From World to World. An Armamentarium for the study of poetic discourse in translation

Koster, C.

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Chapter 3

THE STUDY OF POETIC DISCOURSE

The implicitness of the translational interpretation may be alternatively phrased as follows: what a translation communicates as an interpretation is implicitly present in what it communicates as a literary text. As we have seen, the methodological problem our concept poses is that we can only have access to the former by means of the latter. At this point I have left myself with the task of finding a way in which to describe the differences between target and source texts, of making visible the textual strategy that we have chosen to call the translational interpretation. This task is twofold. On the one hand we have to look into the methodology of comparative description and its specific requirements: we have to study the way in which shifts may be established and deal with such concepts as ‘unit of comparison’ and ‘ tertium comparationis’; chapters 4, 5 and 6 will be devoted entirely to this aspect of my enterprise.

But inasmuch as my specific concern is limited to the description of poetic discourse in translation, I am also in need of a theory of literary discourse that will enable me to make the translational interpretation visible by providing me with the terms in which it may be described. As it turns out, the framework adopted here will be a pragmatic theory in which literature and poetry are considered instances of discourse. The basic concept that serves to gain access to the translational interpretation will be that of ‘text world’.

As a starting point I will make the assumption that

a linguistic event of communication can be described as constituting a transaction between addressee on three different planes: an interpersonal transaction (or discourse), an ideational transaction (or representation) and a textual transaction (or text) (Leech 1987: 81).

In Leech’s reinterpretation the scheme of functions originally devised by Halliday (cf. for instance Halliday 1971) becomes a ‘hierarchy of instrumentality’, since
the planes are ordered in such a way that the discourse is enacted by means of the representation, and the representation is conveyed by means of the text. Each plane has the function of transmitting the plane or planes above it (Leech 1987: 81).

A text, then, may be considered the ‘written report of a discourse’ (cf. Widdowson 1984: 223). The discourse situation, or the context of what is represented is not immediately given, but must be constructed out of the text and analysis always proceeds from the textual level.

This scheme can be applied to any ‘linguistic event of communication’: from the canonical situation of utterance (cf. Lyons 1977: 637) to any type of written discourse up to and including literature. Literary discourse, however, is typical in that its autotelic character (a literary message can be regarded as an end in itself, rather than as a means to an end [cf. Leech 1987: 77]), gives it an added function that profoundly affects all three main functions.

In general one might say that on the interpersonal and ideational levels the profoundest effect of the autotelic status is on the way in which a text is related to its context, an effect which is often discussed in terms of changes relative to the canonical situation of a face-to-face conversation between two participants that share a specific spatio-temporal location, which in a written report functions as a deictic zero-point of reference. In the canonical situation the context is immediately given, as the shared situation and, diverging or converging, and always modifiable, competences (linguistic as well as encyclopaedic) of the participants.

Ricoeur has pointed out that the very textuality of written discourse renders reference to situation and world complicated (cf. for instance Ricoeur 1976: 25-37 as well as 1981: 147-149). In written discourse there still is reference to a situation or world ‘outside’ the text, but it is not immediately given. The indicators or reference to a particular context are still present in the text, but the text itself is ‘decontextualized’, and it is up to reader to recontextualize it, by constructing plausible contexts out of the textual and linguistic material (cf. Verdonk 1991: 96). In literary discourse, deictic indicators (demonstratives, adverbs of time and place, personal pronouns and
the like [cf. Lyons 1977: 636-724]) do not activate a context that is already given and known, but allow for the possibility of creating a context (cf. Tate 1984: 144). In that sense, one might say of literary discourse that the relationship it bears to a world ‘outside’ the text is always an indirect one, which is mediated by a world of the text. Interpretation, in the sense of finding a level of coherence in the text, of constructing a plausible context, is directed towards the world of the text.

Translation as a specific form of interpretation, it seems justified to say at this point, always involves recontextualization. Retrospectively, in its status as reproduction it may be considered to constitute an act of recontextualization, and in its status as independent text it is itself subject to the entire mechanism of de- and recontextualization. Consequentially, the translational interpretation can be described in terms of the effects of textual shifts for the way in which on the various levels the text can be related to context.

In order to be able to find out in what ways text can be related to context, we must link the interpersonal and ideational levels to specific dimensions of context and look into the effect of the mechanism of de- and recontextualization on these levels.

A problem at this point is that Ricoeur, in his considerations on the effects of distanciation, uses Jakobson’s scheme of functions in which context is only one factor, whereas in Halliday’s scheme all three levels can be linked to a specific dimension of context. It is evident, that we can only relate Ricoeur’s argument to Leech’s reinterpretation if we are able to relate Jakobson’s functions to Halliday’s and the factors in the Jakobsonian scheme to one of the three levels mentioned above.

The interpersonal function may be said to correspond to the emotive and conative functions; on the level of discourse, then, the factors of addressee and sender are most pertinent. The ideational function corresponds with Jakobson’s referential function, context being the pertinent factor on this level. The metalingual function (with its matching factor ‘code’) corresponds to Halliday’s logical function, which is one of the subfunctions of the ideational function and is in itself not incorporated into Leech’s variant (cf. Leech 1987: 80). The added autotelic function unique to literature may be said to coincide
with Jakobson's poetic function, the pertinent factor here being the message\(^{43}\). The phatic function doesn't seem to have a counterpart in the Leech-Halliday scheme, but within our present argument we need not be concerned with that problem. Obviously, I do not aim at a complete homologation of both functional perspectives, but merely intend to use the apparent correspondences for my own purposes.

Ricoeur distinguishes between two different dimensions of reference, both of which relate the text to different aspects of context: \textit{ostensive} reference (reference which contains an element of \textit{pointing} towards immediate surroundings) and \textit{descriptive} reference. For both dimensions, the transition from spoken to written discourse renders an 'eclipse of reference' (Ricoeur 1976: 36). As we have already argued, in written discourse reference is no longer grounded in a dialogical situation, and as a consequence every text is subjected to \textit{decontextualization}. However, \textit{ostensive} reference (that is to say, reference to the situational context, or context of utterance) is not totally absent in a text, it is only suspended, because the indicators of that situation are still present and ascertain the possibility of recontextualization. In Ricoeur's own words:

the text must be able, from the sociological as well as the psychological point of view, to "decontextualize" itself in such a way that it can be 'recontextualized' in a new situation (Ricoeur 1981: 139).

