

TRANSLATION OF PROPER NAMES - PART 2

Does Juliet's Rose, by Any Other Name, Smell as Sweet?

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What is going on with Merriam-Webster, Mom?"¹ My daughter was boiling mad and in the middle of writing a restaurant review when she phoned me from New York. "Why on Earth," Andrea asked, "does Merriam-Webster not cap 'french fries' when it caps French beans, French bread, French pastry, and French toast? Is it that 'french fries'—alone amongst its French culinary brethren—has become a common noun much like 'frankfurters,' 'hamburgers,' and 'wiener schnitzels'?" Andrea's rationale sounded plausible, so I said that I would explore it and call her back with an answer.

Never, ever, take proper names for granted.

Trying to make sense of all this as a medical translator, I decided to track a disease that was once as common as french fries:² syphilis—euphemistically known to English medical historians as the 'French pox.' Because of its incidence and prevalence, I fully expected to find it lowercased in Merriam-Webster (considered the foremost authority on American English usage). What I found, instead, is that it no longer even warrants an entry in that dictionary. How soon we forget the medical catastrophes of our ancestors.

I kept looking for concrete answers, but was able to report only more inconsistencies, omissions, and doubts. Merriam-Webster, now viewed through a magnifying glass, failed to deliver a coherent treatment of toponymic proper nouns and their derivative verbs and adjectives. It caps, for example, the noun 'Americanization' (and the verb 'to Americanize') but not 'romanization' (nor the verb 'to romanize'),³ and neither does it cap 'frenchification' (nor the verb 'to frenchify.') Furthermore, 'germanization' and 'to germanize' are also in lower case, and so is 'to italianize,' but inexplicably, it *does* cap 'Italianization.'

That same evening I got a call from my son, Axel. I had translated his résumé into Spanish and he wanted to know why I had spelled the state where he went to college with a single 't': 'Massachussets.' Well, my answer was that I ran Microsoft's Spanish spell-checker and it changed the spelling automatically to one 't.' I don't mean to pass the buck, but that's exactly what had happened. It did it, although after consulting all my Spanish style manuals I found no justifiable reason for it to have done so. I must conclude that Gates and I did not read the same style guides.

I knew then that the MS spell-checker had flaws in Spanish, so I decided to find out if

the MS American English spell-checker was trustworthy. I tested the MS spell-checker's treatment of other toponymic proper names, and the verbs, nouns, and adjectives derived from them. I discovered that that spell-checker selectively auto-corrects 'romanize' to 'Romanize' and 'germanize' to 'Germanize' even though the Merriam-Webster dictionary quoted here doesn't reflect a capped version, but it does not similarly "correct" 'frenchify' or 'italianize.' As far as 'italianization,' the MS spell checker doesn't recognize it. I often rant about the *Real Academia*, *L'Académie française*, and the *Accademia della Crusca*, but it looks like American English is begging for order.

If all this hadn't been enough to spoil my day, I was surfing the web later that night for transliteration of proper names from non Roman alphabets and found a series of pages from university libraries in the US asking sinologists for patience, as they hadn't finished converting the Wade-Giles bibliographic records into the Pinyin system. That wasn't surprising, given the monumental task that it is, but what I did find surprising was that some sites capped 'Pinyin' and some did not. Now weary of Merriam-Webster, I consulted it anyway. It categorically decreed: 'pinyin.' I then asked my Chinese colleagues and they emphatically said: 'Pinyin.' When it rains, it pours.

This article's aim is to take the treatment of proper names in translation a little further than where I left off in the previous article entitled "*What's in a Name: Juliet's Question Revisited*." I have here tried to red-flag some additional perils I've encountered in translating proper names—this time on toponymic terminology—from mere choppy waters to lethal tsunamis. And I certainly hope to throw an occasional lifeline to you, but I beg you not to expect anything other than rough sailing when reading it. In preparation, let's take a Dramamine before we leave shore.

Shipwrecks

When I teach translation, I often give a simple piece of advice to my students: When working with proper names, especially names of countries in sensitive, official, or important documents, raise the register. I then tell them the story of Furious Fouad. I used to translate the monthly newsletter of a US hospital of international renown for its cardiovascular services. In one issue, the lead English story opened with: "Fouad, a visitor from Jordan, is delighted with his new heart valve." When I read the story, I got a severe case of tachycardia, for this man—who was simply called Fouad or Fouad Lastname in the story—held the rank of Ambassador of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The hospital was aware of his accomplished diplomatic career, and that is precisely why they had showcased him in the lead article. He was a man of unquestionable distinction, and having treated him was quite a feather in their cap. It is therefore beyond comprehension that they failed to heed protocol and refer to him as His Excellency, and that they called him 'a visitor from Jordan' instead of using his country's name in its official long form. By the time my client called the Ambassador, at my urging, to apologize for the breach of protocol, only the Ambassador's secretary came to the phone. His Excellency may have been very happy with the hospital's

valve, but not with its gall. My advice is to pay a great deal of attention to proper names, for they are full of perils. Red-flag every last one for research. If you spot mistakes in proper names in the source text (and my hope is that after reading this article you *will* find them), do the necessary research and then call your client. Never, ever, take proper names for granted.

