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LOS CUATRO NIVELES DE TRADUCCION
EN UN TEXTO SEGUN G. MOUNIN

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I INTRODUCCION

...inside or between languages,
human communication equals
translation. A study of trans-
lation is a study of language.

George Steiner

Hablar de perfección o imposibilidad en la traducción es caer en los extremos. Pueden discutirse, sin embargo, los niveles de comunicación de un texto, el nivel o los niveles de traducción que requiere, la aproximación a ese texto original por vías diferentes y, posteriormente, el grado de acercamiento al mismo en cada nivel. El propósito de este trabajo es señalar y comentar la presencia de cuatro niveles distintos en una traducción literaria al español: la de "Bartleby", de Herman Melville, por Jorge Luis Borges. Se ha tenido en cuenta, asimismo, una traducción más del mismo relato, a fin de establecer comparaciones dentro de cada nivel. Esta última corresponde a Lesmes Zabal S.

Por lo general, los textos literarios requieren un mayor número de niveles de traducción del que usualmente necesitan los textos conocidos como técnicos. Esta diversidad de niveles permite encontrar paralelismos con otra actividad: La comunica-

ción. En su libro Los problemas teóricos de la traducción (1) Georges Mounin presenta un esquema de niveles de comunicación, el cual sirve de base al presente trabajo para aplicarlo a un análisis tanto del texto original como de las traducciones ya mencionadas de Borges y Zabal.

Cabe hacer la aclaración de que existen, no obstante, dos diferencias importantes en el empleo del esquema: 1) Mounin lo aplica a un fragmento de un poema, a un solo verso, dándole a cada nivel una jerarquía, es decir, adjudicándole varios grados de comunicación en los que el éxito varía; y 2)- lo aplica a un escrito original, no a una traducción. En esta tesina se aplica el esquema al texto original completo y, posteriormente, a diferentes párrafos de las traducciones, según las necesidades de traducción que presenta el texto original, sin significar esto que los niveles sean diferentes desde un punto de vista jerárquico; simplemente son distintos.

Después de considerar una parte del texto que presenta un problema dentro de un nivel determinado, se procede a la comparación de las traducciones del fragmento en ese mismo nivel.

(1) Georges Mounin, Los problemas teóricos de la traducción, versión española de Julio Lago Alonso, 2a. ed., Madrid, Gredos, 1977, p. 210

II PARALELISMO ENTRE NIVELES DE COMUNICACION Y NIVELES DE TRADUCCION

A. Niveles de comunicación

En su obra citada, Mounin toma como ejemplo un verso de Mallarmé para ilustrar una tesis lingüística referente a los grados de la comunicación, y propone un oyente imaginario que puede percibir ese enunciado a varios niveles: "La chair est triste, hélas! et j'ai lu tous les livres".

El primer nivel es el de la "función de comunicación social mínima", en el que "el oyente....comprende el vocabulario y la sintaxis de la frase". (2) Se trata de un nivel de comunicación al cual corresponde una función del lenguaje, "una función comunicativa práctica". (3)

El segundo nivel es el de la "función de elaboración del pensamiento". El oyente imaginario "comprende ya que 'la chair est triste' es un juicio del poeta sobre la vida y los placeres de la carne....comprende también que 'j'ai lu tous les livres' es una expresión hiperbólica". (2) La función del lenguaje correspondiente es -según Mounin- la de "ejercicio intelectual o lógico racional (3), es decir, "una función de instrumento del pensamiento lógico". (4)

El tercer nivel considerado es el de la "función expresi

(2) ibid., p. 211

(3) ibid., p. 213

va de los valores afectivos". "El oyente -dice Mounin- sabe algo de la vida de Mallarmé, de sus ideas. Conoce también las connotaciones culturales en francés, bíblicas, religiosas, filosóficas, morales de la palabra chair (carne). Percibe....el valor del segundo hemistiquio....comprende la desesperación del poeta, que dice....la carne está triste y el espíritu también". (2) A este nivel corresponde la "función expresiva del lenguaje", (3) que es una función de "exteriorización, o de manifestación, o incluso de comunicación de los estados afectivos". (4)

El cuarto nivel es el de la "función estética del lenguaje". El oyente "percibe quizá, más o menos analíticamente la solidez del verso, su equilibrio en la antítesis, sus valores fónicos, la pesantez que se puede dar a su dicción, a pesar de las líquidas, gracias a las oclusivas sordas bien colocadas (triste, tous) — gracias, quizá, también al hecho de que el verso está constituido por diez monosílabos entre once palabras". (2)

El modelo de comunicación que presenta Mounin se ajusta bien a la poesía. Sin embargo, ya que en este trabajo se aplica a la traducción de un texto en prosa, la tarea se dificulta, especialmente en el cuarto nivel, como se ve más adelante.

(4) ibid., p. 204

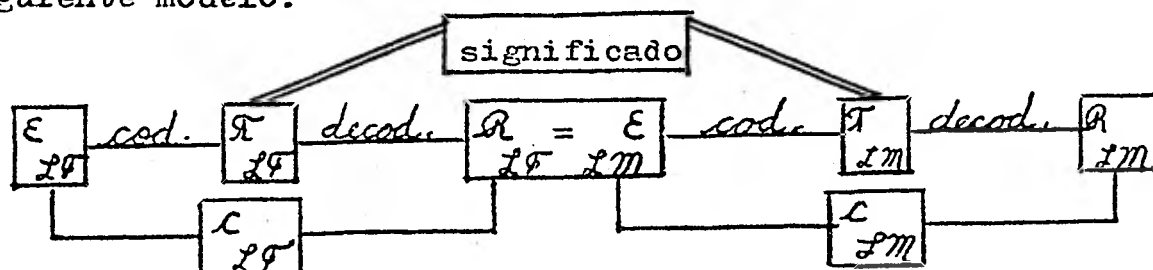
Después de presentar este modelo de comunicación en una misma lengua, Mounin señala escuetamente que, de acuerdo con la lingüística contemporánea, si existen diferentes niveles de realización del acto de comunicación, debe haber "...por consiguiente, también, niveles de traducción...". (5) Este paralelismo potencial entre niveles de comunicación y niveles de traducción resulta interesante para profundizar donde Mounin sólo toca el punto y deja abierta la posibilidad de una investigación.

B. Traducción, comunicación y lenguaje

En términos muy sencillos la traducción puede ser considerada como un acto doble de comunicación. Cuando existe la necesidad, o el deseo de comunicar una idea, una inquietud, intervienen tres factores en ese acto comunicativo: un emisor, un mensaje y un receptor. La comunicación se lleva a efecto si el receptor logra decodificar más o menos satisfactoriamente el mensaje codificado por el emisor. Ahora bien, en la traducción de textos existe un primer emisor (el autor del texto), un mensaje original (el texto) y un primer receptor (el traductor), quien, a su vez, se convierte en nuevo emisor de un mensaje expresado en otra lengua, mensaje que debe llegar a un nuevo

(5) ibid., p. 216

receptor: el lector. Este proceso puede representarse en el siguiente modelo:



E = emisor C = código LF = lenguaje fuente
 R = receptor T = texto LM = lenguaje meta

cod. = codificación
decod. = decodificación

Gran parte de los errores en una traducción se cometen en la fase de recepción del texto por parte del traductor. No se puede transmitir bien lo que no se ha comprendido previamente, o bien se le ha interpretado de manera errónea.

(6) Marlene Rall, "Problemas lingüísticos de la traducción", Perspectiva, año 2, julio, México, U.N.A.M., 1981 (en prensa).

C. Niveles de traducción

Con el objeto de hacer una diferencia entre los niveles de traducción y los niveles de comunicación, en este estudio, se ha modificado ligeramente su denominación. Al mismo tiempo se trata de incluir en la designación de cada nivel a la función del lenguaje correspondiente.

El primer nivel de traducción es el de comunicación mínima básica, es decir, un nivel de comunicación práctica. En este nivel el traductor, como receptor de un mensaje, debe comprender el vocabulario y la sintaxis del texto original. Hecho esto, procede a transmitir el mensaje a la lengua meta con los ajustes mínimos que hagan posible su comprensión por el nuevo receptor: el lector. El mensaje transmitido nuevamente está ahora en la traducción.

Por lo general, este nivel de traducción es el suficiente en los textos de tipo técnico y algunos otros de naturaleza informativa. Como ejemplos se pueden citar un instructivo para el manejo de una cámara fotográfica, en el que ni siquiera es necesario traducir todos los términos (como "flash"), o un manual de normas de seguridad (en una fábrica, en un avión).

Los errores en este nivel son graves, ya que afectan el significado básico del texto original.

2.- El segundo nivel de traducción es de asimilación del pensamiento lógico. En éste se requiere un esfuerzo de tipo intelectual para llegar a la "sustancia", la esencia del texto, la idea que se da en el contexto. Además de comprender el significado de las palabras y la sintaxis, es decir, además de alcanzar el primer nivel de traducción, el traductor tiene que ofrecer al lector la idea más exacta posible de lo que el autor quiso decir. El significado de las ideas, la lógica del mensaje original es lo más importante en este nivel.

Hay entonces que buscar la equivalencia ya no de cada palabra, sino de la idea del autor en la lengua meta. Tal vez sea necesario cambiar, omitir o incluso añadir palabras a fin de transmitir mejor el mensaje original. El criterio del traductor al elegir la idea equivalente más adecuada es tanto o más importante que las opciones aisladas que le puede brindar un diccionario bilingüe.

Entre los textos en los que este nivel de traducción es indispensable están los filosóficos, los psicológicos, los médicos. ¿Cómo traducir al inglés un enunciado en el que se hace la diferencia entre el "ser" o el "no ser", y el "estar" o "no estar"? Unicamente comenetrándose con el juicio particular sobre la vida y la existencia que el autor esté expresando.

3.- En el tercer nivel de traducción, un nivel de comunicación de los valores afectivos mediante la función expresiva del lenguaje, reside lo que Eugene Nida llama "el espíritu del texto". (6) El traductor debe tratar de captar "el sentimiento y el tono originales del mensaje" (7), así como las circunstancias (la situación única) en las que se produjo el texto. En este nivel, la personalidad del escritor es muy importante para interpretar el texto original, ya que trasciende al mensaje comunicado.

Textos que requieren este nivel son, por ejemplo: una autobiografía, una colección de cartas, un discurso político, un sermón religioso.

4.- El cuarto nivel de traducción será el de expresión del lenguaje estético. En este nivel es esencial profundizar todavía más en el texto original para captar la calidad de la expresión y transmitirla en la lengua meta, hasta donde sea posible, sin detrimento grave de los otros niveles de traducción. El traductor debe poner en juego su talento para percibir los valores inmanentes a la obra como, por ejemplo, la fuerza o la suavidad de la expresión, el equilibrio de los enunciados,

(6) E. Nida, Towards a Science of translation, Leiden, Holanda, E. J. Brill (EJB), 1964, p. 3

(7) ibid., p. 3

la belleza de las imágenes o los giros del lenguaje cuando éstos tienen trascendencia y valor estético en sí mismos, es decir, cuando no desempeñan la función secundaria de atraer la atención del lector sobre alguna idea perteneciente a otro nivel de comunicación.

Más que traducciones, los trabajos realizados en este cuarto nivel son versiones de quienes, además de dominar la técnica de la traducción, poseen cierto grado de sensibilidad artística. Ejemplos de textos que requieren este nivel son: una novela, una obra de teatro, un poema. (Con respecto a la traducción de poesía, Octavio Paz comenta que:

el punto de partida del traductor no es el lenguaje en movimiento, materia prima del poeta, sino el lenguaje fijo del poeta. Lenguaje congelado y, no obstante, perfectamente vivo. Su operación es inversa a la del poeta: no se trata de construir con signos móviles un texto inamovible sino desmontar los elementos de ese texto, poner de nuevo en circulación los signos y devolverlos al lenguaje.....la traducción es una operación paralela, aunque en sentido inverso, a la creación poética.)(8)

Como una última observación a estos cuatro niveles cabe mencionar la diferencia entre los dos primeros y los dos últimos, así como los problemas que en cada caso afronta el traductor los cuales sintetiza E. Nida de la manera siguiente:

(8) Octavio Paz, El signo y el garabato, 2a. edición, México, Joaquín Mortiz, 1975, p. 66

...Similarly, the translator is caught in the dilemma of "letter vs spirit" for in being faithful to the things talked about, he can destroy the spirit that pervades an original communication. At the same time, if he concentrates too much upon trying to reproduce the original 'feeling' and 'tone' of the message, he may be accused of playing loose with the substance of the document — the letter of the law (9).

D. Selección de un texto por sus niveles de traducción

Para poder aplicar el esquema de Mounin a un texto literario se seleccionó "Bartleby", de Herman Melville, por lo siguiente: amén de hacer patentes los cuatro niveles de traducción en un mismo texto, muestra los problemas de interpretación que han de afrontarse en cada uno de aquellos, como se verá más adelante.

En el capítulo siguiente se procede a una serie de comentarios críticos sobre el texto original y sus necesidades de traducción. En la división posterior se trata de analizar en qué medida las traducciones de Borges y Zabal logran sus objetivos en los cuatro niveles, a fin de apreciar la fidelidad, adecuación y calidad estética de cada una, utilizando el modelo de Mounin como parámetro para evaluar las traducciones de manera más diferenciada.

(9) Nida, op. cit., p. 3

III ALGUNOS COMENTARIOS CRITICOS SOBRE EL TEXTO ORIGINAL

Para poder localizar los niveles de traducción de un texto dado es necesario un estudio previo del original. Mediante éste se buscan en la obra las características más sobresalientes cuya traducción es imprescindible en cada nivel, y -donde existan- las que hay que sacrificar. Por otra parte, el título de este capítulo del estudio implica la noción de que, más que un análisis exhaustivo, se requiere un estudio breve del texto; el tipo de investigación que un traductor presionado por el tiempo necesita realizar.

Todo texto literario a la vez que despierta inquietudes en el lector, plantea una serie de interrogantes. El traductor como primer receptor puede responder o no a esas preguntas; pero en tanto que funge como nuevo emisor debe, al menos, tener en mente la contestación a tres interrogantes fundamentales: ¿Cuál es el posible significado del texto? ¿Cómo logra el autor expresar ese significado? ¿Qué tan efectivamente lo hace? (10)

A la par del planteamiento de esas preguntas y de otras más que surgen a lo largo del estudio de "Bartleby", se proponen necesidades de traducción en cada nivel para analizar su

(10) Colin White et al., "Ejercicios de apreciación crítica y redacción", Módulo de prácticas acumulativas I (primer semestre), Letras Modernas, S.U.A., México, U.N.A.M., 1980, p. 5

solución en el capítulo IV.

Una lectura general de todo el texto es indispensable.

Las diferentes interrogantes que la obra plantea y las necesidades de la traducción de la misma pueden cambiar o dejar de existir conforme se avanza en la lectura. La unidad del texto original no debe perderse de vista.

En principio, por ser "Bartleby" un texto literario, se lo puede traducir directamente al nivel del lenguaje estético atendiendo a los otros niveles cuando se mezclen entre sí. Sin embargo, por razones de objetividad, se hace primeramente el estudio del texto en cada uno de los niveles de comunicación para detectar sus necesidades y problemas, y después se analizan esos problemas del texto original por sus niveles de traducción.

Al nivel de comunicación mínima, "Bartleby" es un relato en el que el personaje narrador -un abogado neoyorkino "de cierta edad" quien siente que "el modo más simple de vivir es el mejor"- (11) da cuenta de como un supuesto expleado de la Oficina de Cartas Muertas de Washington irrumpe en su despacho, su vida y su mente.

(11) Herman Melville, "Bartleby", Billy Budd, Sailor and Other Stories, Introduction by Harold Beaver, Great Britain, Penguin Books, 1970, p. 59 ("rather elderly" "the easiest way of life is the best." La traducción es mía).

En este primer nivel, el análisis se concentra en el me-
ro argumento, en el hilo de la narración. Las necesidades de la
traducción en este nivel y las interrogantes surgidas del análi-
sis son, en esencia, las siguientes:

El texto requiere un amplio margen de fidelidad a la
narración y a la descripción; al vocabulario ("palabras para ob-
jetos", "palabras para acontecimientos", "abstractos modifico-
res de las dos primeras clases" y "términos relacionales") y a
la sintaxis ("las relaciones entre estas cuatro clases de pala-
bras"). (12) Es a través de los ojos del narrador, de sus jui-
cios, de sus descripciones y su relato de los hechos como se co-
noce la historia a un primer nivel de comunicación.

En el texto original abundan los "abstractos" modifico-
res -adverbios y adjetivos-. ¿Qué importancia tienen en la
obra?, ¿En qué orden se deben presentar los adjetivos?, ¿como
epítetos? Para traducir términos que no tienen un equivalente
exacto en la lengua fuente, ¿hasta dónde es pertinente dar una
definición? ¿Qué tan grave puede resultar omitir, añadir o cam-
biar palabras en un texto?

(12) c.f. Mounin, op. cit., p. 292 ("Las cuatro grandes partes
de la oración ... en todas las lenguas del mundo", según
E. Nida).