The 'eclipse' of descriptive reference is specific to literary discourse, and concerns the building of fictional worlds (to be taken in its broadest possible sense). A literary text does not refer to some external reality, it creates a 'mock reality', a possible world, which is actualized during the act of reading. Ricoeur does not explicitly relate descriptive reference to a specific aspect of context, but my suggestion is that it may be related to what elsewhere has been called \textit{context of reference}, the 'topic or subject-matter of a text' (Fowler 1986: 89).

\(^{43}\) Leech proposes to replace the definition of this function as 'set towards the message', by a more 'truly functional (...) set towards the discourse', discourse being 'the literary work in its fullest sense' (Leech 1987: 85).
It is possible to link the types of context we have distinguished so far (in a later stage a third dimension, context of culture, will be added) with the two uppermost planes of Leech’s scheme. The context of utterance links up with the interpersonal level of discourse, whereas the context of reference is related to the ideational level. Until this point my considerations on the mechanism of de- and recontextualization have been rather abstract. In what follows I will discuss the effects of this mechanism on both levels in a more concrete way, exemplifying them by illustrations from poetic discourse.

The interpersonal level
The consequences of decontextualization on the interpersonal level have been discussed earlier, in the previous chapter, in terms of the distanciation concerning message and sender and message and addressee, as intentional exteriorization and universalization of audience. As far as poetic discourse is concerned, the extratextual category of author has its intratextual counterpart in the persona, which, relative to the empirical entity, may be described as ‘a temporary transfiguration of self’ (Widdowson 1987: 247). The discourse to be constructed from the poetic text, then, is not one between real interactants; poetic discourse rather is to be considered

a context-dependent communicative activity in which the participants are fictionalized as persona and implied reader (Verdonk 1988: 44).

Any approach which takes into account the context-dependency of meaning has to stress the importance of deixis, since this semantic-pragmatic category is concerned with

the ways in which languages encode or grammaticalize features of context of utterance or speech event, and thus also concerns ways in which the interpretation of utterances depends on the analysis of that utterance (Levinson 1983: 54).

In the specific situation represented in the text it is the persona who functions as the deictic centre of the discourse:
In the interpretation of poetry, readers will, by and large, have to construct an *imaginary* situation of utterance, where the deictic expressions are anchored in relation to a fictional speaker (Semino 1992: 135).

As to the kind of situations that may be evoked by a poem, there is an enormous variety of possibilities, that may be classified according to the explicitness of the deictic reference to the participants. In the seventeenth-century Constantijn Huygens translation of John Donne’s ‘The Flea’ for instance, there is an abundance of deictic elements, all of which contribute to the evocation of a communicative context closely corresponding to the canonical situation:

Slaet acht op dese vloij, en leert wat overleggen  
Hoe slechten dingh het is dat ghij mij kont ontseggen,  
Eerst sats’ en soogh op mij, nu sits’ in uw en drenckt,  
Soo is ons beider bloed in eene vlooij vermengt. 

(...) (Donne 1993: 50)

First and third person personal pronouns, the temporal adverb ‘nu’, the proximal demonstrative in ‘dese vloij’, and the imperative verb phrases ‘slaet acht’ and ‘leert’ - from all these elements a situation can be constructed in which two participants, one addressing the other, are together in a single spatio-temporal location. To a certain extent this example is typical, in that its grammatical structure is restricted in use to specific contexts; imperatives, just as interrogatives, and contrary to declaratives, are in themselves direct forms of address and indirectly point to the immediate presence of an addressee, and often the imperative occurs with a vocative, as in the Kopland poems discussed in the first chapter: ‘Ga nu maar liggen, *liefste*, in de tuin’ / ‘Lie down in the garden, *my love’* / ‘Go now into the garden, *dear*’, and *lie’, to make the presence even more immediate. As Semino points out,

this is the kind of situation where readers seem to be relegated to the role of invisible eavesdroppers, overhearing a conversation between others (1992: 137).
Paradoxically, then, the use of deixis in this poem as part of the textual strategy is to explicitly exclude the actual reader from the described situation itself; its effect is to create a certain distance between reader and situation. Direct address is a more explicit strategy of evoking a participant in the conversation which is implied, and that participant in this case is an entity belonging to the 'implied field of reference' (cf. Ricoeur 1991: 144).

A further subclassification can be made concerning the explicitness of reference to the persona, and the specificity of the spatio-temporal context. Typically, in this variant of the canonical situation the presence of the speaker is evoked by first person singular personal, possessive and relative pronouns, and because of the absence of any direct reference to an addressee, the speaker may be imagined as a mere voice: someone talking to himself in a solitary environment, or a thinking mind. As to the identity of the persona, it is hardly possible to make any generalization; it may represent any kind of human or non-human being that can be attributed some kind of consciousness (cf. Verdonk 1993: 120).

In this, far more frequently occurring, type of lyrical poetry in which there is no explicit mention of an addressee, the kind of distance mentioned above is not present, as can be seen, for instance, in Philip Larkin's 'Aubade':

I work all day, and get half-drunk at night.
Waking at four to soundless dark, I stare.
In time the curtain-edges will grow light.
Till then I see what's really always there:

5
Unresting death, a whole day nearer now,
Making all thought impossible but how
And where and when I shall myself die.
Arid interrogation: yet the dread
Of dying, and being dead,

10 Flashes afresh to hold and horrify.

44 For a full discussion of the use of deixis in lyrical poetry cf. Green 1992 and Semino 1992; some of the material used here is borrowed from that discussion. Cf. also Green (ed.) 1995.
The mind blanks at the glare. Not in remorse
– The good not done, the love not given, time
Torn off unused – nor wretchedly because
An only life can take so long to climb

Clear of its wrong beginnings, and may never;
But at the total emptiness for ever,
The sure extinction that we travel to
And shall be lost in always. Not to be here,
Not to be anywhere,

And soon; nothing more terrible, nothing more true.

(...) (Larkin 1988: 208)

In this passage there hardly occur any deictic elements, but the few that do very much influence the interpretation of their co-text. In the first line two activity verbs occur; not being in the progressive they can be interpreted either as habitual or instantaneous presents, but the lack of qualification makes the habitual use more plausible. The same goes for ‘stare’ in the second line, even though it is qualified temporally. It is not until line three that the deictic use of the article in the definite referring expression ‘the curtain-edges’ draws the reader to the situation of a specific location (someone lying awake in bed), and not until line 5 that the deictic ‘now’ locates the situation at a specific moment in the present. At that point the tension between the habitual and instantaneous use of the present tenses comes to reflect the tension between the description of a general state and a specific situation.

