

**ETHICAL AND STYLISTIC ISSUES OF TRANSLATING  
BOSMAN'S ENGLISH SHORT STORIES INTO AFRIKAANS**

by

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This study is dedicated to the memory of my parents,

Gerhard and Esther Davidtsz

## DECLARATION

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ETHICAL AND STYLISTIC ISSUES OF TRANSLATING BOSMAN'S ENGLISH  
SHORT STORIES INTO AFRIKAANS

I declare that the above thesis is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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## ABSTRACT

Herman Charles Bosman (1905–1951) remains a popular South African writer, despite the frequent occurrence of the offensive k-word for black people in his writings. Although the discipline of Translation Studies is presently dominated by ethical considerations, there are reasons to believe that ethical issues have been neglected in recent translations of Bosman’s English short stories into Afrikaans. His translators, Griebenow and De Lange, have conformed to a simplistic fidelity-driven perception of ethics, while more attention should have been paid to “sensitive” aspects of the original. The research problem is how this gap that exists in translation practice can be addressed, which in turn raises the question: How would one translate Bosman’s stories in an ethically responsible manner for the twenty-first century?

This study not does deal with all of Bosman’s short stories but focuses on the Oom Schalk Lourens ones as these demonstrate the research problem best. Thus, the data consist of existing texts in printed form. The following stories have been selected for comparative analysis: “Makapan’s Caves”, “The Rooinek”, “The Gramophone”, “Mafeking Road”, “Splendours from Ramoutsa”, “Unto Dust”, and “Funeral Earth”. Since excerpts from the original and their corresponding translations are compared, translator style is inevitably included in the discussion. A committed approach, which considers translation as an activist and interventionist cultural activity (Brownlie 2011), forms the analytical framework of this study.

The analyses indicate that Griebenow and De Lange have retained the offensive racial epithets of the source texts, rather than toning them down for modern target-text readers. Thus, the translators have been faithful to a dead author, instead of taking the socio-cultural and political context of reception into consideration.

From a committed stance, I would strongly recommend that derogatory racial epithets, found in older texts, should be subdued in current translations. Otherwise, it may be better not to translate at all, as Pym (2012) suggests. Owing to translators’ responsibility for the effects of their translations on their readers, and South Africa’s

political transformation to a democracy in which all people are deemed equal before the law, the use of racist language, is totally unwarranted.

**Keywords:** accountability; accuracy; activist/committed approach; ethics; loyalty; racial epithets; repetition/retention; responsibility; strategies; translators' style; visibility

## SAMEVATTING

Herman Charles Bosman (1905–1951) bly 'n gewilde Suid-Afrikaanse skrywer, ten spyte van die gereelde voorkoms van die neerhalende k-woord vir swart mense in sy werk. Hoewel die dissipline, Vertaalkunde, tans deur etiese vraagstukke oorheers word, is daar rede om te vermoed dat etiese kwessies afgeskeep is in die onlangse vertalings van Bosman se Engelse kortverhale in Afrikaans. Die vertalers, Griebenow en De Lange, vereenselwig etiek met getrouheid aan die skrywer, in plaas daarvan om meer aandag te skenk aan “sensitiewe” aspekte van die oorspronklike. Die navorsingsprobleem is hoe om hierdie gaping in vertaalpraktyk aan te spreek: Hoe behoort Bosman se verhale op 'n etiese, verantwoordelike wyse vertaal te word vir die een-en-twintigste eeu?

Hierdie studie fokus op Bosman se oom Schalk Lourens-verhale wat die navorsingsprobleem die beste illustreer. Die data is derhalwe saamgestel uit bestaande tekste in gedrukte vorm. Die volgende verhale is vir vergelykende ontleding gekies: “Makapan’s Caves”, “The Rooinek”, “The Gramophone”, “Mafeking Road”, “Splendours from Ramoutsa”, “Unto Dust”, en “Funeral Earth”. Aangesien grepe uit die brontekste en die vertalings daarvan vergelyk word, is vertalerstyl noodwendig deel van die bespreking. 'n Betrokke benadering waarvolgens vertaling as 'n aktivistiese en intervensionistiese kulturele aktiwiteit beskou word (Brownlie 2011), vorm die ontledingsraamwerk van die studie.

Die ontledings dui daarop dat Griebenow en De Lange die rassistiese skeldname van die oorspronklike behou het, in plaas daarvan om dit “sagter” uit te druk vir hedendaagse doeltaallesers. Die vertalers was getrou aan 'n afgestorwe skrywer, eerder as om die sosiokulturele en -politiese konteks van resepsie in ag te neem.

Vanuit 'n betrokke standpunt sou ek sterk aanbeveel dat neerhalende, rassistiese benamings wat in ouer tekste voorkom, gedemp moet word in hedendaagse vertalings. Anders sou dit beter wees om hoegenaamd nie te vertaal nie, soos Pym (2012) voorstel. Vanweë vertalers se verantwoordelikheid vir die effek van hul

vertalings op hul lesers, en Suid-Afrika se politiese transformasie in 'n demokrasie waar alle mense gelyk geag word voor die wet, is die gebruik van rassistiese taal verregaande.

**Sleutelwoorde:** aanspreeklikheid; akkuraatheid; aktivistiese/betrokke benadering; etiek; lojaliteit; rassistiese skeldname; herhaling/behoud; verantwoordelikheid; strategieë; vertalerstyl; sigbaarheid



## ISISHWANKATHELO

UHerman Charles Bosman (1905-1951) ngomnye wababhali abaphume izandla baseMzantsi Afrika, nangona iincwadi zakhe zizele ligama elingamkelekanga eliqala ngo-k elibhekiselele kubantu abantsundu. Nangona Izifundo Zoguqulo zikuthathela ingqalelo ukunanzwa kweenqobo ezisesikweni xa kuguqulelwa, kukho izizathu ezibangela ukuba kukholeleke ukuba imiba engeenqobo ezisesikweni iye yatyeshelwa xa bekuguqulelwa kwiAfrikaans amabali amafutshane kaBosman abhalwe ngesiNgesi. UGriebenow noDe Lange abangabaguquli bathande ukulandela uluvo olubonisa intembeko kumbhali, endaweni yokugxila kwimiba “enobuethe-ethe” ekwiscatshulwa sentsusa. Injongo yolu phando kukufumana indlela esinokuvalwa ngayo esi sikhewu kwimisebenzi yoguqulelo, nto leyo ebangela ukuba kubekho imibuzo ethi: Umntu angawaguqula njani amabali amafutshane kaBosman kwinkulungwane yamashumi amabini ananye apho umguquli azithathela ingqalelo iinqobo ezisesikweni.

Olu phando aluwahlautyi onke amabali amafutshane kaBosman, koko lugxila kuphela kula ka-Oom Schalk Lourens kuba ingawo ayivelisa kakuhle le ngxaki/njongo yophando. Izicatshulwa ezihlalutywayo zezishicilelweyo kuphela. Amabali akhethelwe ukuthelekiswa nokuhlalutywa ngala: “Makapan’s Caves”, “The Rooinek”, “The Gramophone”, “Mafeking Road”, “Splendours from Ramoutsa”, “Unto Dust”, and “Funeral Earth”. Njengoko kuthelekiswa iziqendwana ezikula mabalana neenguqulelo zawo, isimbo sokubhala sabaguquli siyaqukwa kolu hlalutyo. Isakhelo sohlalutyo esisetyenzisiweyo kolu phando seso sisekelwe kwiingcamango zikaBrownlie (2011) ezihlela uguqulelo njengesenzo senkcubeko sokuphemelela nokungenelela.

Uhlalutyo lubonisa ukuba uGriebenow noDe Lange bawagcinile amagama ocalucalulo ngokobuhlanga anyelisayo asetyenziswe kwizicatshulwa zentsusa, endaweni yokuwatshintsha ngelokulungiselela abafundi ekujoliswe kubo beli xesha. Abaguquli

ke ngoko baye bathembeka kakhulu kumbhali owaswelekayo endaweni yokuthathela ingqalelo imeko yokwamkelekileyo ngokwezopolitiko nentlalo.

Ndiphakamisa ukuba amagama anyelisayo ocalucalulo ngokobuhlanga asetyenziswe kwiimbalo zakudala athonyalaliswe okanye atshintshwe kwiinguqulelo zangoku. Kungenjalo, kungcono kungenziwa nguqulelo kwaphela njengoko ecebisa uPym (2012). Ngenxa yoxanduva olusemagxeni abaguquli ngeziphumo zeenguqulelo zabo kubafundi bazo, nokutshintsha kwemeko yezopolitiko yoMzantsi Afrika itshintshela kwidemokhrasi apho abantu balinganayo ngokomthetho, ukusetyenziswa kolwimi olucalulayo akwamkelekanga.

## ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used in this study:

**BT:** back-translation

**CDA:** critical discourse analysis

**CL:** corpus linguistics

**HAT:** *Handwoordeboek van die Afrikaanse taal*

**FIT:** International Federation of Translators

**SATI:** South African Translators' Institute

**SL:** source language

**ST:** source text

**TL:** target language

**TT:** target text

**TC:** *tertium comparationis*

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# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background to and rationale behind the research problem

Herman Charles Bosman (1905–1951) remains an extraordinary South African writer, despite his short, chequered life as an outsider, once a prisoner on death row and a thrice married bohemian. Even though he worked in diverse genres, he is most famous for his short stories, especially the so-called Oom Schalk Lourens stories, named after their first-person narrator.

Bosman was born on 3 February 1905 in Kuils River near Cape Town, but spent most of his life in the Transvaal.<sup>1</sup> His mother, Elizabeth Helena (Elisa) Malan, a teacher, had married Jacobus (Jakoos) Bosman, a mine labourer who was deemed to be beneath her station, and today it is still unclear whether he was indeed Herman's father.<sup>2</sup> Herman and his younger brother, Pierre, attended English schools, notably Jeppe Boys' High in Johannesburg. Having completed his T2 teaching diploma at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) and the Normal College, Herman Charles Bosman received a posting in January 1926 to the Groot Marico district in the remote Western Transvaal (the North-West Province today) where he encountered a community whose sole richness was to be found "in the art of storytelling" (MacKenzie 2012:372). In time, Bosman's brief sojourn in the Marico Bushveld inspired most of his short stories (Cornwell, Klopper & MacKenzie 2010:57).

Returning to Johannesburg for the school holidays in July 1926, he became involved in a family quarrel, shooting and killing his stepbrother, David Russell, with a hunting rifle. Bosman was tried for murder and sentenced to death, but the sentence was commuted, and he served four years in Pretoria Central Prison (now the Kgosi

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<sup>1</sup> In Bosman's day, the Transvaal was a province of South Africa; at present, it is the area incorporating Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and North-West Provinces (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:227).

<sup>2</sup> Two theories have been put forward: Rosenberg (1976; 2005) hints that Herman Charles Bosman was, or believed himself to be, the result of incest between a brother and a sister (Lenta 2003), while Hansen (2013) posits that he was the son of the Afrikaans poet and morphine addict, Eugène N. Marais (1871–1936).



Mampuru II prison). In December 1930, three months after his release on parole, his first Oom Schalk Lourens story, “Makapan’s Caves”, appeared in *The Touleier* (BT: Wagon leader), a short-lived literary journal<sup>3</sup> (MacKenzie 2011; MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:226).

In 1934 Bosman left South Africa with his second wife,<sup>4</sup> Ellaline Manson, to live in Britain and Europe. Some of his most famous stories were written in London. The couple returned home shortly after the outbreak of World War II.

The years following his marriage – in March 1944 – to Helena Stegmann, his third wife, were his most productive. *Mafeking Road*, a selection of his best-known tales, was published in book form in 1947 and *Cold Stone Jug*, his prison memoir, in 1949. The *Voorkamer* stories were written to a weekly deadline for *The Forum*, from April 1950 until Bosman’s untimely death of heart failure on 14 October 1951, aged forty-six.

My interest in Bosman’s work was sparked at high school where *Mafeking Road* was prescribed for English Literature. This interest was augmented by the one-man shows of a remarkable actor, Patrick Mynhardt, such as *A Sip of Jerepigo*, *Just Jerepigo* and *The Best of Bosman and Bethulie*. MacKenzie and Sandham (2011:153) assert that “through his vivid dramatisation of the Oom Schalk Lourens figure on stage, Patrick Mynhardt single-handedly made Herman Charles Bosman a household name in South Africa”.

Race is a significant theme in Bosman’s stories because it forms part of “the Marico experience” as Lawson (1986:144) points out. As a white person, Bosman focuses on “white experience of blacks” (Lawson 1986:145) in various narratives where black people operate either within white society as servants, or outside it as enemies.

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<sup>3</sup> Most of Bosman’s stories first appeared in periodicals with anti-establishment tendencies (Gray 1989:5), illustrating his position as an outsider.

<sup>4</sup> Bosman married his first wife, Vera Sawyer, before leaving for the Marico district but she remained in Johannesburg with her mother. The marriage was (presumably) annulled by her family after his imprisonment (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:198).

Numerous stories also include references to important events in Boer history, notably the two South African Wars, fought against Great Britain (Cornwell et al. 2010:59).

Even though Bosman – an anglicised Afrikaner – is chiefly known as an English writer, he also published sixteen short stories in Afrikaans<sup>5</sup> during his last years, presumably encouraged by his Afrikaans wife, Helena, who retaught him his mother tongue (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011). Bosman's stories, poems, and critiques in/about Afrikaans were finally edited and compiled by Leon de Kock (2001) and published by Human & Rousseau, aptly titled *Verborgte skatte* (BT: Hidden treasures), as part of the *Anniversary Edition* of the author's collected works under the general editorship of Stephen Gray and Craig MacKenzie ([www.leondekock.co.za/?page\\_id=11](http://www.leondekock.co.za/?page_id=11)). *Verborgte skatte* was the subject of a dissertation on Bosman's bilingual writing (Snyman 2003). Most of his Afrikaans stories have English versions, not translations, because he made deliberate shifts (i.e. significant additions and omissions) when rewriting a story.

The continuing success of Bosman's work has (regrettably) perpetuated the use of the extremely offensive word for black people (i.e. "kaffir"), causing readers to misjudge his work as racist, because of their ignorance of his historical interpretation of the word, together with not being able to grasp that his use of it is steeped in irony (Snyman 2003:65). Bosman (2003:170) explicated his understanding of this word in characteristically ironic fashion: "if I were a Native, and I had acquired a certain amount of culture, I wouldn't want to call myself a Bantu or a Native or a negro or an African. No, I would demand to be recognised and accepted as a plain kaffir. I would receive from the hand of the white man nothing less. I would never allow them to take away from me a name so rich in legend, sorrow and so heavy with the drama of Africa."

The bulk of Bosman's short stories has only recently been translated into Afrikaans: in 2011, 2012 and 2016 by the proprietor of Suiderkruis Boeke, Francois Griebenow,<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Bosman's Afrikaans stories appeared in periodicals from the late 1940s, such as *Die Brandwag* and *On Parade*.

<sup>6</sup> Griebenow's translations are self-published; hence, in his case the translator and the publisher are one and the same.

and in 2013 by the award-winning poet, Johann de Lange, in celebration of Human & Rousseau's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary as Bosman's regular publishers.

