributing to the reader’s understanding of the source text. Most translators aimed to find an equivalent voice in English. By describing the style of the original author, they provided information that could help readers and critics assess the translation. However, one translator, Edwards (1995), felt “it was always an invidious task for a translator to comment on an author’s style” (8). In his opinion, it should be—and he hoped it was in his translation—evident in the translation.

Translators who aimed to capture the voice of the original described that voice and what exactly they were trying to reproduce (Clancy (1991), Hettlinger (2002), Nathan (1968)). The reader could then judge whether they had achieved their goal.

A problem that occurred quite often, and that translators were eager to explain was the shifting of style within the same text, as if, in some cases, the reader might

find shifts in the translation odd if they were not aware that they were deliberate. The style shifts Pontiero (1998) and Pomerans (1990) dealt with were due to changing narrative voices within one story. In the texts Keene (1977) and Constantine (2003) translated shifts occurred because the translations were of collections of stories that each had their own style.

### *3.7 Essential Rendering versus Literal*

The question of whether to strive for an essential or a literal rendering of the source text was the second most often discussed topic at the text level. It is referred to in sixteen of the prefaces (19% of the total). The translator's explanation of his or her aim fulfills all five functions but can be particularly helpful in assessing the translation: have they achieved what they set out to do?

Those who aimed for the essence of the text defined it in various ways: Soyinka (1982) called it the author's "sensibility"; Le Gassick (1975) called it the "spirit of a work of fiction"; and Claxton (1986) called it the "character of the book"; but the most evocative description of it can be found in Caws's (1987) preface to *Mad Love*:

In particular, in the translation here, it is not a question of being "right" or "wrong," or then "faithful" or "fickle"—rather, more of trying to express the ongoing and deep relation of the translation to the original, they being complementary in nature as if they were signifying fragments of some larger whole. The translation may be seen turning like a sunflower, its emblematic incarnation, toward the captivating and terrible illumination of Breton's prose and yet posing itself in doubt in relation to the original effect of the French text, totally unlike other texts as it is. This is, it seems to me, the only original *going after*, the one we sense behind what we read; to go after it is not to chase a prey for complete capture, but to believe in an interior and impulsive correspondence with one of the true surrealist texts. (xvii)

Some translators explained why they avoided a literal translation. Kern (1974) referred to Chukovsky's book on translation, *The High Art*, where it was shown that "the meaning of a word matches its standard foreign equivalent only in certain contexts, but not in others, so that a constant one-to-one relationship in a translation

may disfigure the sense of the original”. Hettlinger (2002) found that a literal translation of a Russian phrase could result in a tired, English cliché and retaining multiple modifiers could result in something “overwrought and amateurish” in English.

Of the three translators who did translate literally, the choice did not seem deliberate for one: Cobham (1984) claimed she *found* herself moving “closer to literalness in the course of” (xiii) translating *Rings of Burnished Brass* from the Arabic, but “surprisingly” more in syntax than in choice of words. In another case, the literal rendering was not the translators’ preferred choice: when faced with the translation of poems from the Russian in *Doctor Zhivago*, Hayward and Harari (1958) “adopted the expedient of merely giving a literal translation of the verse without making any attempt to convey its form” (5). They did not want to delay the publication of the book by waiting for an “accomplished English poet who knows Russian” to translate them. In the third case the translator, Maier (1994), felt a literal rendering would better convey the author’s use of language and the spaces in the language.

Two translators wanted to convey both the essential and the literal. Golini (2004) sought to “be faithful to the word and the spirit of the original text” (ix); and Poitras (1980) tried “insofar as is possible to preserve the flavor of the original, even with its problems”. It was his opinion that “a translator is not, after all, an editor, but has the obligation to transmit the essence of the original in as nearly an equivalent form as he is capable of creating” (3).

### *3.8 Explanation of Culturally Specific Items*

After the treatment of proper names, the next most commonly discussed problem at the word level was how to explain items that are specific to the source culture. Fifteen translators (18% of total) either discussed their strategies for coping with the problem or used the preface as a place to provide explanations of specific items. This topic fulfills all five functions.

Certain translators were against the use of footnotes or glossaries, preferring to work the explanations into the text. Le Gassick (1975) explained that he gave brief descriptive definitions within the text because he believed that a glossary or notations “would seem unfortunate in a work of creative fiction, a cumbersome and largely unnecessary barrier between the work and its readers” (ix). Claxton (1986) and

Clancy (1991) unobtrusively incorporated the clarifications of references into the translations.

Two of the translators who made use of footnotes were working with texts that used them in the original. Creagh (1999) pointed out that his notes seldom corresponded with those provided by the author of the original text because the requirements of Italian and English readers are so different, and Weaver (1984) added his own footnotes to those in the original Italian text.

