

Practice before policy: Translation and translators in French military strategy on Ireland 1792-1804

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Abstract

From ca. 1792 to 1804, Irish revolutionaries lobbied the French Directory for military intervention in Ireland in a continuous stream of oral and written acts of communication. Petitions, memorials and correspondence were translated into French to facilitate circulation among decision-makers. Once the deployment of troops was decided, more texts were produced in both English and French, but also translated into either language. A key negotiator, Theobald Wolfe Tone (1763-1798), not only described the translation practices producing these texts in his diary, he also identified two exiled Irishmen working in a government "Bureau de traduction", and the dynamics of interacting with them. A substantial corpus of texts has survived and goes against the standard anonymity of the translator's task, as the scope of their influence and agency emerges vividly from these sources. In the specific historical context of this case study, the first French Republic's territorial expansion against the backdrop of the Revolution, they seemed free to influence the shaping of policy on Ireland in French military strategy, produce propaganda or communicative texts for logistical purposes. Overall, these translators did much more than just translate. This case study will locate these intense translation and communicative practices within a constant needs-driven political process fuelled by war, availing of ideologically-motivated bilinguals who were also subservient exiles serving their paymasters. Arguably, their ad hoc practices "from below" helped drive the formulation of future policies, though they have been overlooked in both traditional historical metanarratives and the history of institutionalised and professionalised translation.

Keywords

Translator, interpreter, bilingual, ideological warfare, propaganda, ad hoc practices

1. Irish revolutionary lobbying in Paris and the Bureau de Traduction, ca. 1793-1796

Finished my second memorial on the present state of Ireland for the French government and delivered it to Madgett for translation. [He] has the slowness of age and at present the gout. Judge oh ye gods how that suits with my impatience [...] Madgett has not yet finished the translation. Hell, Hell! He has lost two or three days in hunting for maps of Ireland, and would have been much better employed in translating. His slowness provokes me excessively but I keep it all to myself... he is always hunting for maps and then he thinks he is making revolutions... (Tone, 2001, pp. 97, 99, 121).

Thus did Theobald Wolfe Tone (1763-1798), an Irish revolutionary exiled in Paris to petition the French Directory for military assistance, deconstruct in his diary the tense dynamic between himself and the official translator he was (at first) totally reliant on to communicate key lobbying documents to decision-makers (Kleinman, 2008). Nicholas Madgett (1740-1813) was also an Irishman; as a long-term exile in France, he also provided Tone with precious advice and guidance as a cultural informant. In the early, tense, and crucial weeks of Tone's mission to France, ca. Feb-March 1796, Madgett is portrayed negatively in his diary, coming across as a "fixer" of sorts and meddling beyond the bounds of his formal role. The scenario is all too familiar to scholars of translation history, depicting a common reality outside institutionalised, professionalised and code-bound translation practices, where the translator as a linguistic and cultural mediator does much more than just translate. Tone's mission to France is a defining chapter in Irish nationalist history, yet for long historians accepted at face value his repeated and melodramatic exaggerations about the weakness of his French, and allowed their judgement to be influenced by his subjective views on Madgett. Furthermore, they took no interest whatsoever in the language dimension of the coalition between Directorial France and Irish conspirators which operated at both civilian and military levels; a major French naval expedition to Ireland in December 1796, in which Tone and other Irish or Franco-Irish officers served, failed but until 1805, invading Ireland was a not insignificant front of French military strategy. This evidently involved a range of *ad hoc* or semi-official measures to overcome language barriers. Tone's diary makes abundant and incisive references encompassing written and oral translation and the instrumental intervention of bilinguals. Most importantly, he identifies Madgett as the "chef", and his congenial nephew John Sullivan as a diligent employee, of a translation bureau which in 1796 was part of the *Département des Relations extérieures*. Though there are sufficient (if scattered, and at times disconnected) sources to reconstruct a profile of the activities of this unit and the multiple roles expected of its translators, it has been overlooked by historians of the French Revolution, despite its relevance to the broader and much documented new and formal language policies of this transformative age.

From a political standpoint, Tone arrived at a very propitious time in Paris when Anglophobia had been rekindled, and the desire to revenge the British-backed landing at Quiberon (June 1795) was shaping military strategy. Yet he would need to mobilise all his powers of persuasion, which presupposes a common language. Despite the generalised Francophilia of Irish Enlightenment society, and being a cultivated and very well-read graduate of Trinity College, it appears that Tone only understood French well, but became totally angst-ridden when he needed to speak it or write it. Exiled in America, he had immediately contacted Adet, the French envoy to Philadelphia in August 1795; he claimed that Adet "spoke English very imperfectly, and I French a great deal worse, however we made a *shift* to understand one another" (Tone, 2001, p. 337, my emphasis). Adet sent dispatches to France so when Tone – travelling on a false American passport as the merchant "James Smith" – arrived with several