Hewson (2011:28) refers to the first published translation of a literary work as its introduction into the other language. As a bilingual writer, Bosman introduced his stories into Afrikaans himself, although they are versions rather than translations, as noted above. Moreover, Griebenow's first published translation, *In die withaak se skadu en ander oom Schalk Lourens-stories*, appeared a full sixty years after Bosman's death. On account of this considerable interval, it should come as no surprise if the value systems of the target-text readers were to diverge from those of the source-text readers. The use of certain derogatory terms in both Griebenow's and De Lange's translations is indeed disturbing. If modern dictionaries discourage the use of offensive language altogether, why have these translators retained it verbatim?

The taboo term for black people, which derives from the Arabic *kafir* meaning "infidel" ([www.dsae.co.za/#!/word/3580/kaffir](http://www.dsae.co.za/#!/word/3580/kaffir)), was originally applied to all indigenous black residents of Southern Africa, but became increasingly offensive to Africans over time (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:117). Although the word was not considered objectionable in Bosman's lifetime, his regular use of it, even if used "in a non-offensive way" as Leff (2016:125) asserts, poses ethical challenges to translators living in a modern democracy. The usage of such racist terms of address could give the offended party sufficient reason for taking legal action.

## **1.2 Research problem**

Although the discipline of Translation Studies is presently dominated by questions of ethics, since translators are nowadays required to demonstrate accountability for their decisions, "there are reasons to believe that ethical issues have been largely overlooked in recent translations of Bosman's English short stories into Afrikaans" (Opperman 2017:92). It would seem that the translators have conformed to a simplistic fidelity-driven perception of ethics, while more attention should have been paid to "sensitive" aspects of the original. The research problem is how this gap that exists in translation practice can be addressed.

### 1.3 Research questions

Transforming the problem into a research question, one may enquire:

- How would one translate Bosman's stories in an ethically responsible manner for the twenty-first century?

#### Sub-questions

- Why has the source texts' offensive language been repeated verbatim in the target texts?
- What is the effect of retaining dated racial epithets in current translations, disregarding South Africa's political transformation?
- From which alternatives to such terms can translators select if faced with racial epithets in the original?

To date, the field of translation ethics has not been investigated extensively in the South African context. Research has, however, been conducted abroad on the ethics of omissions and other ideological changes made to "sensitive texts" (Chesterman & Wagner 2002:106). Hitherto, no research on ethical considerations in the translation of Bosman's short stories except my own (Opperman 2017) has been published, although other aspects of his literary output have received renewed academic attention, especially since the beginning of this century (Leff 2016).

### 1.4 Research aims of the study problem

Because few literary texts are translated into Afrikaans these days, the translation of stories by a celebrated South African writer might exemplify current trends in local literary translation. However, this thesis focuses on current translation practice in lieu of Afrikaans itself: I shall consider how sensitive aspects of Bosman's texts have been rendered for target-text readers, who are accustomed to today's climate of political correctness. Although the phrase could be perceived as a negative term, "politically correct" implies the deliberate avoidance of language or behaviour that could offend "particular groups of people" (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* 2015:1150).

The aims of this study are twofold:

- To encourage translators in general to reflect carefully, before settling for the first, literal equivalent that comes to mind;
- To prevail upon translators to assume responsibility for their ethical choices instead of imposing this on a dead author, especially when translating racially prejudiced texts from the past, or texts that could be perceived as such.

It must be emphasised that Bosman's translators, Griebenow and De Lange, regard ethical translation in a rather superficial manner as fidelity to the author. Nevertheless, it is vital to bear in mind that "translation always has a potentially radical and activist edge": it might be "driven by ethical and ideological concerns", and it could shape societies (Tymoczko 2006:459). Consequently, Tymoczko (2006; 2010) views translation as "an ethical, political, and ideological activity" (2006:443) rather than merely as "a mechanical linguistic transportation or a literary art" (2010:3). Baker (2008:12) considers translational ethics from "potentially equally ethical perspectives", but inclines towards "a more engaged, committed translation practice, and translation scholarship", as translators are required to be ethically accountable to themselves and to others.

Baker (2008:19) believes that all translation is mediated; hence it is not intervention-free – sometimes translators are "unable to avoid intervening in a more direct sense". Translators' interventions are evident in "the shifts they introduce in the texts they produce" (Tymoczko 2010:6), which include shifts in content, form, politics and ideology. To illustrate the point, consider the following example provided by Baker (2008:14): – if an Afrikaans speaker uses the term "Eskimo", the English interpreter<sup>7</sup> might "use the more politically responsible term 'Inuit'" as it is considered ethically responsible from a particular vantage point. If the former term had been repeated exactly, it would have induced "unnecessary hurt and offence" (Baker 2008:16). Therefore, an activist stance is taken in this study by advocating that racist epithets should be toned down for modern target-text readers, in the interest of reshaping South African society. Here, the descriptor, "activist", implies a strong belief in socio-

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<sup>7</sup> What is said of the interpreter is also applicable to the translator because the discipline of Translation Studies comprises translation and interpreting.

political/ideological change, although not in the more usual sense of militant protest action such as public demonstrations. Tymoczko (2010:13) affirms that the term “activism” is also used for other, less dramatic forms of political involvement, i.e. social interventions in translation.

## 1.5 Delineating the study

This study does not deal with all of Bosman’s short stories, which can be grouped into three categories: the Oom Schalk Lourens stories, the *Voorkamer* series, and the “old Transvaal” stories (MacKenzie 2005). The focus is placed on the Oom Schalk stories as these demonstrate the research problem best. Owing to the scope of the project, only a representative selection of the Oom Schalk Lourens stories, seven of the total of sixty, have been made for comparative analysis. Three of these stories have been translated by both the translators, one has been translated by Griebenow only, while the remaining three were translated by De Lange only. Since translation is treated here as a product rather than a process, I have refrained from contacting either of Bosman’s translators.

The significance of this study’s contribution is likely to be predominantly on the applied level by proposing ethical ways of handling racial epithets, found in older texts. It can only be hoped that my suggestions will be useful to translators working in “the real world” where racist language may cause offence to some people, whether they are clients or readers.

## 1.6 Definition of terms

It is crucial that the relation between the terms **accuracy**, **ethics** and **style** is established at the outset, by defining each in turn:

### **1.6.1 Accuracy**

Trainee translators studying at honours level in the Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages at the University of South Africa (Unisa) are taught that the transfer of information, including dates, names<sup>8</sup> and figures, must be accurate. Hence, accuracy is a significant category on the mark sheet that is used in assessment at leading local universities, such as Unisa and Wits.<sup>9</sup> The occasional omission of a word, an unnecessary addition, or a shift in emphasis are negligible errors, as opposed to more serious ones that may distort the message, i.e. mistranslation (when the meaning of one word is incorrect), or misinterpretation (when the meanings of two or more words are incorrectly conveyed). Serious inaccuracy that amounts to distortion, is unethical. However, even when a source-text item has been transferred accurately, this does not automatically imply that the translation is ethically sound; accuracy and ethics are two distinct concepts. I elaborate on this matter in Chapter 4.

In translation criticism, it is prudent to follow Hewson's (2011:20) advice: "The critic cannot judge that the translator's work is based on an erroneous interpretation, but by envisaging other possible interpretations, can argue that the translational choices encourage an interpretation that lies outside the range that the critic has set out". Ethics is the major concern of this thesis: even if the word "accuracy" is sometimes mentioned in relation to a translated section, this is done with the aim of providing a balanced evaluation.

### **1.6.2 Ethics**

Ethical behaviour is not merely a simple decision between right and wrong: it entails a complex choice where "both options available for choosing embody principles that can be considered worthy" (Harpham 1995:396), calling to mind the collocation "ethical dilemma". The translators discussed in this study conform to the traditional notion of

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<sup>8</sup> If a person's name is transferred inaccurately from the source text, the translation would be flawed. Inaccurate transfer of dates and figures, for example in a financial report, would likewise have serious repercussions.

<sup>9</sup> This was affirmed via email (31 October 2017) by Ms Thandiwe Nxumalo, acting head of the Translation and Interpreting unit at the Wits Language School.

translation ethics as fidelity to the author, despite the call for accountability that implies that the target situation must be taken into consideration as well. One needs to be South African to fully grasp the bitterness caused by the use of the k-word and similar racial epithets, especially in present-day democratic South Africa, where all people are deemed equal before the law. In this study, the term ethics pertains to the way in which sensitive aspects of the original are transferred to target-text readers who are situated in specific socio-political circumstances.

### **1.6.3 Style**

Translator style accounts for variety in translation and can therefore be considered as a kind of individual thumb-print (Baker 2000). Owing to lexical priming and idiolect<sup>10</sup>, each translator expresses himself/herself differently – no two translations of a given source text would ever be identical throughout. Since excerpts from Bosman's stories and their corresponding translations by Griebenow and/or De Lange are compared in this study, translator style is inevitably included in the discussion. By analysing the translations, and comparing them to the source text, the style of each translator can be traced, indicating his ideology, which might in turn have ethical implications.

## **1.7 Organisation of the study**

The remainder of this thesis is arranged as follows:

Chapter 2, the literature review, describes how ethical considerations in translation have formerly implied faithful translations produced by invisible translators, whereas today, translators are urged to take their visibility, responsibility and accountability seriously. The chapter is also concerned with translators' style that, despite being restricted by the source text, may indicate his or her ideological positioning. Subsequently, the grouping and the reception of Bosman's short stories are discussed, followed by critics' comments on the existing translations of his stories into

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<sup>10</sup> In Chapter 2 section 2.3.2, these concepts are explained in more detail.



Afrikaans, resulting in the conclusion that the ethical issues of translating Bosman's fiction have not yet been researched.

Chapter 3 deals with the methodology adopted in this study. The research is qualitative, I take a narrative approach to original and translated narratives, while the research design combines interdisciplinary research, textual analysis, comparative analysis, and critical discourse analysis. The data consist of existing texts in printed form, while the *tertium comparationis* outlines the ethical and stylistic aspects to be focused on during comparative analysis. A committed approach that views translation as an activist and interventionist cultural activity (Brownlie 2011) forms the analytical framework of this study.

In Chapter 4, the following Oom Schalk Lourens stories are analysed and compared to their translation(s) in terms of ethical and stylistic issues: "Makapan's Caves", "The Rooinek", "The Gramophone", "Mafeking Road", "Splendours from Ramoutsa", "Unto Dust", and "Funeral Earth."

In Chapter 5 the study's limitations are discussed and the conclusions and recommendations presented.

## CHAPTER 2

### Literature review

#### 2.1 Introduction

A literature review of sources has more than one purpose: it highlights both the researcher's credentials and the theory base of the proposed study, while providing a detailed context for the work, and ensuring its significance and originality (Hofstee 2006:91). I undertook a literature review because a proper survey of the field of study would determine the direction for this thesis. According to Mouton (2001:87), "scholarship review" would be a more accurate term; it can "save time and avoid duplication [of previous studies] and unnecessary repetition".

At some universities, Translation Studies is hidden in other departments, such as the Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages (at Unisa), which might account for the general perception that Translation Studies is a sub-branch of Linguistics. In the late 1970s, however, Translation Studies emerged as a discipline in its own right, following the 1976 Leuven conference on literary translation. Scholars attending this conference agreed that the theory and practice of translation should be linked (Bassnett 1998; 2002). In the mid-1980s, Translation Studies went through a "cultural turn" as postcolonial and feminist approaches gained ground (Bassnett 1998; Koskinen 2000). By the 1990s, the visibility of the translator was being emphasised while translation itself began to be seen as "a fundamental act of human exchange" (Bassnett 2002:1). At present, ethical and ideological issues dominate the field and translators are under pressure to demonstrate accountability and a perception of the impact of their decisions (Baker 2011).

Despite the increased focus on ethics in Translation Studies, it would seem that ethical issues have been neglected in recent Afrikaans translations of Herman Charles Bosman's English short stories by Griebenow (Bosman 2011b; 2012; 2016b) and De Lange (Bosman 2013). As stated in Chapter 1 section 1.2, the research problem is

how this gap that exists in translation practice can be addressed. Transforming the problem into research questions,<sup>1</sup> it can be asked:

- How would one translate Bosman's stories in an ethically responsible manner for the twenty-first century?

### **Sub-questions**

- Why has the offensive language of the source texts been repeated verbatim in the target texts?
- What is the effect of retaining dated racial epithets in current translations, disregarding South Africa's political transformation?
- From which alternatives to such terms can translators select if faced with racial epithets in the original?

The literature review therefore covers the following topics: **translation ethics**, **translators' style**, and **Herman Charles Bosman's short stories**. The key players in the field of translation ethics are firstly, Pym (2001; 2012), whose main concern is intercultural cooperation and Chesterman (2001), who proposes an ethics of professional commitment for translators. They are followed by Arrojo (2005), Baker (2008; 2011; 2014), Drugan (2010), Hermans (2009), Inghilleri (2011), Koskinen (2000), Maier (2007), Nord (2007), Tymoczko (2006; 2010) and Van Wyke (2013). All these scholars appear to acknowledge the translator's visibility and ensuing ethical responsibility. A further effect of growing translator visibility is the recognition of translations and translators as stylistic domains, notably in the work of Baker (2000), Boase-Beier (2010), Hewson (2011), Malmkjær (2003), Munday (2008) and Saldanha (2011; 2014).

Currently, the major Bosman scholars are De Kock, Gray, Lawson, Lenta, MacKenzie and Snyman. They have all studied Bosman's original literary texts, not their translations. Since Griebenow's and De Lange's translations were produced only

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 1, section 1.3.

recently, no research other than my own (Opperman 2017) has been conducted on aspects of translating Bosman's stories into Afrikaans.

## **2.2 Translation ethics**

### **2.2.1 Introduction**

The South African Translators' Institute (SATI), an organisation that was established in 1956 to serve the translation, interpreting and related language professions, has stipulated codes of ethics to ensure high standards of professionalism. Its individual members must abide by principles such as the greatest possible accuracy in their work and should strive constantly for self-improvement. They must accept full responsibility for their translations and should not accept work that is beyond their knowledge, or for dishonest purposes. They should maintain a relationship of trust with their clients, not charge excessive rates, respect copyright and uphold high ethical and moral standards in their dealings with clients and in the practice of their occupation. Lastly, they should be a credit to the institute and the profession ([translators.org.za/sati/cmsdownloads/dynamic/sati\\_ethics\\_individual\\_english.pdf](http://translators.org.za/sati/cmsdownloads/dynamic/sati_ethics_individual_english.pdf)). SATI is a member of the International Federation of Translators/*Fédération Internationale des Traducteurs* (FIT), a global grouping of associations of translators, interpreters and terminologists, which has specified translators' duties as follows: a translation is the single responsibility of the translator; translations must be faithful to the original, although a faithful translation is not to be confused with a literal one. Translators are required to have "a sound knowledge" of the source language, while being experts in the target language. Moreover, translators should not attempt translating "in a field beyond [their] competence"; they must opt for "equitable remuneration", respect the legitimate interests of the client, and obtain the right to translate a work from its author ([www.fit-ift.org/translators-charter/](http://www.fit-ift.org/translators-charter/)).