En el nivel de elaboración del pensamiento la atención se enfoca hacia los personajes, los conceptos, el trasfondo ideológico de la obra. En este nivel se comprende que la actitud de Bartleby es una reacción en contra de una sociedad o de una vida sin sentido en medio de "cartas muertas". Bartleby encarna el conflicto de un individuo que rehúsa obedecer y aceptar las normas de una sociedad. Bartleby es la imagen de un nihilismo absoluto, suicida, o tal vez de una resistencia pasiva; imagen que se repite y se repite hasta convertirse en un símbolo. Bartleby es, a este nivel, algo más que un loco o un intruso. Su presencia se convierte en algo obsesivo, abrumante; penetra en el subconsciente del narrador, e incluso en el de los otros escribanos. Bartleby se hace dueño de la situación...sin hacer nada.

"Bartleby" es un texto de carácter descriptivo profundo. Los personajes y las acciones son representativas de la existencia humana y sus complicados procesos mentales. En efecto, y particularmente en esta obra, Melville se anticipa a Twain, James, Kafka, al mismo D. H. Lawrence, a Dylan Thomas, en el manejo de recursos psicológicos más profundos en la literatura. (por ejemplo, el juego de fuerzas opuestas -Bartleby y el abogado-).

Al respecto, Borges afirma que "Bartleby" "define ya un género que hacia 1919 reinventaría y profundizaría Franz Kafka: el de las fantasías de la conducta y del sentimiento o, como

ahora malamente se dice, psicológicas". (13)

En esta obra el autor ha echado mano de figuras retóricas pleneadas, calculadas, pensadas; metáforas válidas, concebidas cuidadosamente y que -a este nivel- obran en función de la claridad de las ideas expuestas en el texto.

Las necesidades de traducción e interrogantes son las siguientes:

La fidelidad al original debe extenderse a (y concentrarse en) las ideas expuestas en el texto -ideas que pueden pertenecer al narrador o al autor- tal y como Melville las enuncia. Aquí se debe ser fiel a la estructura de la lengua y a la organización que de ella ha hecho el autor. Se debe buscar y respetar la visión ideológica que nos da el narrador a través del texto y descubrir, cuando autor y narrador son diferentes, dónde se separan. En "Bartleby" el traductor debe trabajar sobre la experiencia ideológica en dos lenguas -y dos épocas- diferentes. Igualmente, debe tratar de captar la presencia de agentes distractores -diseminados por la obra para darles el carácter de tales- sin que su importancia en la traducción decaiga o se exceda.

¿Por qué se considera a "Bartleby" un relato importante dentro de la narrativa? ¿Qué ideas importantes se manejan en esa obra? ¿De qué medios, de qué figuras retóricas se vale el

(13) Borges en prólogo a Bartleby, de Herman Melville, 2a. ed., Lá nave de los locos, México, Premiá, 1978, p. 11

autor para elaborar su narración? Para salvar la autenticidad de las ideas expuestas en el original, ¿deben traducirse todos los términos, incluso los nombres propios y los títulos de los libros que se mencionan ahí?

Al nivel de expresión de los valores afectivos "Bartleby" es el segundo texto que Melville publica (1853) después del fracaso inicial de su novela Moby Dick (Pierre se publica en 1852 sin éxito alguno). La situación del escritor es apremiante: tiene que difundir sus trabajos en publicaciones periódicas; desea triunfar, pero su público, que antes lo había aclamado, no lo comprende más. Los críticos no lo aceptan, tiene problemas con los editores. Está enfermo. Y pese a ser parte y producto de la cultura y la lengua de esa época -al igual que su autor-, la obra de Melville deja de satisfacer las expectativas de su público, con lo cual las posibilidades de éxito se reducen considerablemente:

...The author's ambiguous attitude towards nature and God were out of tune with the optimistic, romantic, Transcendental temper of the age, and its symbolistic style run counter to the new realism in fiction writing. (14)

(14) "Melville, Herman," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 15, p. 135

Melville se manifiesta, además, en contra de un liberalismo que en nombre del progreso económico maneja la doctrina cristiana (protestante) a su entender -y eso no le agrada al público-.

Para algunos críticos, Melville busca el éxito en "Bartleby" tratando de imitar a Dickens -autor de fama en aquella época de humorismo en Norteamérica- en la caricaturización de personajes como Turkey, Nippers, Ginger Nut. Es posible también que Melville -consciente o inconscientemente- se burle un poco del público que no supo apreciar su gran novela Moby Dick, reduciendo así -en apariencia- el nivel de dificultad en la nueva obra mediante una serie de explicaciones innecesarias (si bien usuales en las publicaciones periódicas, cuyos lectores son más heterogéneos y su número, mayor).

En "Bartleby" hay elementos autobiográficos de su autor -quien fue empleado de un abogado, tenía un hermano abogado también y conocía bien la vida de oficina- y subtemas recurrentes en la obra del mismo (encantamientos -cuando los empleados comienzan a repetir la palabra "preferir-", los huérfanos sin hogar, una cierta relación de tipo homosexual). (15)

El lenguaje empleado en la obra sigue, en cierta forma, la convención de la época de emplear términos y expresiones bíblicas: "Bartleby was billeted upon me for some Mysterious purpose of an all-wise Providence...., (16) "A new commandment give

(15) cf. H.Beaver en prólogo a Melville, op. cit., Billy Budd.
p. 21

(16) Ibid. p. 89

I unto you, that ye love one another," (17) "...or sweet charity's sake." (18)

Las necesidades de la traducción en este nivel y algunas de las preguntas que surgen son las siguientes:

a) Localizar los pasajes donde el autor se infiltra en el relato, cambia el tono del narrador o hay un juicio que trasciende sus propias opiniones. (Conociendo la vida de Melville, así como sus ideas, se puede percibir que el narrador es un personaje más cuyos juicios y opiniones difieren de los del autor, no así sus descripciones de los estados anímicos y de la realidad material).

b) Tener en cuenta las diferentes connotaciones (religiosas -bíblicas-, del lenguaje judicial) y los valores afectivos complementarios mediante los cuales se añade algo más a la denotación de las palabras (e.g. la palabra amigo es diferente -afectivamente- de amiguito, amigote, amigazo; o -para emplear un ejemplo tomado de "Bartleby"- "ain't he" es diferente de isn't he").

¿Qué reacciones y sentimientos hay en la narración?
 ¿Qué grado de ambigüedad presentan algunas partes del texto?
 ¿Cuál es el tono de la narración? ¿Hay elementos autobiográficos sobresalientes? ¿Por qué escoge Melville al gremio de los escribanos?

(17) Ibid. p. 88

(18) Ibid. p. 88

En el nivel del lenguaje estético se comprende que, si bien "Bartleby" es un texto en prosa, en muchos de sus pasajes tiene tintes eufónicos y poéticos, tanto en la sustancia gráfica predominante -se trata de un texto escrito- como en el potencial fónico. Existe una intención latente de que la obra entre no sólo por los ojos, sino por los oídos. "El silencio de la página -dice Octavio Paz- no deja escuchar la escritura,al leer oímos y al oír vemos". (19)

En el texto hay un cierto efecto visual y auditivo, una comunicación fónica y gráfica que se logra mediante: . . .

La aliteración: "...till tea-time" / "fellow-feeling"
 "ground-glass folding doors"
 "corps of copysts"

Por lo general, Melville se sirve de la aliteración en los modificadores y las palabras que éstos modifican, aunque a veces la usa con propósitos meramente musicales o irónicos?

"...gentleman might smile, and sentimental souls might weep...."

(19) Octavio Paz, op. cit., Cap. I "La modernidad y sus desenlaces", p. 17

La asonancia: (principalmente interna):

"rounded and orbicular sound"

"green folding screen"

"which might isolate from my sight"

La onomatopeya: "...the scrape of his pen blending with the crunching of the crisp particles in his mouth."

El ritmo: Hay cierta tendencia de Melville a terminar sus oraciones en (/ ~ \) una sílaba acentuada seguida de dos sílabas más débiles -la segunda, a veces, con un acento secundario-:

"and closed the eyes" "murmured I"

El énfasis y

la entonación: A través de medios propios de la escritura (combinaciones de letras, puntuación, cursivas y mayúsculas):

"...that is all I know of him..."

Las necesidades de traducción en este nivel son, en esencia, las siguientes: Preservar, hasta donde sea posible, la belleza fónica del texto (la preocupación del autor por la eufonía es manifiesta), mantener la calidad de las figuras del lenguaje, conservar la singularidad en la expresión sin detrimento del lenguaje meta.

NOTA: Las necesidades de la traducción de "Bartleby", así como las interrogantes que plantea este mismo texto en cada uno de los niveles, serán estudiadas mediante ejemplos en el siguiente capítulo. Algunas de ellas se han resuelto ya en los comentarios al texto original, por lo que no se repetirán como problemas en la próxima sección.

IV COMENTARIOS SOBRE LAS TRADUCCIONES

En este capítulo se presentan unos cuantos pasajes de "Bartleby" en cuyas traducciones se advierten o no los diferentes niveles sugeridos por Mounin. Estos ejemplos se seleccionaron con base en dos criterios:

1) Se tuvieron en cuenta las necesidades de la traducción en cada uno de los niveles señalados en el capítulo anterior.

2) Se consideraron aquellos ejemplos que se logró delimitar y aislar un poco más efectivamente. (En la realidad, la división por niveles de traducción -que en el presente trabajo se ha llevado a cabo para el análisis- es sumamente difícil, ya que -al igual que sucede en los niveles de comunicación- se entrelazan y se mezclan continuamente en un mismo texto y no se los puede separar con facilidad.

Después de presentar cada ejemplo, se compara, en cada caso, cómo codifican ambos traductores el mensaje original, con sus interrogantes, su ambigüedad, indeterminación, precisión o belleza para transmitirlo a la lengua meta.

La señal que anuncia la existencia de un problema de traducción es la falta de coincidencia del texto original con una de las traducciones, o bien, con ambas. Cuando las dos

versiones difieren entre sí, es posible que en una de ellas este la solución más adecuada, o que ambas sean erróneas, o insuficientes en sus respectivos niveles.

Para facilitar la ubicación de los diferentes pasajes de "Bartleby" cuya traducción se va a comentar, se procedió a dividir obra en seis partes numeradas en notación romana. A cada párrafo de cada una de las seis partes corresponde un número arábigo

- Parte I- Desde la introducción del relato hasta la llegada de Bartleby a la oficina del abogado. (13 párrafos)
- " II- Desde la llegada de Bartleby hasta la primera vez que se niega a trabajar. (7 párrafos)
- " III- Desde la primera negativa hasta que el narrador se resigna a tolerar la actitud de Bartleby. (18 párrafos)
- " IV- Desde ese momento de resignación -por lástima- hasta que Bartleby se rehúsa a copiar. (25 párrafos)
- " V- Desde esa segunda negativa de Bartleby hasta que el abogado decide abandonar la oficina. (25 párrafos)
- " VI- Desde la separación del abogado y Bartleby hasta la muerte de este último. (25 párrafos)
- VII- Epílogo.

A- Nivel de comunicación mínima básica

1. Problemas y ejemplos.

En el ejemplo siguiente ambas traducciones se oponen entre sí. Sólo una puede ser correcta:

(I 9') Melville: Among the manifestations of his diseased ambition....

Borges: Entre las manifestaciones de su ambición enfermiza

Zabal: Entre las manifestaciones de su enfermedad ambiciosa

En la segunda traducción se imita la sintaxis del inglés con resultados deplorables. Se ha confundido al adjetivo con un sustantivo y viceversa. La expresión enfermedad ambiciosa no es coherente y no corresponde al original.

Este tipo de error en el que se altera la relación entre los términos se repite varias veces en la traducción de Zabal y, en ocasiones, también en la de Borges:

- pitiably respectable traducido por Zabal como respetablemente lastimosa

- a certain unconscious air of pallid ...haughtiness traducido por Borges como

cierto aire de inconsciente, de descolorida..altivez

(En el primer caso Borges traduce la expresión como lamentablemente decente. En el segundo, Zabal traduce como aire

inconsciente).

Es probable que estos errores se cometan por traducir demasiado aprisa, por descuido, o por no comprender el texto como en el siguiente caso:

(III 13) M. Poor fellow! thought I, he means no mischief; it is plain he intends no insolence; his aspect sufficiently evinces that his eccentricities are involuntary.

B. ¡Pobre hombre! pensé yo, no lo hace por mal; es evidente que no procede por insolencia; su aspecto es suficiente prueba de lo involuntario de sus rarezas.

Z. "¡Pobre hombre!", pensaba. "No quiere causar daño alguno; resulta claro que sus excentricidades son involuntarias.

La interpretación en la segunda de las traducciones es incorrecta. Lo que resulta claro en el original no es lo involuntario de sus excentricidades, sino el hecho de no causar daño alguno o de no proceder por insolencia. Es el aspecto el que muestra sus involuntarias rarezas.

En el caso de la traducción literaria estos descuidos acaban por deteriorar y falsear las obras ante los ojos de los nuevos lectores. En la traducción técnica, un error o una omisión de esta naturaleza pueden ocasionar desde la destrucción de un aparato hasta la muerte de alguien si se trata de un texto de química o medicina.

En el ejemplo siguiente hay un problema muy serio:

(VI 15) M: 'Bartleby, this is a friend; you will find him very useful to you.'

'Your sarvant, sir, your sarvant,' said the grub-man, making a low salutation behind his apron. 'Hope you find it pleasant here, sir; nice grounds -cool apartments- hope you'll stay with us sometime -try to make it agreeable. What will you have for dinner to-day?'

B -Bartleby, éste es un amigo; usted lo encontrará muy útil.

-Servidor, señor, servidor -dijo el despensero, haciendo un lento saludo, detrás del delantal-. Espero que esto le resulte agradable, señor; lindo césped, departamentos frescos, espero que pase un tiempo con nosotros, trataremos de hacérselo agradable. ¿Qué quiere cenar hoy?

Z -Bartleby, le presento al señor Cutlets. Le será utilísimo.

-Servidor de usted, señor, servidor de usted -dijo el cocinero haciendo una profunda reverencia tras su delantal-. Espero que se encuentre a gusto aquí señor; terrenos amplios..., habitaciones frescas, señor; espero que estará con nosotros algún tiempo..., haremos lo posible para hacerle grata su estancia. ¿Podremos tener el placer, la señora Cutlets y yo, de contar con su compañía para la cena, señor, en la habitación privada de la señora Cutlets?

En la segunda traducción hay una invitación --¿Podremos tener el placer, la señora Cutlets y yo, de contar con su compañía para la cena, señor, en la habitación privada de la señora Cutlets?-- que no aparece en el original; como tampoco existe ninguna Sra. Cutlets, ningún "cocinero" que lleve por nombre --¿o por mal nombre?-- Cutlets, ni tampoco una habitación privada.

En la misma traducción de Zabal se puede apreciar que ese incidente está fuera del contexto; no tiene ningún sentido. De no existir esta parte de la traducción de Zabal en alguna de las fuentes originales (no aparece en ninguna de las ediciones consultadas), más que una alteración de la obra, es to constituiría un engaño a los lectores.

En el ejemplo siguiente se advierte la necesidad de definir un objeto para transmitirlo más fielmente al lector:

- (II 3) M. ground-glass folding doors
 B. puerta vidriera
 Z. mampara de cristal esmerilado

Hay una gran diferencia entre un vidrio común y un vidrio esmerilado: una visión clara, o borrosa, a través de ellos. La segunda traducción es mejor, más efectiva, porque la imagen borrosa mencionada tiene --más adelante-- implicaciones importantes en otros niveles del texto. Sin embargo, existe un

error: Después de haber buscado el significado de ground-glass (vidrio esmerilado), el traductor añade que llegaba hasta el suelo, repitiendo ground que ya estaba traducida y que forma parte de una expresión compuesta.

Otro ejemplo interesante en cuanto a la traducción de modificadores es el siguiente (Este ejemplo es, como se aprecia después, difícilmente separable del siguiente nivel. Por lo tanto sirve, más que como un ejemplo del nivel de comunicación mínima básica, como puente entre éste y el nivel de asimilación del pensamiento lógico):

- (II 2) M. ...upon the flighty temper of Turkey,
and the fiery one of Nippers.
- B. ...en el arrebatado carácter de Turkey,
y en el fogoso de Nippers.
- Z. ...sobre el temple inconstante de Pavo
y sobre el temperamento arrebatado de
Pinzas.

La opción "arrebatado" la seleccionan ambos

traductores. Lo malo del asunto es que uno de ellos lo aplica a Pinzas y el otro a Turkey. Lógico es que exista una diferencia entre Turkey y Nippers ¿Cuáles son los adjetivos más cercanos al original?

Turkey o Pavo es descrito por Melville, a lo largo de la narración con los siguientes adjetivos (entre otros):

energetic, incautious, noisy, impatient, excentric, rash, insolent, ("there was a strange, inflamed, flurried, flighty recklessness of activity around him;" "Before 12 o'clock he is civil, bland and reverential;" "He is like a restive horse."

