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The Application of Berman's Theory as a Basis for Target Text Evaluation

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Abstract

Broadly speaking, this article demonstrates the advantage of theoretical knowledge in the practical aspect of the translation process. Antoine Berman's criteria for the linguistic evaluation of a target text provide a valuable model that can be applied to almost any literary text. In this instance, the short stories of the renowned non-conformist French author, Boris Vian, have been used as a case study. The stories have been taken from two collections, *Le Loup-garou* and *Le Ratichon baigneur*, that were written during the 1940s and 1950s. Many contain elements of surrealism and the unique humour, partially based on word plays, for which Vian is famous. By applying Berman's linguistically structured theory to an author who is rarely able to be discussed in terms of structure, this article will show how very little, if any, divergence has occurred between the original stories and those that appear in the 2014 University of Adelaide publication *If I Say If*.

The aim of this article is to show how the criteria for target text evaluation proposed by Antoine Berman, which were designed to uncover variations between source and target texts, can be appropriately applied to the short stories found in the collection *If I Say If: The Poems and Short Stories of Boris Vian*.

Boris Vian was an engineer, jazz musician in post-World War II Paris, composer of anti-establishment songs that helped to define the '60s, contemporary of Sartre and de Beauvoir, pseudotranslator, poet and writer of autofiction. His style poses many translation problems that are seldom encountered in the works of a single author. I translated the twenty-eight short stories taken from the Bourgois editions of *Le Loup-garou* and *Le Ratichon baigneur*, collected in the Pleiade edition, that are found in *If I Say If*. This collection also contains a number of Vian's poems, translated by Maria Freij, along with several scholarly articles on translation methodology and the short story genre, authored by myself and others. The *skopos*, or purpose, of my short story translations was to recreate an era-specific English version, which subsequently served as the basis for my PhD research at the University of Newcastle in Australia.¹ The present article serves as a means of self-evaluation within Berman's parameters, undertaken after the translations had been completed. It should be noted that the application of Berman's criteria as a frame of reference is not necessarily limited to post-translation, nor to these particular texts.

Approaches to source and target text comparison

Several models have been proposed for the comparison of source text and target text pairs, including those by Lambert and van Gorp, Nord, van Leuven-Zwart, House, Vinay and Darbelnet, Chuquet and Paillard, and Berman. Lambert and van Gorp propose a systematic comparison of the whole translation process that incorporates preliminary data, macro-level textual structure, micro-level linguistic features and systemic relationships. Nord's approach focuses on the comparison of preliminary data, which proposes an examination of source text and target text profiles in a process called "translation-oriented text analysis" to see whether

¹ The thesis is entitled *Boris Vian (Non)conformist: The Translation of Two Collections of Short Stories in a Theoretical Context*.

the stipulations stated in the commission (i.e. intended text functions, addressees, motive or reasons for the existence of each text, and time and place of text reception) have been met and where variations have occurred. This process can be applied to all text types and may also include an examination of the product itself to detail the addition or removal of footnotes, endnotes, introductions and illustrations. Van Leuven-Zwart offers two models for textual comparison: the descriptive model, which focuses on the systemic context involving intertextual relations of translated literature in general; and the comparative model, which is the one of primary interest here insofar as it details and classifies micro-level semantic transfer within sentences, clauses and phrases, involving transemes and shifts. Other micro-level theoretical options include House's model of quality assessment, a comparative source and target analysis that leads to an evaluation of the quality of the translation through an examination of register and detailed linguistic comparisons for signs of Venuti's foreignization and domestication strategies. Other theoreticians working in the area of product-oriented Descriptive Translation Studies have also suggested the analysis of single source text and target text pairs as the basis for comparison. The detailed study of linguistic trends between French and English undertaken by Vinay and Darbelnet and Chuquet and Paillard has identified common transpositions that can be used as a means of comparison in translation practice.