The codes of ethics of SATI and of FIT are similar with regard to responsibility, competence and copyright, even though the word "faithful" does not occur in the former. Significantly, SATI ([translators.org.za](http://translators.org.za)) urges translators to "constantly ... pursue self-improvement" with the aim of quality assurance, conforming to the code of the International Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters (IAPTI),

whose members are prompted to “keep up-to-date and well informed regarding everything that has to do with the proper performance of their profession” ([www.iapti.org/code\\_of\\_ethics/](http://www.iapti.org/code_of_ethics/)). Translators should therefore be aware of current issues in their subject field (translation theory) through continuing education, as required by the American Translators Association ([www.atanet.org/governance/code\\_of\\_ethics.php](http://www.atanet.org/governance/code_of_ethics.php)), i.e. by attending conferences and colloquia.

The above-mentioned codes are general principles governing ethical conduct, but ethical behaviour is more than simply following a set of rules, because that would undermine the accountability norm (Chesterman & Wagner 2002), now a key principle in all professions (Baker & Maier 2011). In his discussion on the relation between translation theory and practice, Chesterman (in Chesterman & Wagner 2002) describes the accountability norm as “overtly ethical”, since a translation should not contain any proof of its translator’s disloyalty to anyone associated with the communication: the author, the sender, the client, the readers, and, significantly, the translation profession. The reputation of the entire profession may be risked by a bad translation, such as a translation containing numerous careless errors, or one retaining those of a faulty source text (Chesterman & Wagner 2002:93).

Moreover, ethics is a complex concept often leading to perplexity rather than providing guidance (Harpham 1995). Ethical choice is never an easy decision between right and wrong,<sup>2</sup> but involves a different situation where “both options available for choosing embody principles that can be considered worthy” (Harpham 1995:396); our choice will reflect what we view as the overriding principle.

Translators are often faced with situations where “codes cannot prescribe the very specific responses that are needed” (Drugan 2010:39). For this reason, ethics must be integrated in translator training curricula at universities with the aim of allowing translation students to develop good judgement, not to become philosophers (Drugan & Megone 2011).

The existing literature informs the proposed study in several ways. Apart from contributing to an understanding of the meaning of translation ethics and translators’

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<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 1, section 1.6.2.

style, it also provides the necessary theoretical background to a study of the named subjects. Today, translators are no longer the neutral, unobtrusive mediators they have traditionally been assumed to be. They are frequently called upon to make difficult choices, that might not always be acceptable.

The question arises whether translators are responsible for the content of the text being translated. Pym (2012) tells us that they cannot be held responsible for the source text's content, but they are indeed answerable for their translations (target texts) and for the possible effects thereof on their readers. If the source text contains offensive language such as racist epithets, the translator should act responsibly by choosing appropriate translation strategies and not just writing down or typing the first (abusive) word that comes to mind. Increased visibility brings with it ethical responsibility for translators – these days they can no longer pretend to be invisible. Exactly what is meant by translators' invisibility is defined in the next subsection.

The statement, "Translation Studies has returned to questions of ethics" (Pym 2001:129) coincided with the beginning of the post-9/11 era of global politics (Inghilleri 2011; Drugan & Megone 2011) in which ethical issues began to receive increasing attention in translation discourse, while being viewed from a different perspective than before (Hermans 2009). Translation ethics is related to one's general approach to translation, and to the translator's degree of visibility. Topics for discussion in this section include traditional notions of translation ethics: faithful translations produced by invisible mediators; two salient attributes of translation ethics: visibility and responsibility; and lastly, some indication of what ethical considerations in translation entail.

### 2.2.2 Faithful translations produced by invisible mediators<sup>3</sup>

For two millennia, traditional notions of fidelity and equivalence have formed the basis for understanding the ethical duty of translators (Pym 2003; Inghilleri 2011; Van Wyke 2013) without taking ideological or historical constraints into account (Arrojo 2005). A “good translation” was considered to be faithful to the source text and author, without additions, omissions or any changes (Chesterman 2001): “If something is in the source [text] but not in the translation, the translator is at fault and is thus somehow unethical” (Pym 2001:130). The translator was seen as an objective, impersonal facilitator who navigated between two languages and cultures, while remaining invisible throughout the translation process (Arrojo 2005; Hermans 2009; Van Wyke 2013). Invisibility was paradoxically equated to excellence: successful translators gave readers the illusion of non-interference in the writing they actually produced (Arrojo 2005).

Focusing on literary translation, Venuti (1995) applies the term “invisibility” in relation to the translator’s position and task in contemporary Anglo-American culture and subsequently seeks greater “visibility” and recognition for translators (Pym 1996; Munday 2012). Translators become invisible – in their texts as well as socially – by producing fluent, transparent and idiomatic translations (Venuti 1995; Pym 1996; Hermans 2009; Munday 2012), where the resemblance to an original is such that readers are unaware that they are reading a translation at all. Literary translators especially may be underpaid and habitually overlooked in book reviews or on title pages of translated books (Hermans 2009), not to mention on the front covers of these books (Hewson 2011). In the English-speaking world, which includes South Africa, many literary translators are academics with language qualifications, translating for pleasure rather than profit (Landers 2001).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The terms **translator** and **mediator** are used interchangeably in this study. In addition, translators are often described as **facilitators** and **bridge-builders** (Hermans & Stecconi 2002). Baker (2008:16), however, considers “the bridge building metaphor” to be naïve for disregarding the complexity of the translator’s place in society.

<sup>4</sup> Elaborating on the perception that literary translation is underpaid, Landers (2001:29) observes “Even at the minimum wage, on an hourly basis you stand to make more money flipping burgers at a McJob than by translating Proust”.

Even today, translation is still seen as a “serving” profession (Arrojo 2005) and the idea that translations are inferior to originals is reflected in the “codes of ethics” of most translation organisations, which use words such as “fidelity” and “impartiality”,<sup>5</sup> thus requiring translators to be invisible and to avoid expressing any personal or political opinions (Van Wyke 2013). The translator visibility argument is crucial: translation theory highlights translators’ visibility, while in practice they are frequently expected to remain invisible.

The last decade has nevertheless brought increased visibility to translators, with the growth of information technology and of Translation Studies as a discipline (Maier 2007). This has become progressively international and multicultural (Hermans 2009) as a result of globalisation: “Every aspect of our social and political life is now heavily mediated by translators and interpreters, hence their increased visibility” (Baker 2011: xiii). In time to come, ethical considerations are expected to occupy a more central position in the discipline for reasons varying from the escalating involvement and visibility of translators/interpreters in scenarios of violent conflict, to the risk caused by new technologies and practices, such as machine translation and crowdsourcing (Baker 2014). The latter can be defined as obtaining necessary services by seeking the input of a large group of people, especially online, rather than making use of conventional employees (Logos 2015), a practice that has serious implications for translation as a profession.

### **2.2.3 Visibility and responsibility**

As translators have become more visible, attention has been drawn to their responsibility, and over time, these two aspects have become the main attributes of translation ethics. It is important to consider the concrete ethical choices that translators will always have to make and for which they are seldom prepared (Baker 2011). Tymoczko (2006:453) explains that translators are forced to make choices: “they cannot capture all aspects of a source text, and their choices establish a place

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<sup>5</sup> Members of the American Translators Association are obliged to “convey meaning between people and cultures **faithfully**, accurately, and **impartially**” ([www.atanet.org/governance/code\\_of\\_ethics.php](http://www.atanet.org/governance/code_of_ethics.php); my own emphasis).



of enunciation, as well as a context of affiliation”. They have to select what to **translate** and what to **subdue** (my own emphasis) – translation can be argued to be a “metonymic process” (Tymoczko 2006). These choices “may not be acceptable everywhere and by everybody” (Van Wyke 2013:557).

Increased visibility, as mentioned, has led to increased responsibility and accountability<sup>6</sup> on the part of translators: these days they “cannot pretend they are invisible by hiding behind the notion that they are simply repeating what they find in the original” (Van Wyke 2013:551). They have to be aware of and prepared for the responsibility and potential conflict that visibility involves (Maier 2007). Translators are responsible not only to the author, the sender (the person, group or institution that transmits a message), the client, and the reader of a text, but also to the “translation profession as a whole” (Chesterman & Wagner 2002), to themselves (McAlester 2003), and “to the wider community” (Baker & Maier 2011). Translators behave as responsible mediators by foreseeing and avoiding any misunderstanding/communication conflict that may arise from readers’ different translational expectations (Nord 2007). This responsibility is what Nord (2007) calls “loyalty”, an *inter-personal* category (first introduced into Skopostheorie in 1989) that has replaced the simplistic, traditional *inter-textual* concept of fidelity (Koskinen 2000; Pym 2001; Van Wyke 2013). Translators are required to think about the impact of their decisions on the lives of others. In addition, they must be able to justify these decisions morally – to themselves (Baker & Maier 2011) and to all their partners in the translation project (Nord 2007). Ultimately, ethical behaviour equals personal integrity and trustworthiness.

Trust is an important ethical value for translators because without it, “there is no cooperation and society collapses” (Chesterman & Wagner 2002:102). If authors trust translators to respect their intentions, they may permit changes in translations and if the receivers/clients trust translators to take their needs into account, they may accept a translation that does not conform to their initial expectations (Nord 2007). Naturally, dead authors can neither be consulted, nor can their approval be sought for changes

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<sup>6</sup> **Responsibility** and **accountability** are similar but not interchangeable concepts: translators are responsible for the translations they produce, but accountable to all their partners in the translation process. In my view, responsibility is a broader, more general concept than accountability.

made in translations. Even so, these changes are often significant, such as the adaptation of a Shakespearean play to different political conditions (Baker 2011). De Kock (2003) affirms that translators have more leeway if the original author is long dead than in the case of a living author. Regardless, translators seem inclined to treat source texts written by the deceased with more respect.

A second ethical value is truth, implying that translators should represent the original text or author “in a truthful way, not falsifying the message or intention”, even though there are various ways to represent a source text truthfully, as Chesterman concedes (Chesterman & Wagner 2002:102). Further values include clarity – to ensure understanding – and intercultural cooperation between parties who regard one another as “Other” (Chesterman 2001; capitalisation in the original).

Ethics is largely concerned with the oppositional difference between the self and non-self or “other”, and the philosophical work of Emmanuel Levinas has informed Translation Studies in this respect. One’s actual existence is called into question by the prior existence of “the other, who makes an appeal to one’s [ethical] responsibility” (Levinas 1994:125). While we may wish to destroy the other’s “face” before us, it simultaneously makes an ethical demand on us that we are not at liberty to refuse<sup>7</sup> (Levinas 1994; Inghilleri 2011).

#### **2.2.4 Ethical considerations in translation**

Recurrent issues that come up for discussion in translation ethics concern “the borderline between professional and personal ethics” (Williams & Chesterman 2002:19): conflicting values/loyalties, whether to improve originals (Newmark 1988; 2003), the limits of a translator’s responsibility, new ideas brought into the ethics debate by postmodern theories – especially deconstruction, with its emphasis on *difference/différance* and unstable meaning (Koskinen 2000) – and when not to translate at all (Pym 2012). Researchers have also investigated the ethics of

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<sup>7</sup> Levinas (1994:125) concludes: “My freedom and my rights, before manifesting themselves in my opposition to the freedom and rights of the other person, will manifest themselves precisely in the form of responsibility, in human fraternity. An inexhaustible responsibility: for with the other our accounts are never settled”.

omissions and other ideological changes made in “sensitive texts” and translators’ responsibility resulting from their power to manipulate texts and audiences. Questions have been asked about a translator’s right to refuse to translate a text on personal ethical grounds (Chesterman & Wagner 2002), such as material with racist or sexist content (Drugan 2010): “Is the translator morally responsible for the content of the text being translated, and if so to whom?” (McAlester 2003:225).

Research has recently been conducted on the problem of translating racial epithets between English and Italian, for example Filmer’s (2011) case-study analysis of the audiovisual translation (dubbing) of offensive language in the film *Gran Torino* (2008). Upon its release in the USA, the film was “hailed as a masterpiece yet simultaneously criticised for its politically incorrect language” (Filmer 2011:88). Filmer (2011:98) observes that racial slurs aimed at Asians, such as “zipperhead”, “gook” and “chink”, have been translated with a more neutral option, *muso giallo* (BT: yellow muzzle). Unlike English-speaking cultures, Italian does not have a vast range of slurs to choose from: the racial content of the original is “ultimately undermined by omissions, repetition, and the exaggeration of homophobic dysphemism” in translation (Filmer 2011:156).

Giampieri (2017) examined how racial slurs are dealt with in a corpus of nine Anglo-American films, and subsequently rendered in films dubbed into Italian. The offensive word, “nigger”<sup>8</sup>, has mostly been translated by repetition, although it has also been omitted, or even substituted by more neutral terms, such as *bello* (BT: handsome) and *uno dei miei* (BT: one of my men), based on the context (Giampieri 2017:261). Since 2000, “nigger” has been replaced by the less insulting “n-word” in many Anglo-American films, but Italian audiovisual translators seem unprepared to political correctness as they have “sometimes translated the n-word with the Italian equivalent of nigger” (Giampieri 2017:266).

It is clear from the above that content poses ethical challenges for translators. Pym (2012) suggests that a content-based ethics might try to decide what one should or should not translate – for example, that offensive material of any kind should not be

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<sup>8</sup> At present, this is one of the most offensive words in English for a black person (*Concise Oxford English Dictionary* 2011:967).

translated. An extreme case is the slaying of Hitoshi Igarashi, the Japanese translator of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* in 1991, a direct result of blasphemies against Islam contained in the text (Pym 2012). Readers are generally outraged when a translator is persecuted for the original writer's opinions, as the translator's responsibility does not encompass the truth of the source text; translators are actually accountable for recreating the meanings they suppose are intended by the inferred author, according to Boase-Beier (2004). Pym favours an abstract ethics that can accommodate considerations of content and situation. It is unrealistic in his view to impose an ethics of content on translation as a discipline, because of the intercultural identity of the translator: "translators tend to be intercultural in the sense that they mostly work in the intersections woven between two or more cultures, rather than wholly within any single primary culture" (Pym 2012:9).<sup>9</sup> Pym's idea that translators are situated in a special intercultural space has been criticised for being "largely hypothetical" (Koskinen 2000:74), because such a space does not truly exist.

Since translators are proficient in two languages and familiar with two cultures, "they have control over which aspects of an original text are transferred from one language to another; they can decide which features would be acceptable to the target readership and which could be potentially offensive" (Kruger 1996:69). The use of epithets for people of different races or nationalities reflects badly on the speaker (Fromkin, Rodman & Hyams 2014:323), while racist terms of address may have serious consequences for the user (Kruger 1996). Late president Nelson Mandela considered it necessary to say in his opening address to Parliament in 1994 that racist words such as "kaffir" and "coolie" should no longer be part of our vocabulary<sup>10</sup> (Kruger 1996; Hermans 2009). Today, the use of the offensive word for black people (i.e. the "k-word") is actionable in South Africa (*Concise Oxford English Dictionary* 2011).