Nippers o Pinzas es, por su parte:

"Victim of two evil powers: ambition and indigestion;" nervous, irritable, discontent, "with a brandy-like disposition.

El problema de traducir flighty y fiery no se resuelve con buscar la opción en el diccionario bilingüe, sino que es preciso hacer un repaso de los adjetivos con los que Melville describe a Turkey y a Nippers -respectivamente- para localizar la palabra que resume el temperamento de cada quien.

El término inconstante queda descartado por ser una característica común de Pavo y Pinzas. Es una solución pobre, porque no aporta nada nuevo a la descripción y no distingue entre uno y otro. Ambos traductores usan arrebatado para distinto personaje. Esta palabra se aviene un poco más al carácter de Turkey. Arrebatado significa rash, crazy; por lo tanto caracterize un poco mejor a Turkey, aunque no es del todo disparata-

do aplicarlo a Pinzas. flighty tiene entre otros significados -que, en efecto, se relacionan con la volubilidad- el de "alocado" (voluble significa changeable, fickle).

El término fiery significa fogoso, impetuoso, vehemente; algo que viene con la naturaleza de Nippers. Esta traducción -fogoso- es más acertada para definir el carácter de Nippers.

Ardiente, impetuoso, lleno de fuego son sinónimos de fogoso. Esa es la diferencia entre Turkey y Nippers, uno se "descompone" por el alcohol, por un factor externo; el otro es de "naturaleza alcohólica"-aunque no beba -.

2. Conclusiones.

En este nivel, las necesidades de la traducción planteadas en el capítulo anterior se satisfacen, en ambos casos, en lo que respecta a la fidelidad a la narración. Las diferencias entre una y otra traducción radican principalmente en las descripciones y el manejo de las relaciones de los términos entre sí, es decir, la sintaxis. La descripción de las características psicológicas de los personajes y del ambiente -descripción que es aún más importante que la de las características físicas- depende en gran medida de la comprensión del texto original como una unidad; comprensión en la que Borges supera a Zabal. Borges pone en labios del narrador un lenguaje "jocoso" en el que es frecuente que los adjetivos se presenten antes de los sustantivos, dándole a las cualidades un carácter esencial.

B- Nivel de asimilación del pensamiento lógico

1. Problemas y ejemplos.

Las figuras retóricas apelan a la inteligencia o al razonamiento más que al sentimiento. El lenguaje oblicuo, indirecto, no es siempre privativo de la literatura. En el ejemplo siguiente se puede detectar una de las numerosas elipsis en el texto de Melville:

(III 2) Melville I looked at him steadfastly. His face was leanely composed; his grey eye dimly calm.

Borges Lo miré con atención. Su rostro estaba tranquilo; sus ojos grises, vagamente serenos.

Zabal Lo miré fijamente. Su flaco rostro aparecía compuesto; sus grises ojos estaban apagadamente tranquilos.

En la primera traducción se observa cómo el autor emplea una expresión elíptica en la segunda oración. El verbo omitido -estar- no hace falta pues se sobreentiende y, por tanto, no es necesario añadirlo o añadir uno nuevo, como sucede en la segunda traducción.

La elipsis es "aquella figura de construcción que permí

te callar u omitir palabras que no son indispensables para la claridad del concepto, pero que sí lo son para que la oración esté completa".(20) En el ejemplo siguiente hay una comparación, un símil:

(III 15) M. It was afternoon, be it remembered. Turkey sat glowing like a brass boiler; his bald head steaming, his hands reeling among his blotted papers.

B. Hay que recordar que era de tarde. Turkey resplandecía como una marmita de bronce; tenía empapada la calva; tamborileaba con las manos sobre sus papeles borroneados.

Z. Recuérdese que era ya la tarde. Pavo estaba incandescente como una estufa de latón, con su calva echando humo, y las manos alborotando sus emborroneados papeles.

La traducción de brass puede ser latón o bronce. Pero en este caso hay una comparación entre el color de la marmita (boiler no significa estufa) o cacerola y la cara de Turkey. Se puede percibir que Melville se refiere al tono rojizo de la cara de Turkey; el color de su rostro es como el del bronce. El texto mismo da la solución para elegir entre latón y bronce.

Como sucede en el primer nivel, el mensaje está centrado en el contexto, solo que ahora se debe buscar, además, la precisión, las connotaciones más exactas de las palabras -ya no sólo la denotación general-.

(20) Miguel Salinas, Construcción y escritura de la lengua española, primera ed. revisada por Ernestina Salinas, México, Aldina, 1968, p. 395

La elección precisa de términos equivalentes -en vez de dar la definición completa de palabras del texto original- es un factor importante, económico, que demuestra cómo maneja la lengua el traductor. Considérese el ejemplo siguiente: Melville emplea el término attorney, Borges lo traduce como procurador, y Zabal, como abogado.

La traducción de Zabal no falsea el original; sin embargo, no brinda el significado completo. Borges recurre a un término más preciso, más específico. Allí donde Zabal dice abogado, en el argot del Derecho se distingue y se nombra al defensor, al fiscal, al asesor legal, al representante legal, al perito en Derecho, etc. En inglés se distingue y se nombra al attorney, attorney at law, attorney general, (21) cuyas funciones son distintas, respectivamente.

La opción abogado puede aceptarse en la comunicación mínima básica, pero no en este segundo nivel. Procurador es "quien ejecuta algo en nombre de otro/ el que por oficio en los tribunales hace, a petición de una de las partes, todas las diligencias necesarias". (22) Ese es el cargo del abogado "Bartleby". Ese es el significado de attorney.

Otro ejemplo de precisión es el siguiente:

(21) "Attorney Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, p. 73

(22) "Procurador", Pequeño Larousse Ilustrado, p. 841

(IV 2) M. ...One prime thing was this -he was always there-, first in the morning, continually through the day, and the last at night. I had a singular confidence in his honesty. I felt my most precious papers perfectly safe in his hands,

B. ...En primer lugar siempre estaba ahí, el primero por la mañana, durante todo el día, y el último por la noche. Yo tenía singular confianza en su honestidad. Sentía que mis documentos más importantes estaban perfectamente seguros en sus manos.

Z. ...Por encima de todo, destacaba lo siguiente: siempre estaba allí; era el primero por la mañana, permanecía durante todo el día y era el último en salir por la noche. Sentía yo una confianza singular en su honradez. Consideraba que en sus manos estaban perfectamente seguros mis documentos más preciosos

Sin llegar a ser un cognado totalmente falso, y pertenecer por ello al nivel de comunicación mínima básica, el término honestidad no equivale totalmente a honesty. La traducción -en este contexto- de honesty por honradez es más adecuada. Honestidad equivale más bien a decency, modesty, chastity, purity, decorum, propriety (si bien puede significar honesty en el sentido de unrightness: rectitud, probiada). (23)

(23) c.f. Webster's, op, cit.

En "Bartleby" el autor maneja una serie de conceptos e ideas que es indispensable comprender para poder traducirlas con más precisión y seguridad. Considérense los ejemplos siguientes:

(III 13) M. Nothing so aggravates an earnest person as a passive resistance.

B. Nada exaspera más a una persona seria que una resistencia pasiva.

Z. Nada molesta más a una persona seria que la resistencia pasiva.

Emplear en la traducción un artículo determinado, o uno indeterminado cambia la idea exacta del original. Al optar por el artículo la y referirse a la resistencia pasiva, Zabal le da a esa expresión un carácter de algo consabido del autor y del receptor; es decir, se presta a que el lector actual pueda pensar que Melville está hablando de la resistencia pasiva como movimiento pacifista tal y como se la conoce después de Gandhi. Es muy cierto que el término resistencia pasiva ya había sido empleado en tiempos de Melville por Thoreau (y desde Lutero, entre los protestantes), quien influiría años más tarde en Gandhi para denominar la estrategia pacifista en pro de la independencia de La India.

Melville hace uso de esa idea en "Bartleby" para dar más fuerza a la alegoría de la libertad mediante la suspensión de las labores -curiosamente otra característica del movimiento de

Gandhi-; sin embargo, conviene mantener en la traducción la ambigüedad, lo vago del artículo una para acompañar esa expresión. Por más interesantes que sean todas estas consideraciones, es preferible ser fiel al original.

Como se comentó ya en el capítulo tercero, "Bartleby" es una precursora de la novela moderna. Se le considera entre las primeras obras que introducen una dimensión psicológica profunda y compleja en la narrativa. Los personajes son caracteres complejos, que sufren diversos conflictos mentales y diferentes tipos de neurosis- como los dos personajes ingleses de la historia: Turkey y Nippers. El narrador, ante la actitud excéntrica de Bartleby, es víctima de ciertos desequilibrios y trastornos que afectan su conducta. Considérese el ejemplo siguiente:

En un momento de absoluta impotencia para deshacerse de Bartleby, el personaje narrador se refugia en la lectura de dos libros: 'Edwards on the Will' (sic) y 'Priestley on Necessity' (sic) (el autor no subraya, ni separa los títulos de los autores). Después de la lectura de esas obras, el narrador cambia radicalmente de actitud y estado de ánimo. Aquí se presenta el dilema de traducir o no los títulos.

(V-17) M. ...at leisure intervals I looked a little into 'Edwards on the Will' and 'Priestley on Necessity.'

B. ...en momentos de ocio, revisé "Edwards on the Will" y "Priestley on Necessity".

Z. ...en mis ratos libres, hojeé un poco en "Edwards, sobre la Voluntad" y "Priestley, sobre la Necesidad"

En este caso es posible -y aconsejable- traducir los títulos de los libros porque pueden ayudar a revelar lo que está pasando en la mente del autor. Esos libros producen un cambio del cual el lector, segundo receptor de la obra, no va a percatarse si el traductor no los vierte al castellano.

El libro de Priestley, Necessity, se refiere probablemente al término legal "necessity (and coercion)." Las doctrinas sobre "necessity" aluden a situaciones en las que una persona o personas deben elegir entre dos desgracias, entre dos males, y deciden tomar una decisión que en cualquier otra circunstancia sería criminal (por ejemplo, sacrificar a una persona para salvar a seis).

La otra obra se refiere, seguramente, a un famoso tratado de Jonathan Edwards sobre el libre albedrío. Edwards piensa que el hombre es libre de actuar como él lo desee; sin embargo, sus elecciones son previstas y están predestinadas por Dios. Surgen las preguntas: ¿Por qué Melville escoge esos

dos libros? ¿Por qué su lectura modifica la conducta del narrador? Fese al riesgo de caer en una interpretación que:peque de de imaginativa vale la pena analizar la situación:

El abogado, en un estado de suma desesperación, se pone a leer dos libros escogidos -aparentemente- sin propósito determinado. El efecto de la lectura puede derivarse del resultado de una lucha mental. Quizá inconscientemente, el narrador está pensando en deshacerse de Bartleby, ¿de asesinarlo?, ¿de librar a los demás de él? Como abogado que es busca mentalmente la atenuante moral: cualquier acto que realice será "voluntad de Dios", "predestinación". El efecto es catártico y la reacción inesperada. El abogado asegura "haber llegado a sentir" el propósito de su vida: está predestinado para cuidar de Bartleby. Estos cambios frecuentes de conducta delatan un desequilibrio serio. Basta una ligera presión de un factor externo -los comentarios de otros abogados- para que nuevamente cambie de actitud hacia Bartleby.

Quizá esta interpretación es errónea o existe otra mejor. Lo que sí es necesario puntualizar -después de este largo peregrinar- es que los libros en discusión tienen un papel en la historia y no es justo que se le niegue al nuevo lector la posibilidad de hacer su propia interpretación de los hechos.

El traductor tiene entonces cuatro opciones:

- 1- Dejar los títulos en inglés, eliminando arbitrariamente un posible espacio vacío de la obra.
 - 2- Especificar -cuando menos- quién es el autor y cuál es el título del libro.
 - 3- Traducir los títulos de los libros.
 - 4- Poner, como último recurso, una nota a pie de página.
- En este nivel, las dos últimas opciones deben considerarse.

2. Conclusiones.

Sin violar las normas de la concordancia, ni romper la dependencia natural de los vocablos en el contexto, Borges suprime palabras e incluso ideas del original, pero gana con ello precisión y economía. En este sentido Borges supera a Zaval. La precisión y la economía son características de esta obra de Melville tan completa que, más que un relato, constituye una novela corta; a juzgar por la opinión de críticos como Raymond Weaver quien intitula a su edición The Shorter Novels of Herman Melville. Los términos que selecciona equivalen, en gran medida, al referente original. Sin embargo, como se ha visto en uno de los ejemplos, Borges priva al lector común de penetrar en el conflicto que tiene lugar en la mente del narrador en uno de los momentos climáticos de la obra. En este sentido, la traducción de Zabal es más afortunada. Este último traductor pasa por alto, empero, algunas peculiaridades del estilo de Melville y exagera la presencia de los agentes distractores de la obra, como lo es el despensero, a quien Zabal llama "Cutlets".

C- Nivel de comunicación de los valores afectivos

1. Ejemplos y problemas.

En el siguiente ejemplo ambas traducciones difieren del original:

(I 3) Melville: Some time prior to the period at which this little story begins...

Borges: Poco antes de la historia que narraré...

Zabal: Poco antes de la época en que se inicia esta historieta...

En la primera traducción -además de la palabra periodo- se omite el adjetivo en little story y la traducción es, simplemente historia. En la segunda, se emplea el término historieta, que no corresponde a little story; historieta denota algo diferente. De dos alteraciones, omisión y confusión, es preferible -en este caso- la primera de ellas. Historieta es una anécdota, un cuentecillo sin mayor importancia. La historia de Bartleby en la vida del narrador sí es importante, aunque el relato no sea muy largo.

Con respecto a los nombres propios, éstos por lo general no se traducen; permanecen escritos en la lengua original. Borges se aparta de esta norma: Al principio del relato traduce John Jacob Astor -cuya pronunciación dice "adorar"- por Juan Jacobo Astor. Esto podría hacer suponer que, en adelante, Borges va a traducir los nombres propios subsecuentes o en su defecto, los apodos. Sin embargo, no sucede así. Turkey, Nippers y Ginger Nut se quedan como están. Zabal decide traducirlos como Pavo, Pinzas y Nuez de Jengibre, respectivamente -al igual que traduce John Jacob por Juan Jacobo. De hecho, estos apodos corresponden a determinadas características y defectos de sus poseedores. Son apodos impuestos entre ellos mismos. Estos sobrenombres tienen la carga humorística presente en el espíritu de la literatura de la época; dejan ver la ironía del trasfondo de esta obra de Melville.

Traducir esos notes es indispensable a este nivel para hacer partícipe al nuevo lector, al nuevo receptor, de ese aspecto emotivo de la obra: el humor, la ironía, la jocosidad. Borges no los traduce, privando a la obra de una parte de su potencial afectivo. Por el contrario, Zabal procede a hacerlo y quizá pudiera lograr un acercamiento mayor al aspecto humorístico de los apodos si les hubiera añadido el artículo determinado del que suelen ir precedidos en español (tanto en España, como en Argentina, México y otros países latinoamericanos): el Pinzas, el Pavo, el Nuez de Jengibre.

El hecho de que Melville en "Bartleby" recurra a apodos es importante porque se sabe que, en su intento por alcanzar la fama, comienza a imitar a Dickens en la caricaturización de ciertos personajes -y lo supera al detenerse en los límites de la ironía sin caer en el sarcasmo-. En Moby Dick los nombres correspondían a la personalidad de los personajes, si bien en una forma alegórica o simbólica. En "Bartleby", en cambio, las referencias bíblicas no son sólo alegóricas, se reflejan también en el lenguaje, directamente. Era, en efecto, una convención de la literatura de la época de Melville -una de las pocas convenciones con las que Melville no rompe- emplear palabras y frases de la Biblia. Considérese el siguiente ejemplo:

(IV 10) M So true it is, and so terrible, too, that up to a certain point the thought or sight of misery enlists our best affections; but in certain special cases, beyond that point it does not. They err who would assert that invariably this is owing to the inherent selfishness of the human heart. It rather proceeds from a certain hopelessness of remedying excessive and organic ill. To a sensitive being, pity is not seldom pain. And when at last it is perceived that such pity cannot lead to effectual succour, common sense bids the soul be rid of it. What I saw that morning persuaded me that the scrivener was the victim of innate and incurable disorder. I might give alms to his body; but his body did not pain him; it was his soul that suffered, and his soul I could not reach.

B. Tan cierto es, y a la vez tan terrible, que hasta cierto punto el pensamiento o el espectáculo de la pena atrae nuestros mejores sentimientos, pero algunos casos especiales no van más allá. Se equivocaron quienes afirman que esto se debe al natural egoísmo del corazón humano. Más bien proviene de cierta desesperanza de remediar un mal orgánico y excesivo. Y cuando se percibe que esa piedad no lleva a un socorro efectivo, el sentido común ordena al alma librarse de ella. Lo que vi esa mañana me convenció que el amanuense era la víctima de un mal innato e incurable. Yo podía dar una limosna a su cuerpo; pero su cuerpo no le dolía; tenía el alma enferma, y yo no podía llegar a su alma.