Swimming with the Tide

1. Numbers, Genders, Articles

A colleague of mine in the History Department told me that when the Thirteen Colonies first united, they would refer to themselves in the plural, i.e., The Thirteen Colonies *are*. Later, when the US became a nation, it referred to itself in the singular: The United States *is*. In order to respect the will of the American people, he advised, the name of this country should always be translated in such a way as to honor that will for unity. In Spanish, if we precede the proper name of the country with the plural article, i.e., *los Estados Unidos*, and we make a noun-verb agreement in the singular: *Los Estados Unidos es*, the lack of conformity between the plural article, the plural compound noun, and the singular verb becomes jarring. If, however, as I tell my students, we get rid of the plural definite article *los*, it becomes easier to see *Estados Unidos* as a single entity: *Estados Unidos es*. Regrettably, this quick trick is not useful for translating into many other languages,⁴ but Spanish translators should keep this escape hatch in mind because it can sometimes be used.⁵

The use of articles is often thorny. We say *the United States* and *the Netherlands* in English; In Spanish, *la Argentina* (or, simply, *Argentina*) and *El Uruguay* (or *Uruguay*), but *Chile* never takes an article in Spanish; in Portuguese we say *o Brasil* and *a Bolívia*, but not *o* (or *a*) *Portugal*. Yet, for *El Salvador*, the article is always preserved in English as in Spanish. When Spanish-speakers travel, we keep the article for some countries, but not for others: *al Japón*, *al Paraguay*, *al Senegal*, but *a México*, *a Portugal*, *a Chipre*. There are no rules, just conventions. Ukrainians insist that their country be referred to in English as *Ukraine*, rather than *the Ukraine*, as a sign of their independence from Russia. It is worth noting that neither the Ukrainian nor the Russian language has a definite article. On the other hand, cities like *la Habana*, *den Haag*, *o Rio de Janeiro*, which have an article in their original names, may not have it when translated into another language. When encountering problems with articles, look into the history of the term, see how that particular country refers to itself, whether or not it has made specific requests as to its translation, and ascertain whether or not the target language allows you to honor those requests.

When working with languages that have grammatical genders, it is not always clear whether a country is feminine, masculine, or neuter.

Let's start off with the easy gender. Germany (as a country name), for example, is translated into Spanish as *Alemania*, and it is considered a feminine proper noun

(largely because of its '-a' ending.) In German, the -en ending in country names as in *Belgien* is a clear sign of the neuter gender. But we cannot always trust these desinences. And consider Canada, that also ends with an '-a' in Spanish, albeit with an accented one, but happens to be masculine: *Canadá es bello*. It is interesting to note that in French the -a ending is not associated with the feminine gender, for we have *le Guatemala* and *le Nicaragua*. Likewise, the -que ending may be either masculine or feminine in French: *la Belgique*, but *le Mexique*. Nonetheless, with a few exceptions—like Israel, which is often modified by the feminine adjective *yaffa* (beautiful) because the feminine *Eretz* (Land of) is implied—the gender of country names is usually easy to research.

The gender of cities can be more problematic. I remember seeing a sign in the French Riviera that read *Le vieux Nice*. As a Spanish-speaker who minored in Italian, I had always thought of Nice as feminine, especially since the Italian name of the city, Garibaldi's *Nizza*, is clearly feminine. In French, however, it is, at first glance, masculine. It was not until I checked in *Le Petit Robert des noms propres* that I realized it was deceptive, as the masculine adjective *vieux* modifies the implied *quartier*, not the city. It would seem that Nice is also feminine in French. I say 'seem' because according to *Hanse-Blampain, Nouveau dictionnaire des difficultés du français moderne*, in spite of the cited entry in *Robert*, there is no rule when it comes to the gender of cities. Under *Genre des noms propres de villes*, item 2, it states that authors often contradict themselves in a single article, but that the masculine seems to take precedence. It further adds that even amongst the best French writers one may find with equal frequency *Rome est bâti* and *Rome est bâtie*; *Lyon est occupé* and *Lyon est occupée*. It also states that when one refers not to the toponym, but to its inhabitants, the masculine is preferred, especially when used with *tout*: *Tout Genève s'intéresse au débat*; *le Tout-Paris*.

