

## Poems

### Clive Meredith

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Le *Je* du traducteur  
The *I* of the Translator

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All you need's something penned by a friend of a friend,  
But remember: the higher the better.

So I'm biding my time till the boss learns that I'm  
The least qualified translator yet.  
For the friends I've on ice will then find me a nice  
Sixty thousand per annum *tablette*.

### THE ARCHITECT AS ARTIST

A prestige catalogue for a prestige exhibit  
For a nation's prestige galleries  
From Québec with love.

Ninety thousand words  
Abounding in architese.

Ninety thousand words  
To be translated in  
One month  
(Deadlines, you know).

Ninety thousand words:  
For one translator,  
A six-month task.

So call in six free-lancers  
And add one for luck  
(deadlines, you know).

That way, each expression  
Will only be given  
Seven different renderings.

The reviser can figure it out.

Reviser? What reviser?  
No time for revision!  
Notimenotimenotimenoti...  
Oh, all right.  
Give it a casual read  
But  
No comparison with source  
(Deadlines, you know).

### POEMS

#### ADMITTED TO CLASS 1

I sat for the latest translation exam;  
My paper was full of corrections.  
I failed. So you ask how I got where I am?  
My secret, in one word: connections.

When the interview came (oh, I know *that* old game:  
Equal doses of wisdom and bull),  
The notation was zero, but see? I'm a hero!  
How come? In three words, I got pull.

It's so easy, you know, in this government show,  
And you don't have to be a go-getter.

Then up the mediocracy  
In service of bureaucracy.  
No time to speak of quality.  
No time  
No time  
No...

#### TO A NOVICE TRANSLATOR

1. Irregardless of the quality of what you might  
produce,

TYPE!

And forget time-honored theories on proper  
English use.

JUST TYPE!

Nose to grindstone, keep a-slogging, nine-to-five  
without a stop

Though the racket all around you makes you want to  
blow your top.

Just remember — you're in trouble if you let your  
word count drop,

SO TYPE.

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2. If some morning you've got worries, you must  
leave them at the door

and TYPE.

Word production's all that matters at the factory  
(second floor),

so TYPE.

Sick or tired or hung over or recovering from a spat,  
Practise not self-consolation — they're not paying  
you for *that*.

Just make certain that the carriage keeps on flying  
like a bat

and TYPE.

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3. It's the saddest commentary that today such stress  
is laid

on TYPE;

That a qualified translator, just to feel he's got it  
made,

must TYPE.

You'll be honored with a handshake once you've  
logged your millionth word,

You might even get a letter from your Minister, I've  
heard.

But speak about the *quality*? Why, Confrère, that's  
absurd!

GO TYPE!

## RUSH JOB

One more...

- deadline met;
- emergency coped with;
- feather in the translator's cap;
- client satisfied.

Sharing the envelope with the prose  
(the deathless prose),

a statement spells out precisely  
how much that prose will cost the client  
in dollars and cents.

(Bueraucrats love to read figures;  
it makes them feel they've arrived.)

A lifetime's harvest, then, of

- diligence, perseverance, self-discipline,
- knowledge, patience, skill

has again borne fruit;

fruit measured in terms of numbers  
and silly decimal points.

CLIVE MEREDITH  
*Sainte-Foy, Canada*