### 3.9 *Dialect/Slang*

The impossible task of translating dialect or slang was considered, often despairingly, in eleven of the prefaces (13%). While some chose to use an English-language dialect to give the flavour of the original, others believed it was absurd to do so. Because this translation problem is, as is generally agreed, an insoluble one, the opportunity to explain and justify their strategies and choices in the preface was undoubtedly important to the translators, so while fulfilling all five functions, the information is most useful for promoting understanding of the translator's role and intervention.

Of those that chose to use an English-language dialect, some translators used specific ones and explained the reasons for their choice, sometimes including what type of dialect existed in the original. In her translation of *My Husband* from the Italian, Golini (2004) employed the idiomatic English widely used in her native Canada by the current young generation "since this was the age group most frequently presented in the stories" (ix-x). Woolf (1997) found the Italian original of *The Things We Used to Say* to be packed with dialect words and phrases (xiv). She chose to draw on Scots vocabulary, "rich as it is in terms for dirt and disorder", for the Triestine dialect and on Yorkshire syntax for the Milanese dialect. And Caminals-Heath and Cashman (2001) believed it impossible to capture in English the colloquial Moroccan speech of *A Matter of Self-Esteem and Other Stories*, so they aimed for an American equivalent such as a rural wife in Tennessee might speak (xii). Hayward and Hingley (1963) found that *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* presented unique problems of translation because the dialogue and the narrative were written in a "peculiar mixture of concentration camp slang and the language of a Russian peasant". They sought to render something of the flavour of this by using the "uneducated speech forms of American English".

For some it appeared really important that readers have some idea of what they were missing by not reading the text in the original and, although they tried their best, they knew their efforts would be unsuccessful. Davis (1996) found one of the problems he had in translating *My Uncle Napoleon* from the Persian, which would be “less visible to the English-speaking reader but ... remain glaring for the translator [and maybe] for any who know the novel in Persian and dip into the translation” was the “wonderfully rich colloquial and often very culturally embedded language of certain characters” (13). Although “such language must be the despair of any translator”, he tried to do his best by finding English equivalents. Edwards (1995) believed the subtlety of varying dialects and localisms could not be conveyed in his translation. He tried to do so in the best manner he could “since a literal use of dialect would, even if it were possible, be pedantic, dull and cumbersome” (8). In dealing with German dialect in *Doctor Faustus* Lowe-Porter (1949) maintained that it cannot be translated, but “only be got round by a sort of trickery which is unusually unconvincing” (v).

One translator considered that not being able to translate the slang in his text was not worth worrying about. Bester (1990) decided not to attempt to translate some Japanese slang in *Acts of Worship* because “it is a peculiarly mechanical trick conveying...no special atmosphere, and it is entirely outdated” (xii).

The most instructive explanation of the problems presented by dialect and slang, and strategies to deal with them, was written by Harris (2003), who wrote extensively about the translation of street slang in *Stories from the City of God: Sketches and Chronicles of Rome, 1950-1966*. She maintained there was nothing more alive than slang but there was nothing more difficult to keep alive once it had been transplanted into a new text. “Constant interventions must be undertaken to preserve the vitality of the original, organic text, which can resist a new language like a body rejects a new heart” (xii). The challenges are almost like those encountered when translating hermetic poetry and the process involves recuperation, research, historical and cultural curiosity, and “love perhaps, for language, Pasolini’s language, and the language of Pasolini’s subjects” (xiii). She used several “imperfect” approaches, tailoring them for specific situations.

Those who were against trying to replace original dialect with an equivalent language believed such attempts absurd or futile. Weaver (1984) stated that “the question of rendering dialect in another language is a particularly tormented one”

(xx). In his opinion, it would be absurd to translate Italian dialects into American or British dialects, so he used straightforward spoken English and asked the reader to imagine the speech as taking place in a mixture of dialects. Poitras (1980) found the translation process especially arduous with the author of *The Stars and Other Korean Short Stories* because he made extensive use of dialect. Poitras wrote:

Dialect raises not only the problem of comprehensibility...but also that of its presentation in translation. It seems futile to attempt to suggest regional Korean dialects through North American or English dialect forms. In fact the only option for the translator is to try to preserve something of the flavor of the speech of the individual character as well as his social level. This is a great sacrifice, though, because much of the charm and authenticity of the original is lost. (3)

### *3.10 Limitations of Translation*

The general topic of the limitations of translation appeared in nine prefaces (11% of the total). The information would be helpful for all functions except quality assessment and process documentation. Some of the comments could be applied to any translation and some were specific to a particular language or text, or to a specific element in a text, but all showed a resignation to the fact that loss in translation is unavoidable.

Caminals-Heath (2001) considered that there are identical amounts of certainty and uncertainty in any translation process: “the certainty that, no matter how accurate and inspired the translator may be, she will fall short of the original; the uncertainty of how close she may come and whether it is close enough” (xii). Hayward and Harari (1958) believed the loss increases when faced with the qualities of the writing of a genius, where the difficulties for the translator are almost insurmountable (5). Sousa (1988) invited the reader to imagine what was lost in his translation: the ambiguity and idiosyncrasy of the original.