My advice here is to do as the infamous Mexican executive: Wanting to hold a meeting on a Friday, but unsure as to whether Friday (*viernes*) was written in Spanish with a 'v' or a 'b,' he scheduled the meeting for Monday (*lunes*) instead. So, if after researching these terms you are still in doubt about a city's gender, the only solution is to 'cheat' by recasting the sentence in such a way as to avoid the problem. Thus, 'We wanted to experience the real Maastricht' could be recast into Spanish without assigning gender to the city in several ways: '*Deseábamos una experiencia maastrichtense auténtica*,' or '*Queríamos conocer Maastricht en toda su pureza*,' or '*Deseábamos conocer lo que realmente era Maastricht*.' In other contexts, the gender of a city or country may be made explicit by adding the word *city* or *country*: '*La bella ciudad de Hong Kong*' or '*el desértico país de Kuwait*.'

2. Spelling

The spelling of the names of places, cities, regions, and countries should be taken as lightly as a hurricane warning in Florida. When proper names become pilgrims, they often end up transformed, if not bruised and battered, by the voyage. My family in Mexico City, for instance, has lived happily for decades on a typo of transposed

syllables. Their house is on Sierra Paracaima, a dyslexic rendition of the mountain range between Brazil and Venezuela called Pacaraima. And similar alterations have happened in the US as well. The City of Albuquerque, on its official web site⁷ mentions that the city was so named in honor of Viceroy Fernández de la Cueva, Duque de Alburquerque. Over time, the sandy desert wind eroded that first 'r' and left the city with its present spelling. And my home state, Texas, is proud to showcase in its maps the quaint town of Buda (pronounced 'beew-dah'), where long ago, the story goes, the only curves for miles around were those of a Mexican widow (or *viuda*) with a good brain and an even better body for business. Texas also has Bexar County, a phonetic adaptation of the Spanish last name 'Béjar.' Obviously, even though as translators interested in proper names we may be able to recognize these 'mistakes,' there is nothing we can do about them now. Don't even try to fix them or educate your client. They are now set, if not in stone, in all street signs, maps, guide books, and search engines. It's a lost cause.

About ten years ago, I read in the *Libro de estilo* of the Madrid daily *El País* that it had made it editorial policy to spell the name of my country of origin and its proper adjective with an 'x.' Gone were the days of that 'j' that made all of Mexico cringe. So I got out a *caballito*, filled it with the very best tequila I had in my cantina, and drank to the fact that even though it had taken a few centuries for the Mother Country to spell us how we like to be spelled, it had finally happened. A few years later, while walking down the *Paseo de la castellana* in the Spanish capital, I couldn't help but grin when I saw a poster that read: "The Ñ is not a letter; it is a Country: España." The posters were printed as a protest to the then recent recommendation of the European Union to eliminate the 'ñ' from its computer keyboards.

Given my experience with that infamous 'j' in Méjico, I read with interest in my hometown newspaper a reprint from *The Los Angeles Times* entitled: "C is for Korea," where it is stated that Korean scholars and politicians have begun a drive to change the official English-language spelling of their country to 'Corea.'⁸ The campaign is based on an increasingly prevalent belief that the original 'C' was changed to a 'K' by the Japanese at the start of their 1910-1945 occupation of the peninsula so that their colonials would not precede them in the English alphabetical hierarchy. There is no doubt that the missing 'C' in the English spelling of the country is as thorny for Koreans as the missing 'x' is in the Spanish spelling for Mexicans. As translators, we must be extremely attuned to nationalistic and patriotic sensibilities, and do our best to honor the wishes of the peoples of the countries whose languages we work with. In addition to researching the government web sites for the countries you are working with, also check the sites of the US Department of State,⁹ the US Board of Geographic Names,¹⁰ and the CIA World Fact Book for guidance.¹¹

Sometimes there are spelling changes that cannot be considered 'naturalizations,' typos, or phonetic adaptations, and are instead a result of a historical lack of agreement on how a foreign proper name is to be 'adapted' in a given language. Consider the example cited by Moya¹² regarding the German cities of Brandenburg and Nürnberg. He found each spelled three different ways in the Spanish (peninsular)

press: Brandemburgo, Brandenburgo, and Brandeburgo; Núremberg, Nuremberg, and Nurenberg. Why get into this sort of problem when it would have been so much easier to simply transfer them as Brandenburg and Nürnberg? I doubt that readers would have been led astray if this had been done. In addition, the adaptations Brandenburgo and Nurenberg violate Spanish grammatical rules, for in Spanish there is never an 'n' before a 'b.' If after checking the target language press you opt against transferring a term and decide to use it in adapted form, make sure that you observe the target language spelling rules as well.