letters of reference, he was expected by Delacroix, the Minister for External relations. Interestingly, when he met the American ambassador, James Monroe, and discussed which members of the Directory would be amenable to his lobbying (from a political standpoint), the diplomat stated which ones "also spoke English." (p. 74) Tone was then introduced to Delacroix, and recorded in his diary that the minister "told him (in French)...[to go] immediately to a gentleman...who spoke both languages perfectly and was confidential" and that Tone could explain himself to without reserve; this was of course Nicholas Madgett (p. 56). In traditional narrative history, interlingual communication is often neutralised so it is noteworthy that Tone specified the self-evident, that Delacroix addressed him in French, his native tongue and the host language. Genuine anxiety, total isolation and the anonymity he had to maintain triggered melodramatic comments about language in the diary. These at time resemble a construct which Palmer refers to, namely that "parleying and petitioning [across language barriers] were only effective through fumbling...pidgin phrases...mispronunciations and mistakes" (Palmer, 2001, p. 49). Yet Tone's record also identifies his translators by name, leads us to numerous translated documents, and overall makes many insightful references to pragmatic bilingualism and *ad hoc* measures to overcome language barriers, making this case study possible.

From the outset, Madgett's (political) role as an *ad hoc* advisor to Delacroix is clear: Tone's first meeting with him is positive, and he recounts a constructive discussion about military logistics. His new confidante dispensed shrewd advice about what to realistically demand of the French, even if his knowledge of Irish politics was hopelessly out of date. But reliance on Madgett to translate the lengthy memorial Delacroix had asked him to write, and the delays which ensued frustrating Tone's lobbying, were to lead to entertaining outbursts, but also sharp observations about cross-linguistic communication. His name surfaces relatively often in French archives from 1793 to 1803 and almost always in the context of Anglo-Irish affairs. Both he and his young and diligent nephew John Sullivan (1767-1803?) seem to have been among the first recruits to what the latter described as a "Bureau de traduction qu'on organisait alors [1793] à la marine et dont je formais le premier noyau avec le citoyen Madgett." (AD, Personnel 1ère série, Vol. 65, f.58r, 30 October 1796). There is no dedicated file for this Bureau in the Service historique de la marine (Vincennes), where the archivists admitted no knowledge of it whatsoever.¹ While the family connection is not stated it is clear there was a "networking" element to the simultaneous recruitment of the two Irishmen, sometime in the spring of 1793, logically just after France's declaration of war on Britain. Though precise details are not known, it is very probable they were forcibly requisitioned to provide some form of labour to the nation. Whether they themselves had proposed translation because they were bilingual, or it was suggested to them, remains an unsolved mystery in the history of the profession. We do know that Sullivan was naturalised a French citizen on 7 February 1793, and it is safe to assume his uncle had probably already been for some time (SHD, Armée 2Y^e, Sullivan). However it is in the papers of Charles Lebrun, the Republic's first Ministre des Relations extérieures, that the earliest trace of Madgett's activity is found, in a letter dated 13 March, just a few weeks after France had declared war on Britain.² Two years later, the *Coup d'État* of 18 Fructidor (1795) terminated their employment with the ousted regime (AN, AF III, 288, 97, 40-93). Documents

¹ The author has not yet consulted the personal papers of various officials in the *Département de la Marine* for this period.

² Lebrun was a former priest and had studied at the Irish Collège Montaigu in Paris under one Richard Ferris, who was a close associate of Madgett's (also a former priest), later becoming the executor of his will (AN, MC/I/733).

inform us about a third, and relatively obscure Irishman, John Delaney. A former medical student, he had been arrested during the Terror in 1793 but after providing two "attestation civiques" was released, and had then joined the Bureau de traduction. Again, his labour had probably been forcibly requisitioned, and we can also safely assume he may have been recommended by Madgett, the oldest and most influential of the Paris network of Irishmen.

Madgett frequently, but not consistently, identifies himself as a translator, yet his "dossier personnel" at the *Archives diplomatiques* only contains scattered and disconnected memos, and no formal letter of appointment or "état de service" charting his career (AD, Personnel 1ère série 47). A later file, this time in the *Archives nationales*, but identifying him as a "secrétaire-interprète" at the *département de la Marine* (AN, Mar/G/242, 1799-1807), is similar in that he is the originator of the documents, and one regrets the absence of any proof he had sworn a dedicated oath allowing him to use this formal status, which already existed under the Ancien Régime. The final paradox, which will be discussed below, is that none of the documents in this file are translations, except arguably the "Extrait du *Morning Post* du 18 août" (year unspecified, but probably 1800) on British naval ship movements through Cork bound for Jamaica. All are memos he seems to have written himself on Anglo-Irish affairs, troop movements and exiled Irishmen; while bilingualism would be necessary to glean information from various sources in English, clearly his position seems to have been primarily political. This file also contains items on the Louisiana purchase, as Madgett had acted as an intermediary and advisor to James Monroe when he returned to Paris to negotiate, in 1803 (Foner, 1945, p. 1502).

It is safe to speculate on the routine translation of documents linked to trade, commerce, and general maritime activities that such a bureau would undertake in peacetime. The 1786 Treaty of Commerce between France and England stipulated that captains of vessels were to use sworn interpreters (or "juré-interprète") when interrogating prisoners (Treaty of 1786: Article 18, cited in AD, CPA 585/68). These same multifunctional linguists, as we will now call them, would also assist with inventories of seized trade goods following the taking of prizes, a lucrative activity which intensified with wartime blockades. Sullivan was stationed for about two years (ca. 1793-1795) in France's western maritime ports, fulfilling an unusual role (discussed below) but nominally acting as "interprète des prisonniers de guerre pour la 13e division", though he was "détaché" from the Bureau de traduction in Paris (AD, CPA 588, 280). This Bureau which concerns us was probably just a restructured version of the pre-existing one set up by Choiseul during the Ancien Régime, but to serve a new political agenda, and in new ways; by 1795 it was subsumed into Delacroix's department (external affairs), but it had been answerable for a time to the formidable *Comité de salut public* and Robespierre himself.