Berman's criteria

Despite efforts by some of these theoreticians to broaden the spectrum of comparative descriptive studies, in this instance it is the criteria set out by Berman that provide the most relevant linguistic overview to see where there is divergence between the source and target texts. Berman favours the retention of foreign elements in translation. His assessment criteria are therefore based on a system that incorporates some of the approaches suggested by the abovementioned theorists while simultaneously identifying a number of "deforming" tendencies that can be used to measure how close the target text is to the original. The most notable "deforming" characteristics listed by Berman include expansion, loss of source text poetics, rationalization, clarification, loss of source text idioms and expressions, qualitative impoverishment, quantitative impoverishment, destruction of vernacular networks, effacement of the superimposition of languages, ennoblement, and destruction of underlying networks of signification, all of which will be applied to the short stories evaluated here. A brief examination of each of these characteristics in relation to the translation of Vian's texts will reveal if any discrepancies have occurred.

Expansion

Difference in length between the source text and target text is an area in which textual deformation is most likely to happen. There is a tendency for text to expand or contract when transferred between languages, with the rate depending on language pairs and subject matter; some texts, especially legal texts, might expand by as much as 30% (Epstein). Cited rates of expansion between language combinations include: English into Arabic at 25%; Finnish into English at 25-30%; Swedish into English at 10%; English into Italian at 15%; and Korean into English between at 10-15%.² These figures could partially explain why some agencies often prefer to use the lower source-text word count to calculate translators' pay. There is some discrepancy as to the accepted French into English expansion and contraction rates, however. According to Omnilingua,³ an international translation agency, a typical increase is in the range of 10-15%, a figure supported by Epstein, while another such agency cited above, Kwintessential, offers the diametrically opposed view that contraction in the same range

² Data taken from <http://kwintessential.co.uk/translation/expansion> (accessed February 2013).

³ Data taken from <http://omnilingua.com/resourcecenter/textexpansion.aspx> (accessed 10 March 2013).

occurs. For Berman, expansion of the target text is the predominant trend, which often happens when there is over-translation of the source text, regardless of language pairs and text type.

Table 1. Comparison of source text and target text word counts for the stories in *Le Loup-garou* and *Le Ratichon baigneur* (ST), and in *If I Say If* (TT).

Title	ST Count	TT Count	+/- (%)
Le Loup-garou	3790	4015	+5.9
Un cœur d'or	1222	1298	+6.2
Les Remparts du sud	6911	7558	+9.4
L'amour est aveugle	2723	2966	+8.9
Martin m'a téléphoné	6290	6330	+0.6
Marseille commençait à s'éveiller	1696	1984	+17.0
Les Chiens, le désir et la mort	3350	3376	+0.8
Les Pas vernis	1440	1653	+14.8
Une pénible histoire	3033	3302	+8.9
Le Penseur	1026	1097	+6.9
Surprise-partie chez Léobille	3212	3391	+5.6
Le Bonhomme de neige	2720	2803	+3.1
Le Danger des classiques	3752	3789	+1.0
Un métier de chien	1051	1065	+1.3
Divertissements culturels	1167	1120	-4.0
Une grande vedette	1218	1251	+2.7
Le Ratichon baigneur	890	905	+1.7
Méfie-toi de l'orchestre	789	860	+9.0
Francfort-sous-la-Main	1783	1856	+4.1
Un test	1424	1424	0
Les Filles d'avril	1086	1126	+3.7
L'Assassin	1190	1208	+1.5
Un drôle de sport	852	878	+3.1
Le Motif	762	791	+3.8
Un seul permis pour leur amour	2314	2342	+1.2
La Valse	1077	1087	+0.9
Maternité	2582	2583	0
L'Impuissant	2827	2806	-0.7

Table 1 compares the word counts – in the original version and in translation – for the stories that appear in the collections *Le Loup-garou* and *Le Ratichon baigneur*. The values are approximate because, as Nogueira notes, “[t]here is no satisfactory definition of ‘word’, as any linguist will tell you. In addition, different word versions and word-counting utilities use different definitions”. The end result is expressed as an expansion or contraction percentage.⁴ The information in Table 1 is summarized in Table 2 below:

