

As a translator of legal texts, I like to update my terminology by reading texts involving litigations, including the media reports on President Clinton's "bimbo problems", caused by his involvement with too many bimbos. To Europeans, the extensive analysis of Bill's philandering seems ridiculous; moreover, the legal implications are hardly understood, as Continental legislation, based on Roman statute law, entirely differs from the more loosely structured Anglo-Saxon "case law". Set aside the farcical aspect of Monica Lewinsky's allegations, the severe though unsubstantiated accusations levelled in February against Clinton included, among others, *perjury*, *conspiracy to obstruct justice by inducing Lewinsky to swear a false affidavit*, and *witness tampering*. Moreover, should the President have lied on making a deposition, this could amount to a *felony* justifying his impeachment, notwithstanding the trivial background. - Whereas the *eidesstattliche Erklärung* or *déclaration sous serment* plays a comparatively minor role in Switzerland, its English counterpart, the *affidavit*, is a cornerstone of US law, a fact evidenced by such a solemn wording: DECLARATION UNDER PENALTY OF PERJURY IN SWISS ENFORCEMENT PROCEEDINGS. Since Switzerland does not have equivalent juridical terms, I had to translate this somewhat pompously as follows: BEEIDIGTE ERKLÄRUNG UNTER ANDROHUNG DER STRAFE WEGEN MEINEID ZWECKS UNTERSTÜTZUNG DES SCHWEIZER VOLLSTRECKUNGSVERFAHRENS. This affidavit had been sworn and signed before a US notary public: SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN TO BEFORE ME ON THIS 12TH DAY OF MARCH 1997 (in German: von mir unterzeichnet und beeidigt am 12. März 1997). If such a statement turns out to be false (*falsche Erklärung/décla-*

*ration fausse*), this amounts to *perjury* (German: *Meineid*, French: *parjure*). Considered by US courts as a *felony*, perjury is very likely to grant the perjurer a prolonged gratis vacation behind bars. Derived from Old French *felon* (crook), felony originally entailed a death sentence, but today chiefly designates a serious crime (*Verbrechen/crime*) as opposed to a mere misdemeanour (*Vergehen/délit*). *Witness tampering* (*Beeinflussung der Zeugen/subornation des témoins*) carries less weight in European courts, whereas *conspiracy* occurs mainly in Italian operas such as *Rigoletto*. Since conspiracy of any type, such as to commit fraud, is usually not prosecutable in Swiss courts, it cannot be used as an "extraditable" count of indictment in legal-aid proceedings involving Switzerland and must be substituted by an "extraditable" count. *Subpoena* is often erroneously translated simply with *Vorladung/citation*. But if a defendant ignores the *Vorladung* of a Swiss court, this is not a punishable offence as in the U.S. The correct translation would thus be: *Vorladung unter Strafandrohung/citation sous peine d'amende*. Moreover, an American subpoena frequently compels the defendant also to submit certain files and documents to the court. While my German colleagues are often sworn translators (*beeidigte Uebersetzer*), I am almost suffering from a minority complex when explaining to foreigners that my humble self is just a mere translator, as the profession "sworn translator" does not exist in Switzerland. For legal-aid proceedings, I declare my translation to be correct and then sign before the notary public, who "legalizes" my signature on the strength of my identification card, without the need of a solemn oath.