The French Revolution and the mission to inform and educate a new generation for citizenship went hand in hand with the institutionalisation of French as the national language, and the widespread use of translation and interpreting to disseminate the principles of democracy. This involved a major inward programme in terms of the numerous regional languages and patois, but also translation of official decrees, proclamations and laws into the main European languages once the outward expansion of the Revolution and the annexation of territories began. To date, only a few links have been established between this Bureau, its Irish translators and this major chapter of the history of language policy and political change. Another useful acquaintance of Madgett's was Barère de Vieuzac; both had lived in Toulouse before the Revolution, may have known each other from a freemason's lodge, and much later

collaborated on a translation on the constitution of the Roman government.³ Barère had been an instigator of the policy to impose the French language (27 January 1794) and may have encouraged Madgett to submit some *Refléxions sur l'Instruction publique*, on schools and education, to the *Comité d'Instruction publique* (*Journal de l'Instruction publique*, n° XXIII, Tome IV). This Comité's influence in promoting French as the language of liberty, but also as a domestic measure to ensure laws were understood and obeyed, overlapped with the translation of official publications by the Agence des Lois into the main European languages. But as it was the *Comité de salut public* which issued an "Arrêté concernant les prisonniers de guerre et les déserteurs ennemis" (17 July 1794), it seems likely Madgett's bureau oversaw its translations into Dutch, German, English, Spanish and Italian (AN, BB 29* 277-280).⁴ Why it was felt necessary to print no less than 10,000 copies (way more than any of the other 7 target languages) of the English translation of an "Adresse aux Français pour les inviter à ne parler que la langue française" (4 June 1794) is unsure, except to circulate it in England as propaganda, where not only political radicals but exiled royalists may have welcomed it. No English version has been identified, but the date coincides with another trace of Sullivan's efforts (below).

An example of the type of political text translated by the Bureau which Madgett may have overseen is *A Candid and friendly address from the people of France to the people of England* (ca. June 1794). The pamphlet is anonymous, but possibly linked to Tom Paine and the Brissotin circle; the French version is a manuscript, and simply entitled *Adresse des François au peuple anglois*, while the English translation is printed, catalogued with items dated early June 1794 in the political correspondence of the Department of External relations (AD, CPA, f. 225r-232, undated). Around this time a memo by Madgett directly addressed to the *Comité de salut public* points to the scope of his influence, and makes it even more surprising that historians of this infamous period of the French Revolution and its Anglophobia have taken no interest in the Bureau. Writing as the "chargé du Bureau des traductions", he requests the Comité's permission to have key translations printed; its date, 15 April 1794, is extremely significant as France was then gripped by the worst excesses of the Terror and executions were escalating (AD, Pers. 1ère série, 47 [Madgett], 85^r-86^r, *Mémoire au comité de salut public*). He justifies his request by explaining each text, leaving no doubt that he was both comfortable, and/or expected to air his opinions. The first is one of the most significant texts of that turbulent spring, Robespierre's *Sur les principes de la morale politique qui doivent guider la Convention nationale dans l'administration intérieure de la République*, delivered at the *Convention* sitting of 5 February 1794 (*Moniteur*, 139, 401-408.) The speech barely veiled its advocacy of virtue and terror going hand in hand, leading us to wonder how sincere Madgett was when claiming:

de tout ce qui a paru encore sur la révolution, le discours de Robespierre est ce qu'il y a de plus capable de faire sur le peuple anglois une profonde impression et de lui faire sentir l'imposture des feuilles ministérielles qui ont cherché jusqu'ici à faire croire que les Français étaient de cannibales. (AD, Pers. 1ère série, 47 Madgett, 1794, 85^r)

The translation had not been carried out at the Bureau; Madgett had hired the exiled English *femme de lettres* Helen Maria Williams, author of the *Letters from France* (1790) and an

³ Moyle [Walter]. *Essai sur le Gouvernement de Rome*. Traduit de l'anglais. Ouvrage utile aux Hommes d'État, et aux Philosophes, Leger, An X – 1801. Traduction de Barère de Vieuzac et Madgett.