⁴ Percentage differential has been calculated according to the methodology proposed by Professor Brian Orr, based on word difference / ST [source text] word count x 100, since ST is a constant, not a variable. ST word count has been calculated both manually and from Word documents (where available). Target text word count

Table 2. Summary of word count variations

Contraction (-) / Expansion (+)	Number of Stories
-5 to 0	4
0 to +5	14
+5 to 10	8
+10 to +15	1
> +15	1

These figures reveal the dominance of expansion over contraction of the target text, thereby supporting Berman's theory. The reasons for target text expansion and contraction are many and varied, and the temptation to be prescriptive should be avoided. Ultimately, however, this trend relates to the fundamental differences between languages, to the replication of style and to the re-wording of cultural differences proposed by individual translators. Furthermore, the concept of equivalence can assume another dimension if there is little discrepancy in length between a translated text and the original, as evidenced here when fourteen stories expand between 0 and 5% and only four stories contract between 0 and 5%. These figures indicate that a message can be transmitted with little embellishment and no omissions, and show that little textual deformation has taken place with regards to comparative length.

Loss of source text poetics

Vian's prose can be rather poetic in nature, endowed with a particular rhyme and rhythm that should be replicated in translation for stylistic purposes. There is an "alternation of long and short sentences in many places, which creates a dynamic rhythm" (de Nodrest 10). This, in part, is what Munday refers to as the "voice" of the text (152). It is particularly evident in "La Valse", where the alternation of long sentences and short staccato-like phrases helps to convey the difference between the rhythm of waltz and jazz.⁵

He could see the big hall with the polished floor stretching off into the distance, the mirrors reflecting the soft lights and the light material billowing in the gentle breeze. He could hear the waltz. He could feel the soft abandon of another being's body against his own [...] and his eyes were open. However, all around, it was smoke and noise and laughter, and cold hard jazz that you could not escape.

(If I Say If 260)

Another example of rhythm and rhyme can be found in the title of the tune the butcher's boy is whistling in "Marseille commençait à s'éveiller". The tune is called "La Valse de Palavas n'est pas la lavasse de l'agence Havas", which, when translated literally, renders the nonsensical "The Palavas Waltz is not the dishwasher of the office of Havas". In the source text there is consistent rhyme between "a" and "ass", as well as alliteration involving the letters "a" and "v". Since I considered the rhythm and rhyme patterns to be the predominant features of

has been retrieved from Word documents. Count includes titles but excludes annotation. Percentage differential is expressed to one decimal place, with a small margin for error. It should be noted that "Le Bonhomme de neige" and "Un seul permis pour leur amour" in the Pleiade edition appear respectively as "Le Voyeur" and "Marthe et Jean" in the Bourgois editions from which the word count has been calculated.

⁵ The musicality of some of Vian's prose has also been noted by Marc Roger, a professional reader, who believes that the words on the page sing to him, leading to his philosophy that what has control over the story is not the voice, but the ear (personal communication, 19 November 2007).

the song title, somewhat lost in the literal version, I attempted to replicate them in the target text, which has led to the equally nonsensical title, “The Palavas Palace is not the Office of the House of Havas”, involving an obvious shift in meaning. However, musicality as the primary feature is retained with the rhyme captured by “Palavas”, “Palace” and “Havas”, and alliteration through the repetition of the letters “p” and “h”.

There are many examples of less obvious rhythm and rhyme patterns that frequently occur in the texts, which are more detectable when read aloud. For example, when I translated “Il tendit un verre à Folubert” as “He handed a glass to Folubert” (in the story “Surprise-partie chez Léobille”), there is loss of the “-er” assonance between *verre* and *Folubert*, as well as a difference between the underlying rhythm of the two structures. Other readily available examples of loss of rhyme include “gros dos” as “arching its back” (in “Francfort sous-la-Main”), and “un bon ami à lui” as “his good friend” (in “Un drôle de sport”). Other stylistic deformations can occur through the loss of alliteration. However, there is no loss when “une femme frigide” is translated as “a frigid female” instead of a “frigid woman” (“L’Impuissant”). This decision, however, is influenced by the quest for register equivalence, when register takes precedence over alliteration.