Hermans (2009:93) asks if an historical document containing the offensive k-word must be translated for publication in South Africa: "Should you write it, gloss it, omit it or replace it with something else – and if so, with what, with another derogatory word or some blander superordinate term? Are you not duty-bound to respect the

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<sup>9</sup> This source is a revised edition of an earlier publication.

<sup>10</sup> Mr Mandela further declared the words *Hottentot* and *baas* as objectionable (Kruger 1996:75).

authenticity of the historical record? Would you have any qualms about using the word if the translation was meant for publication outside South Africa?”

Pym (2012:166–167) posits the following general principles of translator ethics: translators are responsible for their translations the moment they accept the task of producing them. They are also responsible for their probable effects. Translator ethics need not involve deciding between two cultures. Transaction costs should not surpass the total benefits resulting from the corresponding cooperative interaction. Translators, so far as they are more than merely messengers, are responsible for the scope of their work to contribute to long-term stable, cross-cultural (intercultural) cooperation.

Chesterman (2001) describes four rather incompatible models of translation ethics, each focusing on different ethical values: an ethics of representation (truth), an ethics of service (loyalty), an ethics of communication (understanding) and norm-based ethics (trust). These models have different scopes of application: the representation model underlies the translation of sacred texts, whereas the service model applies mostly to non-literary translation, undertaken as a professional service for a client (Chesterman 2002). The representation model operates in this thesis, as it is best suited to literary translation, such as the translation of Bosman’s short stories. If the racial epithets that occur in these stories are toned down, the inferred message/intention should be unaffected, since an original may be represented truthfully in more than one manner (Chesterman & Wagner 2002:102), as mentioned in section 2.2.3.

Chesterman (2001:146) suggests that in order to make the best ethical decisions, the most important virtue a translator can have is the desire to make the right decision: “the translator must *want* to be a *good* translator, must strive for excellence in the practice of translation” (emphasis of the original). General virtues of an ethical decision-making translator include the following: fairness (the comparative value assessment of alternative lexical choices must not be biased), truthfulness (the assessment must be honest), trustworthiness (the translator must be capable of justifying his/her decisions), empathy (the translator should have the ability to put himself/herself in someone else’s place – such as that of the reader, the author, or the client – with the aim of imagining the consequences of alternative actions), and finally,

courage and determination to find good solutions to translation problems (Chesterman 2001:147). In addition to these ethical virtues, the translator requires appropriate language skills (contrastive linguistic and cultural knowledge) as well as technical and research skills to assess potential alternatives (Chesterman 2001).

Nevertheless, current research indicates that translators may disregard translation theory altogether, i.e. by refusing to intervene in the translations that they produce. Kruger and Crots (2014) conducted a survey among SATI members to establish which translation strategies they would be most likely to use when faced with different kinds of ethical challenges at textual level; their findings suggested “an overwhelming preference for faithful translation” (Kruger & Crots 2014:147). It would seem that translators are reluctant to adapt their target texts as a result of risk aversion; they would sooner that all responsibility remain vested in the author (Kruger & Crots 2014).

On account of the importance at present of ethical and ideological concerns (Tymoczko 2006; 2010), translators need to demonstrate good judgement and act responsibly, and thus “take their visibility and accountability seriously” (Maier 2007; Inghilleri 2011). The subject of a translator’s visibility has an impact not only on translation ethics but also on translators’ style.

## **2.3 Translators’ style**

### **2.3.1 Introduction**

As a newer discipline, Translation Studies inherited from Literary Studies an interest in “the style of individual creative writers”, and an interest in “the style of social groups of language users” from Linguistics (Baker 2000:243). In literary translation, style has traditionally been associated with “original” writing (Baker 2000; Saldanha 2014) since translation was not regarded as a creative activity. This implies that a translator is *not* entitled to have a style of his or her own, “the translator’s task being simply to reproduce as closely as possible the style of the original” (Baker 2000:244). Still, it would be naïve to regard a literary translation as an exact copy of the original and moreover, impossible to overlook the translator’s individual personality on account of the independent decisions that he/she inevitably makes during the translation process

(Mikhailov & Villikka 2003). The next section focuses on the following aspects: restrictions on translators' choices, approaches to style in translation, definitions of translators' style, variety in translators' style as a result of lexical priming, the connection between style and idiolect, and finally, the notion that theoretical knowledge has an impact on translators' stylistic choices.

### 2.3.2 The style of translations and translators

Translational stylistics (a term introduced by Malmkjær in 1994) relies on work done within conventional stylistics where word choice is crucial. Compared to the author who has freedom of choice, the translator's linguistic choices are restricted by the source text (Malmkjær 2003; Munday 2008; Boase-Beier 2010). The object of translational stylistics is "to explain why, *given the source text*, the translation has been shaped in such a way that it comes to mean what it does" (Malmkjær 2003:39). Boase-Beier (2010; reprinted in 2014 – further references will be to 2010) considers the style of a (literary) source text as the expression of choices made by the author and hence, the style of the target text as the expression of the translator's choices, while recreating the content and form of the original. The style of the author of the source text, seen as a reflection of choice and mental state, will impose constraints on the translator's stylistic choices, and the function that the target text has to fulfil will lead to further stylistic constraints (Boase-Beier 2010). Hewson (2011:19) views style as "a primary factor both when attempting to reconstruct the choices that faced the translator, and when assessing the effects of the translational choice that was finally made".

Part of this study will focus on an important aspect of translational stylistics, namely translators' style. It is important to distinguish at the outset between style as a textual feature and style as a personal one. If style is regarded as a textual feature, the researcher will concentrate on how the *target texts* respond to the source text (Saldanha 2014), but if style is seen as a personal attribute, the focus will be on the style of a particular *translator* across various translations.

Contrary to the traditional source text-oriented approach to style in translation that treats style as a textual attribute, Baker (2000) and Saldanha (2011; 2014) have

adopted a target text-oriented approach in their work by focusing on style as a personal attribute. However, source and target orientation need not be viewed as a definite dichotomy (Saldanha 2014), but rather as a continuum, with the work of Boase-Beier (2010), Malmkjær (2003) and Munday (2008) situated somewhere in between the two extremities of the continuum.

Baker (2000:245) describes translator style as “a kind of thumb-print that is expressed in a range of linguistic – as well as non-linguistic – features”, including open interventions, (literary) translators’ choice of material to translate, their consistent use of specific strategies and particularly their characteristic use of language and linguistic habits that set them apart from other translators. Identifying a translator’s distinctive patterns of choice rather than isolated occurrences ought to convey something about his/her ideological positioning (Baker 2000; Munday 2008). Studies of translators’ style typically make use of electronic corpora for comparative analysis, and in this manner, employ corpus linguistics as a research methodology. The relevance of corpus-based translation enquiry is discussed in the next chapter. Once the stylistic patterns are motivated, the analyst must decide what is attributable to the translator and what has merely been transferred from the source text (Baker 2000). Baker (2000:262) insists that translators cannot simply “reproduce” what they find in the source text without leaving a personal imprint on the target text.

Adding to Baker’s (2000) notion of translator style as distinguishing an individual translator’s work and consisting of coherent patterns of choice, Saldanha (2011:31) explains it as a way of translating that

is felt to be recognisable across a range of translations by the same translator, is “motivated” in the sense that the choices have a discernible function or functions, and cannot be explained purely with reference to the author or source text style, or as the result of linguistic constraints.

Even though the translator is constrained by the source text, no two translations are lexically identical (Landers 2001; Munday 2008). Given this state of affairs, it can be asked: Where would the individuality and variety in translators’ style reside? In order to answer this question, Munday (2008) examined Hoey’s notion of **lexical priming** as incorporating the typically preferred phraseologies of a translator. Language users



store language in the way that they receive it. Their encounters with a spoken or written word prime them to associate that word with a particular context and each new encounter either reinforces the priming or weakens it (Hoey 2009; 2011). Lexical priming pertains to predictable combinations of words into collocations, colligations and semantic associations which are domain- and genre-specific, such as the phrase “*in winter*” – as opposed to *over*, *through* or *within* – which is primed for use in travel writing (Hoey 2009; 2011). The significance of lexical priming for translators’ style is that everyone’s primings are different, based on unique encounters with words (Hoey 2011; Munday 2008).

Landers (2001:90) assumes that “the translator strives to have no style at all and attempts to disappear into and become indistinguishable from the style of the [source language] author”, even though he concedes that an individual translator’s style is demonstrated – consciously or not – through his/her “characteristic mode of expression”. Style is “inextricably intertwined” (Landers 2001:90) with an individual’s **idiolect** (personal dialect)<sup>11</sup> which influences one “to prefer one word to another equally acceptable one” (Landers 2001:91). Contrary to idiolect, which is at the core of one’s being, translators should not impose their style on the writers they translate, according to Landers (2001). Landers’ view seems contradictory: if style and idiolect are truly intertwined, how can they be disentangled? How would translators impose their idiolect, but not their style on a text?

Style, however, does not merely involve saying the same thing in several ways: stylistic choices are considered to be “a reflection of different content rather than just different expression” (Boase-Beier 2010:53). Boase-Beier (2010) argues that style reveals mind and character in a broad moral sense, and being optional, it signifies personality. Three aspects of style are significant for translation: “its formal linguistic characteristics, its contribution to what the text means, and the interplay between universal stylistic possibilities (such as metaphor or ambiguity) and those rooted in a particular language or culture” (Boase-Beier 2010:58). A translator’s stylistic choices can be influenced by his/her knowledge of stylistic and translation theory. Boase-Beier

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<sup>11</sup> The *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (2011:708) defines **idiolect** as “the speech habits peculiar to a particular person”.

(2010:63) asserts that theoretical knowledge broadens the mind and can thus “free the translator from too timid a dependence on the source text”.

Previous research on topics such as conflicting loyalties and the question of how to translate texts containing racist or sexist language connects with what I do as a researcher: examining ethical and stylistic aspects of the current Afrikaans translations of Herman Charles Bosman’s English short stories. As few literary texts are translated into Afrikaans these days, the translation of short stories by a celebrated South African writer might exemplify current trends in local literary translation. The translation of Bosman’s fiction, written between 1930 and 1951, poses ethical challenges for translators living in a modern, democratic society where the use of racist terms of address can give the offended party sufficient reason for taking legal action.

## **2.4 Herman Charles Bosman’s short stories**

### **2.4.1 Grouping of Bosman’s short stories**

Between 1930 and 1951, Herman Charles Bosman wrote over one hundred and fifty short stories in the ironic mode (Gray 1989). These established him as a decidedly popular and enduring South African writer (MacKenzie 2006; 2012; Cornwell et al. 2010). The stories have been grouped as follows: sixty Oom Schalk Lourens stories, named after their first-person narrator, seventy-nine *Voorkamer* (parlour) conversation pieces featuring multiple narrators rather than a single one, and the remaining stories that fall into neither group (Gray 1989; MacKenzie 1996; 2006; 2012; Cornwell et al. 2010). In the third group, an authorial narrator reflects on “the craft of storytelling” (MacKenzie 1996:20; 2006; 2012; Lenta 2003).

Although Bosman is chiefly known for his English short stories, he also published sixteen stories in Afrikaans during his last years (De Kock 2001; Cornwell et al. 2010) as mentioned in Chapter 1 (section 1.1). Bosman’s collected writings in and on Afrikaans first appeared in book form in 2001, titled *Verborgte skatte*, for the anniversary edition of his works (De Kock 2001; MacKenzie & Sandham 2011). Most of these stories have English versions, not translations, because Bosman made deliberate shifts in emphasis when rewriting a story. De Kock (2001:210) considers

the Afrikaans stories to be “far more painful to read than their English counterparts”, a debatable exegesis of Bosman’s bilingual writings.

#### **2.4.2 Bosman’s positioning as a writer**

Bosman was a loner (Gray 1989), disengaged from society: a bohemian (Lenta 2003) and a nonconformist, an anglicised Afrikaner who wrote mainly in English (Gray 1986; De Kock 2001; Lenta 2003), his language of education. “He asserts the right to be seen as an Afrikaner without pretending to the religious and political loyalties and prejudices which have been held to be an essential part of an Afrikaans identity” (Lenta 2003:116). His short stories are about isolated, marginalised characters (Gray 1989) living in the Marico bushveld. They form a link with their author’s positioning on the margins of society, giving him the freedom to criticise (Lenta 2003). Bosman’s Marico subsequently becomes allegorical of the South Africa of his own time (Gray 1989):

It is clear, despite the regional setting and localised humour, that Bosman’s concerns in these stories are not confined to the Groot Marico but touch upon wider issues that extend to the entire South African population and beyond (Cornwell et al 2010:59).

He commented on the parochialism (Gray 1989), hypocrisy and racism of white South Africans in his stories (Lenta 2003): “The bland manner in which Schalk’s unabashed racism is presented suggests that the author does not share his views” (MacKenzie 1996). It could also be that Bosman deliberately invites the reader to make the final call by adopting a bland tone.<sup>12</sup>

As a white South African writer, Bosman focuses on “white experience of blacks” (Lawson 1986:145) in various stories where black people operate either within white society as servants, or outside it as enemies. They are indispensable to the white people’s sense of identity as Lawson (1986:146) explains:

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<sup>12</sup> One of my supervisors, Prof. David Levey, helpfully suggested this idea.

Conflict polarises and strengthens the sense of racial identity, and therefore not only unifies the white community against a common enemy but also plays a vital role in reaffirming the white community's sense of itself.

By means of storytelling, Bosman depicts the attitudes of a sector of white society in pre-apartheid South Africa (Hayden 2002), although he is more aware of what separates black and white than of what might unite them (Lawson 1986). As Hayden (2002:57) puts it, “[t]he value of the Marico stories lies in the fact that they probe the heart of the belief-system of the Boers, uncovering the attitudes which fuelled apartheid thinking in a way which historical or sociological studies cannot”

### **2.4.3 The reception of Bosman's stories**

Bosman is noted for the irony, wry humour and pathos of his stories (MacKenzie 1996; 2006). His best-known character, Oom Schalk, is “only apparently simple, prejudiced and narrow-minded” and has remained, according to MacKenzie (2006:11), as “a much-loved South African literary figure because his humane vision extends to embrace all of South Africa, and all South Africans”, perhaps a rather idealised representation. For some readers this has not been the case: in 1999, a teacher from Cullinan was discharged for examining his pupils on “Unto Dust,” one of Bosman's most prominent yet controversial short stories (Gray 2005; Freedom of Expression Institute 1999). Black parents were outraged at the frequent use of the abusive “k-word” in the original story, although the teacher explained its historical context and the story's theme as being: white or black, we are all the same (Freedom of Expression Institute 1999).

In 2014, a similar scenario came about: a pupil from a private school in White River was expelled because of a bitter quarrel following his complaints about the repeated use of the “k-word” in “Unto Dust”. Adding insult to injury, the teacher emphasised that word when she read the story in class, causing the white children to laugh at the black ones. The school's English department, that deliberately selects literature dealing with “difficult issues”, indicated that it would continue teaching “Unto Dust” (Is SA okay with the k-word? 2015).

The objectionable word in question, derived from the Arabic word for “unbeliever” or “infidel”, was in Bosman’s time, commonly applied to a black person living in Africa, but has since become increasingly offensive to Africans (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:117).