Two of the translators explained why they carried out the translation regardless. Soyinka (1982) acknowledged that there was “undoubtedly a great loss in translation” but that it was “not reason enough to limit [it] to the readership of Yoruba speakers only” and that “as with all truly valid literature” the essence survived. Caws (1987) stated in her preface to *Mad Love* that to “translate such a classic in the sure

knowledge of failure is—perhaps—to make an impossible gesture of gratitude to a work and an author ... a gesture, all these years later, of our own mad love” (xvii).

### *3.11 Translator as Editor*

Sometimes the translator is called upon to go beyond the role of translator to that of editor. This topic is referred to in nine prefaces (11%) and is helpful for promoting understanding of the translator’s role and for quality assessment. The various reasons cited for making editorial changes to the original text included the presence of errors, incomplete texts, a desire to improve it, and a desire to simplify it for the target audience.

Four of the translators mentioned finding errors in the text. One, Hollander (1974), emended an error because the author asked him to do so. Another, Claxton (1986), corrected occasional errors in the course of translating, but they were typographical only, and in doing so, she was able to consult the manuscript and accompanying notes, which fortunately reside in a library. The other two translators, Davies (2003) and Golini (2004), did not correct the errors they found, but they were undoubtedly glad to have the opportunity to tell readers in the preface that they were aware of them.

Two translators, Le Gassick (1975) and Bester (1990), simplified the original or omitted phrases.

Filkin (1999) had to take on the extra role of editor because the author died before the original texts were complete. His changes required that he “strike a devil’s bargain between faithfulness to the unknown intent of the author and the demands involved in trying to arrive at a successful artistic work” (xxiv). Goldstein (1997) also had to deal with an unfinished manuscript, but her aim was to present the reader with exactly what was found on the author’s desk in “as readable a form as possible” (vi).

In the more structural role of editor, the translator of *Blues for a Black Cat* from the French, Older (1992) chose to omit one of the stories from the original collection because she felt it failed to live up to the “spontaneity and vigor” of the other stories. She also used the title of a different story as the title of the collection, because she felt it best underlined the author’s style and themes (xxiv).

### *3.12 Universality of Themes*

The universality of themes was discussed in nine prefaces (11%). While the universality gives the stories universal appeal, and this aspect is mentioned by some

of the translators, it also can lead readers to thoughts on how to improve intercultural relations. The functions of this topic are to promote understanding of the source culture and to foreground differences between the source and target cultures.

One of those whose concern was the appeal of the story was Davis (1996). He believed that *My Uncle Napoleon* “contains enough within its pages for it to make a broad appeal to readers quite unfamiliar with the specifics of Iranian cultural history” (9-10). Cobham (1984) quoted Walter Benjamin: “Languages are not strangers to one another, but are, a priori and apart from all historical relationships, interrelated in what they want to express” (xiii-xiv). She expressed the hope that she had shown that in her translation.

The message from some was not that we are all the same but that we should look beyond cultural differences, while still appreciating them, to what is the same. In the words of Johnson-Davies (1985), the reader must be “willing to enter [the] unfamiliar territory” of the local context to find the universal themes “within the confines of [the author’s] own particular culture and set of moral values” (ix). Bester (1990) wrote that the author used his “particular preoccupations to create real worlds from which universal (which does not necessarily mean immediately familiar to the Western reader) themes transpire” (vii).

Some translators believed readers could use what they learn about another culture’s history when thinking about their own world. Along with an understanding of the very varied past of what was then known as Yugoslavia (“the part least accessible to Western readers or Western minds”), Johnstone (1961) maintained *Bosnian Story* would reveal to its readers “some thoughts on problems familiar in our own time—the fate of weaker states which are alternately courted and bullied by Great Powers, the effect of revolutions on successive generations and the needs and prospects of what are now called ‘underdeveloped’ areas” (11). Bester (1981) considered that, although the approach of *Black Rain* was intensely Japanese—“not much given to the explicit statement of personal feelings or to extravagant emotional gestures”—the book succeeded in relating the subject matter (the bombing of Hiroshima) “to our own, everyday experience, wherever we may live” (7).



### *3.13 Grammatical Conventions*

The constraints imposed by the differing grammatical conventions of the source and text languages was a problem translators discussed in eight prefaces (10% of total). This topic fulfills all five functions.

Some translators explained these problems in order to point out the difficulties they encountered. Hettlinger (2002) had to cope with the pliant syntax allowed by the inflected structure of the Russian language where English is far more rigid. “Thus a sentence that unfolds with luxuriant ease in Russian can quickly turn prolix and ungainly in English” (xiv-xv). Cohen (1983) explained that there are no satisfactory translations into English of the Spanish formal and familiar forms of “you”. However, he was frequently able to indicate the greater or lesser degree of familiarity in other ways.