Z. ...Es cierto, y a la vez terrible, que, hasta cierto punto, el pensamiento o la contemplación de la miseria despierta en nosotros los mejores sentimientos; pero, en ciertos casos especiales, una vez rebasado ese punto, ya no es así. Se equivocan los que afirman que invariablemente ello se debe al egoísmo inherente al corazón del hombre. Más bien procede de una cierta ausencia de esperanza para remediar un mal orgánico y excesivo. Para un hombre sensible, la piedad no raras veces es dolorosa. Y cuando, finalmente, se advierte que esa piedad no puede llevar a un socorro eficaz, el sentido común exige que el alma se libere de ella. Lo que vi aquella mañana, me persuadió de que el escribiente era víctima de un trastorno innato e incurable. Podría dar limosnas a su cuerpo; pero su cuerpo no era lo que le dolía; era su alma la que sufría, y a ella no podía llegar.

El tono de este pasaje de "Bantleby" es similar al de la Biblia (en particular de la Versión autorizada), e.g., "effectual soccour."

Borges . traduce miseria por pena, lo cual modifica el sentido del pasaje. Es la contemplación de la miseria y no la de la pena, la que "despierta los mejores sentimientos". El traductor argentino altera en este caso el valor afectivo (nótese cómo estas palabras denotan afecto desde un principio). Más adelante, Borges omite un enunciado completo: To a sensitive being, pity is not seldom pain.

En la última oración de este párrafo hay un enunciado que nos permite relacionar "Bartleby" con Sn. Mateo (9:9 y nota al pie del Evangelio según Sn. Mateo) cuando Cristo dice que "no se cura a los sanos sino a los enfermos", se lleva a Levi y lo invita. (Sn, Mateo se llamaba Levi)

Borges define al lenguaje de la obra como "tranquilo y hasta jocoso " pero detrás de esa jocosidad hay ironía, desilusión, ira.

(V 2) M. At the expiration of that period, I peeped behind the screen and lo! Bartleby was there.

B. Al expirar el plazo, espí detrás del Biombo: ahí estaba Bartleby.

Z. ...Al expirar el plazo, me asomé tras el biombo y ¡Bartleby seguía ahí!

En la segunda traducción el narrador expresa más sorpresa

(24) Borges, prólogo a Bartleby, op. cit. p. 10

que en el original. Realmente, la reacción del abogado es de desilusión, desencanto, decepción. Borges capta esos sentimientos y elimina el signo de admiración añadiendo dos puntos (:). Zabal elimina el efecto de desencanto encerrando entre signos de admiración la expresión mencionada: "¡Bartleby seguía ahí!". Nótese cómo Melville hace dos pausas antes de la admiración; Zabal sólo hace una.

En el siguiente ejemplo se aprecia lo importante que es entender la intención del autor a lo largo de la obra:

(V 17) M ...you are harmless and noiseless as any of these old chairs; in short, I never feel so private as when I know you are here. At last I see it, I feel it; I penetrate to the predestinated purpose of my life.

B ...eres inofensivo y silencioso como una de esas viejas sillas; en una palabra, nunca me he sentido en mayor intimidad que sabiendo que estabas ahí. Al fin lo veo, lo siento; penetro el propósito predestinado de mi vida.

Z ...eres inofensivo y silencioso, como esas viejas sillas; en pocas palabras nunca me siento más solo que cuando se que estas ahí . Al menos lo veo, lo siento; penetro en la finalidad predestinada de mi vida.

En la segunda traducción existen dos errores notorios:

Se ha .vertido: private como solo y at last como al menos.

El primero de estos errores va más allá de un primer o segundo nivel; es un error que afecta al verdadero valor afectivo de la frase. Traducir "private" por "solo" hace la expresión triste cuando, por el contrario, ésta es agradable. La palabra "intimidad" es, en este contexto, la que más se acerca al sentido emotivo de la frase.

2. Conclusiones.

En este nivel Borges percibe la relación anfibológica -pero íntima- entre Bartleby y el abogado: relación que es tema recurrente en otras obras del mismo autor. El conocer también otros aspectos de la vida, ideas y personalidad de Melville permite al traductor argentino expresar más efectivamente las diferencias entre el narrador y el autor. Los juicios de aquél son superfluos -aunque firmes-, en tanto se presenta como un hombre razonable. Estos juicios comienzan a derrumbarse ante un incipiente desequilibrio mental que sufre ese mismo narrador; desequilibrio cuyas manifestaciones no son ajenas al escritor del relato.

La ambigüedad en cuanto a los personajes, el significado de la obra, el ambiente real, los límites entre el razonamiento y la locura, ha hecho de "Bartleby" un relato que resiste múltiples interpretaciones. ¿Por qué escoge a los escribanos en su obra? Tal vez porque en la búsqueda de una nueva identidad nacional los norteamericanos buscaban, incluso, una nueva caligrafía, una nueva escritura diferente de la inglesa, ¿diferente de la de los ingleses Pavo y Pinzas? Zabal logra en ocasiones, como es el caso de la traducción de los apodos, una mejor comunicación de los estados afectivos, pese a sus fallas de expresión.

D- Nivel de expresión del lenguaje estético

1. Problemas y ejemplos.

- (III 13') Melville The passiveness of Bartleby sometimes irritated me. I felt strangely goaded on to encounter him in new opposition to elicit some angry spark from his answerable to my own.
- Borges La pasividad de Bartleby solía exasperarme. Me sentía aguijoneado extrañamente a chocar con él en un nuevo encuentro, a despertar en él una colérica chispa correspondiente a la mía.
- Zabal Me sentía extrañamente ansioso de tener con él una agarrada, para encender en él alguna colérica chispa correspondiente a la mía.

En la primera traducción se optó por la palabra encuentro, en tanto que en la segunda, el traductor se decide por agarrada -término demasiado coloquial para el contexto original-. Borges transforma el verbo encounter en un sustantivo: encuentro, que además tiene un sonido muy similar al original. Otro caso singular de analogía de sonidos en la traducción lo constituye el ejemplo siguiente:

- (V 7') M. One of the coolest and wisest hours a man has, is just after he awakes in the morning.
- B. Una de las horas más lúcidas y serenas en la vida del hombre es la del despertar.
- Z. Una de las horas más frías y sabias de que dispone el hombre es justo después de despertarse, por la mañana.

Además de hacer una traducción adecuada en los niveles I, II y III, Borges emplea dos palabras que suenan parecido al original (aunque no correspondan respectivamente en significado):

Coollest and wisest
wisest and coolest
lúcidas y serenas

coolest se parece a lúcidas que es la opción de Borges para wisest y wisest se parece a serenas (que es la opción para coolest).

El ejemplo siguiente constituye una prueba de que, efectivamente, Melville tiene muy presente la musicalidad:

- (I 2') M. ...John Jacob Astor, a name which, I admit, I love to repeat; for it hath a rounded and orbicular sound to it, and rings like into bullion
- B. ...Juan Jacobo Astor; nombre que, reconozco, me gusta repetir porque tiene un sonido orbicular y tintinea como el oro acuñado.

Z. ...Juan Jacobo Astor, nombre que, reconozco me place oír, ya que suena a algo rotundo y redondo con ecos áureos.

En la segunda traducción -aunque no se puede negar que Zabal se preocupa también por la eufonía- hay sonidos que se funden y se pierden en vez de prolongarse; tal es el caso de "suena a algo" /suenalgo/- La expresión ecos áureos suena bien pero no dice realmente nada.

En la primera traducción la elección de términos es más afortunada. Por el uso y la combinación de sonidos /t/ /n/ /tiene/ /tintinea/ parece como si en verdad se oyera el "tintineo" de monedas de oro. La traducción es onomatopéyica incluso. En la primera traducción también existen esos sonidos, pero no imitan el sonido de lo que significan.

A la sonoridad análoga en algunos pasajes de la obra se puede añadir el ritmo y la fluidez que posee entre sus cualidades estéticas:

- (I 1) M. I am a rather elderly man
 B. Soy un hombre de cierta edad
 Z. Soy hombre ya de cierta edad

El acento rítmico del enunciado que, en el caso de Melville cae en ráther, y en el de la primera traducción en hombre, en la segunda traducción cae en el adverbio ya, una

palabra que sobra -puesto que también se ha usado otro modificador: cierta, que equivale en ese contexto a rather. Este primer acento cae, en los tres casos, al mismo tiempo. Pero en tanto que en los dos primeros enunciados da un énfasis eficaz, en el tercero resulta inadecuado y hasta molesto, puesto que marca la mitad del enunciado con una /a/ que hace una especie de rima con la /a/ de edad. La frase no corre, no se desliza como lo hace la de Melville. El ritmo se interrumpe.

Por otra parte, uno de los metros tradicionales del español es, a juicio de Octavio Paz, el de arte mayor o endecasílabos Anapésticos: (25)

Este verso, con la oscilación métrica de sus hemistiquios, que pueden ser de cinco y de siete sílabas y que posee gran variedad de acentuación está más cerca del ritmo natural del habla castellana. (26)

Una de esas variedades de acentuación más comunes es la de: 1a 4a y 7a. sílabas

Podría decirse que un hispanohablante tiende a pronunciar esta frase más o menos así:

Sóy hóm̄bre yá / de ciërta, edád. / desiërtedá /

El ritmo, como puede verse, se interrumpe.

(25) c.f. Octavio Paz, p. 73

(26) ibid., p. 73

La elección de términos con propósitos estéticos debe hacerse cuidadosamente en función del tipo de lenguaje que se está empleando en ese momento. Si, por ejemplo, se está haciendo uso de un lenguaje coloquial y se inserta una palabra demasiado formal, se produce un rompimiento en el estilo.

En el párrafo (I 1) donde Zabal emplea el término "pendo-
listas de bufete" hay un contraste entre éste y expresiones
tales como "de oídas", "muchísimas". Hay un choque en el estilo
que no se da en el original.

Borges usa también términos poco comunes; palabras de su
propio estilo: "composición de lugar", "la daba insolencia"
que, a veces, suenan un tanto extrañas en la traducción del ori-
ginal. Sin embargo hay ocasiones en que esos términos revisten
a la traducción de cierta elegancia, sin alterar el significado
o la intención del original; por ejemplo, los dobles negativos:

M. "...for it was exceedingly difficult to bear
in mind..!"

B. Pues era muy difícil no olvidar nunca

(VI 6) M. No, at present I would prefer not to make
any change (Aquí usa Melville doble negación
también)

B. No, preferiría no hacer ningún cambio.

2. Conclusiones.

Borges logra preservar no sólo el espíritu si-
no también la eufonía del original. Por ser un escritor ciego,

sensible a la musicalidad del lenguaje, su traducción se enfoca en esta dirección, manteniendo el valor estético de las palabras y respetando a la vez el ritmo natural del español. La traducción de Zabal abunda en cacofonías y términos más coloquiales que los del original, su ritmo se interrumpe y el estilo tiende a cambiar.

V CONCLUSIONES

A- Limitaciones del modelo de niveles de traducción según G. Mounin.

En principio, el modelo de niveles de traducción no existe en tanto que su mismo proponente, Mounin, lo presenta como una mera posibilidad que no confirma. Mounin nunca ratifica la existencia de ese modelo. Sólo la sugiere. (27) Lo que existe entonces es un esquema hipotético, con elementos tomados del modelo de comunicación -del mismo autor-, que es, a su vez, ambiguo y escueto.

El único elemento concreto confiable de este modelo de comunicación (AMBIGUO) y del modelo de traducción (SUPUESTO) es el de las funciones del lenguaje. Es aquí, precisamente, donde encuentro la segunda limitación de ambos esquemas: falta -por lo menos- una función importante del lenguaje: la función apelativa, la cual se atribuye a Bühler y es adoptada por Jakobson. (28) A través de esta función "el hablante trata de provocar un cierto estado de ánimo en el oyente" (compasión, envidia, satisfacción). (29) En el caso de "Bartleby" se puede

(27) Mounin, op. cit., p. 210

(28) Rall, op. cit., p. 3

(29) ibid.

decir que Melville trata de provocar hilaridad (a través de Pavo o de Pinzas), simpatía (a través de Nuez de Jengibre).

Otra función del lenguaje que podía haberse incluido en el esquema es la función metalingüística que sirve para aclarar un mensaje difícil de entender y que emplea Melville cuando, por ejemplo, hace aclaraciones parentéticas o subraya palabras dentro del texto: "Nippers...what do you think of it?", (30) "Ginger Nut,....what do you think of it?, (31) "We both are getting old...",(32) "...would request him to run round to his (the legal gentleman's) office and fetch some papers..." (33) En los dos primeros ejemplos se especifica a quién se le está hablando, en el segundo se enfatiza el pronombre numeral y en el cuarto se elimina la ambigüedad.

La tercera limitación del esquema es la dificultad que presenta para deslindar los niveles de traducción, ya que éstos se encuentran íntimamente relacionados. A esta limitación se puede añadir una última que es la dificultad para llegar a establecer un juicio objetivo sobre la calidad de las traducciones. En un modelo como el de Juliane House, en el que verdaderamente se evalúa la calidad de las traducciones, se dan dimensiones para establecer la comparación del texto original y la traducción. Algunas de estas dimensiones son, por ejemplo

(30) Melville, op. cit. p. 70

(31) ibid.

(32) ibid. p. 63

(33) ibid. p. 89

el tiempo, la actitud social, la procedencia del lenguaje: (34) (House, sin embargo, no recomienda su modelo para la traducción de poesía, aludiendo a la inseparabilidad del fondo y la forma).

En el modelo de Mounin no existen tales parámetros de comparación. En consecuencia, para desarrollar el esquema de niveles de traducción -y respetarlo tal y como fue propuesto-, he tenido que limitarme a sólo cuatro funciones del lenguaje que continuamente se mezclan entre sí y a establecer parámetros de evaluación de la traducción obteniéndolos: del texto original mismo, de la comparación del texto con sus traducciones (de Borges y de Zabal) y de la comparación de ambas traducciones entre sí.

B- Ventajas del esquema de niveles de traducción.

El resultado de este trabajo no ha sido un simple ejercicio intelectual, sino la integración de un enfoque, una forma de dividir las posibilidades infinitas de llegar a la traducción, al menos, en cuatro estratos distintos. El ser un esquema totalmente abierto (con la única guía -severa empero- de la comunicación por funciones del lenguaje), y la forma sutil de escurrirse en la imaginación de un traductor interesado por

(34) Juliane House, A Model for Translation Quality Assessment, Tubinga, Alemania Occidental, TBL Verlag Gunter Narr, 1977, pp. 78-79

hacer -de alguna manera- más efectivo su trabajo, tiene ya la ventaja de la motivación.

Y pese a las limitaciones que el esquema presenta, la preocupación misma por delimitar cada nivel del original y sus parámetros de análisis o de evaluación de las traducciones, favorece la concentración en los niveles de comunicación, aunque no se logre delimitar cada problema como parte de un nivel determinado. Esto implica, desde luego, modificar la aplicación del esquema en cada nueva traducción.

Después de una primera lectura general del texto original, el modelo de Mounin permite planear, hasta cierto punto, el nivel o niveles que se desean alcanzar en la traducción de acuerdo con las necesidades y los problemas que el traductor encuentre como primer receptor. He encontrado, además, que este mismo esquema puede ser útil en el análisis literario en cuatro estratos diferentes.

C- Evaluación de las traducciones

En el nivel de comunicación mínima básica, la traducción de J. L. Borges se concreta a la transmisión de las ideas más importantes, omitiendo palabras y frases del original. L. Zabal traduce literalmente, añadiendo palabras innecesarias y alterando en ocasiones la relación sintáctica de los términos entre sí. En el nivel de asimilación del pensamiento, Borges gana

precisión y economía mediante la omisión de algunas vocales del original que, en su traducción, resultan superfluas. Borges percibe el texto como una unidad cuya estructura respeta. Sin embargo, en su traducción puede dificultar todavía más la comprensión del texto por parte del nuevo receptor al no traducir términos cuya trascendencia se entrevé en el relato, y que un lector del original captaría de inmediato. Zabal es, por su parte, redundante en la expresión; no logra transmitir los giros del lenguaje peculiares de Melville y distrae la atención del nuevo receptor añadiendo detalles innecesarios que no existen en el original.

En el nivel de comunicación de los valores afectivos Borges transmite el tono y la atmósfera del texto. Sabe que connotaciones tienen los términos en el ámbito de Melville. Transmite esas vicisitudes de la mente humana —no ajenas al propio autor— que hacen de esta obra una precursora en su género. Descuida, no obstante, el valor afectivo que en el relato tiene la denominación de los personajes secundarios. Zabal logra una mejor comunicación de los estados afectivos más superficiales. Zabal percibe el potencial emotivo de la obra pero no logra transmitirlo adecuadamente. Y en el último nivel, en el de expresión del lenguaje estético, la traducción del escritor argentino es más musical. En ella puede observarse como se preservan en español muchos de los sonidos del original. Zabal queda lejos de alcanzar este nivel.