3. Transliteration

As I briefly mentioned in the introduction to this article, the Chinese government felt that the good Sir Thomas Francis Wade and Cambridge professor Herbert Allen Giles had been leading the way for English speakers to mangle Chinese pronunciation and argued that the Wade-Giles transliteration system of Chinese names was not intuitive. To correct this, in 1979 the Chinese adopted the Pinyin system for romanization.¹³ The US government honored the request, but, like the *New York Times* and other major newspapers, reserved the right to select which names to keep in the Wade-Giles system and which to change.¹⁴

If the Pinyin romanization, in spite of its soundness, gave severe headaches to governments, newspapers, map makers, and translators, it gave heart attacks to librarians. In 2000, some 20 years after the official decree, representatives from the Library of Congress, the Online Computer Library Catalog, and the Research Libraries Group were still consulting each other and senior administrators of libraries with large Chinese collections in order to attempt to identify the issues in converting existing Chinese-language bibliographic records, associated authority records for headings in these bibliographic records,¹⁵ and related headings in non-Chinese-language bibliographic records. In spite of everyone's good intentions, we are now in 2004 and most of the world's Chinese bibliographic records remain in transition.¹⁶ More than 20 years after the decree no one calls *Zhongguo* by any other name than China, nor *Tungmei* by anything other than Manchuria, and we never refer to Hong Kong by the Pinyin *Xianggang*. And it gets worse, for in many books and articles published today one will inevitably find Chinese proper names¹⁷ spelled using the Wade-Giles system, others spelled using Pinyin, and yet others—because some scholars are unhappy with either system—are written in accordance to a third set of rules: Yale University's nomenclature.¹⁸ If you encounter terminology in more than one system,¹⁹ you may wish to contact the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Business Advisory Council (ABAC) for guidance.²⁰

Drift

In spite of the problems created by requests such as those made by the Chinese government in 1979, it would seem like a simple tenet for translators to honor the

wishes of a people and call them what they want to be called, spell them the way they want to be spelled. The problem is that sometimes it is not clear who 'they' are.

Consider the fate of a safe, deep harbor on the western coast of India that the Arabs of the Sultanate of Gujarat had called 'Al Omani.' When the Portuguese conquered it in 1508 CE, they renamed it Boa Bahia (Good Bay), and then the British developed the harbor into what is now the city of Bombay. According to some secular web pages,²¹ in 1998 the Marathi colonists revised history to political advantage and claimed that the original name of the city by the bay was Mumbai—a name derived from the name of the goddess Mumba— and further asserted that it was the British who distorted the name Mumbai to Bombay. Other secular sources don't consider this a revisionist view, for they trust the Hindu historical etymology of the name, but are displeased because the Shiv Sena party—with its fundamentalist platform—demanded, achieved, and enforced (by some accounts through violence) the non-secular renaming of the city. It may now be Mumbai on the dotted line on English documents, but the name change is scorned and mourned by many.

Another politically volatile case is that of Burma. Since 1989 the military authorities there have promoted the name Myanmar for their state—a derivative of the Burmese name Myanma Naingngandaw. Yet, the CIA World Fact Book states that this decision was not approved by any sitting legislature in Burma. Because of this, the US government has not adopted the name, yet the US media have been known to use it. If this were not problematic enough for translators, the CIA graciously gives us five different names for that country. For mooring, always check the CIA World Fact Book, but do not stop your research there. Look for the terminology in question in the target-language press, in atlases,²² Internet sites and up-to-date dictionaries of proper names.²³

The CIA knows, just like the Bard knew centuries ago, that a rose—by any other name—does not smell as sweet. Because of this, translators cannot afford to ignore geopolitical changes. If we think like Alan Clark, the former UK Minister of Defense who, when asked in 1994 about Indonesia's continued occupation of East Timor, said, "I don't really fill my mind much with what one set of foreigners is doing to another,"²⁴ we will not only certainly botch our translations, but in so doing risk offending our clients and our readers. Onerous as it may be, we *must* fill our minds much.

Friend and Foe

Sometimes geographic and historical terms are known by two different names. For example, the occupation of Mexico City on Sept. 14, 1847 by U.S. General Winfield Scott marked the end of what is known in the US as the 'Mexican War.' In Mexico, however, that war is known as the *La Guerra de Texas* (The Texas War). Furthermore, in order to get to Mexico City, Scott had to cross the Rio Grande, a river known in Mexico as the *Río Bravo*. Likewise, what is known in French as *La campagne du Mexique* (The Mexican Campaign) is known in Spanish as *La intervención francesa* (The

French Intervention). My advice here is that unless instructed to do otherwise for political reasons, to honor the terminology of the target language, not the source's.