Even though Bosman tried to undermine the gist of racist epithets, taken out of context, the dated and ironically racist terminology in his work is criticised today for its political incorrectness (Cuthbertson 2006), a notion that is pertinent to a study dealing predominantly with translation ethics. If nomenclature in the original is frowned upon, it stands to reason that a translator of these stories is likely to be held morally responsible for their content, as in the tragic case of the Japanese translator of Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses*. This is an instance of the meeting of the central topics of this thesis, translation ethics and Bosman’s short stories.

#### **2.4.4 Existing Afrikaans translations of Bosman’s stories**

Before discussing the recent Afrikaans translations of Bosman’s short stories by Griebenow and De Lange, it is useful to consider the role of the initiator in the translation process according to functionalist approaches. Generally, an initiator (a person, group or institution) “starts off the translation process and determines its course by defining the purpose [*skopos*] for which the target text is needed” (Nord 1997:20). Ideally, the initiator should provide a clear translation brief, providing “as many details as possible about the purpose, explaining the addressees, time, place, occasion and medium of the intended communication and the function the text is intended to have” (Nord 1997:30). A translation brief, however, does not advise the translator how to translate or which strategy to use, since these decisions are subject to the translator’s responsibility and proficiency (Nord 1997). Nord’s functionalist approach is oriented towards professional translator training at tertiary level.

In defence of the appropriateness of her functionalist model for literary translation, Nord (1997:92) suggests four *skopos* for the translation of literary texts, one of which is especially relevant to this study: “[t]he translator interprets the source text not only with regard to the sender’s intention but also with regard to its compatibility with the target situation”. The author of a literary text is usually the sender as well. Since the

author's intention can merely be inferred, the translation really is "the translator's interpretation of the sender's intention" (Nord 1997:85), which would further explain the variations found in different translations of the same source text. Besides interpreting the implied meaning of the original, the translator must establish whether the source text can be reconciled with the target side's (current) situation. If the source text contains racial epithets that are no longer acceptable today, the translator could decide to reduce their damaging effects.

Translations may also be produced without the involvement of an initiator. Landers (2001) mentions that literary translators often translate a favourite text of their own accord, before applying for copyright and finding a publisher, in which case there would naturally be neither an initiator nor a translation brief. Griebenow was self-motivated to translate Bosman's short stories which he published himself in his capacity as proprietor of *Suiderkruis Boeke*, whereas De Lange's translation was probably commissioned by Human & Rousseau<sup>13</sup> in celebration of their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary as Bosman's regular publishers.

Reviews of these Afrikaans translations of Bosman's stories are few and far between. Griebenow's translations are described as being "supple", the selection of stories "not too faulty" and the publication "fair", but it would seem that Afrikaans people prefer reading Bosman in English (De Kock 2012), casting doubt on the necessity of translation altogether. "The k-word sounds less offensive and more distanced in Afrikaansified English – creating an old-fashioned country bumpkin feeling – than in contemporary Afrikaans, where it comes across as utterly abominable" (De Kock as translated by the researcher). This kind of racist reference in Bosman's work is nevertheless problematic, even more so in translation. Offensive language cannot be anything but offensive, no matter what sort of feeling it evokes in a subjective reader.

Snyman (2011) believes that Griebenow's first self-published translations, *In die withaak se skadu en ander oom Schalk Lourens-stories*, and the presumption of editing four of the original Afrikaans stories, would make Bosman turn in his grave.

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<sup>13</sup> I have sent Human & Rousseau a number of emails, enquiring whether they initiated the Afrikaans translation of selected stories by Bosman and if so, whether there was a brief, but have received no response.

Owing to the volume's many deficiencies, Snyman suggests that Griebenow should not have touched Bosman's work. Roux (2013) holds the opinion that Griebenow's translations in his second Bosman volume, *'n Bekkersdal-marathon en ander Voorkamerstories*, do not work because he has translated verbatim – a common error among novice translators – retaining the past tense of the original in the translation, which has a stilted effect in Afrikaans. The views of both Snyman and Roux have serious implications for the potential quality of Griebenow's translations. Should he be taken seriously as a translator?

Whether or not Griebenow has paid attention to the criticism directed against his translations is a question that remains unanswered. He did, however, launch a new and longer edition<sup>14</sup> of Bosman's *Mafeking Road*, together with his Afrikaans translation of the volume, entitled *Mafeking-pad*, at The Book Lounge in Cape Town in February 2016. No review of Griebenow's latest Bosman translations could be found for inclusion here.

De Lange, by contrast, is praised for his Bosman translations. When the source text is compared to the target text, one becomes aware of De Lange's flair for translation (Hambidge 2014a). In her review of *Die beste verhale en humor van Herman Charles Bosman*, Hambidge concentrates on Bosman's writing, but insists that De Lange's translations are "excellent". Elsewhere, she remarks that his work as a translator provides research opportunities (Hambidge 2014b); opportunities that this study endeavours to take up by investigating the style of his target texts as expressions of choice. No further reviews of De Lange's Bosman translations could be located.

In an interview with De Vries (2013), "Bosman praat opnuut Afrikaans: De Lange vertaal verhaalbundel", Johann de Lange – an acclaimed poet himself who habitually translates poetry<sup>15</sup> – alludes to his translations of Bosman's short stories as "his baptism of fire" in prose translation. Comparing translation to publishing poetry, where

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<sup>14</sup> Griebenow has added the text that Bosman regretted not including (New edition of Herman Charles Bosman's *Mafeking Road* to be launched at the Book Lounge 2016), thereby ignoring Gray and MacKenzie's monumental *Anniversary Edition* of the entire Bosman oeuvre which is discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>15</sup> De Lange has translated poems by Wilma Stockenström from Afrikaans into English, published in 2007 by Human & Rousseau, under the title: *The wisdom of water* (Terblanche 2014).

the poet is in control, he regards translation as something of a team effort, involving the input of a publisher, an editor and a proof-reader. A translator rewrites the story and is faced with the same kind of decisions that the author had to make (De Vries 2013).

Bosman's propensity for long sentences posed some challenges.<sup>16</sup> In addition, De Lange also had to decide in advance whether to use the Afrikaans of an earlier era, or not. He chose not to translate "The Bluecoat's Story" (taken from Bosman's prison memoir, *Cold Stone Jug*), written mostly in 1920s prison slang that is virtually impossible to translate, since slang becomes obsolete very quickly. Although De Lange was aware of the existence of Afrikaans versions and translations of some of Bosman's stories, he claimed that he had neither time for reading, nor the desire to be influenced by other texts.

While some veiled allusions have been made to translator style, translation ethics were not mentioned by any of the reviewers. It would seem that it had not occurred to them to connect such a topic with the translation of Bosman's stories today. This eliminated the chance of repetition in the present study and underlines its originality. To my knowledge, no research other than my own (Opperman 2017) has been published on ethical issues arising from the translation of Bosman's stories. This study should thus fill an existing gap, and lead to new knowledge.

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<sup>16</sup> Translators must also trace the source text's networks of lexical cohesion prior to translation, which is impossible to reproduce in the target text without some shifts. The dense lexical patterning in literary texts can be exceptionally difficult to translate (Unisa 2015).



## CHAPTER 3

### Analytical framework and research procedures

#### 3.1 Introduction

Although the discipline of Translation Studies is presently dominated by ethics, with translators expected to demonstrate accountability for their decisions, there are reasons to believe that ethical issues have been largely overlooked in recent translations of Herman Charles Bosman's English short stories into Afrikaans. The translators, Griebenow and De Lange, have conformed to a facile, fidelity-driven perception of ethics. The research problem is how this gap that exists in translation practice can be addressed. While translators are not answerable for the content of the source text, they are certainly responsible for the target texts that they produce.

A research methodology has been designed by combining different methods to assess ethical and stylistic aspects of the current Afrikaans translations of Bosman's literary texts. This has the dual purpose of observing how the translations have been undertaken, compared to the source text, and suggesting ethical translation options where necessary. The discussion will focus on the following aspects: the type of research/approach, the general research designs, the researcher's implementation of the methodology, the analytical framework, the method's limitations, and in conclusion, a brief indication of how the main part of the thesis has been structured.

#### 3.2 Research type

The research topic and selected data ultimately inform the research type, which will be **qualitative** in this case. Creswell (2013) provides the following reasons for conducting qualitative research: "when the [research] problem needs to be explored; when a complex, detailed understanding is needed; when the researcher wants to write in a literary, flexible style; and when the researcher seeks to understand the context or settings of participants" (Location 1458 of 9141). In this case, a "complex, detailed understanding" of the research problem is required. It must be noted from the outset that this study will **not** involve participants, but rather fictional characters, based

on real people, whose contexts/settings will be examined. Creswell (2013) further distinguishes five dominant qualitative approaches to inquiry: narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study.

Among these possibilities, a **narrative** approach was deemed the most suitable for dealing with the research question of how to translate Bosman's short stories in an ethically responsible manner: a narrative approach "is best for capturing the detailed stories or life experiences of a **single individual** or the lives of a small number of individuals" (Creswell 2013 Location 1615 of 9141; emphasis in the original). These stories must be situated within the few [fictional] individuals' "personal experiences (their jobs, their homes), their culture (racial or ethnic), and their historical contexts (time and place)" (Creswell 2013 Location 1627 of 9141). Subsequently, the stories have to be analysed and reorganised into a framework. Creswell (2013) concludes that ultimately "the analysis process consists of the researcher looking for themes or categories; the researcher using a microlinguistic<sup>1</sup> approach and probing for the meaning of words, phrases, and larger units of discourse" (Location 1644 of 9141).

As mentioned in Chapter 1 section 1.4, the aims of this study are as follows:

- encouraging translators in general to reflect carefully, before settling for the first, literal equivalent that comes to mind;
- prevailing upon translators to assume responsibility for their ethical choices, rather than imposing this on a deceased author, especially when dealing with "sensitive" material, such as racially prejudiced texts from the past.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Neither Creswell (2013), nor the online *New Oxford American Dictionary* defines the term **microlinguistic**, but the prefix **micro-** refers to something "small; on a small scale" (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 2015:949), from which I understand **microlinguistic** to refer to a detailed analysis of linguistic data, from word and sentence level, upwards. Hence, a microlinguistic approach is a detailed one on a relatively small scale.

<sup>2</sup> Bosman's original short stories were written between 1930 and 1951, the pre-apartheid era in South Africa, and from 1948 when the National Party came to power, the early years of apartheid as sanctioned by the newly elected government. However, racial discrimination and segregation as enforced by legislation had existed long before 1948: most notably the Natives' Land Act of 1913, and the first Immorality act of 1927.

Having defined the research type as qualitative, using a narrative approach, with the aim of urging translators to take their ethical responsibility seriously, the research designs informing this study are outlined in the following section.

### 3.3 Research design

In this study, **research design** is taken to signify the general techniques that can be used to investigate a research problem. Mouton (2001:55) calls it a “plan or blueprint of how [one intends] conducting the research”, while Trafford and Leshem (2008:104) suggest using the research design chapter as “an analytic framework to assess the research itself”. Although there are numerous common research designs to choose from, the following are relevant here: interdisciplinary research, textual analysis, comparative analysis and critical discourse analysis.

#### 3.3.1 Interdisciplinary research

Hofstee (2006:130) explains that “interdisciplinary research takes methods, concepts, or ideas from one discipline and applies them to a problem in another discipline”, but Translation Studies itself is often looked upon as [a complex] interdisciplinary research area (Saldanha & O’Brien 2014). This study is interdisciplinary in the sense that it combines two disciplines, namely Translation Studies and English Literature. While it focuses on ethical and stylistic aspects of translations, the data under discussion are existing literary texts: a selection of Bosman’s short stories and their Afrikaans translations. The main drawback of any interdisciplinary inquiry is its difficulty because it calls for “mastery of two disciplines<sup>3</sup> rather than just one” (Hofstee 2006:130).

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<sup>3</sup> As my master’s study, titled *’n Tyd-ruimtelike verkenning van Lina Spies se “Oorstaanson”* [Exploring time and space in Lina Spies’ *Oorstaanson*] dealt with modern Afrikaans poetry and theory of literature, which called for rigorous textual analysis, I had had some experience in the domain of literature before becoming involved in Translation Studies. I am fortunate in my supervisors, Professors Moropa and Levey, both of whom are experts in their respective fields.

### 3.3.2 Textual analysis

Related to **content analysis** that investigates the content of “preserved records” (Hofstee 2006:124) frequently consisting of written documents, **textual analysis** pertains specifically to literary texts. Usually, the point of analysing a text, whether literary or not, is to understand the author’s meaning as interpreted by the researcher. Readers are likely to extract different meanings from a given text, as according to postmodern theory, a single, authoritative meaning does not exist. Textual analysis is similar to content analysis in that both techniques are empirical, making use of existing textual data (Mouton 2001). The key research questions in such designs are predominantly exploratory and descriptive. Interpreting literary texts is one of the typical applications of textual analysis. Narrative interpretation is mostly “a process of subjecting the information one gathers to chains of inductive and deductive thinking. In this regard, [it] is no different from analysis in most other fields in which meaning must be culled from data” (Abbott 2008:97).

In this study, textual analysis is used to analyse a representative selection of Bosman’s short stories and their translations, while seeking to reduce **overreading** on the one hand, and **underreading** on the other. Abbott (2008:239) differentiates between these terms as “the activities of importing into a text material that is not signified within it (overreading) or of neglecting material that is signified within it (underreading).” Since both inaccuracies are inevitable to some extent, minimising them is the aim of an **intentional reading** where interpretation is based on the intended meanings of an implied author. Abbott (2008:103) explains the appeal of intentional interpretation as follows:

By looking at a narrative as a whole and trying to grasp an intention behind it, we have a way of grounding a reading and making a case for its validity.

An alternative interpretation of narrative is by way of a **symptomatic reading**, which can be defined as “decoding a text as symptomatic of the author’s unconscious or unacknowledged state of mind, or of unacknowledged cultural conditions” (Abbott 2008:242).

Reasonable and credible textual interpretation throws light on “historical periods, cultural trends and socio-political events” (Mouton 2001:168). Conversely, Mouton (2001:168) believes that context may also restrict a researcher’s understanding of a text. In order to ensure sufficient contextual information in this study, close attention was paid to the historical background against which the stories are set.

### **3.3.3 Comparative analysis of translations and their source texts**

The analysis of translated texts requires textual comparison with their originals – the researcher must choose which facet(s) of the texts to focus on, since not all possible aspects can be dealt with (Williams & Chesterman 2002). There is no set form of text analysis, but it is essential to use the same model for source and target texts (Munday 2014). Under the best of circumstances, a **translation comparison** in this study involved two translations into the same language (Afrikaans) of the same original story.<sup>4</sup> Ethical and stylistic issues of the source text (as expounded in the methodology section) and the related passages in the target texts were compared with the aim of discovering “patterns of correspondence between the texts” to quote Williams and Chesterman (2002:7).

The initial theoretical model applied in Translation Studies has been a comparative one, which is useful for identifying changes (Williams & Chesterman 2002; Munday 2014). When source texts and their translations are analysed, identity/similarity as well as difference can invariably be detected. Thus, the purpose of all comparative research is discovering “correlations between the two sides of the relation” (Williams & Chesterman 2002:51) as well as differences, as “*all* translation implies degrees of change and difference” (Hewson 2011:17; the emphasis is Hewson’s). Chesterman’s (2002) comparative model corresponds to product-oriented research methodologies such as critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics (Saldanha & O’Brien 2014).