Considero que la traducción de Zabal es menos ambiciosa y está dirigida a un público poco exigente. Es una versión comercial. La traducción de Borges es más erudita. Es una versión artística. Para poder emitir estos últimos juicios sobre ambas versiones, me vi en la necesidad de tener en cuenta al público receptor, cuyo papel en la traducción como proceso comunicativo se descuida o no se lo considera. Al aplicarse en la traducción, el modelo de comunicación de Mounin atiende únicamente al autor y al texto original por una parte, y por otra, al traductor como primer receptor y al segundo mensaje. La intervención del nuevo receptor en este proceso no se tiene en cuenta, por lo tanto el ciclo de la comunicación no se cierra.

Si se prestara una mayor atención a la función apelativa del lenguaje; si se consideraran aspectos como el prólogo a una traducción y los comentarios a la misma, cabría la posibilidad de que, realmente, el ciclo de la comunicación se completara.

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"BARTLEBY"

APPENDICE

I

I AM a rather elderly man. The nature of my avocations, for the last thirty years, has brought me into more than ordinary contact with what would seem an interesting and somewhat singular set of men, of whom, as yet, nothing, that I know of, has ever been written - I mean, the law-copyists, or scriveners. I have known very many of them, professionally and privately, and, if I pleased, could relate divers histories, at which good-natured gentlemen might smile, and sentimental souls might weep. But I waive the biographies of all other scriveners, for a few passages in the life of Bartleby, who was a scrivener, the strangest I ever saw, or heard of. While, of other law-copyists, I might write the complete life, of Bartleby nothing of that sort can be done. I believe that no materials exist, for a full and satisfactory biography of this man. It is an irreparable loss to literature. Bartleby was one of those beings of whom nothing is ascertainable, except from the original sources, and, in his case, those are very small. What my own astonished eyes saw of Bartleby; that is all I know of him, except, indeed, one vague report, which will appear in the sequel.

2 Ere introducing the scrivener, as he first appeared to me, it is fit I make some mention of myself, my employés, my business, my chambers, and general surroundings; because some such description is indispensable to an adequate understanding of the chief character about to be presented. Imprimis: I am a man who, from his youth upwards, has been filled with a profound conviction that the easiest way of life is the best. Hence, though I belong to a profession proverbially energetic and nervous, even to turbulence, at times, yet nothing of that sort have I ever suffered to invade

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2¹ my peace. I am one of those unambitious lawyers who never addresses a jury, or in any way draws down public applause; but, in the cool tranquillity of a snug retreat, do a snug business among rich men's bonds, and mortgages, and title-deeds. All who know me, consider me an eminently *safe* man. The late John Jacob Astor, a personage little given to poetic enthusiasm, had no hesitation in pronouncing my first grand point to be prudence; my next, method. I do not speak it in vanity, but simply record the fact, that I was not unemployed in my profession by the late John Jacob Astor; a name which, I admit, I love to repeat; for it hath a rounded and orbicular sound to it, and rings like unto bullion. I will freely add, that I was not insensible to the late John Jacob Astor's good opinion.

3 Some time prior to the period at which this little history begins, my avocations had been largely increased. The good old office, now extinct in the State of New York, of a Master in Chancery, had been conferred upon me. It was not a very arduous office, but very pleasantly remunerative. I seldom lose my temper: much more seldom indulge in dangerous indignation at wrongs and outrages; but, I must be permitted to be rash here, and declare, that I consider the sudden and violent abrogation of the office of Master in Chancery, by the new Constitution, as a — premature act; inasmuch as I had counted upon a life-lease of the profits, whereas I only received those of a few short years. But this is by the way.

4 My chambers were up stairs, at No. — Wall Street. At one end, they looked upon the white wall of the interior of a spacious sky-light shaft, penetrating the building from top to bottom.

5 This view might have been considered rather tame than otherwise, deficient in what landscape painters call 'life'. But, if so, the view from the other end of my chambers offered, at least, a contrast, if nothing more. In that direction, my windows commanded an unobstructed view of a lotty brick wall, black by age and everlasting shade; which wall required no spy-glass to bring out its lurking beauties,

but, for the benefit of all near-sighted spectators, was pushed up to within ten feet of my window panes. Owing to the great height of the surrounding buildings, and my chambers being on the second floor, the interval between this wall and mine not a little resembled a huge square cistern.

6 At the period just preceding the advent of Bartleby, I had two persons as copyists in my employment, and a promising lad as an office-boy. First, Turkey; second, Nippers; third, Ginger Nut. These may seem names, the like of which are not usually found in the Directory. In truth, they were nicknames, mutually conferred upon each other by my three clerks, and were deemed expressive of their respective persons or characters. Turkey was a short, pursy Englishman, of about my own age — that is, somewhere not far from sixty. In the morning, one might say, his face was of a fine florid hue, but after twelve o'clock, meridian — his dinner hour — it blazed like a grate full of Christmas coals; and continued blazing — but, as it were, with a gradual wane — till six o'clock, P.M., or thereabouts; after which, I saw no more of the proprietor of the face, which, gaining its meridian with the sun, seemed to set with it, to rise, culminate, and decline the following day, with the like regularity and undiminished glory. There are many singular coincidences I have known in the course of my life, not the least among which was the fact, that, exactly when Turkey displayed his fullest beams from his red and radiant countenance, just then, too, at that critical moment, began the daily period when I considered his business capacities as seriously disturbed for the remainder of the twenty-four hours. Not that he was absolutely idle, or averse to business, then; far from it. The difficulty was, he was apt to be altogether too energetic. There was a strange, inflamed, flurried, flighty recklessness of activity about him. He would be incautious in dipping his pen into his ink-stand. All his blots upon my documents were dropped there after twelve o'clock, meridian. Indeed, not only would he

he reckless, and sadly given to making blots in the afternoon, but, some days, he went further, and was rather noisy. At such times, too, his face flamed with augmented blazonry, as if cannel coal had been heaped on anthracite. He made an unpleasant racket with his chair; spilled his sand-box; in mending his pens, impatiently split them all to pieces, and threw them on the floor in a sudden passion; stood up, and leaned over his table, boxing his papers about in a most indecorous manner, very sad to behold in an elderly man like him. Nevertheless, as he was in many ways a most valuable person to me, and all the time before twelve o'clock, meridian, was the quickest, steadiest creature, too, accomplishing a great deal of work in a style not easily to be matched - for these reasons, I was willing to overlook his eccentricities, though, indeed, occasionally, I remonstrated with him. I did this very gently, however, because, though the civilest, nay, the blandest and most reverential of men in the morning, yet, in the afternoon, he was disposed, upon provocation, to be slightly rash with his tongue - in fact insolent. Now, valuing his morning services as I did, and resolved not to lose them - yet, at the same time, made uncomfortable by his inflamed ways after twelve o'clock - and being a man of peace, unwilling by my admonitions to call forth unseemly retorts from him, I took upon me, one Saturday noon (he was always worse on Saturdays) to hint to him, very kindly, that, perhaps, now that he was growing old, it might be well to abridge his labors; in short, he need not come to my chambers after twelve o'clock, but, dinner over, had best go home to his lodgings, and rest himself till tea-time. But no; he insisted upon his afternoon devotions. His countenance became intolerably fervid, as he oratorically assured me - gesticulating with a long ruler at the other end of the room - that if his services in the morning were useful, how indispensable, then, in the afternoon?

7. 'With submission, sir,' said Turkey, on this occasion, 'I consider myself your right-hand man. In the morning I but marshal and deploy my columns; but in the afternoon I

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put myself at their head, and gallantly charge the foe, thus - and he made a violent thrust with the ruler.

'But the blots, Turkey,' intimated I.

'True; but, with submission, sir, behold these hairs! I am getting old. Surely, sir, a blot or two of a warm afternoon is not to be severely urged against gray hairs. Old age - even if it blot the page - is honorable. With submission, sir, we both are getting old.'

8. This appeal to my fellow-feeling was hardly to be resisted. At all events, I saw that go he would not. So, I made up my mind to let him stay, resolving, nevertheless, to see to it that, during the afternoon, he had to do with my less important papers.

9. Nippers, the second on my list, was a whiskered, sallow, and, upon the whole, rather piratical-looking young man, of about five and twenty. I always deemed him the victim of two evil powers - ambition and indigestion. The ambition was evinced by a certain impatience of the duties of a mere copyist, an unwarrantable usurpation of strictly professional affairs, such as the original drawing up of legal documents. The indigestion seemed betokened in an occasional nervous testiness and grinning irritability, causing the teeth to audibly grind together over mistakes committed in copying; unnecessary maledictions, hissed, rather than spoken, in the heat of business; and especially by a continual discontent with the height of the table where he worked. Though of a very ingenious mechanical turn, Nippers could never get this table to suit him. He put chips under it, blocks of various sorts, bits of pasteboard, and at last went so far as to attempt an exquisite adjustment, by final pieces of folded blotting-paper. But no invention would answer. If, for the sake of easing his back, he brought the table lid at a sharp angle well up towards his chin, and wrote there like a man using the steep roof of a Dutch house for his desk, then he declared that it stopped the circulation in his arms. If now he lowered the table to his waistbands, and stooped over it in writing, then there was a sore aching in his back. In short, the truth of the matter

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4) was, Nippers knew not what he wanted. Or, if he wanted anything, it was to be rid of a scrivener's table altogether. Among the manifestations of his diseased ambition was a fondness he had for receiving visits from certain ambiguous-looking fellows in seedy coats, whom he called his clients. Indeed, I was aware that not only was he, at times, considerable of a ward-politician, but he occasionally did a little business at the Justices' courts, and was not unknown on the steps of the Tombs. I have good reason to believe, however, that one individual who called upon him at my chambers, and who, with a grand air, he insisted was his client, was no other than a dun, and the alleged title-deed, a bill. But, with all his failings, and the annoyances he caused me, Nippers, like his compatriot Turkey, was a very useful man to me; wrote a neat, swift hand; and, when he chose, was not deficient in a gentlemanly sort of deportment. Added to this, he always dressed in a gentlemanly sort of way; and so, incidentally, reflected credit upon my chambers. Whereas, with respect to Turkey, I had much ado to keep him from being a reproach to me. His clothes were apt to look oily, and smell of eating-houses. He wore his pantaloons very loose and baggy in summer. His coats were execrable; his hat not to be handled. But while the hat was a thing of indifference to me, inasmuch as his natural civility and deference, as a dependent Englishman, always led him to doff it the moment he entered the room, yet his coat was another matter. Concerning his coats, I reasoned with him; but with no effect. The truth was, I suppose, that a man with so small an income could not afford to sport such a lustrous face and a lustrous coat at one and the same time. As Nippers once observed, Turkey's money went chiefly for red ink. One winter day, I presented Turkey with a highly respectable-looking coat of my own - a padded gray coat, of a most comfortable warmth, and which buttoned straight up from the knee to the neck. I thought Turkey would appreciate the favor, and abate his rashness and obstreperousness of afternoons. But no; I verily believe that buttoning himself up in so downy and

blanket-like a coat had a pernicious effect upon him - upon the same principle that too much oats are bad for horses. In fact, precisely as a rash, restive horse is said to feel his oats, so Turkey felt his coat. It made him insolent. He was a man whom prosperity harmed.

10. Though, concerning the self-indulgent habits of Turkey, I had my own private surmises, yet, touching Nippers, I was well persuaded that, whatever might be his faults in other respects, he was, at least, a temperate young man. But, indeed nature herself seemed to have been his vintner, and, at his birth, charged him so thoroughly with an irritable, brandy-like disposition, that all subsequent potations were needless. When I consider how, amid the stillness of my chambers, Nippers would sometimes impatiently rise from his seat, and stooping over his table, spread his arms wide apart, seize the whole desk, and move it, and jerk it, with a grim, grinding motion on the floor, as if the table were a perverse voluntary agent, intent on thwarting and vexing him, I plainly perceive that, for Nippers, brandy-and-water were altogether superfluous.

11. It was fortunate for me that, owing to its peculiar cause - indigestion - the irritability and consequent nervousness of Nippers were mainly observable in the morning, while in the afternoon he was comparatively mild. So that, Turkey's paroxysms only coming on about twelve o'clock, I never had to do with their eccentricities at one time. Their fits relieved each other, like guards. When Nippers's was on, Turkey's was off; and *vice versa*. This was a good natural arrangement, under the circumstances.

12. Ginger Nut, the third on my list, was a lad, some twelve years old. His father was a car-man, ambitious of seeing his son on the bench instead of a cart, before he died. So he sent him to my office, as student at law, errand-boy, cleaner and sweeper, at the rate of one dollar a week. He had a little desk to himself, but he did not use it much. Upon inspection, the drawer exhibited a great array of the shells of various sorts of nuts. Indeed, to this quick-witted youth, the whole noble science of the law was contained in a nutshell. Not

the least among the employments of Ginger Nut, as well as, one which he discharged with the most alacrity, was his duty as cake and apple purveyor for Turkey and Nippers. Copying law-papers being proverbially a dry, husky sort of business, my two scribes were fain to moisten their mouths very often with Spitzenbergs, to be had at the numerous stalls nigh the Custom House and Post Office. Also, they sent Ginger Nut very frequently for that peculiar cake - small, flat, round, and very spicy - after which he had been named by them. Of a cold morning, when business was but dull, Turkey would gobble up scores of these cakes, as if they were mere wafers - indeed, they sell them at the rate of six or eight for a penny - the scrape of his pen blending with the crunching of the crisp particles in his mouth. Of all the fiery afternoon blunders and flurried rashnesses of Turkey, was his once moistening a ginger-cake between his lips, and clapping it on to a mortgage, for a seal. I came within an ace of dismissing him then. But he mollified me by making an oriental bow, and saying -

'With submission, sir, it was generous of me to find you in stationery on my own account.'

13 Now my original business - that of a conveyancer and title hunter, and drawer-up of recondite documents of all sorts - was considerably increased by receiving the master's office. There was now great work for scribes. Not only must I push the clerks already with me, but I must have additional help.

III In answer to my advertisement, a motionless young man one morning stood upon my office threshold, the door being open, for it was summer. I can see that figure now - pallidly neat, pitifully respectable, incurably forlorn! It was Bartleby.

2 After a few words touching his qualifications, I engaged him, glad to have among my corps of copyists a man of so singularly sedate an aspect, which I thought might operate beneficially upon the flighty temper of Turkey, and the fiery one of Nippers.

3 I should have stated before that ground glass folding-doors divided my premises into two parts, one of which was occupied by my scribes, the other by myself. According to my humor, I threw open these doors, or closed them. I resolved to assign Bartleby a corner by the folding-doors, but on my side of them, so as to have this quiet man within easy call, in case any trifling thing was to be done. I placed his desk close up to a small side-window in that part of the room, a window which originally had afforded a lateral view of certain grimy back-yards and bricks, but which, owing to subsequent erections, commanded at present no view at all, though it gave some light. Within three feet of the panes was a wall, and the light came down from far above, between two lofty buildings, as from a very small opening in a dome. Still further to a satisfactory arrangement, I procured a high green folding screen, which might entirely isolate Bartleby from my sight, though not remove him from my voice. And thus, in a manner, privacy and society were conjoined.

4 At first, Bartleby did an extraordinary quantity of writing. As if long famishing for something to copy, he seemed to gorge himself on my documents. There was no pause for digestion. He ran a day and night line, copying by sun-light and by candle-light. I should have been quite delighted with his application, had he been cheerfully industrious. But he wrote on silently, palely, mechanically.

5 It is, of course, an indispensable part of a scrivener's business to verify the accuracy of his copy, word by word. Where there are two or more scribes in an office, they assist each other in this examination, one reading from the copy, the other holding the original. It is a very dull, wearisome, and lethargic affair. I can readily imagine that, to some sanguine temperaments, it would be altogether intolerable. For example, I cannot credit that the mettlesome poet, Byron, would have contentedly sat down with Bartleby to examine a law document of, say five hundred pages, closely written in a crimped hand.

6 Now and then, in the haste of business, it had been my

habit to assist in comparing some brief document myself, calling Turkey or Nippers for this purpose. One object I had, in placing Bartleby so handy to me behind the screen, was, to avail myself of his services on such trivial occasions. It was on the third day, I think, of his being with me, and before any necessity had arisen for having his own writing examined, that, being much hurried to complete a small affair I had in hand, I abruptly called to Bartleby. In my haste and natural expectancy of instant compliance, I sat with my head bent over the original on my desk, and my right hand sideways, and somewhat nervously extended with the copy, so that, immediately upon emerging from his retreat, Bartleby might snatch it and proceed to business without the least delay.

In this very attitude did I sit when I called to him, rapidly stating what it was I wanted him to do — namely, to examine a small paper with me. Imagine my surprise, nay, my consternation, when, without moving from his privacy, Bartleby, in a singularly mild, firm voice, replied, 'I would prefer not to.'

I sat awhile in perfect silence, rallying my stunned faculties. Immediately it occurred to me that my ears had deceived me, or Bartleby had entirely misunderstood my meaning. I repeated my request in the clearest tone I could assume; but in quite as clear a one came the previous reply, 'I would prefer not to.'