Since certain aspects of Vian’s prose tend to be poetic in nature, compensation through the replication of these patterns elsewhere in the target text (not necessarily at the relevant point) can help to overcome perceived stylistic loss. This compensation does not necessarily have to happen after the loss; it can happen beforehand, meaning that multiple readings of the source and target texts are required to determine where compensation can take place. Compensation at a different point in the text due to the loss of alliteration and rhyme mainly occurs through optional lexical decisions, such as in “Méfie-toi de l’orchestre” when “chaussures épaisses”, translated as “big boots” instead of “big shoes”, helps to compensate for loss when “homme horrible, rougeaud repu” is translated as “a horrible man, a red-faced over-indulger”; similarly, in “L’Impuissant”, the translation of “pauvre renégat” as “poor pretender” helps to compensate for loss of alliteration in the translation of “vraie voix de la volupté” as “true path to sensual gratification”. The replication of rhyme at a particular point in the text can be difficult to achieve because it sometimes leads to syntactical variations, as in “La Valse” when “Lise et Gisèle” is slightly expanded and translated as “Lise and Gisèle as well”, producing rhyme between “Gisèle” and “well” to compensate for loss of rhyme in the sentence that immediately precedes it between “force” and “écorce” in the phrase “traîné de force, emmaillotés dans de l’écorce”. On the other hand, some phrases do not require any manipulation; their translations seem to be almost naturally poetic, as in “Maternité”, when “gentils petits ménages de pédérastes” is translated as “happy little homosexual households”, and in “Les remparts du sud”, when “Sent bon, votre bois” is translated as “Smells good, your wood”. These examples show that wherever equivalence of poetics has not been met at the precise point in the text, appropriate compensation can and has been applied elsewhere. Therefore, it can be considered that loss of source text poetics involving rhythm, rhyme and alliteration is one feature of these translations in which textual deformation does not take place.

Rationalization

According to Berman, rationalization is where the alteration of syntax, punctuation and sentence structures is linked to transposition (288). Transposition involves the shift of grammatical structures and the interchange of parts of speech, which are sometimes necessary, and indeed often compulsory, between languages. Noun and verb transposition is a fairly common feature between French and English, along with the interchange of adjectives and nouns, and nouns and adverbs. Vian’s syntax has been the subject of numerous studies, but essentially – aside from a number of isolated constructions – there tends to be minimal syntactical variation from standard French, which forms the bulk of the prose content.

Syntactical variation involving positional and grammatical shift does occur in those constructions where it is necessary to unlock semantic difficulties, which is in keeping with Bassnett's system of the prioritized ranking of semantics over syntax (34). In other words, in the search for textual equivalence, translation should be considered to be composed of a syntactic, semiotic and pragmatic component arranged in a hierarchical relationship.

The following example, taken from "Les Filles d'avril", suggests that some interpretation and subsequent rewording might be necessary when semantic difficulties arise in a particular comprehensible textual unit or transeme.⁶ As Gouzin is preparing to go out on the town, he feels that he is about to strike it lucky with the ladies:

Il avait mis ce jour-là son joli complet à carreaux ovales et bruns, sa cravate de fil d'Écosse, et ses souliers pointus qui faisaient bien sur le trottoir.

(*Le Ratichon baigneur* 81)

Little syntactical difficulty arises in the first part of this sentence; it is only the final words "qui faisaient bien sur le trottoir" that are problematic because interpretation is required to determine their meaning. A literal translation "that made him feel good on the footpath" helps unravel the semantics of the unit but stylistically it does not work in the overall context of the structure because of the possibility of ambiguity. These final words refer to his shoes and not to the totality of his attire, which is the impression given by a literal translation. Therefore, an alternative may need to be sourced. The proposed solution involves the use of the adjective "sharp" positioned before the translation of "souliers pointus", which provides a link to the inference of looking good. This therefore leads to the following translation containing syntactical variation:

That day he had put on his nice suit with brown and oval checks, his Tartan tie and his sharp-looking pointy shoes.