When there is territorial dispute, translators and journalists usually attempt to remain neutral by using both the name of the place as it is known by the natives, or in a given geographical area, and the name the opposing party uses. This is the case of the Falkland Islands (*Islas Malvinas* in Spanish), of the Diaoyu Islands (*Senkaku* in Japanese), and the quite incredible case of the Imia islets (*Kardak* in Turkish).

According to the HR-Net Forum,²⁵ in 1996 the Pentagon's National Imaging and Mapping Agency (NIMA)²⁶ published its updated map of the Imia region, rocky outcrops by all accounts smaller than the US Department of State's Washington DC building, and labeled the islets *Vrákhoi Imia* (The Imia Rocks), under the sovereignty of Greece. There was no reference to *Kardak*, nor to any claims of Turkish sovereignty over the islets. The NIMA spokeswoman quoted in the article emphasized that the mapping agency had "adhered to the State Department's guidance in the depiction of Imia [...] standardized in accordance with the policies of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names." Since the publication of that map, the State Department changed course and now refers to the islets as Imia/Kardak²⁷ in acknowledgment of Turkey's outstanding territorial claim. The lesson to be learned from the NIMA incident is that even the most diligent translators, who will research all the authoritative US government sites, may find inconsistencies in the official sources. If this is the case, contact your client.

Old World, New World

Another topic that concerns translators is liberation and nationalistic movements, such as those that have swept Africa in recent decades. Upper Volta is now Burkina Faso, Rhodesia is Zimbabwe, and Basutoland, Lesotho. Moreover, when ideologies or regimes are toppled, the winds of change sometimes sweep away 'new' names and revert to the 'old.' This is the case of St. Petersburg (Leningrad), Varna (Grad Stalin), Chemnitz (Karl-Marx Stadt), and Gdansk (Danzig), to name a few. As translators, we must check the date of the document we are asked to translate.²⁸ If said document precedes the official name change of a place, then the former name ought to be used. If, on the other hand, we are working on a current document and it is outdated in terms of proper names, we must contact our client and ask for guidance.

Not only is it important to keep abreast of name changes, but also to know if there are any peculiarities attached to a name. Pakistan is a case in point. I have often seen the name of that country transferred (albeit with a diacritical mark) into Spanish as 'Pakistán' as well as adapted as 'Paquistán.' I have also seen it adapted in Portuguese as 'Paquistão.' When I learned that 'Pakistan' is an acronym representing the various origins of the peoples who settled in that geographical area in 1947: Panjab (also spelled as Punjab), Afghania, Kashmir, Iran, Sindh, Tukharistan, Afghanistan, and BalochistaN,²⁹ I noticed that the 'k' in Pakistan stood for Kashmir³⁰ and came to the conclusion that at least in Spanish (I don't dare make a pronouncement on

Portuguese), that 'k' should not be rendered as a 'qu'.³¹

Sometimes governments want to eliminate the stench of death with the stroke of a pen. Catherine the Great, for instance, issued a ukase renaming the River Yaik the Ural in an attempt to wash away the sinister memory of the hundreds of serfs, peasants, Old Believers, Cossacks, and noblemen slain on its banks during the Pugachev insurrection.³²

Yet at other times, it is the people who want to remember bloody deeds. In 1510, before the conquest of Cuba had even begun, the indigenous population of the northwestern region of the island slaughtered a Spanish garrison. To remember the act for posterity, the area was called Matanzas, a name it still bears to this day.³³ Less than honorable urban districts are also prime candidates for re-branding when opportunity strikes. After the 1906 fire that destroyed San Francisco, Morton Street, notorious for prostitution, was reborn from the ashes as the chaste and antonymic Maiden Lane.³⁴ Once again, check the date of the source document and handle proper names accordingly.³⁵

Pilgrimages

Faith and longing may also color naming. Practicing Catholics in Mexico, for example, don't just go to *Ciudad del Vaticano* (Vatican City); they go to *La Santa Sede* (The Holy See) instead, where they often seek an audience not with *el papa* (the Pope), but with *el Santo Padre* or *Su Santidad* (the Holy Father; His Holiness). Likewise, they go on pilgrimages to *Tierra Santa* (The Holy Land), not to Israel. Whereas devout Mexican Jews, when traveling to that part of the world buy their tickets to *Eretz*. In similar fashion, Indians living stateside pine for *desh* (the Country), and never simply long for India.³⁶

As I mentioned in the previous article for the *TJ* on onomastic terminology, if the translator wants his translation to be understood and accepted in the target-language culture (or sub-culture, as in the examples of faith or longing, above) he would do well to use the names of places in forms that are familiar to that particular readership.