Caminals-Heath and Cashman (2001) deliberately followed source language conventions and wanted the reader to understand why the text might sound odd to English ears (xiii).

Then there were the translators whose problems were compounded because the author had used language that was unconventional even in the source language. Pontiero (1998) found considerable problems because the author had “disregarded conventional syntax and punctuation” in his own language and favoured “an uninterrupted sequence of extended paragraphs” (xv). Wilson (1985) tried to respect the author’s tense choices because they were deliberate, but occasionally opted for consistency (vii). A further problem was the author’s tendency to universalize, using “it” to refer to a child (“obviously not acceptable in English”), for example, so that Wilson had to make her own choices about which pronoun to use (vii-viii).

### *3.14 Choice*

The act of translation involves constant decision-making. Seven of the prefaces (8%) discuss this issue, which gives the reader an idea of the translator’s struggle and demonstrates how much of the process is subjective. This topic’s main function is to promote understanding of the translator’s role and intervention, but it also foregrounds the differences of the source and target cultures and languages.

Soyinka (1982) mentioned that the “pattern of choice begins ... right from the title”. Calderbank (2003) mentioned that making choices often led to compromise (vii). Maier (1994) explained the importance of the word “choose”: “The nature of

translation is such that a translator *will* have to choose, or at least interpret and proceed accordingly; ideally, the choice is conscious and deliberate” (182).

The only translator to explain what influenced her choices was Wilson (1985). Her choices were affected by her knowledge that the author had become “furious over previous translations of her novels (to the extent of refusing royalties)” (vii).

### *3.15 Translator’s Introduction to Author’s Work*

Six of the translators recounted how they came to learn of the author’s work and/or how they came to translate it (Older (1992), Nathan (1977), Dunlop and Holman (1988), Bester (1981), Kim-Renaud (2005)). The translators’ purposes in discussing this topic included sharing their admiration and/or understanding of the author, and explaining how long the idea of doing the translation can germinate. The information provided helps to promote understanding of the translator’s role and intervention and is useful as process documentation.

### *3.16 Limitations of Translator*

Six translators wrote about their limitations (7% of total), thereby promoting understanding of their role and intervention.

In some cases they were humbly declaring their own abilities to be inadequate, such as Hayward and Harari (1958), who had “no illusions” that they had “done justice, even remotely” to the original, but may have given English readers “some approximate idea” of its merits. They expressed the hope that one day the book would fall into the hands of a translator whose talent was equal to that of its author. (5-6) Calderbank (2003) lamented the limitations of his own literary abilities “when working on a text by a master craftsman” (vii). Lowe-Porter (1949) felt that her translation could “not lay claim to being beautiful, though in every intent it is deeply faithful” (vi). (In writing this she was referring to the well-known saying: *Les traductions sont comme les femmes: lorsqu’elles sont belles, elles ne sont pas fidèles, et lorsqu’elles sont fidèles, elles ne sont pas belles.*)

Two translators referred to the limitations of translators generally. After devoting seventeen pages of his preface to providing the reader with the background of the subject-matter of the text, Johnston (1969) stated that much more could be said, but that he had “usurped more space than is normally allotted to a mere translator” (17). Offering a unique viewpoint, Golini (2004) considered that the limitations of the translator have decreased in recent times. She stated: “Access to today’s infinite

resources in the areas of language studies greatly facilitates the work of translation and lends it renewed vigour...Today, the Italian phrase ‘traduttore, traditore’ (translator, traitor), no longer need be true as it may have been in past times” (ix).

### 3.17 Word Play

Amongst the strategies used by the six translators who discussed the translation, or untranslatability, of word play were compensation and footnotes, while some used the preface to explain the references (Ringold (1990), Blair (1985), Martin (1988)). This topic fulfills all five functions.

Claxton (1986) used the strategy of compensation, following the lead of Eugene Nida who “compared solving a stubborn translation problem with crossing a turbulent river, when, in order to reach one’s destination directly opposite on the other side, one needs to search some distance up- or down-stream to find a fording place” (6).

Weaver (1984) did not attempt to translate untranslatable Italian puns in *That Awful Mess on Via Merulana*, but instead inserted explanatory footnotes (xxi).

### 3.18 Reader’s Preconceived Perception of Source Culture

The five translators who discussed readers’ preconceived perception of the source culture were all eager to dispel stereotypes, the existence of which they often blamed on previous translations, and for the reader to have a truer understanding of that culture. The information could be helpful in all five function areas but particularly in understanding of the source culture.

Betts (1980) stated in his preface to *The Passport and Other Stories* that “the reader may at first be surprised that there is nothing in them of what is considered typically Greek in the Anglo-Saxon world” (viii). Mathy (1974) warned that *Wonderful Fool* was “quite different from the exotic Japan that appears in most of the Japanese novels that have found their way into translation” (9). Liman (1986) believed that the stories he translated “offer a statement more authentic—because less consciously fashioned for Western consumption—than those of more abundantly translated writers” (10).