(*If I Say If* 159)

Similarly, the implementation of punctuation equivalence, as noted by Chuquet and Paillard, can help in the facilitation of reception (418-421). This can involve the more frequent use of commas in French than in English, and the French comma corresponding to a semi-colon, colon or full stop in English. This therefore applies primarily to the translation of pause markers, most of which occur in "Martin m'a téléphoné...". Because of the frenetic nature of the events in this story, there is a slight degree of ambiguity at times in the source text that should be transferred to the target text. This is achieved through the implementation of punctuation equivalence, which manages to convey the same level of comprehension, as in the following example:

– *Thanks!* dit Martin, et on y va, on retransverse le hall, on tourne à gauche, petit salon, moquettes, entièrement tendu d'Aubusson, à boiseries de chêne; sur le divan, il y a le colonel et sa femelle frotteuse, elle a un tailleur noir, des bas un peu trop roses mais fins

(*Le Loup-garou* 81)

"Thanks!" Martin says. And off we go. We go back across the foyer. We turn left. A small sitting room. Wall-to-wall Aubusson carpet. Hung with Aubusson tapestries.

⁶ Individual sense units may vary from one translator to another depending on the perception of the relationship that exists between all of the other units combined.

Oak panelling. On the couch are the colonel and his fondling female. She is wearing a black suit and sheer stockings that are a little too pink

(*If I Say If* 75)

With only a small number of examples of major syntactical difficulties being located across twenty-eight stories, and with punctuation issues being largely confined to “Martin m’a téléphoné...”, it can be seen that there is minimal textual divergence in terms of rationalization.

Clarification

Clarification in the target text of things that are not necessarily clear in the source text is another “deforming” feature noted by Berman. This is often achieved through explanation and, in Vian’s case, it particularly applies to the presupposition contained in the extensive number of proper nouns found in the source texts. In fact, over six hundred proper nouns are spread across the twenty-eight short stories, providing an extensive database from which examples can readily be drawn. The translation of these proper nouns involves a number of non-clarification and clarification techniques; the former when it is deemed that there is sufficient familiarity between the target audience and the references in the source text, and the latter when the opposite view is prevalent. Methods of clarification found in the translations include: the creation of a target-language equivalent (*La Mondaine* – Vice Squad); expansion through the addition of a short phrase, a descriptor or an attributive adjective (*Saint-Jean-de-Luz* – Saint-Jean-de-Luz south of Bordeaux, *Houdan* – Houdan chicken, *l’Hôtel Presse-Purée d’Argent* – the posh Presse-Purée d’Argent Hotel); the substitution of a hyponym by a superordinate (*Sûreté* – police); or the addition of paratextual elements, such as a map or appendix. However, the majority of proper nouns found in the short stories involve real people and real places known to Vian personally, such as Claude Léon, Paul Boubal, Ville d’Avray and Club Saint-Germain, all of which need some form of explanation in order for the reader of the target text to achieve the same level of presupposition as the reader of the source text. As such, proper noun clarification has been primarily achieved through annotation, which does not impact directly on textual equivalence.

Berman has observed that clarification also occurs through paraphrasing, a technique that sometimes involves syntactical variation linked to interpretation. One example to which clarification might be applied occurs in the final line of “Martin m’a téléphoné...” where the narrator says “et juste avant de dormir, je me suis changé en canard”. The literal translation of this phrase is “and just before falling asleep, I turned into a duck”. Attempts at deciphering Vian’s intended meaning with leading Vian scholars Christelle Gonzalo and François Roulmann⁷ are based on conjecture and have proven to be inconclusive, so the translation found in *If I Say If* – “and just before I fell asleep, I turned over and let out an almighty quack” – is not an attempt at clarification. Since this is the only example in which paraphrasing involving non-clarification has been employed, and since the significance of proper nouns has been mainly dealt with outside the primary text, clarification does not emerge as a major issue in relation to textual divergence.