⁴ I am very grateful to Virginie Martin for sharing with me a comprehensive list compiled by Maria Betlem Castella i Pujol of official translations commissioned by the Bureau des Lois, 1794-1795, which includes the number of copies printed per language (source: AN, BB 29* 277-280).

influential salonnière. He praised her precise and elegant rendering, which also conformed to the expectations of the target audience, because it was completely "dans le goût anglais", and had been translated "avec une exactitude littérale qui ne laisse rien à désirer". He had also commissioned her to finish translating Saint-Just's *Rapport sur les factions de l'étranger et sur la conjuration ourdie par elles dans la République française, pour détruire le gouvernement républicain par la corruption, & affamer Paris* delivered to the Convention on 13 March 1794, just before the arrest of the Hébert faction. Madgett was emphatic on the effect it would have:

Une fois connu en Angleterre, il peut y produire le plus grand bien. Car il paraît certain que le peuple anglais, s'il était éclairé sur son véritable intérêt et sur les principes de la Révolution française qu'on a tant cherché à dénaturer à ses yeux, ne tarderait pas à se soulever. (AD, Pers. 1ère série, 47 Madgett, 1794, 85')

Williams was an influential Girondist *salonnière* and key female figure in the British ex-patriate community. While detained in the Luxembourg prison following Robespierre's decree of 10 October 1793, along with other British subjects, she had worked on her celebrated translation of Bernardin de Saint Pierre's idyllic *Paul and Virginia*, published in 1795⁵. Thus it seems plausible that a condition of her release and permission to stay in France would have been to provide this very useful translation service to the Republic. Madgett had known her since a banquet in Paris of exiled British and American radicals (at White's Hotel, on 18 November 1792), at which, inter alia, were present an instrumental network of agitators for French military intervention in Ireland. Williams ran a printing business in Paris with another English radical, John Hurford Stone (president of that banquet). Madgett explained in a later note that the translations of Robespierre and Saint-Just's speeches (now finished, and also into Spanish and Italian) be printed by this firm because the English (Anglophone) typesetter would only require "la paye ordinaire" for this order, unlike a Frenchman who would charge double for a language "qu'il n'entend pas" (AD, Pers.1/ 47 [Madgett], 89^v, Note, par Madgett, sans date). Of greater consequence was the fact that the typeface used would be a genuine English one, which Madgett stressed "ferais croire au Gouvernement que l'ouvrage est imprimé dans le pays même, ce qui ferait trembler George et Pitt". No contemporary printed English version of Saint-Just's report has been located, and it is impossible to know whether the extant English pamphlet of Robespierre's *Report upon the principles of political morality... (Translated from a copy printed by order of the Convention)* supposedly printed in Philadelphia in 1794, was one of the many false imprints of the age, and actually the result of Madgett's agency in Paris. These sources on the outward dissemination of French propaganda in English do seem to locate his responsibilities within official policy. However the archives do not contain any "top-down" orders to Madgett or responses to his memos, nor any internal discussions on the importance of this Bureau's translations.

Another key activity of the Bureau translators was the "dépouillement de la presse", i.e., trawling through the English press, closely monitoring attitudes to France and the Revolution, and preparing relevant abstracts or translations into French (AN/AF/III/58/228 + 229/I; Masson, 1877, p. 239). This press trawl was already a key service provided by the "Bureau des traducteurs" which had flourished under the tenure of Genet, *secrétaire-interprète* for the ministries of foreign affairs, war and marine during the last decades of the ancien régime.

⁵ The main biography of Williams cites no French archival sources, and totally overlooks this interface between Williams and the Comité de salut public: Kennedy, Deborah, *Helen Maria Williams and the Age of Revolution*, Bucknell University Press, 2002, pp. 110-112, pp. 122-124.

Though it had been reduced in 1787, it may have been a model of practice for the first French Republic's Bureau de traduction (p. 42). There are several references to Madgett and Sullivan's involvement in facilitating the smuggling of English newspapers in (e.g., through Hamburg), and Tone refers to Sullivan supplying him with English newspapers. Preparing abstracts could also help develop writing skills to compose political propaganda, transcending the mere cross-linguistic function; this would also support intelligence gathering and ad hoc advice on the formation of policy formations. In a memo written as the Terror was intensifying, Sullivan commented freely on a piece in *The Times* of London; though he does not identify himself as a Bureau translator, merely signing with his surname is in itself a rare and welcome feature in this field of study (AD, CPA, 588/179^r, note de Sullivan, 8 June 1794). He embedded his own heavily Anglophobic snippets of information into paraphrases of the source text rather than simply translate: "Il n'y a rien de si bête et de si méchant que les absurdités monstrueuses dont est rempli le journal anglois *The Times* (les tems) [sic] et soudoyé par Pitt et ses agens", he wrote. According to this "feuille ministérielle", France was but one macabre "scène de famine, de misère et d'horreurs" from north to south, the guillotine worked incessantly from dawn to dusk, and the heaped piles of innumerable cadavers had caused an outbreak of the plague and other diseases. He then added a full [translated] section to demonstrate what he referred to, tongue-in-cheek, as "un échantillon de l'impartialité de cet écrivain" (the original is anonymous):

Jean Bon Saint André, un des tirans sanguinaires de la Société des Jacobins dit que la France dans sa situation actuelle jouit des douceurs de la liberté. Y a-t-il en France un seul homme raisonnable qui ne dise dans son coeur que les autorités qui gouvernent actuellement ce malheureux pays sont plus tyranniques et plus cruelles que la monarchie la plus absolue qui ait jamais existé. Néron était une colombe et Tibère un agneau en comparaison de ces scélérats. (AD, CPA, 588/179^r, note de Sullivan, 8 June 1794)

No matching wording referring to the guillotine and its unfortunate victims has been located in *The Times* for the first 6 months of 1794. But the following extract was, allowing us to note Sullivan's elegant and precise translation, but also his switching "tiger" for "tiran":

Jeanbon St. André, one of the bloody tygers of the Jacobin Society at Paris, calls the situation of the people of France at this moment the *sweets of Liberty!!* — Is there a rational man in France that does not in his heart say the Republican governing powers of that distracted country are more tyrannical and cruel than the most absolute Monarchy that ever existed on the face of the earth! Nero was a *dove*, and Tiberius a *lamb*, to what these villains are (*The Times*, 21 March 1794, p. 3, n°2942).