The possibility of the instantaneous reading draws the reader closer to the situation: it is as if the situation is being described on the spot, in one’s presence. The effect of inclusion of the reader in the situation is reinforced by the subtle shift in the use of the personal pronoun from the singular ‘I’ in the first stanza to the plural ‘we’ in the second (and in the rest of the poem, which goes on for another thirty lines, no shift back occurs). The use of the plural here is inclusive, it is the point where the ‘I’ and the ‘you’ (which remains implicit throughout the poem) coalesce.

An example of a poem in which there is no explicit reference to a first person speaker is W.H. Auden’s ‘Musée des Beaux Arts’:
About suffering they were never wrong,
The Old Masters: how well they understood
Its human position; how it takes place
While someone else is eating or opening a window or just
walking dully along;

How, when the aged are reverently, passionately waiting
For the miraculous birth, there always must be
Children who did not specially want it to happen, skating
On a pond at the edge of the wood:
They never forgot

That even the dreadful martyrdom must run its course
Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot
Where the dogs go on with their doggy life and the torturer's
horse
Scratches its innocent behind on a tree.

In Brueghel's Icarus, for instance: how everything turns away
Quite leisurely from the disaster; the ploughman may
Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,
But for him it was not an important failure; the sun shone
As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green
Water; and the expensive delicate ship that must have seen

Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,
Had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.
(Auden 1945:3)

The only explicitly locative element situating the speaker in relation
to the immediate surroundings can be found in the title of the poem,
but the title in itself is not enough to do so. It is the combination of
the locative character of the proper name in the title and the abundant
deictic use of the definite article that allows for the possibility of
imagining a speaker walking about in the museum pointing to specific
details on paintings. In the first stanza, it is the use of deixis that pro-
vokes the reader into a search for plausible referents, since neither of
the representations referred to are explicitly mentioned; it is only in
the second stanza that this aspect of context creation is fully con-
Firm. The effect of the lack of explicit mention, as the analysis of
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Verdonk (1988) shows, is that the reference is ambiguous: it is not clear whether the deixis is used to refer to a particular or general situation. This effect is reinforced by the occasional shift to the kind of present tense that is capable of denoting a single event as well as a permanent state. In the end, the textual strategy of playing with the verbal tenses most intensely appeal to the reader. The interplay between coding time and content time and the possibility of convergence between content time and receiving time allow for the discourse to be transcended from its immediacy, an effect all the more forceful because of the absence of direct reference to a speaker. The topic of the poem, the human position of suffering, and the extent to which art contributes to our staying aware of it, can be related to a much wider context, to a general situation, a certain state-of-the-world, the human condition; in that sense, the poem can be related to the function of iconicity: what the confrontation with the paintings does for the speaker, the confrontation with the poem may do for the reader.

Analysis of the situation, then, does not stop at the immediate context of utterance. In this particular case, it automatically led to considerations concerning the topic of the text, which is commonly associated with the context of reference, linked to the ideational aspect of communication; there is a natural link between the situation of the speaker standing in front of the paintings (which from the point of view of the speaker may be imagined as well) and what can be seen on the paintings. In a sense one might say that both levels of context are interdependent in that their relationship to the textual level is similar. They may be distinguished from each other in terms of their communicative scope, but both are to be constructed during analysis of co-textual features (the dimension of context that links up with the textual level).

As Widdowson has pointed out, the position a reader assumes in the face of a text (as the report of a written discourse) is determined more by ideational factors than by interpersonal factors (cf. Widdowson 1984: 223-224), and to my mind one might infer from that proposition that in the process of interpretation the interpersonal and idea-

tional levels tend to merge. Although it is possible to distinguish between a context of reference in which the persona is explicitly present, and one in which she is not (the distance between context of utterance and context of reference may vary), the situation of the persona, I think one might say, is always embedded in the ‘mock reality’ represented in the text, is, in other words, part of the text world. Deictic elements in a text are used as much to refer to the text world as they are used to refer to the situation. In that sense there is a fuzzy border between recontextualization on the interpersonal level and on the ideational level.

The ideational level

As we have seen earlier, the level of context relating to the ideational transaction is the context of reference. Decontextualization on the ideational level pertains to the world of the text: the reality represented by the text is a ‘mock reality’. We have also seen that there cannot be a clear-cut division between the concepts of ‘situation’ and ‘world’.

In the framework of fictional semantics (as opposed to mimetic semantics; cf. Doležel 1988) a text world is considered to be composed of sets of entities (characters, objects, places) and of networks of relations that can be described as organizing principles: spatio-temporal relations, event and action sequences (Ronen 1994: 8).

It seems, then, that the concept of ‘world’ is more inclusive. The fictional entities that constitute the text world include first-order entities (characters and objects) as well as second-order entities (events and places) (cf. Ronen 1994: 109, as well as Lyons 1977: 442-447).

46 Cf. also Werth 1995, who describes text worlds in terms of a situation, or a series of situations.
47 Although it is used in roughly the same way, I prefer this term to ‘possible world’ or ‘fictional world’, which both have a slightly narratological over-tone.
48 Lyons employs a somewhat different distinction: physical objects (persons or non-personal) are defined as first-order entities, whereas by second-order entities he means situations (states-of-affairs, events, processes, actions; cf.
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concept of ‘situation’ is always connected to a participant that functions as *origo*, its point of view is, so to speak, already anchored in what within the concept of ‘world’ is just one class of entities: character (or: subject). The concept of ‘world’ is also more dynamic, which is a major advantage, since the idea of a single situation is somewhat deceptive, and one has to allow for the possibility of a polyvalent identity of the subject, or for the possibility that no single central subject can be constructed from the text, that the assumption of a single deictic centre is frustrated\(^{49}\).