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<sup>4</sup> There are exceptions, such as Bosman’s murder story, “The Gramophone” which has been translated only by Griebenow, or the notorious “Unto Dust”, which has been translated only by De Lange.

### 3.3.4 Critical discourse analysis (CDA)

Besides comparative textual analysis, **critical discourse analysis (CDA)** is also appropriate when examining translated texts. CDA, a variety of discourse analysis (DA), is not truly a methodology but rather a school of thought, an umbrella term for theories and practices that share specific principles in their approach to language research (Saldanha & O'Brien 2014). These principles are best outlined by focusing on the terms **discourse**, **critical** and **analysis**, in that order.

In linguistics, **discourse** refers to language “above the sentence [level]”, such as whole texts, and “language in use”, which implies that language has to be studied through “naturally occurring texts” keeping in mind the context of production and reception (Saldanha & O'Brien 2014:52). In other words, researchers in “many CDA approaches work with existing data”, rather than requiring specifically produced texts (Wodak & Meyer 2009:32). Although text analysis is a crucial part of CDA, the focus is on the relationship between text and “orders of discourse” (Saldanha & O'Brien 2014:52–53), which Fairclough (2010:294) defines as “the social organisation and control of linguistic variation.” In a broader sense, different **discourses** express the different ways of constructing reality.

The **critical** aspect of CDA concerns “a committed agenda to reveal how discourses produce and reproduce unequal power relations within society” by attempting to demonstrate how the binaries that underpin language and culture present one side as normal and the other as invisible and odd, thus creating social inequalities (Saldanha & O'Brien 2014:53). Moreover, critique implies a normative element, focusing on what is wrong with a society and how it might be changed for the better, which is to a degree “a matter of highlighting gaps between what particular societies claim to be ... and what they are” (Fairclough 2010:7).

CDA involves the identification of patterns by frequently employing a set of analytical concepts that allow “an analysis that goes beyond the surface of texts” (Saldanha & O'Brien 2014:54). Saldanha and O'Brien (2014:55) argue that an **analysis** with no linguistic framework risks restating the discourse (i.e. retelling the story), resulting in uninteresting claims, but a thorough understanding of systemic-functional grammar or

pragmatics is not essential for conducting CDA, however – “analysis can rely on a close and critical reading of texts” if it is systematic.

Significant features of CDA include the following (Fairclough 2010:10–11):

- CDA is not merely analysis of discourse (i.e. texts); “it is part of some form of systematic transdisciplinary analysis of relations between discourse and other elements of the social process”.
- CDA is not merely general commentary on discourse; “it includes some form of systematic analysis of texts”.
- CDA is not merely descriptive; it is normative as well. “It addresses social wrongs in their discursive aspects and possible ways of righting or mitigating them”.

Owing to its politically committed agenda, CDA examines social problems with the aim of influencing or even changing social practice. In Translation Studies, it has been used for exploring issues of ideology in the translation of various written genres, including fiction (Saldanha & O’Brien 2014), which makes it a suitable method for this study.

In order to illustrate how CDA has been used in my study, let us consider the following extract from “The Gramophone”:

ST p 56: When I am visiting strangers and they give me bad coffee I don’t throw it out and say that the stuff isn’t fit for a **kaffir**. I just drink it and then don’t go back to that house again.<sup>5</sup>

TT p 100: As ek by vreemdelinge kuier en hulle gee vir my slegte koffie, gooi ek dit nie uit en sê dat ’n **kaffer** dit nie eens sal drink nie. Ek drink dit net en gaan nooit weer terug na daardie huis toe nie.

The “I” in the above refers to Oom Schalk Lourens, the first-person narrator of the story. Gribenow has retained the offensive k-word (spelled the Afrikaans way) in his translation, instead of using a more neutral form such as *’n swart mens* (BT: a black person). It must be borne in mind that in the author’s day, the use of racial epithets

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<sup>5</sup> Emphasis has been added to all quotations from the ST and TT in this chapter.

was considered the norm. Although the underlying white prejudice cannot be eliminated from Bosman's original stories, the damaging effect thereof might at least be diminished by toning down the racist language for modern target-text readers. The above extract implies that the character, Susannah, makes coffee that is unsuitable for human consumption. Griebenow has altered "not fit for..." to "a ... would not **even** drink it" (emphasis added), thereby accentuating the division between black and white instead of playing it down.

### 3.3.5 A possible but unused method: corpus linguistics (CL)

Studies of translators' style typically make use of electronic corpora<sup>6</sup> for comparative analysis, and in this manner, employ corpus linguistics as a research methodology. A fine example is the thesis by Nokele (2015), entitled *Translating conceptual metaphor in Mandela's "Long Walk to Freedom": a cross-cultural comparison*. CL is useful for analysing vast quantities of texts by means of corpus-processing software (Kenny 2011:59), but Bosman's entire oeuvre is not sufficiently large to warrant the use of an electronic corpus. Consequently, in this study all narrative texts were analysed manually.

Saldanha and O'Brien (2014:8) consider CL and CDA as "both alternative and complementary methodologies", indicating that CDA can be used on its own or combined with CL. Still, the use of corpora for discourse analysis is limited: "the corpus analysis tools currently available are best suited for the investigation of features *below* sentence level, and they present the analyst with fragments of language which are *removed* from the environment in which they were designed to be displayed" (Saldanha & O'Brien 2014:61, own emphasis). What is more, since individual researchers have different interests and skills it is wise to choose a research design that is best suited to one's strengths, as Hofstee (2006:109) recommends.

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<sup>6</sup> "A corpus (plural: corpora) is a collection of texts that are the object of literary or linguistic study" (Kenny 2011:59).



### 3.4 Methodology

In this section, my approach to implementing the above research designs is discussed, starting with the sources of the data.

#### 3.4.1 Data

There was no need to use research instruments to generate data for analysis, as the textual data already existed in printed form.

Bosman's short stories initially appeared singly in various small, ephemeral magazines<sup>7</sup> of the 1930s and 40s, before a volume was eventually published in 1947 as *Mafeking Road*. This is the only selection of stories made by the author himself, albeit rather hastily (Lenta 2003; MacKenzie 2005; Mackenzie & Sandham 2011). Despite containing numerous errors, the book has remained "an all-time South African classic" (MacKenzie 2005:2). When Bosman died in 1951, he left his writings in disarray (Gray 1989), and it was up to his editors to establish his literary reputation posthumously (Lenta 2003). Bosman's principal editors were at first his former mentee and friend, Lionel Abrahams, and later, two professors of English, Stephen Gray and Craig MacKenzie.<sup>8</sup>

Abrahams' pioneering mission was to disseminate previously uncollected stories (MacKenzie 2005). When Gray and MacKenzie co-edited the fourteen-volume *Anniversary Edition*,<sup>9</sup> produced between 1998 and 2005, their aim was to release all Bosman's works in reliable, unabridged and uncensored versions, using original sources (MacKenzie 2005; MacKenzie & Sandham 2011). MacKenzie's role in the project was to edit seven volumes of stories (MacKenzie 2005:4), most of which necessitated scrupulous restoration of omissions and the correction of persistent

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<sup>7</sup> *The Touléier* and *The South African Opinion* are among the better known of these magazines.

<sup>8</sup> Other editions of Bosman's stories include selections made by Rosenberg (1987) and Mynhardt (1981; 2005).

<sup>9</sup> The title refers to two anniversaries: planning for this definitive version started in 1997, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of *Mafeking Road*. The year of completion, 2005, was the centenary of Bosman's birth (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:19).

errors, beginning with a fully re-edited *Mafeking Road* (1998). A second selection of Oom Schalk Lourens stories appeared in *Seed-time and Harvest* (2001) and the final selection in *Unto Dust* (2002). The contents of this trilogy of selections, reprinted in the *Complete Oom Schalk Lourens stories* (2006), are an essential part of the data informing this study because they include all the source texts for analysis.

During the highly productive, last eighteen months of his life,<sup>10</sup> Bosman wrote seventy-nine stories – never missing a deadline – for the leftist Johannesburg weekly, *The Forum*, under the rubric *In die voorkamer* (BT: In the front room). In 1971, Abrahams republished only half the sequence, but the entire series appeared as part of the *Anniversary Edition* in their original order in *Idle Talk* (1999) and *Homecoming* (2005), which were collected into one volume as the *Complete Voorkamer stories* (2011). MacKenzie (2005:3–4) highlights the importance of dividing Bosman’s stories into three “generic categories”:<sup>11</sup> the Oom Schalks, featuring a single narrator; the *Voorkamer* series using multiple narrators “in a conversation-style setting”, and the “old Transvaal” stories, told by an authorial narrator. When these distinct categories are mixed, as Abrahams and others did in their collections, the unwary reader can easily misinterpret the meaning of a story, especially the irony, by conflating the views of the narrator, Oom Schalk, with those of either the implied author or the real one.

There can be no doubt about the authenticity and quality of the data, as MacKenzie went to great lengths to sort out the confusion of the stories’ complicated publication history. Having explained the origins of the English source texts, we can move on to their Afrikaans translations.

Despite being known chiefly as an English writer, Bosman also published sixteen Afrikaans stories in his lifetime. Most of these stories have English versions, not translations, because he made deliberate shifts when rewriting a story. The bulk of his stories, however, was only recently translated into Afrikaans. In 2011, translations of twenty-nine Oom Schalk stories by the publisher of Suiderkruis Boeke, Francois Griebenow, appeared, entitled *In die withaak se skadu en ander oom Schalk Lourens*

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<sup>10</sup> Herman Charles Bosman died suddenly of cardiac arrest at the age of forty-six, on 14 October 1951.

<sup>11</sup> See Chapter 2 under 2.4.1 (Grouping of Bosman’s short stories).

stories.<sup>12</sup> The following year, Griebenow published a second volume of translations, consisting of forty-one *Voorkamer* pieces: *'n Bekkersdal-marathon en ander Voorkamerstories*. In February 2016, Griebenow issued his translation of *Mafeking Road* as *Mafeking-pad*, a title that is somewhat too close to the original because *pad* is merely substituted for the word, “Road”, whereas “Die pad na Mafeking” as used in his 2011 translation, is a more idiomatic choice.

In celebration of Human & Rousseau’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary as Bosman’s regular publishers, *Die beste verhale en humor van Herman Charles Bosman* appeared in 2013, translated by award-winning poet Johann de Lange.<sup>13</sup> At that time, the original English collection, *Best stories and humour of Herman Charles Bosman*,<sup>14</sup> was republished as well. Griebenow and De Lange’s translations of Bosman’s stories are currently available at first-rate bookshops in South Africa, such as Exclusive Books.

### 3.4.2 Analysis

The following model of the *tertium comparationis* (TC) is used in this study. It is based on Kruger and Wallmach’s (1997) model, although mine consists of ethical aspects rather than cultural ones:

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<sup>12</sup> The book (2011) contains thirty-three stories in total, but instead of translating them all, Griebenow had the audacity to **edit** four of the stories that appeared in Afrikaans, implying that Bosman’s command of the language was not up to standard.

<sup>13</sup> Human & Rousseau presumably initiated the Afrikaans translation, as they also publish De Lange’s poetry. Kindly refer to footnote number 24 about their lack of reply to my queries.

<sup>14</sup> It comprises *Starlight on the Veld* and *Recognising Blues*, first published in 2001 as a volume containing two books with the overarching title *Best of Bosman*.



### **Ethical aspects**

Terms of address

References to  
cultural/historical  
contexts:

- Historical figures
- Events
- Place names

Transfer of irony

### **Stylistic aspects**

Translators' stylistic  
choices

Translation strategies

The *tertium comparationis* (TC)

This study consists of a comparative analysis of literary texts, more specifically narratives, at macro- and microtextual (“microlinguistic”) level, beginning with the source text. The basis of comparison, or *tertium comparationis* – Latin for “the third comparator” (Munday 2012:76)<sup>15</sup> – consists of ethical aspects, such as terms of

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<sup>15</sup> Munday (2012:76) defines the *tertium* (TC) as “an invariant against which two segments [ST and TT] can be measured to gauge variation from a core meaning”.

address for individuals or groups and references to their cultures and their historical contexts, comprising time and space, especially references to historical figures, events and place names.

Before continuing, I demonstrate how the *tertium* (comprising ethical aspects) may be applied when conducting comparative analysis. The following passage is taken from Bosman's famous story, "Mafeking Road", which deals mainly with historical events – the siege and relief of Mafeking at the onset of the Second Anglo-Boer War:

ST p 121: And if we had difficulty in finding the road to Mafeking, we had no difficulty in finding the road away from Mafeking. And this time our veldkornet did not need **kaffirs**, either, to point with their fingers where we had to go.

TT Griebenow, p 45: En so baie soos wat ons gesukkel het om die pad Mafeking toe te kry, so min het ons gesukkel om die pad weg van Mafeking af te kry. Hierdie keer het ons veldkornet ook nie **kaffers** nodig gehad om met hul vingers te wys waarheen ons moet gaan nie.

TT De Lange, p 57: En as ons moeite gehad het om die pad na Mafeking te kry, het ons geen moeite om die pad uit Mafeking te kry nie. En hierdie keer het ons veldkornet ook nie **kaffers** nodig om met hulle vingers te wys waarheen ons moet ry nie.

After the relief of Mafeking, the Boers did not need to be shown the way out of town, as they wanted to get away as fast as possible from the enemy's line of fire. Since it had been a so-called "white man's war", the passing black people featuring in Bosman's story had helped the young *veldkornet* (BT: field cornet) when asked to, by pointing with their fingers in the direction of Mafeking, because he did not know the way. The translators have repeated the insulting k-word, instead of subduing it. From an activist perspective, it is unethical to retain the racial epithets of older stories in current translations.

Another example may be considered, this time from the story "Splendours of Ramoutsa":

ST p 158: Perhaps the **Indian** realised the truth of what I am saying now. At all events, after a while he stopped wasting the time of his customers with stories of emperors.

TT De Lange p 70: Dalk het die **koelie** die waarheid besef van wat ek nou sê. Ewenwel, ná 'n ruk het hy opgehou om sy klante se tyd te mors met stories oor keisers.

Throughout his translation, De Lange has used the derogatory word, *koelie* (BT: coolie), instead of *Indiër* (BT: Indian). His disturbing translation choice of misrepresenting the original would seem unethical towards both the deceased writer and the modern reader. Although Bosman also used this offensive term in his Afrikaans version of the story, the use of racial epithets was acceptable in his day, whereas today it is not.

Stylistic aspects, such as translators' recurring use of specific translation strategies reflecting their stylistic choices, are also considered. Even though the translator's linguistic choices are limited by the source text, no two translations are lexically alike throughout. Translators' distinctive patterns of choice might ultimately reveal personality and ideological positioning, although the emphasis in this study is on style as a textual feature,<sup>16</sup> i.e. how the target texts respond to the source text. Let us take a look at the following example, again from "Mafeking Road":

ST p 120: At the outbreak of the **Second Boer War** Floris van Barnevelt was a widower, with one son, Stephanus, who was aged seventeen.