2. The Bureau translators and political agitation for Ireland

The first contribution by Madgett to the Irish cause does not appear in a translated version in any Irish or English archive, but is an ambiguously-titled *Compte rendu de l'adresse au peuple d'Irlande par le citoyen Madgett Chef du Bureau de traduction près le Comité de salut public* (CPA, 588/480^r-81^v, undated but catalogued just after a text dated 27 July 1795). Was he the actual author of a text written in English, or merely the translator-rapporteur of the "compte-rendu" in French, also seeking approval of its translation, printing and circulation? Its purpose, he explained, was "de réveiller la haine du peuple irlandais contre l'anglois son éternel oppresseur; et le déterminer à faire de nouveaux efforts pour en secouer le joug". The odd reference to the author in the third person is not dissimilar to other examples of his eccentric character: "L'auteur leur rappelle avec énergie les longs et douloureux tourments que leur a fait éprouver l'inflexible tyrannie de l'Angleterre, injustices continuelles, vexations de tous les

genres, cruautés, perfidies... ” The Anglophobic tone of the source text is relentless, not surprisingly as it appears to have been produced after the British-backed royalist landing at Quiberon in June 1795. Another example of a routine translation are dispatches conveying, through the French minister in Philadelphia, the official thanks of the American Senate to the Directoire exécutif for the gift of a French flag, and renewing the friendship between the two countries; in his fine and easily identifiable handwriting, the translator ends with the standard formula: ”Certifié la présente traduction par moi traducteur au Département des Relations extérieures Sullivan.” (AN AF III 64, dossier 260, 6 Janvier 1796).

The agency of Madgett and Sullivan is vividly portrayed in Tone’s diary, translating into French the most influential documents he composed for the Directory, especially his *First* and *Second Memorials to the French government on the present state of Ireland* (22 and 29 February 1796), the target-language versions of which were circulated among political and military decision makers (Tone, 2001, pp. 61-70 and 88-97). Tone’s original manuscript, and translations (and/or copies) signed by Madgett have survived (AD, CPA 589, f. 162-8; 173-81; AN, AF III, 186b; SHA, MR1422/30: 1-34). In these, Tone considerably exaggerated the extent of Irish revolutionary mobilisation and the widespread support the French army would be met with after landing. After the brief invasion of August-September 1798, the French openly criticised Irish lobbyists for having misled them; yet despite Tone’s (initially negative, and slightly burlesque) portrayals of Madgett, historians never verified the accuracy of these translated memorials. The (francophone) editors of the scholarly edition of Tone’s *Writings* deemed the first a ”very free”, and the second a ”free” translation (editorial notes, Tone 2001, pp. 61, 88). This implies Madgett had shifted the semantic content of the original, perpetuating a construct that translation can never be faithful in general, (in particular with this dubious translator), and misleads an Anglophone readership. Madgett had only adapted Tone’s often effusive style for a French target audience, and implemented shifts, moderations, and editorial strategies (e.g., different paragraph breaks) recognisable by any translator. But overall there are so few adjustments, and no semantic dilutions or embellishments, that the labelling of them as ”free” simply does not stand up to scrutiny (Kleinman, 2005, pp. 161-180). Extract 2 in the following example addresses what continued to be a contentious question in French military strategy during the Consulate and Napoleon’s famous plans to invade the British isles:

1. I humbly submit that England is the implacable, inveterate, irreconcilable enemy of the [French] republic...(Tone, 2001, p. 96)

1.1. L’Angleterre est l’ennemi invétéré et implacable de la République française (AN, AF IV/1671, f. 97^v)

2. ...the Irish people are prepared and united, and want nothing but the means to begin...in humbling to the dust a haughty and implacable rival (Tone, as above).

2.1. Le Peuple Irlandais est entièrement uni, il est prêt à s’insurger, et n’attend pour agir que d’en avoir les moyens...[pour] abreuver d’humiliations une ennemie hautaine et irréconciliable (AN, AF IV, as above)

One fails to see, in the balanced and faithful French rendering, where Madgett’s translation could be seen as ”free”.