'Prefer not to,' echoed L, rising in high excitement, and crossing the room with a stride. 'What do you mean? Are you moon-struck? I want you to help me compare this sheet here — take it,' and I thrust it towards him.

'I would prefer not to,' said he.

I looked at him steadfastly. His face was leanly composed; his gray eye dimly calm. Not a wrinkle of agitation rippled him. Had there been the least uneasiness, anger, impatience or impertinence in his manner; in other words, had there been any thing ordinarily human about him, doubtless I should have violently dismissed him from the premises. But as it was, I should have as soon thought of

turning my pale plaster-of-paris bust of Cicero out of doors. I stood gazing at him awhile, as he went on with his own writing, and then rescued myself at my desk. This is very strange, thought I. What had one best do? But my business hurried me: I concluded to forget the matter for the present, reserving it for my future leisure. So calling Nippers from the other room, the paper was speedily examined.

A few days after this, Bartleby concluded four lengthy documents, being quadruplicates of a week's testimony taken before me in my High Court of Chancery. It became necessary to examine them. It was an important suit, and great accuracy was imperative. Having all things arranged, I called Turkey, Nippers, and Ginger Nut, from the next room, meaning to place the four copies in the hands of my four clerks, while I should read from the original. Accordingly, Turkey, Nippers, and Ginger Nut had taken their seats in a row, each with his document in his hand, when I called to Bartleby to join this interesting group.

'Bartleby! quick, I am waiting.'

I heard a slow scrape of his chair legs on the uncarpeted floor, and soon he appeared standing at the entrance of his hermitage.

'What is wanted?' said he, mildly.

'The copies, the copies,' said I hurriedly. 'We are going to examine them. There' — and I held towards him the fourth quadruplicate.

'I would prefer not to,' he said, and gently disappeared behind the screen.

For a few moments I was turned into a pillar of salt, standing at the head of my seated column of clerks. Recovering myself, I advanced towards the screen, and demanded the reason for such extraordinary conduct.

'Why do you refuse?'

'I would prefer not to.'

With any other man I should have flown outright into a dreadful passion, scorned all further words, and thrust him ignominiously from my presence. But there was something about Bartleby that not only strangely disarmed me,

but, in a wonderful manner, touched and disconcerted me. I began to reason with him.

7 'These are your own copies we are about to examine. It is labor saving to you, because one examination will answer for your four papers. It is common usage. Every copyist is bound to help examine his copy. Is it not so? Will you not speak? Answer!'

8 'I prefer not to,' he replied in a flutelike tone. It seemed to me that, while I had been addressing him, he carefully revolved every statement that I made; fully comprehended the meaning; could not gainsay the irresistible conclusion; but, at the same time, some paramount consideration prevailed with him to reply as he did.

'You are decided, then, not to comply with my request—a request made according to common usage and common sense?'

He briefly gave me to understand, that on that point my judgment was sound. Yes; his decision was irreversible.

9 It is not seldom the case that, when a man is browbeaten in some unprecedented and violently unreasonable way, he begins to stagger in his own plainest faith. He begins, as it were, vaguely to surmise that, wonderful as it may be, all the justice and all the reason is on the other side. Accordingly, if any disinterested persons are present, he turns to them for some reinforcement of his own faltering mind.

10 'Turkey,' said I, 'what do you think of this? Am I not right?'

'With submission, sir,' said Turkey, in his blandest tone, 'I think that you are.'

'Nippers,' said I, 'what do you think of it?'

'I think I should kick him out of the office.'

(The reader, of nice perceptions, will here perceive that, it being morning, Turkey's answer is couched in polite and tranquil terms, but Nippers replies in ill tempered ones. Or, to repeat a previous sentence, Nippers's ugly mood was on duty, and Turkey's off.)

'Ginger Nut,' said I, willing to enlist the smallest suffrage in my behalf, 'what do you think of it?'

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'I think, sir, he's a little lunny,' replied Ginger Nut, with a grin.

'You hear what they say,' said I, turning towards the screen, 'come forth and do your duty.'

10 But he vouchsafed no reply. I pondered a moment in sore perplexity. But once more business hurried me. I determined again to postpone the consideration of this dilemma to my future leisure. With a little trouble we made out to examine the papers without Bartleby, though at every page or two Turkey deferentially dropped his opinion, that this proceeding was quite out of the common; while Nippers, twitching in his chair with a dyspeptic nervousness, ground out, between his set teeth, occasional hissing maledictions against the stubborn oaf behind the screen. And for his (Nippers's) part, this was the first and the last time he would do another man's business without pay.

Meanwhile Bartleby sat in his hermitage, oblivious to everything but his own peculiar business there.

11 Some days passed, the scrivener being employed upon another lengthy work. His late remarkable conduct led me to regard his ways narrowly. I observed that he never went to dinner; indeed, that he never went anywhere. As yet I had never, of my personal knowledge, known him to be outside of my office. He was a perpetual sentry in the corner. At about eleven o'clock though, in the morning, I noticed that Ginger Nut would advance towards the opening in Bartleby's screen, as if silently beckoned thither by a gesture invisible to me where I sat. The boy would then leave the office, jingling a few pence, and reappear with a handful of ginger-nuts, which he delivered in the hermitage, receiving two of the cakes for his trouble.

12 He lives, then, on ginger-nuts, thought I; never eats a dinner, properly speaking; he must be a vegetarian, then; but no; he never eats even vegetables, he eats nothing but ginger-nuts. My mind then ran on in reveries concerning the probable effects upon the human constitution of living entirely on ginger-nuts. Ginger-nuts are so called, because they contain ginger as one of their peculiar constituents,

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and the final flavoring onc. Now, what was ginger? A hot, spicy thing. Was Bartleby hot and spicy? Not at all. Ginger, then, had no effect upon Bartleby. Probably he preferred it should have none.

13 Nothing so aggravates an earnest person as a passive resistance. If the individual so resisted be of a not inhumane temper, and the resisting one perfectly harmless in his passivity, then, in the better moods of the former, he will endeavor charitably to construe to his imagination what proves impossible to be solved by his judgment. Even so, for the most part, I regarded Bartleby and his ways. Poor fellow! thought I, he means no mischief; it is plain he intends no insolence; his aspect sufficiently evinces that his eccentricities are involuntary. He is useful to me. I can get along with him. If I turn him away, the chances are he will fall in with some less-indulgent employer, and then he will be rudely treated, and perhaps driven forth miserably to starve. Yes. Here I can cheaply purchase a delicious self-approval. To befriend Bartleby; to humor him in his strange willfulness, will cost me little or nothing, while I lay up in my soul what will eventually prove a sweet morsel for my conscience. But this mood was not invariable with me. The passiveness of Bartleby sometimes irritated me. I felt strangely goaded on to encounter him in new opposition - to elicit some angry spark from him answerable to my own. But, indeed, I might as well have essayed to strike fire with my knuckles against a bit of Windsor soap. But one afternoon the evil impulse in me mastered me, and the following little scene ensued:

14 'Bartleby,' said I, 'when those papers are all copied, I will compare them with you.'

'I would prefer not to.'

'How? Surely you do not mean to persist in that mulish vagary?'

No answer.

I threw open the folding-doors near by, and, turning upon Turkey and Nippers, exclaimed:

'Bartleby a second time says, he won't examine his papers. What do you think of it, Turkey?'

15 It was afternoon, he it remembered. Turkey sat glowing like a brass boiler; his bald head steaming; his hands reeling among his blotted papers.

'Think of it?' roared Turkey; 'I think I'll just step behind his screen, and black his eyes for him!'

So saying, Turkey rose to his feet and threw his arms into a pugilistic position. He was hurrying away to make good his promise, when I detained him, alarmed at the effect of incautiously rousing Turkey's combativeness after dinner.

'Sit down, Turkey,' said I, 'and hear what Nippers has to say. What do you think of it, Nippers? Would I not be justified in immediately dismissing Bartleby?'

'Excuse me, that is for you to decide, sir. I think his conduct quite unusual, and, indeed, unjust, as regards Turkey and myself. But it may only be a passing whim.'

'Ah,' exclaimed I, 'you have strangely changed your mind, then - you speak very gently of him now.'

'All beer,' cried Turkey; 'gentleness is effects of beer - Nippers and I dined together to-day. You see how gentle I am, sir. Shall I go and black his eyes?'

'You refer to Bartleby, I suppose. No, not to-day, Turkey,' I replied; 'pray, put up your fists.'

16 I closed the doors, and again advanced towards Bartleby. I felt additional incentives tempting me to my fate. I burned to be rebelled against again. I remembered that Bartleby never left the office.

'Bartleby,' said I, 'Ginger Nut is away; just step around to the Post Office, won't you? (it was but a three minutes' walk), and see if there is anything for me.'

'I would prefer not to.'

'You will not?'

'I prefer not.'

17 I staggered to my desk, and sat there in a deep study. My blind inveteracy returned. Was there any other thing in which I could procure myself to be ignominiously repulsed by this lean, penniless wight? - my hired clerk? What

added thing is there, perfectly reasonable, that he will be sure to refuse to do?

'Bartleby!'

No answer.

'Bartleby,' in a louder tone.

No answer.

'Bartleby,' I roared.

Like a very ghost, agreeably to the laws of magical invocation, at the third summons, he appeared at the entrance of his hermitage.

'Go to the next room, and tell Nippers to come to me.'

'I prefer not to,' he respectfully and slowly said, and mildly disappeared.

18 'Very good, Bartleby,' said I, in a quiet sort of serenely-severe self-possessed tone, intimating the unalterable purpose of some terrible retribution very close at hand. At the moment I half intended something of the kind. But upon the whole, as it was drawing towards my dinner-hour, I thought it best to put on my hat and walk home for the day, suffering much from perplexity and distress of mind.

7] Shall I acknowledge it? The conclusion of this whole business was, that it soon became a fixed fact of my chambers, that a pale young scrivener, by the name of Bartleby, had a desk there; that he copied for me at the usual rate of four cents a folio (one hundred words); but he was permanently exempt from examining the work done by him, that duty being transferred to Turkey and Nippers, out of compliment, doubtless, to their superior acuteness; moreover, said Bartleby was never, on any account, to be dispatched on the most trivial errand of any sort: and that even if entreated to take upon him such a matter, it was generally understood that he would 'prefer not to' - in other words, that he would refuse point-blank.

2 As days passed on, I became considerably reconciled to Bartleby. His steadiness, his freedom from all dissipation, his incessant industry (except when he chose to throw himself into a standing reverie behind his screen), his great

stillness, his unalterableness of demeanor under all circumstances, made him a valuable acquisition. One prime thing was this - *he was always there* - first in the morning, continually through the day, and the last at night. I had a singular confidence in his honesty: I felt my most precious papers perfectly safe in his hands. Sometimes, to be sure, I could not, for the very soul of me, avoid falling into sudden spasmodic passions with him. For it was exceeding difficult to bear in mind all the time those strange peculiarities, privileges, and unheard of exemptions, forming the tacit stipulations on Bartleby's part under which he remained in my office. Now and then, in the eagerness of dispatching pressing business, I would inadvertently summon Bartleby, in a short, rapid tone, to put his finger, say, on the incipient tie of a bit of red tape with which I was about compressing some papers. Of course, from behind the screen the usual answer, 'I prefer not to,' was sure to come; and then, how could a human creature, with the common infirmities of our nature, refrain from bitterly exclaiming upon such perverseness - such unreasonableness. However, every added repulse of this sort which I received only tended to lessen the probability of my repeating the inadvertence.

3 Here it must be said, that according to the custom of most legal gentlemen occupying chambers in densely-populated law buildings, there were several keys to my door. One was kept by a woman residing in the attic, which person weekly scrubbed and daily swept and dusted my apartments. Another was kept by Turkey for convenience sake. The third I sometimes carried in my own pocket. The fourth I knew not who had.

4 Now, one Sunday morning I happened to go to Trinity Church, to hear a celebrated preacher, and finding myself rather early on the ground I thought I would walk around to my chambers for a while. Luckily I had my key with me; but upon applying it to the lock, I found it resisted by something inserted from the inside. Quite surprised, I called out; when to my consternation a key was turned

41 from within; and thrusting his lean visage at me, and holding the door ajar, the apparition of Bartleby appeared, in his shirt sleeves, and otherwise in a strangely tattered deshabelle, saying quietly that he was sorry, but he was deeply engaged just then, and - preferred not admitting me at present. In a brief word or two, he moreover added, that perhaps I had better walk around the block two or three times, and by that time he would probably have concluded his affairs.

5 Now, the utterly unsurmised appearance of Bartleby, tenanted my law-chambers of a Sunday morning, with his cadaverously gentlemanly *nonchalance*, yet withal firm and self-possessed, had such a strange effect upon me, that incontinently I slunk away from my own door, and did as desired. But not without sundry twinges of impotent rebellion against the mild effrontery of this unaccountable scrivener. Indeed, it was his wonderful mildness chiefly, which not only disarmed me, but unmanned me as it were. For I consider that one, for the time, is a sort of unmanned when he tranquilly permits his hired clerk to dictate to him, and order him away from his own premises. Furthermore, I was full of uneasiness as to what Bartleby could possibly be doing in my office in his shirt sleeves, and in an otherwise dismantled condition of a Sunday morning. Was anything amiss going on? Nay, that was out of the question. It was not to be thought of for a moment that Bartleby was an immoral person. But what could he be doing there? - copying? Nay again, whatever might be his eccentricities, Bartleby was an eminently decorous person. He would be the last man to sit down to his desk in any state approaching to nudity. Besides, it was Sunday; and there was something about Bartleby that forbade the supposition that he would by any secular occupation violate the proprieties of the day.

6 Nevertheless, my mind was not pacified; and full of a restless curiosity, at last I returned to the door. Without hindrance I inserted my key, opened it, and entered. Bartleby was not to be seen. I looked round anxiously,

peeped behind his screen; but it was very plain that he was gone. Upon more closely examining the place, I surmised that for an indefinite period Bartleby must have ate, dressed, and slept in my office, and that, too without plate, mirror, or bed. The cushioned seat of a rickety old sofa in one corner bore the faint impress of a lean, reclining form. Rolled away under his desk, I found a blanket; under the empty grate, a blacking box and brush; on a chair, a tin basin, with soap and a ragged towel; in a newspaper a few crumbs of ginger-nuts and a morsel of cheese. Yes, thought I, it is evident enough that Bartleby has been making his home here, keeping bachelor's hall all by himself. Immediately then the thought came sweeping across me, what miserable friendliness and loneliness are here revealed! His poverty is great; but his solitude, how horrible! Think of it. Of a Sunday, Wall Street is deserted as Petra; and every night of every day it is an emptiness. This building, too, which of week-days hums with industry and life, at nightfall echoes with sheer vacancy, and all through Sunday is forlorn. And here Bartleby makes his home; sole spectator of a solitude which he has seen all populous - a sort of innocent and transformed Marius brooding among the ruins of Carthage!

7 For the first time in my life a feeling of over-powering stinging melancholy seized me. Before, I had never experienced aught but a not unpleasing sadness. The bond of a common humanity now drew me irresistibly to gloom. A fraternal melancholy! For both I and Bartleby were sons of Adam. I remembered the bright silks and sparkling faces I had seen that day, in gala trim, swan-like sailing down the Mississippi of Broadway; and I contrasted them with the pallid copyist, and thought to myself, Ah, happiness courts the light, so we deem the world is gay; but misery hides aloof, so we deem that misery there is none. These sad fancyings - chimeras, doubtless, of a sick and silly brain - led on to other and more special thoughts, concerning the eccentricities of Bartleby. Presentiments of strange discoveries hovered round me. The scrivener's pale

form appeared to me laid out, among uncaring strangers, in its shivering winding sheet.

8 Suddenly I was attracted by Bartleby's closed desk, the key in open sight left in the lock.

I mean no mischief, seek the gratification of no heartless curiosity, thought I; besides, the desk is mine, and its contents, too, so I will make bold to look within. Everything was methodically arranged, the papers smoothly placed. The pigeon holes were deep, and removing the files of documents, I groped into their recesses. Presently I felt something there, and dragged it out. It was an old bandanna handkerchief, heavy and knotted. I opened it, and saw it was a saving's bank.

9 I now recalled all the quiet mysteries which I had noted in the man. I remembered that he never spoke but to answer; that, though at intervals he had considerable time to himself, yet I had never seen him reading - no, not even a newspaper; that for long periods he would stand looking out, at his pale window behind the screen, upon the dead brick wall; I was quite sure he never visited any refectory or eating house; while his pale face clearly indicated that he never drank beer like Turkey, or tea and coffee even, like other men; that he never went anywhere in particular that I could learn; never went out for a walk, unless, indeed, that was the case at present; that he had declined telling who he was, or whence he came, or whether he had any relatives in the world; that though so thin and pale, he never complained of ill health. And more than all, I remembered a certain unconscious air of pallid - how shall I call it? - of pallid haughtiness, say, or rather an austere reserve about him, which had positively awed me into my tame compliance with his eccentricities, when I had feared to ask him to do the slightest incidental thing for me, even though I might know, from his long-continued motionlessness, that behind his screen he must be standing in one of those dead-wall reveries of his.