Spelling out the stereotype he wanted to eradicate, Davis (1996) wrote in his preface to *My Uncle Napoleon*:

The existence in Persian literature of a full-scale, abundantly inventive comic novel that involves a gallery of varied and highly memorable characters, not to mention scenes of hilarious farcical mayhem, may come as a surprise to a Western audience used to associating Iran with all that is in their eyes dour, dire and dreadful...Its wide acceptance [in Iran] by virtually all strata of society clearly belies the Western stereotype of the country as one that is single-mindedly obsessed, to the exclusion of all else, with religion and revolutionary revenge. (7)

### *3.19 Exoticism or Foreignness and Hybridism*

Of the four translators who discussed the issue of exoticism or foreignness appearing in the target text, the purpose of three was to explain to the reader that such elements were deliberate. This topic fulfills all five functions, especially in foregrounding differences and promoting understanding of the translator's role.

Blair (1985) explained that “any shreds of exoticism” that “may cling to the style” were a result of her “deliberate faithfulness” to the author and not due to negligence (xiv). Hennes (1986) chose “to let a Norwegian flavour dominate even where it may sound strange to the British ear” (v).

Maier (1994) had a “general preference for a translation that is not ‘transparent’” (193). She believed that the story could be retold at any time and in any language but that it would still take place at the same time in Spain with the Spanish customs of the time. “This means that those retellings will inevitably be ‘hybrids’, as necessary elements of [the] narrative find their way relatively unaltered into a new context.” (193)

The fourth translator discussed the loss of foreignness when dealing with a regional source text. Creagh (1992) discussed the “Sicilian-ness” of the original author (quoting Leonardo Sciascia who had discussed this matter in a preface to Brancati's collected works) and how it would “appear less evident, less ‘foreign’, to real foreigners than to Italians” (6).

### *3.20 Reader's Responsibility*

Three translators discussed the role of the reader of their works—a topic that fulfills the function of increasing understanding of the source culture. They varied in the level of sternness in their advice, from the not-so-stern Johnson-Davies (1985), who believed that the reader must be “willing to enter this unfamiliar territory” (ix) in

order to be reached on an emotional level, to the very stern Lowe-Porter (1949), who believed readers of *Doctor Faustus* “will and must be involved, with shudders, in all three strands of the book” (vi).

### *3.21 Difference of Languages*

The three translators who wrote about the difference of languages did so to explain to the reader that what specific words represent in the target culture can be different from what they represent in the source culture. Another main function is to increase understanding of the source culture, but it also fulfills the other three functions to some extent.

Di Giovanni (1974) quickly discovered that “the English and Spanish languages are not, as is often taken for granted, a set of interchangeable synonyms but are two possible ways of viewing and ordering reality” (7). Seidensticker (1967) maintained that “no two languages make quite the same distinctions, and every translation is a makeshift insofar as this is true” (xiv).

Maier (1994) discussed how the same words could have different meanings in different languages, such as “feminism” and “feminist” (189). She believed it was time for some critics and even other translators to consider that certain words may be less international than they acknowledge. Rather than a dictionary equivalent, such words often require an explanation or a parallel term.

### *3.22 Treatment of Words in a Foreign Language in the Original*

Three translators explained their strategies for dealing with the specific, text-level problem of foreign words in the original text, such as Claxton (1986), who used small capitals to indicate words or phrases that were originally written in English. This would help in all functional areas.

### *3.23 American versus British Usage*

Another instance of a decision that must be made by the translator is the specific problem of whether to use American or British usage, particularly when the target text is not intended for only one of these two audiences. This topic fulfills all functions except promoting understanding of the source culture. Pomeran (1990) found it “too great a hurdle to cross” to find slang and idiomatic expressions “acceptable and intelligible” to both American and British readers. He opted for more British usage when he had to choose with the aim of retaining “a more European flavour” (ix).

### 3.24 *Subjectivity of Translator*

Of the two translators who mentioned the subjectivity of translation, one referred to it as motivating him to undertake the translation, while the other referred to it as shaping the translation itself. The main function of this topic is to promote understanding of the translator's role and intervention but the other functions are fulfilled as well.

Davis (1996) was aware of the irony in the fact that *My Uncle Napoleon*, “which bases so much of its comic effect on suspicion of, not to say hatred for, the English is here translated into English, and that the translation has been carried out precisely by a member of the suspected people in question” (12). He did not feel it appropriate to discuss the ramifications of his own feelings about the matter in the preface, except to say that “the great affection” he felt for the novel and the “recently much-maligned culture of Iran, as well as the sheer importance of the novel in Iranian literary and cultural history, have been the impulses” (12) that led him to undertake the translation.

Claxton (1986) noted that her translation was “very subjective indeed” because it is certain that “the more creatively imaginative the underlying work, the more subjective will be the act of translating it” and she was working with a “highly imaginative” text (7).