TT Griebenow, p 44: Met die uitbreek van die **Tweede Vryheidsoorlog** was Floris van Barnevelt 'n wewenaar met een seun Stephanus, wat sewentien jaar oud was.

TT De Lange, p 56: Met die uitbreek van die **Tweede Boereoorlog** is Floris van Barnevelt 'n wewenaar met een seun, Stephanus, wat sewentien jaar oud is.

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<sup>16</sup> It would not have been viable to study Bosman's translators' style as a personal feature, because Griebenow has not published other translations for comparative purposes, while De Lange who mostly translates poetry, has never translated fiction before.

In the source text, Oom Schalk mentions the “Second Boer War”, which De Lange has transferred accurately and neutrally as the *Tweede Boereoorlog*, while Griebenow has altered it to the *Tweede Vryheidsoorlog* (BT: Second War of Independence) as some Afrikaners refer to it. Consequently, Griebenow’s translation choice is ideologically slanted, whether intentional or not. It is also worth noting that his use of the past tense is somewhat stilted in Afrikaans, whereas De Lange’s use of the present tense is idiomatically sound.

The function of the *tertium* is to act as an objective yardstick (sometimes expressed as an invariant) against which original and translated passages can be measured, although Hewson (2011:19) argues that the formulation of an invariant comprises “some type of paraphrase which ... in itself constitutes some kind of interpretation”. Despite Hewson’s (2011) implicit disapproval of the *tertium*, it might still be helpful in delineating what a researcher is looking for when analysing source and target texts, as illustrated above.

Investigating how racist epithets, found in older texts, have been rendered for target readers living in the current climate of political correctness<sup>17</sup> is one of the objectives of this study. Naturally, ethical considerations in translation go beyond merely avoiding the use of objectionable words. It is thus also important to determine whether the intended meanings of the implied (or inferred) author have been conveyed in a truthful manner. In Bosman’s case, it would be crucial to establish whether the irony for which he is renowned has remained intact in translation as he “almost invariably wrote with touches of irony and sarcasm” (Leff 2016:123).

In general, translators tend to simplify texts for their target readers by inserting explanations. Such unnecessary additions might destroy the subtle nuances of meaning that contribute to the overall ironic effect of a story. This brings us to the subject of translation strategies.

There are five relatively basic strategies available to translators for handling instances of non-equivalence between languages: repetition/retention, deletion, addition,

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<sup>17</sup> Today, as intimated earlier, offensive epithets for other people are no longer tolerated, especially in South Africa. The term “politically correct” has already been explained in Chapter 1 under 1.4 (Research aims of the study).

substitution and compensation. Baker (2011:23–44) examines examples of translation strategies used by professional translators for dealing with various types of non-equivalence at word level. These strategies include the following: using a more general word (superordinate); using a more neutral/less expressive word; cultural substitution; using a loan word or loan word plus explanation; paraphrase using a related word/unrelated words; omission;<sup>18</sup> and illustration. Baker (2011:44) stresses that they do “not ...represent an exhaustive account of the strategies available for dealing with non-equivalence at word level.” Moreover, these strategies have not been tailor-made for the translation of literary texts. Usually, the intended function of the translation will influence the translator’s choice of strategy.

Chesterman differentiates between **global** and **local** textual **strategies** used by professionals for solving text problems.<sup>19</sup> Global strategies pertain to “the choice between suppressing or emphasising specific aspects of the source text” (Kearns 2009:283), usually determined prior to translation (Chesterman & Wagner 2002:58), whereas local strategies<sup>20</sup> involve “altering various linguistic aspects of the source text as [translators] construct the translation” (Chesterman & Wagner 2002:59). As a matter of course, Gribenow and De Lange have used global and local strategies in their translations. Local strategies encompass production strategies which Chesterman groups into three categories: **syntactic**, **semantic**, and **pragmatic strategies** (Kearns 2009:284).

**Syntactic strategies** include literal translation that is close to the source-language form, but still grammatical; loans/calques, borrowed from another language; transposition, which implies any change of word-class, e.g. a noun changed to a verb; as well as phrase and sentence structure changes (Chesterman & Wagner 2002:60).

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<sup>18</sup> “Deletion” and “omission” are synonyms, while Landers (2001:209) refers to this as “zero translation”. This strategy occurs frequently in translation practice, although Baker (2011:43) cautions that it should be used “only as a last resort, when the advantages of producing a smooth, readable translation clearly outweigh the value of rendering a particular meaning accurately in a given context”.

<sup>19</sup> Text problems concern questions such as: “how to process a particular bit of source text, how to come up with more alternative versions to choose from ...; when to use loanwords?” (Chesterman & Wagner 2002:58).

<sup>20</sup> Alternative terms for local strategies include: tactics, procedures, methods, shifts and changes (Chesterman & Wagner 2002:59).



**Semantic strategies** comprise synonymy, using a (near-) synonym to avoid repetition; antonymy, choosing an antonym and a negation element; hyponymy, i.e. when a hyponym is translated as a superordinate or vice versa; paraphrase, resulting in a loose/free translation; and trope changes in the use of figurative language, such as metaphor and personification (Chesterman & Wagner 2002:61–62).

**Pragmatic strategies** include cultural filtering,<sup>21</sup> when culture-specific items are translated to conform with TL norms; information changes, implying either addition of new information or omission of SL information; coherence changes, concerning the logical order of information in a text; partial translation; and transediting, involving the entire re-editing of a source text (Chesterman & Wagner 2002:62-63).

Scholars in Translation Studies have opposing views on the exact definition of “**strategy**”. Chesterman (in Chesterman & Wagner 2002:60) argues that a strategy may be obligatory – called for by “contrastive differences between languages” – or optional; while Pym (2011) suggests that strategies are invariably optional, because a translator must choose between alternatives. Pym (2011:92–93) defines a strategy as “an action that aims to achieve a purpose where: there is no certainty of success (i.e. it is not a mechanistic application of a rule), and there are viable alternative actions (i.e. other ways of aiming to achieve the same or similar purpose)”.

Besides numerous instances of repetition, Gribenow and De Lange have used other translation strategies as well. The following example from “The Rooinek” illustrates this:

ST p 30: “When we get to understand one another perhaps we won’t need to **fight** anymore.”

TT Gribenow, p 147: “As ons mekaar leer verstaan, hoef ons dalk nie meer **haaks** te **wees** nie.”

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<sup>21</sup> This strategy, also known as domestication, is the opposite of foreignisation: when source-language items are transferred directly rather than adapted (Chesterman & Wagner 2002:62).

TT De Lange, p 34: “As ons mekaar eers beter leer ken, sal dit dalk nie meer nodig wees om te **veg** nie.”

This extract refers to the troublesome relationship between the Boers and the Englishmen after the Second Boer War of 1899–1902. Griebenow has translated the verb “fight” by paraphrase using unrelated words, *haaks ... wees* (BT: [be] at odds), whereas De Lange has applied the verb “veg”, a stronger lexical item that is a suitable choice in this context to evoke the war.

Another case in point is a sentence from “The Gramophone,” where the pronoun “they” refers to the English:

ST p 54: First they **took** our country and governed it for us in a better way than we could do ourselves; now they wanted to make improvements in our language for us.

TT Griebenow, p 97: Eers het hulle ons land **afgevat** en dit beter namens ons regeer as wat ons self kon; nou wil hulle ons taal namens ons opknep.

Griebenow has transferred the verb “took” as *afgevat* (BT: took away), thereby intensifying the source text’s inferred meaning: the English did not merely take the Boers’ country; they took it **away** from them. The translation strategy illustrated here is unnecessary addition, which affects accuracy.

Since it has been established that the predominant research design of this study is CDA, and that the data were analysed in terms of ethical and stylistic aspects, the analytical framework that was adopted is explained below.

### 3.5 Analytical framework

**Descriptive translation studies (DTS)**, an open-ended theoretical approach, emerged in the 1970s as “a reaction to centuries-long speculative and prescriptive writing on translation” (Brownlie 2011:77). Kruger and Wallmach (1997) explain that “the aim of descriptive translation theorists is not to prescribe how translation **ought**

to be done, but to observe how translations **have been done** in practice". (The emphases are by Kruger & Wallmach.)

However, Brownlie (2011:79) differentiates between descriptive and committed approaches, with the latter depending on "the recognition of unfair power differentials in and between cultures and languages". **Committed approaches** thus underscore the importance of political engagement. A more general committed approach (as represented by Baker and Tymoczko) does not promote a particular political stance, but views translation as an activist and interventionist cultural activity in itself (Brownlie 2011). Moreover, since committed approaches never call their own presuppositions into question, Brownlie (2011) suggests combining the strengths of both approaches to arrive at justified decision-making (what Drugan and Megone (2011) would call "good judgement") by means of self-reflection. This is exactly what this study is about: describing how the translations of Bosman's source texts have been carried out while being aware of my own position and bias as a researcher, and finally proposing that a different kind of ethics be followed.

A committed approach thus forms the basis of this study, as it moves beyond the **descriptive** (a subdivision of **pure** translation studies) to the **applied** aspect of the discipline. A committed approach and CDA was thus a suitable combination for sharing the same activist viewpoint with the aim of changing translation practice.

### **3.6 Limitations**

Qualitative research is sometimes criticised because its results are not replicable, but this type of research is valid if dependable methods and a transparent methodology are in evidence. Subjectivity also underlies "the assumption of privileged knowledge on the part of the researcher", although the true problem posed by CDA is the lack of explicitness regarding methods of data collection and text analysis (Saldanha & O'Brien 2014:57–58). The risk of imposing an interpretation on a text is not exclusive to CDA but one that is inherent in all linguistic analyses. Saldanha and O'Brien (2014:59) mention that the problems of ascribing motivation to text producers without access to their thought processes have repeatedly been stressed in the literature on Translation Studies.

Despite the above limitations, it was hoped that the findings of this study would provide a rich, nuanced assessment of how Bosman's English source texts have been rendered in Afrikaans, together with a detailed discussion of the ethical issues arising from these translations.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

Seven of Bosman's short stories and their translations are analysed in the next chapter using the research methodology explained in this chapter – briefly at macrotextual level (henceforth “macro-level”), but in considerable detail at microtextual level (henceforth “micro-level”).<sup>22</sup> Chapter 4 deals with the following Oom Schalk Lourens stories: “Makapan's Caves”, “The Rooinek”, “The Gramophone”, “Mafeking Road”, “Splendours from Ramoutsa”, “Unto Dust” and “Funeral Earth”. The comparative analyses follow the chronological order in which Bosman's original stories first appeared.

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<sup>22</sup> Hewson (2011) applies these shorter forms to the different textual levels.

## CHAPTER 4

### Interpretation and findings

#### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, seven of Bosman's Oom Schalk Lourens stories are analysed, in the order in which they were originally published: "Makapan's Caves", "The Rooinek", "The Gramophone", "Mafeking Road", "Splendours from Ramoutsa", "Unto Dust", and "Funeral Earth." The criteria used for their selection were the degree that they exemplify the research problem of translating racial epithets, and the importance of each story. The exception was "The Gramophone", which is not generally rated as one of Bosman's best stories, although it is a favourite of mine.

The first-person narrator, Oom Schalk Lourens, is a character<sup>1</sup> who is present to a greater or lesser extent in all these stories. He is "ostensibly situated in the first couple of decades of the twentieth century, although his memory stretches back to the mid-nineteenth century, and he claims, somewhat incredibly, to have participated in the siege of Makhaphane's forces in 1854" (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:132). Thus, Oom<sup>2</sup> Schalk is an adaptable tool, wielded strategically by the author, rather than a historically accurate character (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011). Before proceeding with the comparative analyses of the Oom Schalk stories at micro-level, the source and target texts are briefly compared at macro-level.

#### 4.2 Preliminary macro-level analysis

The following features emerge at macro-level: the source texts have no formal division into sections, other than paragraphs. Both Afrikaans translations are identified as such; not as adaptations or imitations. At present, the prevailing attitude towards

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<sup>1</sup> Abbott (2008:232) uses the terms **entity** and **character** as follows: "Humanlike entities capable of agency are referred to as characters".

<sup>2</sup> *Oom* (BT: uncle) is an Afrikaans term of respect for older men, used even if the addressee is not the speaker's uncle (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:166).

literary translation from English into Afrikaans is that it is unnecessary,<sup>3</sup> since in general, an educated Afrikaans person can read and understand English. Thus, translators' interventions are not required to make English source texts accessible to Afrikaans target-text readers. Griebenow translated Bosman's stories on his own initiative, whereas, as mentioned, De Lange was apparently commissioned to do so by Human & Rousseau in commemoration of their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary as Bosman's publishers. In each instance, the translator's name is mentioned: Griebenow's name appears on the page containing the publisher's details, as he is also the publisher; De Lange is more prominently acknowledged on the title page.

Griebenow's texts are quite easily recognised as translations as a result of source language interference, such as retaining the past tense of the original, which has a stilted effect in Afrikaans. It is more difficult to identify De Lange's predominantly fluent translations as such. Both translators have followed the general strategy of producing complete translations, not partial ones, even though Griebenow's translations are longer since his use of the past tense adds length to his target texts.

A translator's preface explains the translator's interpretation of the source text, indicating the problems that were encountered in the translation process as well as the strategies employed to solve them. Of the two men, only Griebenow (Bosman 2016b) has written a preface that he calls a *Voorwoord deur die uitgewer* (BT: preface by the publisher), since he is both the translator and the publisher, as mentioned. Despite admitting that offensive racial epithets should have no place in "our" vocabulary, he provides the following reasons for retaining them: The translation tries to be **faithful** to Bosman's original text; omitting or toning them down would be **historically inaccurate**. In the 1980s, even black academics objected when racial epithets had been substituted in an original English publication of Bosman's works. Bosman uses race in the interest of irony – without (racial epithets), many of his stories would become shallow or even disintegrate (Griebenow 2016: vii; my own translation and emphasis).

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<sup>3</sup> According to De Kock (2012), Afrikaans people seem to prefer reading Bosman in English.

In answer to Griebenow (Bosman 2016b), I would like to comment as follows: The translator clearly favours fidelity to the deceased author, but what about the present socio-cultural and political context of reception in South Africa? Which is the most important: historical accuracy, or nation-building? The substitution of racial epithets in Bosman's original English stories by inoffensive terms, such as "black" and "Pedi", caused an outcry against "*ex post facto*<sup>4</sup> tinkering" (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:117), because no one, except the author, should meddle with a source text. The target text, produced by a translator, is an interpretation of the inferred meaning of the original (Boase-Beier 2004) and therefore, not intervention-free (Baker 2008). Even if the racist language is toned down, the irony, a literary device frequently used in Bosman's stories, would remain intact as indicated by the analyses to follow at micro-level. Neither of the translators has made use of footnotes or endnotes, habitually used to annotate literary translation. The purpose of annotations is to justify translation choices where dilemmas exist

Literary source texts and translations are often surrounded by "paratextual and peritextual elements" (Hewson 2011:25). Genette applied the term **paratext** to material outside the narrative but related to it; paratexts may influence the reader's interpretation of a narrative (Abbott 2008). Paratexts can be physically attached to the narrative vehicle ("peritexts"): prefaces, tables of contents, titles, blurbs, illustrations. They may also be separated from the vehicle but nonetheless connected by association ("epitexts"): comments by the author, reviews and other works by the author (Abbott 2008:239). Pym (2011:97) explains that prefaces or notes contribute to the visibility of a translator. It can be concluded that De Lange is less visible than Griebenow, owing to the former's silence about translation problems. This is revealing as he apparently did not experience any difficulties.