The notion of text world is commonly associated with narrative texts, and one may ask whether it is suitable for the analysis of poetic discourse. This is hardly the place for an essentialist argument on the question whether it is possible to make a clear distinction between narrative and poetic discourse. Often the differences between the genres are obvious, but one only has to point to the narrative character of epic poetry or to the phenomenon of the prose poem to show that there also is an obvious area of overlap. As to the semantic-pragmatic categories that may serve as parameters for the analysis of text worlds (the entities mentioned above\(^{50}\)) there is no question that they can be applied to both genres. There may be differences in degree: the category of ‘character’ is perhaps better replaced by that of ‘subject(s)’ when applied to poetic discourse, and the temporal dimension is probably dealt with in a different way most of the time, but there is no fundamental incompatibility. If ‘world’ is taken as a broad enough concept, if it is also allowed to consist of states-of-mind or states-of-affairs (any kind of static or dynamic situation in the semantic sense [cf. Lyons 1977: 483]) as well, there is no problem in applying it to poetic discourse as well\(^{51}\).

\(^{49}\) Cf. also Semino 1995a on ‘voice shifts’ in twentieth-century poetry.

\(^{50}\) When it comes to the actual development of the armamentarium, in Chapter 7, I will deal with these parameters more extensively.

\(^{51}\) A similar point, within the framework of schema theory, is made by Semino 1995 and Semino 1996.
In this book, the notion of text world is not taken to be a mimetic concept. I do not consider a text world to be ontologically anterior to 'the' actual world, it is an autonomous world. As we have seen, the whole point of the mechanism of recontextualization is that the reader has to construct a context out of the textual material: ‘

Fictional worlds of literature are constructs of a textual activity (...) constructional texts are prior to their world (Doležel 1988: 488-9).

The notion, then, can also be applied to texts that fail to make sense when approached mimetically; even to worlds where anyone lives in a pretty how town.52

Both on the interpersonal and ideational levels, the consequences of the mechanism of decontextualization is that deictic elements cannot refer to pre-existing entities. On the interpersonal level we saw that the persona becomes a fictional entity in a fictional world, and that there is also a dimension of addressee that belongs to the fictional world as opposed to that dimension which entails the construction of the fictional world in itself as part of the interpretative process. On the ideational level the mechanism works much the same way.

In the canonical situation of a face-to-face dialogue the expression 'the garden' in the clause 'go now into the garden, dear', for instance, would refer deictically to what may be called, within the limits of a particular cultural framework, a pre-existing entity. The use of a definite referring expression indicates that the speaker assumes that the contextually shared knowledge is sufficient to enable the addressee to establish its referent. In the text world to be constructed from the poem 'An Empty Spot to Stay', however, things are altogether different. Although by its form the noun phrase 'the garden' still is a definite referring expression, it cannot be correlated to a pre-existing referent. Its main function now is to locate the space shared by the subjects in the text world: 'garden' (apart from its potential Edenic reso--

52 I will not explore this point in detail. An excellent discussion of this problem in terms of the accessibility relations between text worlds and actual worlds can be found in Semino 1996, who bases herself, on this point, on Ryan 1991.
nance) in this context presupposes a domestic scene. Furthermore, the
deictic quality of the article still points to the shared knowledge of the
subjects, but its effect is to show the reader what kind of relationship
holds between the subjects in the text world.

We may look upon the use of the article in this text as a textual
strategy, as a stylistic choice. From the paradigm of possible central
determiners that can link up with ‘garden’, the semantically closest to
the definite article in this context are ‘that’ and ‘our’. The choice of
any of those two, however, would have made the reference more spe-
cific and less evident. In terms of the text world that can be con-
structed from ‘An Empty Spot to Stay’, then, the effect of the stylistic
choice of ‘the’ is that we may infer that for the lovers who inhabit that
world, the presence of the garden is totally self-evident. Together
with the connotation of domesticity of ‘garden’ and the use of a term
of endearment this gives ground for the inference that their relation-
ship is an intimate one.

Textual strategy and text world
According to Eco,

being a cultural construct, a possible world cannot be identified with
the Linear Text Manifestation that describes it. The text describing
such a state or course of events is a linguistic strategy which is sup-
posed to trigger an interpretation on the part of the Model Reader.
This interpretation (however expressed) represents the possible world
outlined in the course of the co-operative interaction between the text

The intricate relationship between textual strategies, interpretation
and world construction may be illustrated by comparing two trans-
lations of the same original. The different stylistic choices opted for
by different translations will show us the effect of stylistic variants on
the ideational level. As an example we may take, again, the two
Kopland translations from Chapter 1, which for reasons of conve-
nience will be quoted here in full once more.
From World to World

An Empty Place to Stay, XI

Lie down in the garden, my love,
the empty places in the tall grass, that's
what I've always wanted, to be an empty
place to stay, for someone.
(Kopland/Leigh-Loohuizen 1977: 57 [K/L-L])

An Empty Spot to Stay

Go now into the garden, dear, and lie
in an empty spot where the grass grows tall.
That's what I've always wanted to be,
an empty spot for someone, to stay.
(Kopland/Brockway 1991: 40 [K/B])

Most of the differences in the first two lines are lexical: the imperatives 'lie down' as against 'go (...) and lie'; 'love' as against 'dear' and 'places' as against 'spot'; but they are not very substantial with respect to world construction. In the second lines there are several substantial differences. In K/L-L the noun phrase 'the empty places in the tall grass' does not immediately link up with another constituent, which leaves the thematic structure of the poem undetermined at that point. In K/B this is not the case: 'in an empty spot where the grass grows tall' is a prepositional phrase functioning as a place-adverbial postmodifying the verb 'lie'. In this poem the first two lines form a grammatically and semantically coherent unit. The difference between the plural of 'places' and the singular in 'spot' may be interpreted in much the same way: in its co-text 'spot' is more specific and explicitly locative than 'places' in its own co-text. This effect, again, is reinforced by the most striking difference between the two passages in the noun phrases 'the empty places in the tall grass' and 'an empty spot where the grass grows tall'. In effect, the phrases may refer to entirely different situations. In K/L-L, the empty places are places where the tall grass is already flattened; the places may be consequently interpreted as traces of once present, but now absent objects. Because of the absence of cohesion in the first two lines in this poem
there is no direct causal link between the lying down in the garden that is requested and the empty places; the link is associative, and uttering the request merely evokes a mental image of ‘empty places in the tall grass’. In K/B, the first two lines consist of one single, cohesive sentence, in which two co-ordinated clauses occur, one containing a subordinated sub-clause, functioning as a restrictive postmodifier. A rather long-winded paraphrase might go that in this poem we have a garden in which some spots are empty, whereas other spots are in some way covered by objects, and that in some of those empty spots the grass grows tall, and in other spots it doesn’t, and that the speaker exhorts the addressee to lie down in one of the uncovered spots in which the grass grows tall. In this poem, the emptiness of the spot is not linked to the grass being either tall or flattened, but to the grass being covered or not.