### 3.25 *Aim to Seem as if Originally Written in English*

Two translators mentioned that their aim was for the text to seem as if it had originally been written in English (of which Venuti would not have approved). This topic fulfills all functions except promoting understanding of the source culture and foregrounding differences between cultures.

Le Gassick's aim (1975) was to approximate how the author “might have expressed himself if English had been his native tongue” (ix). And the guiding aim of di Giovanni (1974) was to “make the text read as though it had been written in English” (7).

### 3.26 *Audience Response to Match Original*

The aim of two other translators was for the target audience to respond to their translation in the same way as the source audience did to the original. This topic also fulfills all functions except promoting understanding of the source culture and foregrounding differences between cultures.

Soyinka (1982) aimed to recreate “the unquestioning impact and vitality which is conveyed...in the original”. For Claxton (1986), the key to faithfulness was whether her text prompted the same responses in the reader. She believed an “image which stirs a [(French-Canadian)] French reader yet leaves an English reader intellectually informed but unmoved is not an adequately translated image” (7).

### *3.27 Archaisms*

The treatment of an archaic style was discussed by two translators, one of whom decided not to attempt to find an equivalent and the other chose to only hint at it. This topic can help in all five areas.

Lowe-Porter (1949) did not attempt to find an equivalent style in English when translating the German archaic style and spelling that appeared in the original. She knew nothing would evoke the same emotions in the English reader as was evoked in the German reader by the original. Hennes (1986) believed she would have to go back to the Georgian period to match the remoteness of the Norwegian language of the original text. She chose, however, to give her translation “a scent of the Victorian age” (v).

### *3.28 Topics Discussed Only Once*

There were six topics that were only mentioned once in all the prefaces. Four of these topics—the translator as reader, the responsibility of the translator and the definition of translation—were all statements about the act of translation generally and the complex role of the translator. They fulfill only the function of increasing understanding of the translator’s role. Another talked about the strategic use of parallel texts to assist in the process. This topic and the final two fulfill all functions except promoting understanding of the source culture and highlighting cultural and linguistic differences. The final two topics—translating at the same time as the original text is written and working side by side with the author while translating—are about specific translating experiences that are not usually an option for the translator.

*3.28.1 Translator as Reader.* Cobham (1984) quoted Hugh Kenner, commenting on Ezra Pound’s translations: “...as the poet begins by seeing, so the translator by reading; but his reading must be a kind of seeing” (xiii) and expressed her hope that she had “‘seen’ at least something of what Idris intends”.

3.28.2 *Responsibility of Translator.* According to Golini (2004), much of the translator's responsibility is "owed to the original writer, to the work of art itself, and to the potential reader" (ix).

3.28.3 *Definition of Translation.* Maier (1994) defined translation as "an activity of multiple mediations or 'refractions' that includes both 'translator' and 'reader'" (193-94). Ultimately, she did not believe there was any such thing as a translation, any more than there are, ultimately, texts or authors. "Rather, one translates, reads, writes."

3.28.4 *Parallel Texts.* Although parallel texts are more often used in the translation of non-literary texts, Maier (1994) found them helpful in working with literary texts, as well, because they allowed her to "visualize translation as an activity of contiguity rather than substitution" (189).

#### 3.28.5 *Simultaneous Writing of Original and Translation*

Di Giovanni (1974) found translating simultaneously with the writing of the original, in collaboration with the author, was "the best possible condition under which to practice the craft of translation" because there was "no need of trying to recapture past moods" as he and the author were always "under the spell of the originals" (7).

#### 3.28.6 *Co-operation between Author and Translator*

Claxton (1986) worked side-by-side with the author reading the two texts together to ensure they really did match and that the translation was consistent with the author's thinking (8).

## 4. Conclusion

My aim in this dissertation has been to show that literary translations should include prefaces written by the translators, describing their activity. Translators are in a unique position to act as ambassadors between cultures because they have knowledge and understanding of both the source and target cultures of the works they have translated. Their prefaces are an excellent locus for disseminating their understanding



to readers who may have preconceived and unrealistic perceptions or very little knowledge of the source culture. With increased understanding of one culture different to their own, readers are bound to be more open-minded towards other cultures. Clearly, in the world we live in today, where borders are being crossed more and more all the time, increased intercultural understanding is vital.

It is not only the provision of background information that leads to increased understanding; just as important is information that foregrounds cultural and linguistic differences. Yes, we are different, and this should be acknowledged and celebrated. When translators make themselves more visible by explaining the problems they encountered and the choices they had to make—demonstrating how active their role is in creating the translated text—they disclose the cultural and linguistic differences.

There are further important benefits to describing and explaining the translation process in a preface. When critics understand the translator's reasoning behind the choices he or she made, instead of just looking at the target text, or comparing the source and target texts, their assessments will be much more valid. A final benefit is their use in descriptive studies as process documentation for current and future translation students, theoreticians and historians.