10 Revolving all these things, and coupling them with the recently discovered fact, that he made my office his con-

stant abiding place and home, and not forgetful of his morbid moodiness; revolving all these things, a prudential feeling began to steal over me. My first emotions had been those of pure melancholy and sincerest pity; but just in proportion as the forlornness of Bartleby grew and grew to my imagination, did that same melancholy merge into fear, that pity into repulsion. So true it is, and so terrible, too, that up to a certain point the thought or sight of misery enlists our best affections; but, in certain special cases, beyond that point it does not. They err who would assert that invariably this is owing to the inherent selfishness of the human heart. It rather proceeds from a certain hopelessness of remedying excessive and organic ill. To a sensitive being, pity is not seldom pain. And when at last it is perceived that such pity cannot lead to effectual succor, common sense bids the soul be rid of it. What I saw that morning persuaded me that the scrivener was the victim of innate and incurable disorder. I might give alms to his body; but his body did not pain him; it was his soul that suffered, and his soul I could not reach.

11 I did not accomplish the purpose of going to Trinity Church that morning. Somehow, the things I had seen disqualified me for the time from church-going. I walked homeward, thinking what I would do with Bartleby. Finally, I resolved upon this - I would put certain calm questions to him the next morning, touching his history, etc., and if he declined to answer them openly and unreservedly (and I supposed he would prefer not), then to give him a twenty dollar bill over and above whatever I might owe him, and tell him his services were no longer required; but that if in any other way I could assist him, I would be happy to do so, especially if he desired to return to his native place, wherever that might be, I would willingly help to defray the expenses. Moreover, if, after reaching home, he found himself at any time in want of aid, a letter from him would be sure of a reply.

12 The next morning came.
'Bartleby,' said I, gently calling to him behind his screen.

No reply.

'Bartleby,' said I, in a still gentler tone, 'come here; I am not going to ask you to do anything you would prefer not to do. I simply wish to speak to you.'

Upon this he noiselessly slid into view.

'Will you tell me, Bartleby, where you were born?'

'I would prefer not to.'

'Will you tell me *anything* about yourself?'

'I would prefer not to.'

'But what reasonable objection can you have to speak to me? I feel friendly towards you.'

13 He did not look at me while I spoke, but kept his glance fixed upon my bust of Cicero, which, as I then sat, was directly behind me, some six inches above my head.

14 'What is your answer, Bartleby,' said I, after waiting a considerable time for a reply, during which his countenance remained immovable, only there was the faintest conceivable tremor of the white attenuated mouth.

'At present I prefer to give no answer,' he said, and retired into his hermitage.

15 It was rather weak in me I confess, but his manner, on this occasion, nettled me. Not only did there seem to lurk in it a certain calm disdain, but his perverseness seemed ungrateful, considering the undeniable good usage and indulgence he had received from me.

16 Again I sat ruminating what I should do. Mortified as I was at his behavior, and resolved as I had been to dismiss him when I entered my office, nevertheless I strangely felt something superstitious knocking at my heart, and forbidding me to carry out my purpose, and denouncing me for a villain if I dared to breathe one bitter word against this forlornest of mankind. At last, familiarly drawing my chair behind his screen, I sat down and said: 'Bartleby, never mind, then, about revealing your history; but let me entreat you, as a friend, to comply as far as may be with the usages of this office. Say now, you will help to examine papers tomorrow or next day: in short, say now, that in a day or

two you will begin to be a little reasonable: - say so, Bartleby.'

'At present I would prefer not to be a little reasonable,' was his mildly cadaverous reply.

18 Just then the folding doors opened, and Nippers approached. He seemed suffering from an unusually bad night's rest, induced by severer indigestion than common. He overheard those final words of Bartleby.

'Prefer not, eh?' gritted Nippers - 'I'd prefer him, if I were you, sir,' addressing me - 'I'd prefer him; I'd give him preferences, the stubborn mule! What is it, sir, pray, that he prefers not to do now?'

Bartleby moved not a limb.

'Mr Nippers,' said I, 'I'd prefer that you would withdraw for the present.'

19 Somehow, of late, I had got into the way of involuntarily using the word 'prefer' upon all sorts of not exactly suitable occasions. And I trembled to think that my contact with the scrivener had already and seriously affected me in a mental way. And what further and deeper aberration might it not yet produce? This apprehension had not been without efficacy in determining me to summary measures.

20 As Nippers, looking very sour and sulky, was departing, Turkey blandly and deferentially approached.

'With submission, sir,' said he, 'yesterday I was thinking about Bartleby here, and I think that if he would but prefer to take a quart of good ale every day, it would do much towards mending him, and enabling him to assist in examining his papers.'

'So you have got the word, too,' said I, slightly excited.

'With submission, what word, sir,' asked Turkey, respectfully crowding himself into the contracted space behind the screen, and by so doing, making me jostle the scrivener. 'What word, sir?'

'I would prefer to be left alone here,' said Bartleby, as if offended at being mobbed in his privacy.

'That's the word, Turkey,' said I - 'that's it.'

'Oh, prefer? oh yes - queer word. I never use it myself.'

But, sir, as I was saying, if he would but prefer -'

'Turkey,' interrupted I, 'you will please withdraw.'

'Oh, certainly, sir, if you prefer that I should.'

21. As he opened the folding-door to retire, Nippers at his desk caught a glimpse of me, and asked whether I would prefer to have a certain paper copied on blue paper or white. He did not in the least roguishly accent the word prefer. It was plain that it involuntarily rolled from his tongue. I thought to myself, surely I must get rid of a demented man, who already has in some degree turned the tongues, if not the heads of myself and clerks. But I thought it prudent not to break the dismissal at once.

22. The next day I noticed that Bartleby did nothing but stand at his window in his dead-wall revery. Upon asking him why he did not write, he said that he had decided upon doing no more writing.

'Why, how now? what next?' exclaimed I, 'do no more writing?'

'No more.'

'And what is the reason?'

'Do you not see the reason for yourself?' he indifferently replied.

23. I looked steadfastly at him, and perceived that his eyes looked dull and glazed. Instantly it occurred to me, that his unexampled diligence in copying by his dim window for the first few weeks of his stay with me might have temporarily impaired his vision.

24. I was touched. I said something in condolence with him. I hinted that of course he did wisely in abstaining from writing for a while; and urged him to embrace that opportunity of taking wholesome exercise in the open air. This, however, he did not do. A few days after this, my other clerks being absent, and being in a great hurry to dispatch certain letters by the mail, I thought that, having nothing else earthly to do, Bartleby would surely be less inflexible than usual, and carry these letters to the post-office. But he

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blankly declined. So, much to my inconvenience, I went myself.

25. Still added days went by. Whether Bartleby's eyes improved or not, I could not say. To all appearance, I thought they did. But when I asked him if they did, he vouchsafed no answer. At all events, he would do no copying. At last, in reply to my urgings, he informed me that he had permanently given up copying.

'What!' exclaimed I; 'suppose your eyes should get entirely well - better than ever before - would you not copy then?'

'I have given up copying,' he answered, and slid aside.

V. He remained as ever, a fixture in my chamber. Nay - if that were possible - he became still more of a fixture than before. What was to be done? He would do nothing in the office; why should he stay there? In plain fact, he had now become a millstone to me, not only useless as a necklace, but afflictive to bear. Yet I was sorry for him. I speak less than the truth when I say that, on his own account, he occasioned me uneasiness. If he would but have named a single relative or friend, I would instantly have written, and urged their taking the poor fellow away to some convenient retreat. But he seemed alone, absolutely alone in the universe. A bit of wreck in the mid Atlantic. At length, necessities connected with my business tyrannized over all other considerations. Decently as I could, I told Bartleby that in six days time he must unconditionally leave the office. I warned him to take measures, in the interval, for procuring some other abode. I offered to assist him in this endeavor, if he himself would but take the first step towards a removal. 'And when you finally quit me, Bartleby,' added I, 'I shall see that you go not away entirely unprovided. Six days from this hour, remember.'

2. At the expiration of that period, I peeped behind the screen, and lo! Bartleby was there.

3. I buttoned up my coat, balanced myself; advanced slowly towards him, touched his shoulder, and said, 'The

time has come; you must quit this place; I am sorry for you; here is money; but you must go.

'I would prefer not,' he replied, with his back still towards me.

'You must.'

He remained silent.

4 Now I had an unbounded confidence in this man's common honesty. He had frequently restored to me sixpences and shillings carelessly dropped upon the floor, for I am apt to be very reckless in such shirt-button affairs. The proceeding, then, which followed will not be deemed extraordinary.

5 'Bartleby,' said I, 'I owe you twelve dollars on account; here are thirty-two; the odd twenty are yours - Will you take it?' and I handed the bills towards him.

But he made no motion.

'I will leave them here, then,' putting them under a weight on the table. Then taking my hat and cane and going to the door, I tranquilly turned and added - 'After you have removed your things from these offices, Bartleby, you will of course lock the door - since every one is now gone for the day but you - and if you please, slip your key underneath the mat, so that I may have it in the morning. I shall not see you again; so good-by to you. If, hereafter, in your new place of abode, I can be of any service to you, do not fail to advise me by letter. Good-by, Bartleby, and fare you well.'

6 But he answered not a word; like the last column of some ruined temple, he remained standing mute and solitary in the middle of the otherwise deserted room.

7 As I walked home in a pensive mood, my vanity got the better of my pity. I could not but highly plume myself on my masterly management in getting rid of Bartleby. Masterly I call it, and such it must appear to any dispassionate thinker. The beauty of my procedure seemed to consist in its perfect quietness. There was no vulgar bullying, no bravado of any sort, no choleric hectoring, and striding to and fro across the apartment, jerking out vehem-

ment commands for Bartleby to bundle himself off with his beggarly traps. Nothing of the kind. Without loudly bidding Bartleby depart - as an inferior genius might have done - I assumed the ground that depart he must; and upon that assumption built all I had to say. The more I thought over my procedure, the more I was charmed with it. Nevertheless, next morning, upon awakening, I had my doubts - I had somehow slept off the fumes of vanity. One of the coolest and wisest hours a man has, is just after he awakes in the morning. My procedure seemed as sagacious as ever - but only in theory. How it would prove in practice - there was the rub. It was truly a beautiful thought to have assumed Bartleby's departure; but, after all, that assumption was simply my own, and none of Bartleby's. The great point was, not whether I had assumed that he would quit me, but whether he would prefer so to do. He was more a man of preferences than assumptions.

8 After breakfast, I walked down town, arguing the probabilities *pro* and *con*. One moment I thought it would prove a miserable failure, and Bartleby would be found all alive at my office as usual; the next moment it seemed certain that I should find his chair empty. And so I kept veering about. At the corner of Broadway and Canal Street, I saw quite an excited group of people standing in earnest conversation.

'I'll take odds he doesn't,' said a voice as I passed.

'Doesn't go? - done!' said I, 'put up your money.'

9 I was instinctively putting my hand in my pocket to produce my own, when I remembered that this was an election day. The words I had overheard bore no reference to Bartleby, but to the success or non-success of some candidate for the mayoralty. In my intent frame of mind. I had, as it were, imagined that all Broadway shared in my excitement, and were debating the same question with me. I passed on, very thankful that the uproar of the street screened my momentary absent-mindedness.

10 As I had intended, I was earlier than usual at my office door. I stood listening for a moment. All was still. He must

be gone. I tried the knob. The door was locked. Yes, my procedure had worked to a charm; he indeed must be vanished. Yet a certain melancholy mixed with this: I was almost sorry for my brilliant success. I was fumbling under the door mat for the key, which Bartleby was to have left there for me, when accidentally my knee knocked against a panel, producing a summoning sound, and in response a voice came to me from within - 'Not yet; I am occupied.'

11 It was Bartleby.

I was thunderstruck. For an instant I stood like the man who, pipe in mouth, was killed one cloudless afternoon long ago in Virginia, by summer lightning; at his own warm open window he was killed, and remained leaning out there upon the dreamy afternoon, till some one touched him, when he fell.

12 'Not gone!' I murmured at last. But again obeying that wondrous ascendancy which the inscrutable scrivener had over me, and from which ascendancy, for all my chafing, I could not completely escape, I slowly went down stairs and out into the street, and while walking round the block, considered what I should next do in this unheard-of perplexity. Turn the man out by an actual thrusting I could not; to drive him away by calling him hard names would not do; calling in the police was an unpleasant idea; and yet, permit him to enjoy his cadaverous triumph over me - this, too, I could not think of. What was to be done? or, if nothing could be done, was there anything further that I could assume in the matter? Yes, as before I had prospectively assumed that Bartleby would depart, so now I might retrospectively assume that departed he was. In the legitimate carrying out of this assumption, I might enter my office in a great hurry, and pretending not to see Bartleby at all, walk straight against him as if he were air. Such a proceeding would in a singular degree have the appearance of a home-thrust. It was hardly possible that Bartleby could withstand such an application of the doctrine of assumptions. But upon second thoughts the success of the plan seemed rather dubious. I resolved to argue the matter over with him again.

'Bartleby,' said I, entering the office, with a quietly severe expression, 'I am seriously displeased. I am pained, Bartleby. I had thought better of you. I had imagined you of such a gentlemanly organization, that in any delicate dilemma a slight hint would suffice - in short, an assumption. But it appears I am deceived. Why,' I added, unaffectedly starting, 'you have not even touched that money yet,' pointing to it, just where I had left it the evening previous.

13 He answered nothing.

'Will you, or will you not, quit me?' I now demanded in a sudden passion, advancing close to him.

'I would prefer *not* to quit you,' he replied, gently emphasizing the *not*.

'What earthly right have you to stay here? Do you pay any rent? Do you pay my taxes? Or is this property yours?'

He answered nothing.

'Are you ready to go on and write now? Are your eyes recovered? Could you copy a small paper for me this morning? or help examine a few lines? or step round to the post-office? In a word, will you do anything at all, to give a coloring to your refusal to depart the premises?'

14 He silently retired into his hermitage.

I was now in such a state of nervous resentment that I thought it but prudent to check myself at present from further demonstrations. Bartleby and I were alone. I remembered the tragedy of the unfortunate Adams and the still more unfortunate Colt in the solitary office of the latter; and how poor Colt, being dreadfully incensed by Adams, and imprudently permitting himself to get wildly excited, was at unawares hurried into his fatal act - an act which certainly no man could possibly deplore more than the actor himself. Often it had occurred to me in my ponderings upon the subject, that had that altercation taken place in the public street, or at a private residence, it would not have terminated as it did. It was the circumstance of being alone in a solitary office, up stairs, of a building entirely unhallowed by humanizing domestic associations -

an uncarpeted office, doubtless, of a dusty, haggard sort of appearance. — this it must have been, which greatly helped to enhance the irritable desperation of the hapless Colt.

15 But when this old Adam of resentment rose in me and tempted me concerning Bartleby, I grappled him and threw him. How? Why, simply by recalling the divine injunction: 'A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another.' Yes, this it was that saved me. Aside from higher considerations, charity often operates as a vastly wise and prudent principle — a great safeguard to its possessor. Men have committed murder for jealousy's sake, and anger's sake, and hatred's sake, and selfishness' sake, and spiritual pride's sake; but no man, that ever I heard of, ever committed a diabolical murder for sweet charity's sake. Mere self-interest, then, if no better motive can be enlisted, should, especially with high-tempered men, prompt all beings to charity and philanthropy. At any rate, upon the occasion in question, I strove to drown my exasperated feelings towards the scrivener by benevolently construing his conduct. Poor fellow, poor fellow! thought I, he don't mean anything; and besides, he has seen hard times, and ought to be indulged.

16 I endeavored, also, immediately to occupy myself, and at the same time to comfort my despondency. I tried to fancy, that in the course of the morning, at such time as might prove agreeable to him, Bartleby, of his own free accord, would emerge from his hermitage and take up some decided line of march in the direction of the door. But no. Half-past twelve o'clock came; Turkey began to glow in the face, overturn his inkstand, and become generally obstreperous; Nippers abated down into quietude and courtesy; Ginger Nut munched his noon apple; and Bartleby remained standing at his window in one of his profoundest dead-wall reveries. Will it be credited? Ought I to acknowledge it? That afternoon I left the office without saying one further word to him.

17 Some days now passed, during which, at leisure intervals I looked a little into 'Edwards on the Will,' and 'Priestley

on Necessity.' Under the circumstances, those books induced a salutary feeling. Gradually I slid into the persuasion that these troubles of mine, touching the scrivener, had been all predestinated from eternity, and Bartleby was billeted upon me for some mysterious purpose of an allwise Providence, which it was not for a mere mortal like me to fathom. Yes, Bartleby, stay there behind your screen, thought I; I shall persecute you no more; you are harmless and noiseless as any of these old chairs; in short, I never feel so private as when I know you are here. At last I see it, I feel it; I penetrate to the predestinated purpose of my life. I am content. Others may have loftier parts to enact; but my mission in this world, Bartleby, is to furnish you with office-room for such period as you may see fit to remain.