3. Translation, war and propaganda

By November 1796, Tone had been enlisted in the French army and was serving as staff officer under General Hoche at Brest, impatiently awaiting the deployment of the fleet to Ireland. To

distract the British navy, Hoche dispatched a small guerilla type raid to Wales under the command of an American, Colonel William Tate. As his reading command of French was poor, Tone was ordered to translate Tate's instructions into English. Hoche's tactics were an unfortunate demonstration of the brutal nature of the total war of the age, and Tone admitted in his diary how painful it had been to transcribe "with the greatest *sang froid* the orders to reduce [Bristol] to ashes", conscious of the "misery the execution of the orders" would have on innocent civilians (Tone, 2001, p. 399). A lawyer and skilful writer himself, Tone had, with shame, discovered in the process of translation the deconstruction and reconstruction of meaning and intent, having now become himself a form of bilingual operative, or what is now referred to as a military linguist (Kleinman, 2012). His diary demonstrates "how the role of soldier and linguist were in practice merged when some of the key tasks of warfare had to be undertaken", which included information, dissemination of orders and propaganda, but also oral tasks such as interpreting or interrogating prisoners (Footitt, 2012, p. 6). Hoche had also called on him to "assist" with the interview of an Anglophone prisoner, i.e., to interpret; Tone's diary also reveals innumerable examples of oral translation and the usefulness of bilingual officers of Irish extraction acting as translators *and* interpreters, working on landing proclamations and exhortatory addresses encouraging Irishmen in the British army, navy and militia to desert.

This case study cannot conclude without examining one highly questionable communicative task assigned to some of the Bureau translators, which required a persuasive command of oral English, and reporting back in French. Tone had initially denigrated it when Madgett had outlined it to him just after his arrival. Duly following Hoche's orders, Tone went to a *dépôt* of British prisoners of war at Pontanezen to "offer liberty" to any of them willing to serve in the French navy, though the destination would not be revealed (Tone, 2001, p. 371). Possibly we are not surprised that of the sixty who accepted, fifty were Irish and eager to follow their congenial (and successful) recruiter. Further details of this tampering with the conscience of prisoners of war, now in total breach of ethical practice and the Geneva Conventions, are revealed in the correspondence of Madgett and Sullivan. Especially revealing on this additional "field task" is Sullivan's impassioned letter to Delacroix (mentioned above) in which he projected how usefully he had served the Republic, and why he should be kept on at the Bureau (AD Pers.1/65 [Sullivan], 58^v and following). It is one of the most revealing documents underpinning this complex study as it contextualises what arguably had been the primary scope of the translator's activity, serving a political ideology. Sullivan explained that in 1793 he had embraced the principles of liberty with enthusiasm, then joined the Bureau de traduction, which shortly after dispatched him to "la ci-devant Bretagne, chargé d'une mission particulière auprès des prisonniers de guerre. He was particularly proud of this special assignment: "Pour prouver que j'ai rempli cette mission avec succès, il suffira de dire qu'à Dinan plus de 200 de ces prisonniers m'ont offert de s'enrôler sur les vaisseaux de la République". Sullivan was also listed as an "interprète des prisonniers de guerre" in several official documents, though in this particular configuration his role clearly extended well beyond a traditional one.

Tone had naively described this practice of preaching republican principles to lure recruits as "Madgett's scheme" in the early weeks of his mission, adding that it allowed the recruiter to collect some extra earnings; yet he too would have no choice but to engage in it as a bilingual staff officer. Sullivan elsewhere elaborated on his mission: he also ensured "que ces prisonniers fussent traités avec humanité", extracted from them [orally, in English and possibly even Gaelic] "des renseignements sur l'état politique de leur pays et sur les forces et les desseins de

nos ennemis”, and transmitted this [in French, and probably in writing] to the government; he also oversaw through them (i.e., the exchanged prisoners, sent home) the distribution of “divers ouvrages républicains en Angleterre.” (AN, AF III 28 d 97, 18 November 1795). Sullivan (back at his desk) had also demonstrated his “mépris et...horreur pour le roi Georges et ses ministres” by busying himself “à faire passer en Angleterre à plusieurs reprises des brochures patriotiques sur lesquelles j’ai en partie travaillé moi-même”. We interpret his wording as meaning he had composed, and or translated into English patriotic tracts, then saw that they were smuggled into England. This contribution to France’s outward dissemination of propaganda can easily be located within Madgett’s first written exchanges with Lebrun, adding a new, and rather challenging, dimension to the practices of the Bureau de traduction. Back in March 1793, at the beginning of the war, Madgett (not yet referring to himself as a translator or head of a translation service) had suggested establishing in Paris “un comité de Britanniques d’un civisme éprouvé pour purger la ville [...] des espions envoyés par le ministère anglois” (AD, CPA, 587, 20r, 13 March 1793). Based on later evidence of a coordinating role in intelligence gathering, the idea was he would also be their “handler”. English or Irish “commissaires” could be stationed in France’s main ports “pour y accueillir les matelots prisonniers dont ils embaucheraient le plus qu’ils pourroient.” He later proposed to Delacroix that he could, specifically, send his nephew for this purpose to another dépôt near Bordeaux. Proselytising, persuading and recruiting in English, and liaising with and reporting back to superiors in French meant that bilingualism twinned with patriotic fervor was a vital instrumental skill in this insightful chapter of psychological warfare. The final plan was for the ministry of war to dispatch and support “en Angleterre et surtout en Irlande un certain nombre de patriotes anglois ou irlandais pour y répandre les principes de la liberté et de l’égalité; c’est par le canal des papiers publics qu’ils y réussiroient le plus efficacement et avec le moins de danger pour eux.” This mission required “des hommes d’une grande force tant par les connaissances politiques que pour les talens d’écrire”; bilingualism, writing skills, and translation, are hinted at but not specified. Lebrun responded positively to Madgett who spoke “le langage d’un vrai patriote”, and the information he gave which demonstrated “vos lumières et votre civisme.” (AD, CPA 587, 43, 22 March 1793).