Landing on Foreign Soil

An exonym is defined by the *American Heritage Dictionary*³⁷ as "a name by which one people or social group refers to another and by which the group so named does not refer to itself." Certain languages favor exonyms more than others, and Spanish is a case in point. Yet, even Spanish is changing. I'm seeing, at least in the Latin American press, more and more original spellings such as Ankara, Tubingen, and Mainz instead

of using their long-revered naturalized forms *Angora*, *Tubinga*, and *Maguncia*. Yet, countries where two languages are spoken, such as Canada, are much more likely to translate names rather than transfer them.

As is the case of given names and last names, the current trend is to not translate place names, but rather transfer them along with any diacritical marks they may have. The city of Karlovy Vary, for instance, used to be translated as Karlsbad/Carlsbad. In so doing, the argument goes, it was possible to confuse it with Carlsbad, located 30 miles north of downtown San Diego, or with its namesake in New Mexico—unless it was explained by a note such as 'the Czech city of Carlsbad.' Likewise, the name of the Brazilian city of Belém, if transferred instead of translated, would not be confused with Bethlehem. In addition to offering greater precision, it is also argued that transference respects the will of the people of the source language text, whereas translation (e.g. Rapa Nui/Easter Island) and adaptation (e.g., México/Méjico) do not.

My advice would be that whenever you encounter names of countries, states, regions, provinces, or cities, that you first turn to the official web pages of the particular country to see if its government has translated its toponymic terminology (Canada has done so) and also run a search in the newspapers of widest circulation in the target language, or in the press of a specific country or geographical area—in case your translation will have limited dissemination— before making a decision on whether to use an exonym in your translation, or judge it best to transfer the source language term.

Semaphores

Like names of people, names of places can have meaning. As such, we often find them used metonymically. Washington, Baghdad, and Brussels—when used in this fashion—represent the US, Iraqi, and EU seats of government, respectively. Names of buildings can also be metonymic, as *The Pentagon*, *Il Quirinale*, *La Casa Rosada*, *The White House*, and *Los Pinos* exemplify. The problem for translators is that the metonymy may not be readily apparent in the target-language culture. If this is the case, the proper name must be accompanied either by a full explanation of its varied connotations: 'The Quirinale, official residence of the President of Italy and symbol of the Republic,' by a more restrictive explanation: 'La Casa Rosada, the executive office of the President of Argentina,' or by an analogy in order to provide a cultural or functional equivalent: 'Los Pinos, the Mexican White House.' There is a caveat to this last recommendation. The White House, for example, may have more than one counterpart in another country. England is a case in point, (and so are other constitutional monarchies such as Spain, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, *inter alia*) where we have the official residence of the British Prime Minister at 10 Downing Street, and Her Majesty's official residence at Buckingham Palace.³⁸

The White House, perhaps the best known of official residences, is often translated in the foreign press (*La Casa Blanca*, *La Maison Blanche*, *La Casa Bianca*, *A Casa Branca*,

das Weiße Haus). Unlike it, the official residences (or executive offices) of other heads of government or heads of state are usually transferred, not translated.³⁹ It would be wise for translators to adhere to this convention, but once again, we should always check the target language press before making decisions as to the rendering of these names into our target language. But going back to the official residence of the British Prime Minister, it is known not by the name of a building, but by a street name: 10 Downing Street. It is worth mentioning that The White House is sometimes also referred to as '1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.'⁴⁰ Depending on the target audience, the Prime Minister's residence is seen in the Spanish-language press a) with the street name transferred and everything else translated, i.e., *El número diez de la calle Downing*; b) transferred as Downing Street with everything else omitted; c) rendered infelicitously with the street name omitted: *El número 10*, and d) also transferred without the number but with an explanation added: *Downing Street, la residencia oficial del Primer Ministro británico*.

Famous streets, especially if numbered like those in Manhattan, often get translated. In Spanish, for example, we most often see Fifth Ave. as *La Quinta Avenida*, and Sixth as *La Sexta Avenida* or *Avenida de las Américas*. There are many street names, however, that are not as easily dealt with specifically because of metonymy. Street names that may not be known internationally are often charged with meaning in a given geographical area. *Fleet Street* and *Wall Street*, for example, are easily recognized in the West, but Wall Street's Canadian equivalent, *Bay Street*, may require an explanation or annotation. And whereas *Rue de Rivoli* might be well understood in the EU, it may not necessarily be in the US, where it would help to spell out the metonymy: 'The French Ministry of Finance.' In the work of Jorge Luis Borges, *Avenida México* sometimes denotes the *Biblioteca Nacional* in Buenos Aires, and a translator might be well advised to annotate the street name. Likewise, translating the meaning(s) hidden behind a 'Park Avenue wife'⁴¹ in New York, or the typically younger, but equally affluent 'Sloane Ranger'⁴² in London might require creativity on the part of the translator in order to convey the exclusivity of those streets. In all of these cases, annotations or explanations may be the best solutions.