In what way this difference is relevant depends on the function of this particular noun phrase in the poems in their entirety. In both poems the head of the phrase is repeated together with its premodifier in the final lines as part of the uttered desire (although in K/L-L there occurs a shift from plural to singular). Structurally there hardly seems to be any difference between the final lines of the two poems. There is a major grammatical difference between ‘That’s what I’ve always wanted to be (...)’ and ‘That’s what I’ve always wanted, to be (...)', but semantically the difference is probably restricted to the level of thematization, and is mainly a matter of emphasis. In K/L-L the emphasis falls on the very wanting, on the desire itself, whereas in K/B the emphasis is slightly more on the specific content of the desire. But the seemingly subtle difference in order of the postmodifiers in ‘an empty place to stay, for someone’ and ‘an empty spot for someone, to stay’ is far more substantial.

Since multiple postmodification is a notorious source of ambiguity, it is an effective stylistic means for establishing textual indeterminacy. In noun phrases, ambiguity arises when it is possible for a postmodifier to modify the head of the preceding modifier as well as the head of the noun phrase in which it occurs. In this particular case an additional problem is caused by the commas separating the modifiers.

When we ask ourselves which constituents in the poems may be
modified by the postmodifier in final position (‘for someone’ in K/L-L, and ‘to stay’ in K/B), the other difference we noted in the final lines becomes relevant again: the syntactical unit to which ‘for someone’ in K/L-L belongs is ‘to be an empty place to stay, for someone’, whereas the pertinent unit in the other poem is ‘an empty spot for someone, to stay’. In both cases the unit is the one to which ‘that’ (K/L-L: line 2; K/B: line 3) refers cataphorically. In K/L-L ‘for someone’ may either modify ‘stay’, ‘place’ or ‘be’, and ‘to stay’ in K/B ‘spot’ or ‘someone’.

In K/L-L there doesn’t seem to be all that much difference semantically between the two most likely readings: ‘to be for someone (...)’ and ‘(...) an empty place for someone (...’). In the last reading ‘someone’ may be interpreted as the subject in the infinitive sub-clause ‘for someone to stay’ and the meaning of the entire phrase in its context may be paraphrased as ‘an empty place that may be occupied by a person’. The stylistic choice of postpositioning ‘for someone’ might then be classified as an inversion, which may be due to thematic or prosodic considerations. The slight difference with the first reading may become clear from its paraphrase ‘to be for a person a place that he or she could occupy’. The emphasis here is on the persona’s sense of fulfilment such a state-of-affairs would mean, rather than on the state itself. The occurrence of the comma in the final line is something of an enigma: it may be there for prosodic reasons (although it doesn’t seem really necessary, from that point of view), but semantically speaking it is almost superfluous.

The opposite is true of the comma occurring in the final line of K/B. Basically, the two paraphrases mentioned above also apply to the phrases used in K/B, but the use of the comma adds an extra semantic possibility to the poem which is not present in K/L-L. The central question that then suggests itself is what the subject is of the infinitive sub-clause of which ‘to stay’ is the predicate.

In the readings I have discussed so far the assumption has been that the (either explicit or implicit) subject of ‘to stay’ has to be ‘someone’, and in the ordinary phrase ‘an empty spot for someone to stay’ there would be no doubt about that. But the comma dividing both constituents makes it an altogether different story, the comma makes it possible that the implicit subject of ‘to stay’ could also be
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‘me’ (or any other phrase co-referential with ‘I’ in the third line). The gist of the persona’s desire, then, may be paraphrased, not by ‘to be a place where someone could stay’, but by ‘to be a place for someone where I could stay’.

At this point we may return to our considerations concerning the semantic effect of the different structures in the second lines, to the concept of ‘emptiness’ that is represented by both images. As we have seen ‘the empty places in the tall grass’ evokes an image of a field of grass in which at some places the grass is flattened. The kind of emptiness that it connotes is linked with the preformedness of the space, with the absence of a formerly present object. Wanting to be an empty place, then, may mean wanting to make oneself devoid of one’s own presence, of one’s own individuality, in order for it to be filled by someone else. In K/B, ‘an empty spot where the grass grows tall’, evokes an image of grass being covered by objects; the emptiness of the spot in this context may mean the availability of the space. The desire of the persona, in that case, may be the desire to be available to the lover.

Semantically speaking, then, the biggest difference between the two poems is that in K/L-L the emphasis is on the role of the Other, on the function the other could have for the persona: he wants to be an empty place in order for it to be filled by someone else; in K/B on the other hand the focus is much more on the question as to the position the persona wishes to take in relation to the other, on what the persona wishes to be for the other, an empty place where he himself could stay.

Although one might say that the topics of the poems are more or less the same in that the poems express a view on the way the relationship between lovers may or should work, the texts differ in the way the topic is substantiated, they express different views. Both may be said to constitute text worlds in that the views are attributable to a subject inhabiting a certain space that may be constructed from the text – perhaps they are minimal worlds, but they are worlds all the same. They are also different worlds in that different views are held in them. The differing views may be considered the effect of differing stylistic choices, of different textual strategies. I will now try to relate these different strategies to the interpretation that gave rise to them, to
the status of the texts as translations.

**Text world and translation**

The two major differences between the poems that have been established during the analysis, the noun phrases in the second lines ('empty places in the tall grass' [K/L-L] as against 'empty spot where the grass grows tall' [K/B]), to which I attributed two different interpretations of 'empty', and the difference in word order between the final lines, may be taken as starting point of a comparison with the original text\(^53\), which will be quoted again in full:

\[
\textit{Een lege plek om te blijven, XIV}
\]

Ga nu maar liggen liefste in de tuin,  
de lege plekken in het hoge gras, ik heb  
altijd gewild dat ik dat was, een lege  
plek voor iemand, om te blijven.  
(Kopland 1980: 18)

In K/L-L the noun phrase corresponds structurally with the source text phrase, whereas K/B on this level deviates from the original. As far as the final line is concerned, the opposite is the case: K/L-L constitutes an inversion relative to ST, whereas in K/B the word order is the same as in the original. In what way have these shifts changed the text world of the original?