The next exchange placed translation firmly at the heart of subversive action, targeting the enemy’s combatants to encourage them to mutiny and or desert, but on their own (British) soil. Madgett suggested that handbills be prepared for distribution among English seamen, reminding the minister (and exaggerating) that a substantial proportion of them were Irish and thus a weak point in King George III’s naval forces (AD, CPA 587, 46, undated but with items from March-April 1793). His plan was implemented by the authorities: the Minister for Marine Dalbarade’s secret expenditure account for 4 June 1793 lists a payment of 300 livres to the “rédacteurs et traducteurs d’une adresse aux marins anglais”, and approves finance to print 4,000 copies as both placards and pamphlets (AN, AF* II/7, *Registre des dépenses secrètes du Conseil exécutif provisoire*). This is the first time the term “translator” is used in the relevant archival sources for this study; going backwards to the start of Madgett’s agency, in the early weeks of a war that would last until 1815, has allowed us to portray a particular range of translation, but also cross-linguistic practices in a very specific context of political change. These contradict the more ethical, structured and professionalised practices which resulted from the formalisation of policies and the professionalization of translation, yet the range of services provided by the Bureau de traduction seems perfectly logical in an age of ideological warfare.

Because the language policies linked to France's outward expansion and annexations at this time represent such a compelling chapter of translation history (D'hulst, 2015; Schreiber, 2015), it is appropriate to locate the Irish expeditions within it. Even if the only way a newly-independent Irish state could survive in the short term was under France's protection, it was never feasible to envisage it could control yet another sister republic at such a distance, and without a land border. Thus the Franco-Irish project never advanced to the extent that the necessity to translate laws, decrees or instruments of local government was envisaged, nor can it be located within French Directorial expansion and the outward dissemination of texts on the colossal scale discussed by D'hulst and Schreiber. Yet both in 1796 and in 1798, the French fleets sailed to Ireland with printing presses on board and several texts have survived. One reason Tone had been asked to write the proclamation [in English] a French general would distribute immediately after landing in Ireland was that it would disavow any ideas of conquest, and would guarantee the protection of persons and property and respect for local customs and religious practices, a fundamental condition of the alliance the Irish had insisted on. It was essential this was communicated clearly. Ireland had become significantly anglicised, especially in the major towns and cities, and in any event those for whom Irish was their first language, in the remote rural areas of the west where the French did intend landing, were not fully literate; an oral translation from English into Irish would suffice. Sullivan was enlisted in the French army for the 1798 expedition and served (along with Tone's brother Mathew and 2 other Irishmen) as captains and bilingual [or trilingual] aides de camp; one of them certainly, and possibly Sullivan and another, also spoke Irish. Though no specifically-worded commission has been found to prove that their formal status was "capitaine-interprète", they clearly filled a role now referred to as contact interpreter. There are several traces of Sullivan's fine handwriting in the relevant files, as he also acted as secretary to the commanding officer, General Humbert. These include translations, or very brief and functional texts dictated to him in French but transcribed in English (e.g., notes to allow safe passage to individuals within the French-occupied zone). In this age of ideological warfare, the communications exercise continued, and it is welcome to discover among documents seized by the British forces a text pair consisting of a source-language version in French and its English translation (NA, PRO/HO 100, 82, 123^{r-v}. General Humbert's address "Aux soldats irlandais dans les armées britanniques" is written out in Sullivan's distinctive handwriting, but he may have translated it even if the English version, "To the Irish soldiers in the English army", is in another hand (NA, PRO/HO 100, 82, 125^r-126^r). Encouraging these men to desert, these documents were considered by the British as a breach of the laws of war. The expedition was poorly planned and the French surrendered fairly quickly, but Humbert had started with a resounding victory which had considerably embarrassed the military authorities in Dublin (and London). This prompted the publication by a senior British officer (anonymously) of many of the documents seized from the French, ([Taylor], 1799).⁶ To prove total clarity and openness, and expose (in their own words) the dishonourable style of warfare of the French, while distracting attention from how ill-prepared the king's forces in Ireland had been, all documents were published in their original French with an English translation (faithful and balanced). In this case, translation was a technique employed –unofficially – by the British colonial government in Ireland, thus indirectly representing an institution. At this time the military as a state institution was

⁶ Captain Herbert Taylor was at this time the private secretary, military secretary and aide de camp to the head of the British forces in Ireland, Lord Lieutenant Cornwallis; though the pamphlet was published anonymously, it was widely known Taylor had produced it. Prior to this posting he had been a secretary to the commander of the British army, and we can safely conclude was a francophone and the translator of the seized documents.

undergoing intense professionalization, in both Britain and France. Further ad hoc measures to develop bilingualism among men serving in a [potential] joint expedition were implemented by the commander of Napoleon's Irish legion. Bernard MacSheehy, another exile, explained to the minister of war: "je fais traduire notre règlement en anglais...J'ai fait copier par chaque officier les leçons en anglais et en français" (MacSheehy to Berthier, 30 January 1804, cited in Desbrières III, 588). The grammar-translation method was also applied after 1830 when, as a result of the French conquest of Algeria, a dedicated corps of interpreters and military linguists was established. Yet the retired member of that corps who wrote its history, even including a description of similar schoolroom-type exercises used for training and exams, makes not the slightest reference to any prior experience gained during the Revolutionary wars in the – failed – Irish campaigns (Féraud, 1876).