At other times, it may be possible to resort to substitution instead of annotation when the metonymy seems too culturally, functionally, or historically "distant" for the target audience. Thus, *Langley* might become 'the CIA Headquarters,' *Quai d'Orsay* 'the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs,' and *Queens Park* 'the Government of Ontario.' As I mentioned in the previous paragraph on street names, another solution for distant metonymies is to annotate them: 'Los Alamos, the research center for the Manhattan Project,' and 'Bletchley Park, the wartime home of Allied code breaking.' And finally, a cultural comparison may be used. For example, *Quai d'Orsay* might be compared to Itamaraty in Brazil. Whenever any of these strategies is used, the translator must verify that the information provided is not only historically and factually accurate, but that it also conveys the implied meaning exactly as the author of the source text intended.

Landlocked

The administrative divisions of countries are perhaps among the most difficult geographical terms translators face. Mexico, for example, has 31 states and one Federal District. The states are divided into *municipios*, for which we have a good English term: municipalities. Regrettably, 'municipality' is a false cognate because the Spanish term is much closer to what in the US would be a county or parish (in the case of Louisiana). In addition, the Mexican Federal District is divided into *delegaciones*, a division that does not have a counterpart in the US. Other Spanish-speaking countries have equally difficult terminology when it comes to translation: *cantones*, *comunas*, *corregimientos*, *dependencias*, *barrios*, *sectores*, *comarcas*, and *circunscripciones*, to name a few. Likewise, English has its difficult terms as well, such as 'commonwealth,' which may be rendered into Spanish as *la Commonwealth*, as *estado libre y asociado*, as *comunidad*, and as *confederación*, depending on context; 'township,' which means one thing in the US and quite a different one in South Africa; and 'borough' with very different meanings in Great Britain, Manhattan, and Alaska. For translators working in Spanish, French, and Portuguese, the Political Database of the Americas⁴³ might be of help.

Moorings

In Shakespeare's time, Comenius (1592-1670), in his allegoric tale about a pilgrimage entitled *The Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart* wrote that it is easier to find a labyrinth than a guiding path. I was fortunate in having colleagues who were my guiding paths when I found this labyrinth. To Gabe Bokor, a good friend and the very patient editor of this journal, thanks for keeping me from straying too far from home, and for your extensive knowledge of Romance, Germanic, and Slavic languages. Since lore has it that labyrinths are solved by always turning left, to my editors Axel Albin and Hugo Enríquez, thank you for keeping me from making deadly right turns. In addition, I can't thank enough whoever made it possible for my childhood friend, Gilberto Castañeda, to weigh anchor and earn his Ph.D. at *L' Université catholique de Louvain*—so thanks, 'Fofu,' for all the brainstorming, the French genders, and your encyclopedic knowledge; to Ury Vainsencher and Francisco Grinberg, M.D., thanks for your help with Hebrew, a language that I neither read nor speak; to Robert Paquin, Ph.D., for knowing *Robert and Hanse-Blampain* like the palm of your hand, for the Canadian metonymies, and for keeping me from falling more than once in this article as in the desert—may Saint-Constant keep watching over you; and to my former student, Rob, now known by his students as Mr. Hawke, for tipping me off on Matanzas when I was searching desperately for name changes tinged with blood.

Boethius wrote in the 6th century CE that every labyrinth is a circle that begins where it ends, and ends where it begins. So if we unwind this spool of words behind me, we

will inevitably end at the place where we began. Lest we forget, a rose, by any other name, never, ever, smells as sweet.

¹ Electronic version of *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate® Dictionary*, Tenth Edition ©1995.

² In all fairness to Merriam-Webster, in their *Manual for Writers and Editors*, Springfield, MA: 1998, p. 38, they do explain their rationale for not capping 'french fries' in item 6: "Derivatives of proper names are capitalized when used in their primary sense. If the derived term has taken on a specialized meaning, it is often lowercased. Consult a dictionary when in doubt."

³ Once again, even though the *MW Collegiate Dictionary* does not reflect a capped version for 'romanization,' the *MW Manual for Writers and Editors*, on page 169 'Romanization-Chinese,' does reflect a capped version when addressing the Romanization of Chinese and Japanese script. In spite of the *Manual's* advice, for this article I have kept 'romanization' in lowercase, for I believe that it is one thing to talk about the romanization of type and alphabets, and quite another to talk about the Romanization of the Western world.

⁴ French, for example, does not allow for the elision of the definite article in *les États-Unis* and forms its agreement in the plural: *sont*.