That we are able to compare both text worlds is, theoretically speaking, not self-evident, but in this case we may safely assume it is possible, since the skeleton we devised in the first chapter as a *tertium* for the two translations is also applicable to the original, which means there is a common semantic core\(^54\). We may even describe this core in

\(^53\) Since the *armamentarium* developed in Chapter 7 is not yet employed for the analyses in this chapter, these have to be considered pre-systematic. They serve as illustrations by the theoretical points made in this chapter; they are not full-fledged translation descriptions.

\(^54\) This theoretical problem belongs to the domain of the methodology of translation description, and concerns the limits of the equivalence postulate. It will be dealt with in general terms in chapter 7, when I discuss the meth-
terms of the common topic we have established for the translations: the way the relationship between lovers may or should work.

The two ways of elaborating on this topic that have been described above both seem to be present in the source text. De Boer (1988: 98-101) has related them to a regressive and progressive interpretation of ‘lege plek’. The regressive interpretation (‘emptiness is there to be filled’ [De Boer 1988: 99]; my translation) is linked to a symbiotic mother-child relationship, to the desire for a ‘childlike security’ (ibid.) in an adult love relationship. The progressive interpretation may be linked to the notion of availability: the desire is oriented towards ‘leaving the other all space available. Not wanting to model after yourself’ (ibid.).

In the original, then, both readings are present, and are confronted with each other. The relationship between these interpretations is represented by the subtle tension between the title and the final line: between the syntactically context-less and comma-less ‘Een lege plek om te blijven’, and ‘een lege plek voor iemand, om te blijven’. One may take the title as an invitation to consider the comma in the final line as semantically superfluous. In the title, the constituents ‘lege plek’ en ‘om te blijven’ are part of one and the same noun phrase, and, at first sight, one is inclined to link the constituent ‘om te blijven’ to the noun phrase ‘een lege plek voor iemand’ and to consider ‘iemand’ as subject of the non-finite clause predicated by ‘te blijven’; the comma need not be forcibly neglected, in that case, its presence might be explained in terms of the poem’s prosody. This reading may be the most obvious one, but the effect of the final comma is to resist that possibility. The function of the comma, however, is not to annul the obvious reading, but to complicate it. The final comma may be said to combine the function of the other comma’s present in the text. After each of the first two commas the discourse takes another direction, there are no direct cohesive links between the phrases divided by the comma. This is not the case with the phrases separated by the third comma: ‘een lege plek voor iemand’ is co-referential with the second ‘dat’ in the third line55. The final comma, then, adds to the in-

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55 The pronoun ‘dat’ may, of course, also be co-referential with the noun
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determinacy: although it forcefully establishes the possibility of linking 'om te blijven' to the persona, thereby giving rise to the progressive interpretation, it does not altogether obliterate the other possibility. The progressive interpretation is an alternative to the regressive interpretation.

At this point we are able to link the textual strategies of the target texts to specific interpretations of the source text. The effect of the changes in the textual strategy in terms of the recontextualization on the ideational level link up with the way the text world is changed relative to the source text world. K/L-L in this respect links up with the regressive interpretation. The text world has not changed inasmuch as the context of reference still pertains to two subjects engaged in an intimate love relationship. However, as an effect of the inversion (relative to the corresponding constituents in the source text) of 'for someone' and 'to stay', probably due to a reading in which the final comma has been considered superfluous, the view on such a relationship as uttered by the persona did undergo a change. The indeterminacy characteristic of the source text, for which the formal conditions are present in this translation, in the final line is solved. The emphasis is on a relationship in which the ideal role of the Other is an active one, whereas the persona reserves for himself a more passive role.

Although it links up with the progressive interpretation rather than the regressive one, more or less the same holds for K/B: the text world still pertains to two subjects engaged in a relationship, but the persona's view is hardly characterized by indeterminacy. The post-positioning of 'to stay' after a final comma points towards the possibility of linking the sub-clause to the persona, but the progressive reading does not really function as an alternative to another reading. The view uttered in this discourse is that the ideal relationship is one which may endure ('stay') because lovers leave each other room to live their own lives.

phrase in the second line; and one might even say that is indeterminate between cataphoric and anaphoric reference.
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Translation description and text world

Before addressing the final dimension of context to be distinguished in this book, that of culture, I wish to devote a short interlude to the implications of the above considerations for the description of poetic discourse in translation.

I hope to have shown, not only that the comparison of two translations of one and the same original exemplifies the usefulness of the notion of ‘text world’ in describing the differences between them, but also that the term can be put to a fruitful use in the comparison of translation and original.

The notion of ‘text world’ first and foremost links up with the context of reference as it has to be constructed from a text, and therefore with the ideational level. As we have seen in the last two paragraphs, the actual descriptive effort mainly concerns the stylistic differences\(^{56}\) between the texts under comparison, which pertain to the textual level. As a consequence, although the pivotal level for the purposes of my descriptive armamentarium is the ideational level, the initial stages of a descriptive effort has to be directed towards the textual level, the one which presents itself most directly and readily for observation.

The armamentarium will be devised to enable one to describe the consequences of the differences (shifts) between translation and original on the textual level that can be located at the ideational level, in other words, it will be devised to enable one to describe the way in which stylistic differences (checked against the similarities) contribute to changes in terms of the ‘text world’ that can be constructed from the texts. The translational interpretation, in the end, will be described in terms of a recontextualization on the ideational level, in terms of the differences between the text worlds.

The order of the descriptive procedure sketched above (it will be dealt with in full in Chapter 7) chimes in with the ‘hierarchy of instrumentality’ that Leech (1987) proposes with respect to the three levels of communicative transaction, and that was dealt with at the beginning of this chapter. With respect to the relationship between the

\(^{56}\) I will not undertake a separate justification of the concept of style other than in terms of it being textual strategy.
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interpersonal and ideational levels, we have to keep in mind, however, the mechanism that in the process of interpretation of texts the distinction between these levels tends to become blurred, an effect that, in the case of poetic discourse, once more is reinforced by the autotelic character of literature. For our purposes, then, we need not distinguish between the context of utterance (or situation) and the context of reference. Since the intratextual position of the sender and addressee pertains to the context of reference rather than the situational context (and to the relationship between the two), and these entities can be considered subjects in the world of the text, I prefer to speak, in this respect, of the situational dimension of the context of reference.

As we will see in the next paragraph, a similar restriction has to be made with respect to the context of culture.