By analyzing the content of translators' prefaces, I have determined that the majority of what is discussed has the function of foregrounding the differences of the source culture, followed closely behind by promoting understanding of the source culture. The next most discussed topics have the function of promoting understanding of the translator's role. These three functions all lead to increased intercultural understanding. This indicates that the translators themselves view this goal as the main purpose of their preface. In addition to being useful for quality assessment and process documentation, the contents show that other purposes for the translator are to express their admiration for the author after focusing on their work so intensely and for so long, to justify their choices in the event of future criticism and to express regret that they did not create a better result.

My view of the preface's importance is supported by translation scholars, most notably Peter Newmark and Lawrence Venuti, who both also consider that the ultimate benefit of their inclusion in translated texts is increased intercultural understanding. Yet, prefaces are still quite uncommon. Out of a large survey of fictional works by major writers that have been translated into English from the

principal world languages in the last sixty years, only 20% had introductions. Only half of those introductions, or 10% of the total number of books, discussed the translation or provided information about the source culture that might be unknown to the target audience.

The greatest impediment to the preface's appearance in translated texts is the prevailing attitude amongst American and British readers, and hence the publishers, that translated works are not worth reading. An extremely low proportion of books published in the UK and the US are translations of fiction (only 2%). Of those that are translated, instead of highlighting that fact, publishers often try to hide it. Prefaces raise the visibility of the translator; therefore, they are unwelcome by publishers who believe that knowing a book has been translated will deter readers from buying it.

This dissertation does not seek to find a way to remove that impediment, nor does it look at whether the inclusion of prefaces has increased over the last sixty years or examine whether prefaces differ according to the language or culture from which they have been translated. Perhaps these are areas for future investigation.

What this study does do, however, is contribute to the argument in favour of the visible translator. Publishers would do well to heed the advice of Peter Newmark set out at the start of this dissertation. While they may have felt that globalisation would make us more homogeneous, in fact our diversity has become more prominent. By publishing more translated literature, and displaying the fact that it has been translated, they also can contribute to intercultural understanding. The translation without a preface ought to be a thing of the past because it has an important role to play as the voice of the translator—the key figure in promoting better understanding among peoples and nations.

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## Appendix A: Breakdown re Preface Inclusion

### *Breakdown re Prefaces*

<i>Language</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Preface Discussing Translating</i>	<i>Preface Not About Translating</i>	<i>No Translator's Preface</i>
African	1	1		
Arabic	29	8	4	17
Catalan	3	3		
Chinese	6			6
Czech	12			12
Danish	2			2
Dutch	9	2		7
Egyptian	2		1	1
Finnish	7			7
French	125	3	3	119
French-Canadian	39	1	1	37
Francophone: African/Caribbean	10	1		9
Francophone: Arab/Maghrebian	1			1
German	70	4	5	61
Greek	7	1		6
Hebrew	13			13
Hungarian	3			3
Italian	124	10	1	113
Japanese	83	17	13	53
Korean	19	6	6	7
Lusophone	6		1	5
Norwegian	23	2	2	19
Persian	1	1		
Polish	11	2	3	6
Portuguese	28	2	8	18
Russian	45	6	15	24
Serbo-Croat	8	4	3	1
Slovak	3		3	
Spanish	26	6	2	18
Spanish: Latin American	74	3	5	66
Swedish	16		5	11
Turkish	3			3
Welsh	1	1		

*Ratio of Prefaces versus No Prefaces*

Total Number of Books	810	
Prefaces Discussing Translating	84	10%
Prefaces Not About Translating	81	10%
No Prefaces	645	80%

*Ratio of Prefaces Discussing Translation versus Those That Do Not*

Total Prefaces	165	
Prefaces Discussing Translating	84	51%
Prefaces Not About Translating	81	49%

## Appendix B: Breakdown of Categories of Topics

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Number of Prefaces Discussing Topic</i>	<i>Percentage of Total of Topic</i>
Cultural/Historical Background	38	45%
Translator's Debts and Acknowledgments	38	45%
Reception of Original/Author's Status in the Country of Origin	29	35%
Treatment of Names of Person/Places	18	21%
Introducing Author to English-speaking Readers	17	20%
Treatment of Style, Register and Tone	17	20%
Essential Rendering vs Literal	16	19%
Explanation of Culturally Specific Items	15	18%
Treatment of Dialect/Slang	11	13%
Limitations of Translation	9	11%
Translator as Editor	9	11%
Universality of Themes	8	10%
Grammatical Conventions	8	10%
The Translator and Choice	7	8%
Translator's Introduction to Author's Work	6	7%
Limitations of Translator	6	7%
Word Play	6	7%
Reader's Preconceived Perception of Source Culture	5	6%
Exoticism or Foreignness/Hybridism	4	5%
Reader's Responsibility	3	4%
Difference of Languages	3	4%
Treatment of Words in Foreign Language in Original	3	4%
American versus British Usage	2	2%
Subjectivity of Translator	2	2%
Aim to Seem as if Originally Written in English	2	2%
Aim for Audience Response to Match Original	2	2%
Treatment of Archaisms	2	2%
Translator as Reader	1	1%
Responsibility of Translator	1	1%
Definition of Translation	1	1%
Parallel Texts	1	1%
Simultaneous Writing of Original and Translation	1	1%
Co-operation Between Author and Translator	1	1%