Loss of source text idioms and expressions

While Baker claims that recognition of source text idioms, the interpretation thereof, and the subsequent appropriate substitution in the target text is the sign of a translator’s linguistic competence (64), interchange between source idiomatic expressions and target idiomatic expressions is, according to Berman, another measure of textual deformation because it can lead to the target text becoming removed from the source culture (Berman 294). The translation

⁷ Personal communication, Paris, 11 October 2012.

of source language expressions and idioms has been dealt with in two ways. The first involves total idiomatic loss, as when a source text idiomatic expression is not replaced with a similar idiomatic expression in the target text. This has sometimes occurred throughout these translations, as when *mettre plein gaz* – “to step on the gas” is translated as “to accelerate” (“Le Loup-garou”); *ils tournent la manivelle* – “they turn the handle” is translated as “manipulative” (“Martin m’a téléphoné...”); and *on reste sur sa faim* – “I was still hungry” is translated as “there should have been more to it” (“Les chiens, le désir et la mort”). However, compensation has been applied on a number of occasions to help offset this imbalance. This means that an idiomatic expression has been used in the target text where there was none in the source text, such as when *menaçante* [threatening] is translated as “starting to get her back up” (“Les remparts du sud”). Likewise, the phrase *tu te permets des trucs comme ça?* [do you allow such things?] is translated as “how can you stoop so low?” (“Surprise-partie chez Léobille”), and *un système ordinaire* [an ordinary system] is translated as “a run-of-the-mill system” (“Le danger des classiques”). Although both of these strategies reveal linguistic deformation, Berman and Baker are both specifically referring to the substitution of a source text idiomatic expression with a target text idiomatic expression. These translations reveal a number of examples of this, including the substitution of *à vol d’oiseau* [as the bird flies] with “as the crow flies” (“Le bonhomme de neige”) and *fort comme un Turc* [strong as a Turk] with “strong as an ox” (“Marseille commençait à s’éveiller”). Some textual deformation through cultural loss does occur when there is idiomatic substitution, especially in the particular reference to the Turks, who are perhaps more geographically relevant to the French than, say, to an Australian or American audience. Retention of the reference through calque (“strong as a Turk”) succeeds in highlighting foreignness; however this particular case supports the conclusion that domestication through recognizable idiomatic substitution wherever possible can help to facilitate reception for a broader audience.

Qualitative impoverishment

Qualitative impoverishment is linked to clarification and refers to the replacement of terms, expressions and figures in the original with terms, expressions and figures of the target language (Berman 290-91). In the case of Vian’s short stories, it refers primarily to the optional translation of proper nouns, especially in relation to socionyms (the name given to societies, businesses and brand names in a particular culture) and to the titles of literary and other works. Throughout these translations, proper nouns have been retained in source-language format and substituted with an English-language equivalent at approximately the same rate. The names of real places and people remain unaltered, along with culture-specific items and those publications where readership is limited to the source culture (as in *Les temps modernes* in “Love is Blind”) in adherence to Venuti’s strategy of foreignization. However, it is domestication that is especially susceptible to qualitative impoverishment. This mainly occurs with proper nouns that already have an established target-language equivalent and in the names of fictitious characters and geographical locations, as well as the titles of some publications and movies. Examples include the rendering of Gerald’s *Toi et Moi* as “You and Me” (in “Le danger des classiques”), “Dilettantes du Chevesne Rambolitain” as “Rambolitain Fresh Water Amateur Fishing Club” (in “Le Loup-garou”), and “Vallyeuse”, “Saute de l’Elfe” and “Cirque des Trois-Sœurs” as “Happy Valley”, “Deer’s Leap” and “Three Sisters Ridge” respectively (in “Le Bonhomme de neige”). Although there is evidence of Berman’s qualitative impoverishment in these examples, a hybrid approach is used, retaining the foreignness of some source culture references and translating others in the interest of maintaining a certain level of recognition for the reader.