Context of culture
The third dimension of context that Fowler (1986: 93-96) distinguishes is that of culture. To show the interdependence of the contexts of utterance, reference and culture Fowler uses Robert Browning's well-known dramatic monologue 'My Last Duchess', in which an Italian duke is negotiating his marriage to the daughter of a count with a messenger serving the latter. The greater part of the monologue is devoted to the suspected infidelity of the late last wife of the duke and her punishment. The context of utterance in this poem is mainly determined by the genre conventions of the dramatic monologue, which we dealt with above in the Donne-example. In Fowler's words, Browning's poem

not only [creates] the illusion of a speaking voice, but also the impression of an addressee towards whom the voice is projected, and a sense of location and movement within a physical space (1986: 93).

The context of reference he considers to be 'vaguely antique Italian' (1986: 96), and the 'linguistically relevant context of culture relates to Browning's only slightly archaic English' (ibid.).

The qualification 'linguistically relevant' may be taken as an indication for the complexity of the concept of culture: apparently there
are other dimensions of culture that may be relevant from different points of view. The cultural context does not correspond to one single level in the Halliday/Leech scheme, as is the case with the context of utterance and context of reference. In this context, ‘culture’ is an encompassing concept, in the sense that the other levels are embedded in it, and have their own cultural dimension.

Of the different code levels we considered relevant for translation, linguistic, literary, social and cultural (cf. Chapter 1, ‘Foci of research’), the cultural one may be said to yield the broadest perspective. The norms and conventions that determine the use of the other code levels are to a great extent culture-bound themselves. The differences between linguistic or literary norm systems (whether inter- or intralingual) always point to cultural differences.

From a descriptive point of view this situation fundamentally complicates the distinction of a level of culture within a descriptive apparatus, since this level would, so to speak, absorb the other levels and make them indiscriminate. In that sense, the relationship between them may be compared to the relationship between pragmatics on the one hand and semantics and syntax on the other. Van Leuven-Zwart decides against using a separate category of pragmatic shifts because it would be ‘counterproductive’:

all shifts in translation have a pragmatic component; ultimately all shifts could be called pragmatic (1984: 75-76).

As a result, she prefers to speak of the pragmatic consequences of syntactic shifts.

For our purposes we will distinguish between two aspects of the cultural context: one pertaining to the extratextual category of translator and one pertaining to the cultural dimension of the context of reference. The first aspect links up with ‘culture’ in the anthropological sense: the way in which humankind organizes its environment. We have this level in mind, when we state that ‘translation is an event taking place in culture’, which functions as a form of intercultural communication. Translation, on this level, reflects the cultural identity of a certain society, the way in which a society situates itself in relation to what is alien and what is familiar (cf. for instance Robyns
1994 and 1994a). Earlier we have alluded to this aspect of the cultural context when we dealt with the possibility of putting the translational interpretation into a broader cultural frame (cf. Chapter 2, ‘Intra-, para-, and extratextual dimensions’), that may serve as the basis for an evaluation of the results yielded by the descriptive analysis.

Within the descriptive apparatus I will deal with the cultural dimension of the text world, in terms of the relationship, within the text world of the target text, between specific source culture and target culture elements. With respect to this relationship one might infer from the cultural and linguistic differences between source and target systems, that, to a certain extent, a translation will always be a cultural hybrid. Theoretically one has to account for the possibility of a total naturalization or exoticization, but in actual practice these seem likely to be exceptions.

The extent to which a translation can be a cultural hybrid may be exemplified by a short analysis of the cultural dimension of the context of reference in Jan Eijkelboom’s Dutch translation of Robert Lowell’s well-known poem ‘Skunk Hour’.

Uur van het stinkdier
(voor Elizabeth Bishop)

De rijke dame van Nautilus Eiland
overwintert als kluizenaar in haar Spartaanse huisje;
haar schapen grazen nog boven de zee.
Haar zoon is bisschop. Haar pachter
5
is raadslid in ons dorp,
terwijl zij kindser wordt.

Hongerend naar
de hiërarchie en rust
van Victoria’s tijd
10
koopt zij alles wat
stoort voor haar kust,

57 Again, this analysis does not constitute a full-fledged translation description (cf. note 53 in this chapter). In Chapter 7 I will deal with the relation between ‘Uur van het stinkdier’ and ‘Skunk Hour’ in more detail.
en breekt het af.

't Seizoen is ziek -
wij verloren onze zomermiljonair,
die zó leek te komen uit een L.L. Bean-
catalogus. Zijn snelle jacht
werd bij opbod verkocht aan kreeftenvissers.
Een rode vossevlek bedekt Blue Hill.

En thans knapt onze nicht

20 de decorateur zijn winkel op voor de herfst,
ijn visnet met oranje kurken volgestouwd,
orie zijn schoenlappersbank en els;
ijn werk levert niets op,
hij was liever getrouwd.

Op een donkere avond
klom mijn oude Ford de schedel van de heuvel op;
ik keek uit naar minnaars in auto's.
Zij lagen romp naast romp in het donker,
waar het kerkhof helt naar de stad...

30 Mijn geest is niet in orde.

Een autoradio blaat
'Love, o careless love...' Ik hoor
mijn boze geest snikken in iedere bloedcel,
alsof mijn hand om zijn keel sloot...

35 Zelf 'ben ik de hel;
niemand is hier-

stinkdieren slechts, op zoek
in het maanlicht naar een hap voer.
Ze lopen op hun zolen de Hoofdstraat in:

40 witte strepen, de maan slaat rood vuur uit hun ogen
onderaan de kalkdroge magere spits
van de Kerk der Driëenheid.