18 I believe that this wise and blessed frame of mind would have continued with me, had it not been for the unsolicited and uncharitable remarks obtruded upon me by my professional friends who visited the rooms. But thus it often is, that the constant friction of illiberal minds wears out at last the best resolves of the more generous. Though to be sure, when I reflected upon it, it was not strange that people entering my office should be struck by the peculiar aspect of the unaccountable Bartleby, and so be tempted to throw out some sinister observations concerning him. Sometimes an attorney, having business with me, and calling at my office, and finding no one but the scrivener there, would undertake to obtain some sort of precise information from him touching my whereabouts; but without heeding his idle talk, Bartleby would remain standing immovable in the middle of the room. So after contemplating him in that position for a time, the attorney would depart, no wiser than he came.

19 Also, when a reference was going on, and the room full of lawyers and witnesses, and business driving fast, some deeply-occupied legal gentleman present, seeing Bartleby wholly unemployed, would request him to run round to his (the legal gentleman's) office and fetch some papers for

him. Thereupon, Bartleby would tranquilly decline, and yet remain idle as before. Then the lawyer would give a great stare, and turn to me. And what could I say? At last I was made aware that all through the circle of my professional acquaintance, a whisper of wonder was running round, having reference to the strange creature I kept at my office. This worried me very much. And as the idea came upon me of his possibly turning out a long-lived man, and keep occupying my chambers, and denying my authority; and perplexing my visitors; and scandalizing my professional reputation; and casting a general gloom over the premises; keeping soul and body together to the last upon his savings (for doubtless he spent but half a dime a day), and in the end perhaps outlive me, and claim possession of my office by right of his perpetual occupancy: as all these dark anticipations crowded upon me more and more, and my friends continually intruded their relentless remarks upon the apparition in my room; a great change was wrought in me. I resolved to gather all my faculties together, and forever rid me of this intolerable incubus.

20 Ere revolving any complicated project, however, adapted to this end, I first simply suggested to Bartleby the propriety of his permanent departure. In a calm and serious tone, I commended the idea to his careful and mature consideration. But, having taken three days to meditate upon it, he apprised me, that his original determination remained the same; in short, that he still preferred to abide with me.

21 What shall I do? I now said to myself, buffoning up my coat to the last button. What shall I do? what ought I to do? what does conscience say I *should* do with this man, or, rather, ghost. Rid myself of him, I must; go, he shall. But how? You will not thrust him, the poor, pale, passive mortal - you will not thrust such a helpless creature out of your door? you will not dishonor yourself by such cruelty? No, I will not, I cannot do that. Rather would I let him live and die here, and then mason up his remains in the wall. What, then, will you do? For all your coaxing, he will

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BARTLEBY
not budge. Bribes he leaves under your own paper-weight on your table; in short, it is quite plain that he prefers to cling to you.

22 Then something severe, something unusual must be done. What! surely you will not have him collared by a constable, and commit his innocent pallor to the common jail? And upon what ground could you procure such a thing to be done? - a vagrant, is he? What! he a vagrant, a wanderer, who refuses to budge? It is because he will *not* be a vagrant; then, that you seek to count him *as* a vagrant. That is too absurd. No visible means of support: there I have him. Wrong again: for indubitably he *does* support himself, and that is the only unanswerable proof that any man can show of his possessing the means so to do. No more, then. Since he will not quit me, I must quit him. I will change my offices; I will move elsewhere, and give him fair notice, that if I find him on my new premises I will then proceed against him as a common trespasser.

23 Acting accordingly, next day I thus addressed him: 'I find these chambers too far from the City Hall; the air is unwholesome. In a word, I propose to remove my offices next week, and shall no longer require your services. I tell you this now, in order that you may seek another place.'

He made no reply, and nothing more was said.

24 On the appointed day I engaged carts and men, proceeded to my chambers, and, having but little furniture, everything was removed in a few hours. Throughout, the scrivener remained standing behind the screen, which I directed to be removed the last thing. It was withdrawn; and, being folded up like a huge folio, left him the motionless occupant of a naked room. I stood in the entry watching him a moment, while something from within me upbraided me.

25 I re-entered, with my hand in my pocket - and - and my heart in my mouth.

'Good-by, Bartleby; I am going - good-by, and God some way bless you; and take that,' slipping something in his hand. But it dropped upon the floor, and then - strange

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to say - I tore myself from him whom I had so longed to be rid of.

VI Established in my new quarters, for a day or two I kept the door locked, and started at every footfall in the passages. When I returned to my rooms, after any little absence, I would pause at the threshold for an instant, and attentively listen, ere applying my key. But these fears were needless. Bartleby never came nigh me.

2 I thought all was going well, when a perturbed-looking stranger visited me, inquiring whether I was the person who had recently occupied rooms at No. — Wall Street.

Full of forebodings, I replied that I was.

'Then, sir,' said the stranger, who proved a lawyer, 'you are responsible for the man you left there. He refuses to do any copying; he refuses to do anything; he says he prefers not to; and he refuses to quit the premises.'

'I am very sorry, sir,' said I, with assumed tranquillity, but an inward tremor, 'but, really, the man you allude to is nothing to me - he is no relation or apprentice of mine, that you should hold me responsible for him.'

'In mercy's name, who is he?'

'I certainly cannot inform you. I know nothing about him. Formerly I employed him as a copyist; but he has done nothing for me now for some time past.'

'I shall settle him, then - good morning, sir.'

Several days passed, and I heard nothing more; and, though I often felt a charitable prompting to call at the place and see poor Bartleby, yet a certain squeamishness, of I know not what, withheld me.

All is over with him, by this time, thought I, at last, when, through another week, no further intelligence reached me. But, coming to my room the day after, I found several persons waiting at my door in a high state of nervous excitement.

'That's the man - here he comes,' cried the foremost one, whom I recognized as the lawyer who had previously called upon me alone.

'You must take him away, sir, at once,' cried a portly

person among them, advancing upon me, and whom I knew to be the landlord of No. — Wall Street. 'These gentlemen, my tenants, cannot stand it any longer; Mr B——,' pointing to the lawyer, 'has turned him out of his room, and he now persists in haunting the building generally, sitting upon the banisters of the stairs by day, and sleeping in the entry by night. Everybody is concerned; clients are leaving the offices; some fears are entertained of a mob; something you must do, and that without delay.'

3 Aghast at this torrent, I fell back before it, and would fain have locked myself in my new quarters. In vain I persisted that Bartleby was nothing to me - no more than to any one else. In vain - I was the last person known to have anything to do with him, and they held me to the terrible account. Fearful, then, of being exposed in the papers (as one person present obscurely threatened), I considered the matter, and, at length, said, that if the lawyer would give me a confidential interview with the scrivener, in his (the lawyer's) own room, I would, that afternoon, strive my best to rid them of the nuisance they complained of.

4 Going up stairs to my old haunt, there was Bartleby silently sitting upon the banister at the landing.

'What are you doing here, Bartleby?' said I.

'Sitting upon the banister,' he mildly replied.

I motioned him into the lawyer's room, who then left us.

'Bartleby,' said I, 'are you aware that you are the cause of great tribulation to me, by persisting in occupying the entry after being dismissed from the office?'

No answer.

'Now one of two things must take place. Either you must do something, or something must be done to you. Now what sort of business would you like to engage in? Would you like to re-engage in copying for some one?'

'No; I would prefer not to make any change.'

'Would you like a clerkship in a dry-goods store?'

'There is too much confinement about that. No, I would not like a clerkship; but I am not particular.'

BILLY BUDD AND OTHER STORIES

'Too much confinement,' I cried, 'why you keep yourself confined all the time!'

'I would prefer not to take a clerkship,' he rejoined, as it to settle that little item at once.

'How would a bar-tender's business suit you? There is no trying of the eye-sight in that.'

'I would not like it at all; though, as I said before, I am not particular.'

His unwonted wordiness inspirited me. I returned to the charge.

'Well, then, would you like to travel through the country collecting bills for the merchants? That would improve your health.'

No, I would prefer to be doing something else.'

'How, then, would going as a companion to Europe, to entertain some young gentleman with your conversation - how would that suit you?'

Not at all. It does not strike me that there is anything definite about that. I like to be stationary. But I am not particular.'

'Stationary you shall be, then,' I cried, now losing all patience, and, for the first time in all my exasperating connection with him, fairly flying into a passion. 'If you do not go away from these premises before night, I shall feel bound - indeed, I *am* bound - to - to - to quit the premises myself!' I rather absurdly concluded, knowing not with what possible threat to try to frighten his immobility into compliance. Despairing of all further efforts, I was precipitately leaving him, when a final thought occurred to me - one which had not been wholly unindulged before.

'Bartleby,' said I, in the kindest tone I could assume under such exciting circumstances, 'will you go home with me now - not to my office, but my dwelling - and remain there till we can conclude upon some convenient arrangement for you at our leisure? Come, let us start now, right away.'

'No: at present I would prefer not to make any change at all.'

7 I answered nothing; but, effectually dodging every one by the suddenness and rapidity of my flight, rushed from the building, ran up Wall Street towards Broadway, and, jumping into the first omnibus, was soon removed from pursuit. As soon as tranquillity returned, I distinctly perceived that I had now done all that I possibly could, both in respect to the demands of the landlord and his tenants, and with regard to my own desire and sense of duty, to benefit Bartleby, and shield him from rude persecution. I now strove to be entirely care-free and quiescent; and my conscience justified me in the attempt; though, indeed, it was not so successful as I could have wished. So fearful was I of being again hunted out by the incensed landlord and his exasperated tenants, that, surrendering my business to Nippers, for a few days, I drove about the upper part of the town and through the suburbs, in my rockaway; crossed over to Jersey City and Hoboken, and paid fugitive visits to Manhattanville and Astoria. In fact, I almost lived in my rockaway for the time.

8 When again I entered my office, lo, a note from the landlord lay upon the desk. I opened it with trembling hands. It informed me that the writer had sent to the police, and had Bartleby removed to the Tombs as a vagrant. Moreover, since I knew more about him than any one else, he wished me to appear at that place, and make a suitable statement of the facts. These tidings had a conflicting effect upon me. At first I was indignant; but, at last, almost approved. The landlord's energetic, summary disposition, had led him to adopt a procedure which I do not think I would have decided upon myself; and yet, as a last resort, under such peculiar circumstances, it seemed the only plan.

9 As I afterwards learned, the poor scrivener, when told that he must be conducted to the Tombs, offered not the slightest obstacle, but, in his pale, unmoving way, silently acquiesced.

10 Some of the compassionate and curious bystanders joined the party; and headed by one of the constables arm in arm

with Bartleby, the silent procession filed its way through all the noise, and heat, and joy of the roaring thoroughfares at noon.

The same day I received the note, I went to the Tombs, or, to speak more properly, the Halls of Justice. Seeking the right officer, I stated the purpose of my call, and was informed that the individual I described was, indeed, within. I then assured the functionary that Bartleby was a perfectly honest man, and greatly to be compassionated, however unaccountably eccentric. I narrated all I knew, and closed by suggesting the idea of letting him remain in as indulgent confinement as possible, till something less harsh might be done - though, indeed, I hardly knew what. At all events, if nothing else could be decided upon, the alms-house must receive him. I then begged to have an interview.

12 Being under no disgraceful charge, and quite serene and harmless in all his ways, they had permitted him freely to wander about the prison, and, especially, in the inclosed grass-platted yards thereof. And so I found him there, standing all alone in the quietest of the yards, his face towards a high wall, while all around, from the narrow slits of the jail windows, I thought I saw peering out upon him the eyes of murderers and thieves.

13 'Bartleby!'

'I know you,' he said, without looking round - 'and I want nothing to say to you.'

'It was not I that brought you here, Bartleby,' said I, keenly pained at his implied suspicion. 'And to you, this should not be so vile a place. Nothing reproachful attaches to you by being here. And see, it is not so sad a place as one might think. Look, there is the sky, and here is the grass.'

'I know where I am,' he replied, but would say nothing more, and so I left him.

14 As I entered the corridor again, a broad meat-like man, in an apron, accosted me, and, jerking his thumb over his shoulder, said - 'Is that your friend?'

'Yes.'

'Does he want to starve? If he does, let him live on the prison fare, that's all.'

'Who are you?' asked I, not knowing what to make of such an unofficially speaking person in such a place.

'I am the grub-man. Such gentlemen as have friends here, hire me to provide them with something good to eat.'

'Is this so?' said I, turning to the turnkey.

He said it was.

'Well, then,' said I, slipping some silver into the grub-man's hands (for so they called him), 'I want you to give particular attention to my friend there; let him have the best dinner you can get. And you must be as polite to him as possible.'

'Introduce me, will you?' said the grub-man, looking at me with an expression which seemed to say he was all impatience for an opportunity to give a specimen of his breeding.

15 Thinking it would prove of benefit to the scrivener, I acquiesced; and, asking the grub-man his name, went up with him to Bartleby.

'Bartleby, this is a friend; you will find him very useful to you.'

'Your sarvant, sir, your sarvant,' said the grub-man, making a low salutation behind his apron. 'Hope you find it pleasant here, sir; nice grounds - cool apartments - hope you'll stay with us sometime - try to make it agreeable. What will you have for dinner to-day?'

'I prefer not to dine to-day,' said Bartleby, turning away. 'It would disagree with me; I am unused to dinners.' So saying, he slowly moved to the other side of the inclosure, and took up a position fronting the dead-wall.

16 'How's this?' said the grub-man, addressing me with a stare of astonishment. 'He's odd, ain't he?'

'I think he is a little deranged,' said I, sadly.

'Deranged? deranged is it? Well, now, upon my word, I thought that friend of yours was a gentleman forger; they

are always pale and genteel-like, them forgers. I can't help pity 'em - can't help it, sir. Did you know Monroe Edwards?' he added, touchingly, and paused. Then, laying his hand piteously on my shoulder, sighed, 'he died of consumption at Sing-Sing. So you weren't acquainted with Monroe?'

'No, I was never socially acquainted with any forgers. But I cannot stop longer. Look to my friend yonder. You will not lose by it. I will see you again.'

17 Some few days after this, I again obtained admission to the Tombs, and went through the corridors in quest of Bartleby; but without finding him.

'I saw him coming from his cell not long ago,' said a turnkey, 'may be he's gone to loiter in the yards.'

So I went in that direction.

'Are you looking for the silent man?' said another turnkey, passing me. 'Yonder he lies - sleeping in the yard there. 'Tis not twenty minutes since I saw him lie down.'

18 The yard was entirely quiet. It was not accessible to the common prisoners. The surrounding walls, of amazing thickness, kept off all sounds behind them. The Egyptian character of the masonry weighed upon me with its gloom. But a soft imprisoned turf grew under foot. The heart of the eternal pyramids, it seemed, wherein, by some strange magic, through the clefts, grass-seed, dropped by birds, had sprung.

19 Strangely huddled at the base of the wall, his knees drawn up, and lying on his side, his head touching the cold stones, I saw the wasted Bartleby. But nothing stirred. I paused; then went close up to him; stooped over, and saw that his dim eyes were open; otherwise he seemed profoundly sleeping. Something prompted me to touch him. I felt his hand, when a tingling shiver ran up my arm and down my spine to my feet.

20 The round face of the grub-man peered upon me now. 'His dinner is ready. Won't he dine today, either? Or does he live without dining?'

'Lives without dining,' said I, and closed the eyes.

'Eh! - He's asleep, ain't he?'

'With kings and counselors,' murmured I.

21 There would seem little need for proceeding further in this history. Imagination will readily supply the meagre recital of poor Bartleby's interment. But, ere parting with the reader, let me say, that if this little narrative has sufficiently interested him, to awaken curiosity as to who Bartleby was, and what manner of life he led prior to the present narrator's making his acquaintance, I can only reply, that in such curiosity I fully share, but am wholly unable to gratify it. Yet here I hardly know whether I should divulge one little item of rumor, which came to my ear a few months after the scrivener's decease. Upon what basis it rested, I could never ascertain; and hence, how true it is I cannot now tell. But, inasmuch as this vague report has not been without a certain suggestive interest to me, however said, it may prove the same with some others; and so I will briefly mention it. The report was this: that Bartleby had been a subordinate clerk in the Dead Letter Office at Washington, from which he had been suddenly removed by a change in the administration. When I think over this rumor, hardly can I express the emotions which seize me. Dead letters! does it not sound like dead men? Conceive a man by nature and misfortune prone to a pallid hopelessness, can any business seem more fitted to heighten it than that of continually handling these dead letters, and assorting them for the flames? For by the cart-load they are annually burned. Sometimes from out the folded paper the pale clerk takes a ring - the finger it was meant for, perhaps, moulders in the grave; a bank-note sent in swiftest charity - he whom it would relieve, nor eats nor hungers any more; pardon for those who died despairing; hope for those who died unhoping; good tidings for those who died stifled by unrelieved calamities. On errands of life, these letters speed to death.

22 Ah, Bartleby! Ah, humanity!