4. Conclusion: Translation and political change

This discussion has attempted to demonstrate how fundamental translators and translation were to the communications exercise underpinning Tone's lobbying, and the success of the Franco-Irish expeditions. The most compelling lesson from this study is the undeniable agency of the translators themselves, who seemed to have influenced practices "from below" and from within their profession, to the extent that one could argue they were instrumental in defining and shaping the importance of translation within institutions. A first gap (in an otherwise rich corpus of texts) is any private correspondence in which the usefulness of their role, or even enjoyment of their activity is self-assessed. No private correspondence between Madgett and his nephew has been located; in personal letters they may have confirmed that translation had been forced on them as a means of saving their lives during the Terror. Another paradox is that literary translation, which so long dominated translation studies, seems to be absent here.⁷ We have no direct evidence that in parallel to their official work, Madgett, or Sullivan, networked in those highly productive translation circles which finally have been recognised as fuelling the "dynamique politique de la Révolution française", what Chappey deems akin to "formes d'actions politiques" (Chappey, 2013, p. 233). This makes Madgett's note about commissioning Williams all the more important. In some ways they seem to operate in a sort of vacuum and we can never connect them (paradoxically, within Paris itself) to the substantial translation policy implemented by the French Revolutionary government as described by D'hulst and Schreiber (2014); was there any interaction or cooperation between their Bureau and the equivalent one translating the *Bulletin des Lois*? Between Madgett before he was recruited to the Bureau, and the "Citoyens Rédacteurs-Traducteurs des séances de la Convention nationale" (Schreiber, 2015, p. 83)?

When the Bureau budget was cut, Madgett had proposed:

un moyen aussi simple que naturel de...conserver cet établissement [i.e. the *bureau*] dont il étoit d'ailleurs impossible de se passer. C'étoit de faire concourir aux frais de son établissement tous ceux qui étoient déjà ou seroient désormais dans le cas d'y avoir recours...généralement tous ceux qui auroient besoin de traducteurs et d'interprètes pour les langues étrangères. (AD/ Pers.1/47/83-84^r)

⁷ A *Théodore et Olivia ou La Famille de Ranspach*, roman traduit de l'anglais par Sullivan, Professeur au Collège royal et militaire de la Flèche, Paris, An VI de la République, was published circa 22 September 1797 to 21 September 1798. Sullivan may have worked on this after Delacroix left and the Bureau was downsized; we note he does not advertise his experience as a government translator, but rather his prior teaching experience.

He proposed one centralised bureau de traduction which would serve the executive wing of the government, ministries, the courts, the Institut national and commerce. He suggested that this bureau be established as it had been "sous le comité de salut public, un bureau central et commun à toutes les autorités constituées et pour le public en général." Clearly he would not make any claims which were not verifiable; his wording seems to imply the bureau he was head of had a greater institutional importance, albeit during a chaotic period of government. In this same letter he highlighted that he had been in charge of part of the correspondence "avec les agents secrets de la république, et généralement du soin de procurer au comité tous les renseignements qui pouvaient l'intéresser." There is no hint that he found what we perceive to be overlapping roles in any way questionable.

We do know that Madgett openly exploited his *official* status as "chef du bureau des traductions au département des relations extérieures" when he advertised he was running a school and translation service (*Décade philosophique* 10 Novembre 1796/20 Brumaire V, pp. 305-306). His "Professeurs d'un mérite connu, et natifs des pays dont ils entreprendront d'enseigner la langue" would teach a range of languages, and subscribers would have access in their private reading room to the latest "gazettes anglaises allemandes italiennes et les feuilles françaises du jour". Seemingly, he was also authorised to openly "freelance" as a certified translator, though we cannot fail to notice translator *training* and *certification* is also absent from the key sources consulted for this study:

Le cit.[oyen] Madgett tiendra en outre, pour l'avantage du commerce et des tribunaux, un bureau constamment ouvert pour la traduction des pièces en langues étrangères. Les personnes qui voudront bien lui en confier, peuvent être assurées que ces pièces seront traduites avec exactitude et fidélité, et le secret sera scrupuleusement gardé. La traduction en sera certifiée conforme par le Cit.[oyen] Madgett lui-même, afin qu'elle puisse faire foi en justice. (*Décade philosophique* 10 Novembre 1796/20 Brumaire V, pp. 305-306).

Yet he would hardly boast of such an official status, unless it was verifiable and true.

This case study is unique in how it reveals a broad scope of translation, and activities carried out by bilingual operatives. The need for all the translations discussed above seems logical, but the unusual personal agency of the translators is a symptom of their political role during a phase of history when individuals felt they could genuinely transform society. Paradoxically, Anglophone Irishmen exiled in France served the French Republic but also their fatherland, while indirectly influencing language practices. Yet if they had not been so instrumental to one lobbyist, destined to become after his death a major hero in Irish nationalist hero, their personal trajectories may have been totally forgotten.

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