Ik sta bovenaan
onze achtertrap, waar ik de zware lucht inadem-
It is interesting to see that in this poem the paradigm of locative elements involving proper names consists of elements from both the Dutch and the Anglo-American cultural repertoire: ‘Nautilus Eiland’ (l. 1), ‘Blue Hill’ (l. 18), ‘Hoofdstraat’ (l. 39) and ‘Kerk der Drieëenheid’ (l. 42). The two strategies that can be mapped out on Holmes’ Cross have both been employed in this paradigm of solutions. ‘Hoofdstraat’ en ‘Kerk der Drieëenheid’ are naturalizations (N), whereas ‘Blue Hill’ constitutes an exoticization (E), and ‘Nautilus Eiland’ is a combination of both (N/E). The differences between both groups may be linked to their function relative to the text world. The exoticizations are employed on those locative elements that enable the reader to link the text world to a geographical element in the extratextual world. Together with other locative elements related to the persons depicted in the first four stanza’s they enable one to specify the location of the text world of this poem as an out of season resort town in New England. The naturalizations occur on locative elements which are related to objects within the text world, and as such can be linked to the strategy employed with respect to other, related, paradigms of cultural elements. The paradigm of animal names (‘stinkdier’ [title], ‘schapen’ [l. 3], ‘kreeften[vissers]’ [l. 17], ‘vosse[vlekk]’ [l. 18], ‘stinkdieren’ [l. 37], ‘moederstinkdier’ [l. 45] and ‘struisvogel[staart] [l. 47]), for instance, as well consists of naturalizations only.

That none of these choices is in any way obvious, and that they can be related, at least partly, to the individual translator58, may be shown by comparing this Dutch translation to other translations. In a

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58 I will deal with this phenomenon later, when I discuss the distinction between optional and obligatory, and constitutive and individual shifts (Cf. Chapter 5). In this particular example, the translation of topographical proper names, the low tolerance for naturalizing no doubt comes into it as well.
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Spanish translation, ‘La Hora de la Mofeta’, (Lowell 1990: 183-198) the paradigm of locative elements has a different division of solutions: ‘la isla Nautilus’ (N/E), ‘Blue Hill’ (E), ‘Main Street’ (E) and ‘la Iglesia de los Trinitarios’ (N). A German translation, ‘Skunk-Stunde’, (Lowell 1982: 51-54) has yet another range of solutions: ‘Nautilus Island’ (E), ‘Blue Hill’ (E), ‘Hauptstraße’ (N) and ‘Trinitarier-Kirche’ (N). Another interesting difference can be noted when the Dutch paradigm of animal names is compared with its German counterpart, which runs as follows: ‘Skunk’ (title), ‘Schafe’ (l. 3), ‘Hummer[fischer]’ (l. 17), ‘Rotfuchs[flecken]’ (l. 18), ‘Skunks’ (l. 37), ‘Mutterskunk’ (l. 45) and ‘Straußen[schwanz]’ (l. 47). Unlike the Dutch translator, the German translator (Manfred Pfister) has considered the cultural element ‘Skunk’ a case in itself, and chose to exotize this lexically and semantically important element.

We have to bear in mind, however, that the line between exotization and naturalization is a fluid one, in the sense that it is not always possible to unproblematically distinguish between what is culture-bound and what is not. In discussing the problem of meaning as cultural unit, Eco discusses a type of unit that may also be recognized as an intercultural unit which remains invariable despite the linguistic symbol with which it is signified (1979: 67).

Whether one recognizes a content-unit as specific to one culture or as intercultural, however, also depends on the relationship between the cultures one compares, and the extent to which they overlap. What is specific to a particular culture, is never totally determined by criteria inherent to that culture. It is also determined by the position from which that culture is viewed upon. Inventing an extreme example, one might say that what is specifically American may be defined differently from a Nepalese point of view than from an English point of view. In that sense the concept of ‘cultural specificity’, to a certain extent, is a relative one. The lexeme ‘Skunk’ does belong to the German linguistic repertoire, in which it no doubt entered as a loan word, and may be considered synonymous to ‘Stinktier’.59 As an exotic ele-

59 In Dutch the situation is somewhat different, since ‘stinkdier’ is sometimes
ment, then, it is to some extent naturalized within the system, and in
that sense the retentive strategy in this text constitutes a diluted form
of exoticization. Within the text, however, and that is what counts
most from our perspective, it does become a ‘strong exoticization’
again, because it is the only exotic element in the paradigm of animal
names.

Whether or not the solutions listed in the above paradigms, or, for
that matter, the paradigms themselves, constitute a shift is a question
that can only be answered after comparing them with the original and
establishing a level of invariance relative to which they constitute a
shift. Taking the cultural element ‘Blue Hill’ for an example, one
might say that, with respect to its purely locative function the exotic-
ization opted for in all three translations does not constitute a shift. In
every sample translation it helps to enable the reader to locate the text
world geographically. There is another level, however, on which the
exoticization does constitute a shift. The source text line in which it
occurs, runs: ‘A red fox stain covers Blue Hill’, and in this co-text
the chromatic antithesis has the rhetorical function of adding to the
sense of incongruity that pervades the persona’s mind, and that cul-
minates in the self-depreciating exclamation ‘My mind’s not right’ (l.
30; Dutch: ‘Mijn geest is niet in orde’). In all three translations the ef-
effect of the exoticizations is to dilute the antithesis, because the two
colour names belong to different linguistic repertoires.

In this example, the choice for exoticizing or naturalizing a cul-
tural element, has its bearing on the rhetorical function of that ele-
ment, and consequently also on the translational interpretation. We
may not assume that this is always the case, but the intercultural char-
acter of translation gives us ample ground to justify the special atten-
tion for the cultural dimension of the context of reference in analyz-
ing a translational interpretation. In the evaluation of a descriptive
analysis, however, one only has to account for those substantial cul-
tural shifts that have their bearing on the translational interpretation.

considered a hypernym relative to ‘skunk’. The use of ‘stinkdier’, then, also
may be seen as a generalization.
Summary
In this chapter the first step has been taken towards the establishment of an armamentarium for the description of poetic discourse in translation. As a means for making visible the translational interpretation, I have introduced the notion of 'text world', to be understood in its fictional, rather than its mimetic dimension.

From the dimensions constituting a text world, and the spatio-temporal relations holding between them, a context can be constructed in order to render the text coherent. As the relevant level of context for my purposes I have postulated the context of reference, which can be related to the ideational level of language use. As two specific aspects deserving special attention I have distinguished a situational and cultural dimension to the context of reference. The situational dimension can be related to the interpersonal level of language use.

A translation may be considered as a specific (re)contextualization of a source text, and the translational interpretation can be made visible by establishing the differences between the target text world and the source text world. Text worlds are constructs of a textual activity, and differences between text worlds are effects of shifts on the textual level.

The way to gain access to a translational interpretation, then, is by describing and evaluating those textual shifts resulting from a comparison between source and target text that have their bearing on the context of reference.

Before trying to outline a comparative procedure for doing precisely that, I will first deal in a more general way with the concept of 'shift', and with its position in the theory and methodology of translation description.