Quantitative impoverishment

Quantitative impoverishment refers to the translation of a number of different source-text words and expressions by a single word or expression in the target language (Berman 291). It does not refer to target-language homonyms, like “coat” as the translation of both “poil” (“Le Loup-garou”) and “manteau” (“Une grande vedette”), nor to decisions based on stylistics, such as “friends” from both “camarades” (“Les remparts du sud”) and “public” (“Méfie-toi de l’orchestre”). Rather, it involves the loss of source text synonymy: as when “femme” and “épouse” are both translated as “wife” (“Les Remparts du sud”); when “casquette” (“Un cœur d’or”), “képi” and “une visière de cuir bouilli” (“Les remparts du sud”) are all translated as “cap”; when “gendarme” (“Les Remparts du sud”) and “agent” (“Le Loup-garou”) are both translated as “policeman”; when “copain” (“Martin m’a téléphoné...”) and “ami” (“Les pas vernis”) are both translated as “friend”; and when “créchait” (“Les pas vernis”) and “habitait” (“Le Loup-Garou”) are translated as “lived”. Although these examples reflect quantitative impoverishment, it does not emerge as a major feature in these translations. This is evident when “truck” and “camion”, which are separated by two lines in “Martin m’a téléphoné...”, are translated as both “truck” (which passes across three varieties of English: American, British and Australian) and “lorry” (British and Australian), respectively. This indicates that the recognition of synonyms by their proximity is a key factor in the avoidance of textual deformation by repetition.

Destruction of vernacular networks

The destruction of vernacular networks refers to the loss of local speech patterns (Berman 293). Since the main language system throughout Vian’s short stories can be traced to the author’s roots as an upper-middle class Parisian, if loss of vernacularism were to eventuate it would most likely occur through Americanization (in “Les chiens, le désir et la mort”) and through deformation by non-native speakers (in “Martin m’a téléphoné...” and “Marseille commençait à s’éveiller”). Since the translations have managed to capture these differences through lexical choices and comparable deformation – as with “cab” instead of “taxi” in the former, and as deliberate misconstructions in the latter – it would have to be said that vernacularism has been widely respected. Slight deformation can be observed in relation to emphasis when “Ça, demanda Charlie, à quoi ça sert?” is translated as “‘What’s that thing for?’ Charlie asked” (in “Un métier de chien”), and when “Mais vous aussi, vous l’êtes” is translated as “But you are too” (in “L’Assassin”). When linguistic equivalence cannot be achieved, Berman states that the attempt to retain emphasis is regularly made by italicizing the relevant word or words, which acts as a mechanism for differentiation from the rest of the text (293), although this technique is not visible here.

Effacement of the superimposition of languages

The effacement of the superimposition of languages refers to the subservience of sociolect and idiolect variations to the predominant language system of the text. Sociolect is best represented by the language of the police, the pimps and the prostitute in “Le Loup-garou”, which appears in stark contrast to the refined speech patterns of the main character, Denis, and by the language of the police, the Major and Verge (who are posing as road workers) which contrasts with the language of the other characters in “Les remparts du sud”. Idiolect is a little more difficult to isolate because it is closely related to the former, although a number of idiolects have been identified. These include the homophobic rant of Caïn in “L’Assassin” and Claude and René’s expressions of homosexual endearment in “Maternité”. In each case, sociolect and idiolect variations within the primary language system have been identified, and retained through lexical choice and textual adaptation, as in the story “Les remparts du sud”, when “Ben oui! dit le Major en prenant l’accent charbonnier” (literally, “‘Well, yes!’ the Major said, adopting

the accent of the charcoal burner”) is translated as “‘To be sure!’ the Major said, adopting the manner of speech of a charcoal burner”. Since sociolect refers to the language of a particular social group and idiolect to the language of an individual, both of which are represented by differences in register, and since variations in register between the source text and target text have been respected, there is no textual deformation.

Ennoblement

Ennoblement, or attempts by translators to improve upon the style of the original, is another feature noted by Berman (290). This notion of “improving the original” refers to a lack of faithfulness to the stylistic features of the source text and to the failure to replicate any errors that might occur. There are three different views on this: those that argue a translation should reveal the flaws of the original; those that argue translator intervention should only remedy the misrepresentation of facts; and those that argue it is the duty of the translator to improve the original. Ennoblement sometimes occurs when short sentences are combined into longer sentences and when long sentences are broken down into shorter sentences. This particular issue has been addressed in relation to Vian’s style and poetics, and has been shown not to emerge as a deformation feature.