⁵ The official long form for Mexico is *Los Estados Unidos Mexicanos*. In this case, the definite plural article *los* may not be elided.

⁷ City of Albuquerque www.cabq.gov.

⁸ For an additional article regarding the K/Corea issue, see the Seattle Times <http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com>

⁹ US Department of State's List of Countries www.state.gov

¹⁰ US Board of Geographic Names <http://mapping.usgs.gov>

¹¹ CIA World Fact Book www.cia.gov

¹² Moya, Virgilio. *La traducción de los nombres propios*. Cátedra. Madrid: 2002.

¹³ CUNY <http://acc6.its.brooklyn.cuny.edu>

¹⁴ *The New York Times*, 4. 2. 1979, 10.

¹⁵ Research Library Group www.rlg.org

¹⁶ Not all Western countries have adopted the Pinyin romanization. *L'Atlas géopolitique & culturel du Petit Robert des noms propres*, Dictionnaires Le Robert, Paris:1999 has kept the Wade-Giles system (e.g. Shanghai, Tianjin, Canton) with an occasional adaptation (e.g. Pékin). See page 82. Interestingly, *Le Petit Robert des noms propres*. Dictionnaires Le Robert, Paris:2000, although very comprehensive, does not have an entry for professors Wade or Giles, whose system it uses.

¹⁷ Dionysia Organization www.dionysia.org

¹⁸ Wade-Giles, Pinyin, and Yale systems www.m.isar.de

¹⁹ Transliteration gets further complicated when you consider that the *Manual de español urgente* of the *Agencia EFE* (Spain), one of the most influential style guides for Spanish, adapts the Pinyin system. Their rendition of the Pinyin 'Guangzhou' (Canton in Wade-Giles) is Kuangchu.

²⁰ APEC www.apecsec.org.sg

²¹ Mumbai/Bombay www.geocities.com

²² Don't trust all atlases! Many printed atlases are outdated, and, in addition, quite a few of these reference books are copied from English language sources. As such, they offer translations of major geographic terminology, such as names of oceans and mountain ranges, but leave the rest of the toponymic terminology in English. For into Spanish, see also *Mapas del mundo* in http://go.hrw.com/atlas/span_hm/index.htm and *Bolsa de nombres propios* www.europarl.eu.int

²³ Two examples are Rey, A. *Le Petit Robert des noms propres*, and Faure, R. *Diccionario de nombres propios*. Planeta, Madrid: 2002.

²⁴ Famous Quotations <http://jhut1.tripod.com>

²⁵ HR-Net Forum www.hri.org

²⁶ NIMA www.nima.mil and <http://gnswww.nima.mil>

²⁷ US Department of State's List of Dependencies and Areas of Special Sovereignty www.state.gov

²⁸ For a wonderful description of what this entails, read Alex Schwartz's experiences as a reviser in the English Verbatim Reporting Unit of the UN at www accurapid.com/journal/25prof.htm.

²⁹ Origin of the name Pakistan <http://geography.about.com>

³⁰ Cachemira, Cachemira, and Cachemire are, respectively, its Spanish, Portuguese, and French exonyms. Italian has opted for transference: Kashmir.

³¹ The French name (*L'Atlas géopolitique & culturel du Petit Robert des noms propres*, p.59) and the Italian name (web search) for the country are transferences: Pakistan.

³² Troyat, H. *Catherine the Great*. Meridian. New York: 1994 p. 214.

³³ Portal de Matanzas www.atenas.inf.cu

³⁴ Maiden Lane History www.spies.com

³⁵ For finding new and old names of towns, cities, and counties in the United States, consult the Geographic Reference Library at www.ancestry.com

³⁶ Lahiri, Jhumpa. *The Namesake*. Houghton Mifflin. Boston: 2003

³⁷ *The American Heritage Dictionary*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000, New York: Bartleby.com, 2000 www.bartleby.com/61/.

³⁸ It is beyond the scope of this article to establish a distinction between heads of state and heads of government. But in order to make this reference clear, George W. Bush is both, Head of State and Head of Government of the US, whereas Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, is only Head of State, and Tony Blair is only Head of Government.

³⁹ Los Pinos <http://zedilloworld.presidencia.gob.mx>

⁴⁰ 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue is an appellation seen mostly in the American press. The international press tends to favor the building, not the street name, when referring metonymically to the US seat of government.

⁴¹ McLaughlin, E. and Kraus, N. *The Nanny Diaries*. St. Martin's Griffin. New York: 2002.

⁴² *The Collins English Dictionary* © 2000 HarperCollins Publishers www.wordreference.com

⁴³ Political Database of the Americas (Georgetown University) www.georgetown.edu

This article was originally published at Translation Journal (<http://accurapid.com/journal>).