## Appendix C: Breakdown of Topics According to Function and Frequency of Appearance

### *Foregrounds differences of cultures and languages*

Cultural/historical background	38
Reception of original/author's status	38
Treatment of names	18
Introducing author to English-speaking readers	17
Treatment of style, register and tone	17
Explanation of CSI	15
Essential rendering vs. literal	16
Treatment of dialect/slang	11
Limitations of translation	9
Universality of themes	8
Grammatical conventions	8
Choice	7
Word play	6
Reader's preconceived perception of source culture	5
Exoticism or foreignness	4
Difference of languages	3
American vs. British usage	2
Subjectivity of translator	2
Archaisms	<u>2</u>

*Total 226*

### *Promotes understanding of source culture*

Cultural/historical background	38
Reception of original/author's status	38
Treatment of names	18
Introducing author to English-speaking readers	17
Treatment of style, register and tone	17
Explanation of CSI	15
Essential rendering vs. literal	16
Treatment of dialect/slang	11
Limitations of translation	9
Universality of themes	8
Grammatical conventions	8
Word play	6
Reader's preconceived perception of source culture	5
Exoticism or foreignness	4
Reader's responsibility	3
Difference of languages	3
Subjectivity of translator	2
Archaisms	<u>2</u>

*Total 220*

### *Promotes understanding of translator's role and intervention*

Translator's debts and acknowledgments	38
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Treatment of names	18
Introducing author to English-speaking readers	17
Treatment of style, register and tone	17
Explanation of CSI	15
Essential rendering vs. literal	16
Treatment of dialect/slang	11
Limitations of translation	9
Translator as editor	9
Grammatical conventions	8
Choice	7
Translator's introduction to author's work	6
Limitations of translator	6
Word play	6
Reader's preconceived perception of source culture	5
Exoticism or foreignness	4
Difference of languages	3
Treatment of words in foreign language	3
American vs. British usage	2
Subjectivity of translator	2
Aim to seem as if written in English	2
Aim for audience response to match original	2
Archaisms	2
Translator as reader	1
Responsibility of translator	1
Definition of translator	1
Parallel texts	1
Simultaneous writing of original and translation	1
Cooperation between author and translator	<u>1</u>
	<i>Total 214</i>

*Raises status and visibility of translator*

Translator's debts and acknowledgments	38
Treatment of names	18
Introducing author to English-speaking readers	17
Treatment of style, register and tone	17
Explanation of CSI	15
Essential rendering vs. literal	16
Treatment of dialect/slang	11
Limitations of translation	9
Translator as editor	9
Grammatical conventions	8
Choice	7
Translator's introduction to author's work	6
Limitations of translator	6
Word play	6
Reader's preconceived perception of source culture	5
Exoticism or foreignness	4
Difference of languages	3
Treatment of words in foreign language	3
American vs. British usage	2

Subjectivity of translator	2
Aim to seem as if written in English	2
Aim for audience response to match original	2
Archaisms	2
Translator as reader	1
Responsibility of translator	1
Definition of translator	1
Parallel texts	1
Simultaneous writing of original and translation	1
Cooperation between author and translator	<u>1</u>
	<i>Total 214</i>

*Helps critics assess quality of translation*

Translator's debts and acknowledgments	38
Treatment of names	18
Treatment of style, register and tone	17
Explanation of CSI	15
Essential rendering vs. literal	16
Treatment of dialect/slang	11
Translator as editor	9
Grammatical conventions	8
Word play	6
Reader's preconceived perception of source culture	5
Exoticism or foreignness	4
Difference of languages	3
Treatment of words in foreign language	3
American vs. British usage	2
Subjectivity of translator	2
Aim to seem as if written in English	2
Aim for audience response to match original	2
Archaisms	2
Parallel texts	1
Simultaneous writing of original and translation	1
Cooperation between author and translator	<u>1</u>
	<i>Total 166</i>

*Useful as process documentation*

Translator's debts and acknowledgments	38
Treatment of names	18
Treatment of style, register and tone	17
Explanation of CSI	15
Essential rendering vs. literal	16
Treatment of dialect/slang	11
Grammatical conventions	8
Translator's introduction to author's work	6
Word play	6
Reader's preconceived perception of source culture	5
Exoticism or foreignness	4
Difference of languages	3

Treatment of words in foreign language	3
American vs. British usage	2
Subjectivity of translator	2
Aim to seem as if written in English	2
Aim for audience response to match original	2
Archaisms	2
Parallel texts	1
Simultaneous writing of original and translation	1
Cooperation between author and translator	<u>1</u>
	<i>Total 163</i>