In the case of the short stories, the term “ennoblement” needs to be discussed in relation to repetition, particularly of the verb *dire* (“to say”). The short stories reveal a plethora of *dire* constructions, mainly in relation to *dit* plus a noun or pronoun placed at the end of dialogue, whether it be a question, an exclamation or a response. In fact, over seven hundred instances of this feature can be found across the twenty-eight stories. Attempts to avoid repetition of the verb *dire* as “to say” might include the alternatives “to ask”, “to answer”, “to acknowledge”, “to concede”, “to agree”, “to insist”, or the verb could be omitted altogether depending on the circumstances. All of these constitute rewording or improvement of the text. However, with repetition being more common in English than in French, and with the repetition of the verb *dire* figuring prominently as a stylistic feature (although some critics might consider it to be flawed), the translation of *dire* as “to say” has been retained. Another example of repetition occurs with *ça* (“that” or “it”), which appears 350 times. Unlike *dire*, *ça* can retain a variable pronominal value depending on its context when translated, often appearing as “something”, “everything” and “nothing”, as well as “that”. These two examples, along with the retention of sentence structure, therefore indicate that attempts at ennoblement have not taken place.

Destruction of underlying networks of signification

The destruction of underlying networks of signification, or the translation of certain words and phrases without consideration being given to their role in the macrostructure of the text, is another area that can lead to variation. It refers primarily to words that might not necessarily seem important in isolation but which assume special significance on a different level (Berman 291-92). Here, the term refers specifically to the retention of intertextuality, with the most notable example being nautical references. Such references occur frequently throughout the short stories, as when “starboard” and “port” are used to describe the intersection of a road in “Une pénible histoire”. This particular feature takes into account the secondary meaning of homonyms, as when the preferred translation options of “démarré” and “fonça” are “cast off” and “set sail” instead of “started up” and “made a beeline” (“Les remparts du sud”). These two examples show that the underlying networks of signification in Vian’s texts have been identified and addressed in the translations, thereby resulting in no loss.

Conclusion

The application of Berman’s comparative criteria reveals two trends: minimal loss and no loss between the source and target texts. There is some loss involving rationalization linked to

semantics based on Bassnett's system of prioritized ranking, but no loss involving rationalization and punctuation. There is slight loss involving clarification, which was only applied after consideration was given to Venuti's theory of domestication to assist the target audience's reception. However, most clarification appears as annotation outside the primary text, thus minimizing deformation, and there is no clarification involving textual interpretation. Some qualitative impoverishment does occur, once again due to domestication that helps to retain equivalent levels of presupposition. There is some idiomatic substitution in line with Baker's observations, but since compensation has been applied, idiomatic loss is once again tied to domestication. Quantitative impoverishment is closely linked to proximity and context but does not emerge as a key factor, while the substitution of vernacular networks only applies to the representation of emphasis.

There is no loss with regards to comparative length because it falls within the typical trends of French into English translation. The superimposition of languages retains the socio- and idiolectal differences within the primary language system; there is no destruction of underlying networks of signification because intertextual references have been identified; and there is no loss of poetics. Perhaps most importantly, there have been no attempts at stylistic improvement involving ennoblement and no attempts at clarification through paraphrasing, both of which ultimately constitute a rewriting of the original text. The result is therefore an English-language version of the short stories contained in *If I Say If* that, according to Berman's criteria, is theoretically justifiable, revealing little if any stylistic and semantic deviation from the original.

This study therefore shows that Berman's criteria for target-text evaluation can be applied as a frame of reference by the translator, and indeed the critic, of a given translation to see where, if anywhere, divergence has occurred. Applied during the translation process (rather than afterwards, as has been the case here), any linguistic issues identified can, if necessary, be appropriately assessed and addressed within the stipulations of the commission, thereby incorporating elements of the broader spectrum of evaluation criteria proposed by other theorists.

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