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<sup>4</sup> The Latin phrase *ex post facto* means "retrospective" ([www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/ex%20post%20facto](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/ex%20post%20facto)).

### **4.3 Micro-level analyses**

Each story is introduced by providing background information, which often concerns the historical context of the narrative's setting, comprising historical figures, events and place names. This is followed by a comprehensive comparative analysis of the English source text and the Afrikaans target text(s). In Chapter 5, the theory applied, and findings are revisited and summed up.

#### **4.3.1 “Makapan’s Caves”**

##### **4.3.1.1 Background**

Bosman’s first Oom Schalk Lourens story, “Makapan’s Caves”, appeared in *The Toulleier* magazine in December 1930 (MacKenzie 2006; Cornwell et al. 2010) The story is based on a documented historical event: the 1854 siege of Makapansgat (Mac Donald 2003; MacKenzie & Sandham 2011).

As the Afrikaner trekboers expanded into the northern region of South Africa, they infringed upon the territory of the Kekana Ndebele chief, Makapan, also known as Mokopane or Mugombane. The Kekanas’ resistance to colonial diffusion (Esterhuysen 2006) resulted in the murder of a number of white farmers, notably Hermanus Potgieter – brother of the Voortrekker leader Hendrik Potgieter (Du Plooy 1990) – who was flayed alive, a fact that Bosman has embellished in the story.

The Boers retaliated by besieging Historic Cave, one of the caves in the present Makapan Valley World Heritage site (Limpopo Province), where Makapan and his subjects had taken refuge before the Boer commandos arrived. When Commandant Piet Potgieter died, having been shot near the entrance to the cave, Paul Kruger retrieved his body in the face of great danger. The siege lasted about a month, but the exact number of Kekana people who died in the cave remains unresolved to this day (Esterhuysen 2006).



#### 4.3.1.2 Comparative analysis<sup>5</sup>

The beginning of Bosman's story may well have a disquieting effect on present-day South African readers:

ST (MacKenzie 2006) p 15: Kaffirs? (said Oom Schalk Lourens). Yes, I know them. And they're all the same. I fear the Almighty and I respect His works, but I could never understand why he made the kaffir and the rinderpest. The Hottentot is a little better. The Hottentot will only steal the biltong hanging out on the line to dry. He won't steal the line as well. That is where the kaffir is different.

TT Griebenow, p 58: Kaffers? (het oom Schalk Lourens gesê). Ja, ek ken hulle. En hulle is almal dieselfde. Ek is 'n godvresende mens, en ek het ontsag vir die Liewe Vader se handewerk, maar ek kon nog nooit verstaan hoekom Hy die kaffer en die runderpes gemaak het nie. Die Hottentot is 'n bietjie beter. Die Hottentot sal net die biltong steel wat aan die draad hang om droog te word. Hy sal nie die draad ook steel nie. Dit is waar die kaffer verskil.

TT De Lange, p 19: KAFFERS? (SÊ OOM SCHALK LOURENS).<sup>6</sup> Ja, ek ken hulle. En hulle's almal eners. Ek is godvresend, en ek het respek vir Sy werke, maar ek kon nog nooit verstaan waarom Hy kaffers en die runderpes gemaak het nie. Die Hottentotte is 'n bietjie beter. Die Hottentot sal net die biltong steel wat aan die draad hang om droog te word. Hy sal nie die draad óók steel nie. Dis waar die kaffer anders is.

The word "kaffir", reiterated three times within the opening paragraph, is "an insulting and contemptuous term for a black African" (*Concise Oxford English Dictionary* 2011:773) and is today taboo, but in Bosman's day, the use of racial epithets was considered the norm, as noted in Chapter 1 section 1.1. Oom Schalk makes a sweeping statement by declaring that black people are all the same.

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<sup>5</sup> When analysing a narrative, a systematic CDA must be offered rather than a mere paraphrase of the story. However, in order to contextualise the extracts that are used for comparison between source and target texts, I have inevitably retold some of the plots.

<sup>6</sup> Capital letters are used in the opening sentences of stories in *Die beste verhale en humor van Herman Charles Bosman*, translated by De Lange, and published by Human & Rousseau (Bosman 2013).

Although the k-word is highly offensive, politically incorrect and actionable in South Africa today, Griebenow and De Lange have repeated it in their target texts, only replacing the letter <i> with an <e> in conformity with Afrikaans spelling. The leading Afrikaans dictionary, *HAT* (2015:567), lists this derogatory term but cautions that it should be avoided at all costs, since it is not only abusive but also libellous.

The word “Hottentot” is now likewise considered offensive when applied to people, where the standard term is “Khoikhoi” and the collective designation “Khoisan” (*Concise Oxford English Dictionary* 2011:690). “Khoikhoi” refers to the earliest cattle farming inhabitants of the Western, Southern and Northern Cape (*HAT* 2015:612). However, MacKenzie and Sandham (2011:105) describe Bosman’s use of the word “Hottentot” as “a playful intertextual reference to the storyteller figure created by his partner in literature ... Aegidius Jean Blignaut”.<sup>7</sup> Thus, as a proper name it may remain intact in translation, although its use should have been explained in a footnote or endnote.

Lawson (1986:144) deems it “significant and appropriate, that the first of the ‘Oom Schalk Lourens’ stories should begin with a question about race”. By associating black people not only with a lethal cattle disease (rinderpest) but also with stealing, Oom Schalk seems to reflect the prevalent racial prejudices of his Marico audience, while Bosman, the author, might be making fun of their racism.

Nevertheless, in the second paragraph, Oom Schalk ironically contradicts what he has just said by implying that black individuals are **not** all the same. A virtuous black person is depicted as faithful to his master, morally upright, “a true Christian”, and a protector of sheep, in line with the Boers’ perception of a loyal servant. The story’s tragic ending is anticipated when Oom Schalk says that it is not right to kill such a person. He could also be suggesting that it is acceptable to kill black people, but not the good ones (Davis 2006).

The third paragraph moves from general notions about race to the specific case of Nongaas (customarily given no surname), an orphaned Bechuana child whom the

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<sup>7</sup> Blignaut’s narrator [Hottentot Ruiter] influenced Bosman’s [Oom Schalk Lourens]; the narrators belong to the same tradition of South African “oral-style” stories (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:35).

Lourens family had taken in. The phrase, “one kaffir we had” conveys the impression that he was regarded as no more than a possession. Moreover, Bosman evokes the image of a puppy that has swallowed a piece of meat as the small boy bites a plug of tobacco, given to him by Schalk’s father. On their way to the Dwarsberge, Oom Schalk’s family encountered Nongaas in front of a hut:

ST p 15: One morning we came to some kaffir huts, where my father bartered two sacks of mealies for a roll of tobacco. A piccanin of about my own age was standing in front of a hut, and he looked at us all the time and grinned.

TT Griebenow, p 59: Een oggend het ons by ’n paar kafferhutte gekom waar my pa ’n rol twak vir twee sakke mielies geruil het. ’n Piekanien wat omtrent so oud soos ek was, het voor ’n hut gestaan en heeltyd vir ons gekyk en glimlag.

TT De Lange, p 19: Een oggend kom ons af op ’n klompie kafferhutte, waar my pa twee sakke mielies vir ’n rol tabak ruil. Voor ’n hut staan ’n piekanien omtrent so oud soos ek, en hy kyk heeltyd vir ons en glimlag breed.

Instead of omitting the offensive k-word, which qualifies “huts”, both translators have retained it<sup>8</sup> as in the original. At the time, Oom Schalk was a boy aged six, and Nongaas – initially, simply referred to as “a piccanin” – was about the same age. Today, “piccaninny” (in full), an offensive term for “a small black child” (*Concise Oxford English Dictionary* 2011:1083), may be considered derogatory or racist, particularly by black people (*HAT dictionary* 2015:977). In their translations, Griebenow and De Lange have repeated it regardless, only rendering the spelling in Afrikaans – *piekanien*. De Lange’s translation of the verb “grinned” as *glimlag breed* (BT: give a broad smile) conveys the meaning more accurately than Griebenow’s mere *glimlag*. The transaction referred to above is clearly unequal: plenty of mealies are exchanged for a single roll of tobacco.

From the outset, Nongaas admired Schalk’s older brother, Hendrik, for his stylish appearance. In time, his admiration developed into hero-worship:

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<sup>8</sup> In this study, “repetition” and “retention” are used interchangeably to denote a translation strategy to which Griebenow and De Lange frequently resort.

ST p 16: Nongaas remained with us for many years. He grew up with us. He was a very good kaffir, and as time went by he became much attached to all of us. But he worshipped my brother Hendrik.

TT Griebenow, p 60: Nongaas het jare lank by ons gebly. Hy het saam met ons grootgeword. Hy was 'n baie goeie kaffer, en met verloop van tyd het hy baie geheg aan ons geraak. Maar hy het my broer Hendrik verafgod.

TT De Lange, p 20: Nongaas bly baie jare by ons. Hy word saam met ons groot. Hy is 'n baie goeie kaffer en raak met verloop van tyd baie geheg aan ons. Maar hy aanbid my broer Hendrik.

Once again, both translators have chosen repetition of the offensive k-word as a translation strategy, rather than translation by a more neutral term, such as *mens* (BT: person). Nongaas' devotion to Hendrik is described by the word "worshipped", which De Lange has translated closely as *aanbid*, while Griebenow has rendered it as *verafgod* (BT: idolised), still in keeping with the source text's inferred meaning.<sup>9</sup> However, despite his being raised with the Lourens children, it soon transpires that Nongaas is cast in a subordinate, servant role within white society, as Lawson (1986:147) points out.

Fifteen years later, news of the slaying of Hermanus Potgieter and his family sets in motion a chain of events: Schalk and Hendrik join their district's commando to fight against Makapan, while Nongaas is tasked with looking after the horses and lighting the fires. Even though Makapan and Nongaas are both black, the former clearly operates outside white society as the enemy (Lawson 1986:145), whereas the latter functions within it as a trusted helper.

ST pp 16–17: It was just after my twenty-first birthday that we got news that Hermanus Potgieter and his whole family had been killed by a kaffir tribe under Makapan. They also said that, after killing him, the kaffirs stripped off old Potgieter's skin and made wallets out of it in which to carry their dagga.

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<sup>9</sup> Some readers regard Nongaas' affection for Hendrik as evidence of underlying homosexuality (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:159).

TT Griebenow, p 60: Kort ná my een en twintigste verjaardag het ons tyding gekry dat Hermanus Potgieter en sy hele gesin deur 'n kafferstam onder Makapan vermoor is. Hulle het ook gesê dat die kaffers ná die moord ou Potgieter se vel gevat en twaksakke daaruit gemaak het om hulle dagga in te dra.

TT De Lange, p 21: Net ná my een-en-twintigste verjaarsdag kry ons nuus dat Hermanus Potgieter en sy hele familie deur 'n kafferstam onder leiding van Makapan uitgemoor is. Ons hoor ook dat, nadat hulle Hermanus vermoor het, die kaffers die vel van sy lyf gestroop en sakkies daarvan gemaak het om hulle dagga in te hou.

The translators have chosen to repeat the offensive term for black people twice. In the first instance the term could have been omitted altogether, since *stam* (BT: tribe) can stand on its own. In the second instance, substitution with less offensive words, i.e. *swart mense* (BT: black people), could have been used. The making of *dagga* (BT: marijuana) pouches from Potgieter's skin is probably a figment of Bosman's imagination, as no historical proof could be traced for such a macabre way of showing contempt. Oom Schalk apparently misses the point by saying that it is a sin to smoke dagga, but nothing about murder, which is far worse. This seeming obtuseness allows for rich humour.

Griebenow has translated "old Potgieter" literally as *ou Potgieter*, whereas De Lange has used the deceased's first name, Hermanus, which is less insulting. The two translators have also rendered the word "family" differently: Griebenow has interpreted it as *gesin*, which refers to parent(s) and children (*HAT* 2015:339), while De Lange has translated it as *familie*, a more inclusive concept meaning all blood relations. Even though the *HAT* (2015:274), states that *familie* and *gesin* are sometimes viewed as interchangeable, such usage is discouraged. Consequently, Griebenow's rendition of this word is less ambiguous than De Lange's.

Before leaving for Makapan's kraal, Schalk and Hendrik receive advice from their father, telling them to read their Bible and pray for help, and always to aim for the enemy's stomach when shooting. The juxtaposition of religion and pragmatism is ironic (Mac Donald 2003) as it implies that during wartime, some things are better not left to divine intervention alone; besides praying, they should always shoot with the intent to

kill. Their father states that he would only fight the “redcoats,” signifying the British army whose red coats were a prominent feature of their uniforms. Here, an anachronism can be detected because they did not wage war against the Boers until 1880 (the onset of the First Anglo-Boer War), whereas this story is set in the period up to and including 1854.

At the camp, the Van Rensburg brothers invite Schalk and Hendrik to eat some roasted *rietbok* (BT: reedbuck) with them. The fellowship of the burghers gathered around the campfire contrasts with their indifference towards Makapan and his followers, trapped inside the cave. Lenta (2003:114) remarks on the impressive portrayal in the story of “the mingling of Boer in-group camaraderie with deathly callousness towards people of another group”.

ST p 18: So, as the Boers could not storm the kaffirs without losing heavily, the kommandant gave instructions that the ridge was to be surrounded and the kaffirs starved out. They were all inside the caves, the whole tribe, men, women, and children. They had already been there six days, and as they couldn't have much food left, and as there was only a small dam with brackish water, we were hopeful of being able to kill off most of the kaffirs without wasting ammunition.

TT Griebenow, pp 61–62: Aangesien ons Boere nie die kaffers kon storm sonder om swaar verliese te ly nie, het die kommandant opdrag gegee dat die rant omsingel moet word tot die kaffers van die honger sterf. Hulle was almal binne-in die grot, die hele stam – mans, vrouens en kinders. Hulle was al ses dae lank daar, en aangesien hulle nie baie kos kon oorbê nie en daar net 'n klein brakwaterdammetjie was, het ons gehoop om die meeste kaffers dood te kry sonder om ammunisie te mors.

TT De Lange, p 22: Aangesien die Boere nie die kaffers kon bestorm sonder om baie swaar verliese te ly nie, het die kommandant opdrag gegee dat hulle die rant moet omsingel en die kaffers in die grotte moet laat verhonger. Hulle was toe reeds ses dae binne die grotte, die hele stam, mans, vroue en kinders, en aangesien hulle nie meer baie kos kon oorbê nie en daar net 'n klein brakwaterdam was, was die Boere hoopvol dat hulle die meeste van die kaffers sou kon uitmoor sonder om ammunisie te mors.

One might have expected some sympathy for the trapped women and children at least, but the Boers show no mercy and the tone of the narrative also remains contemptuous. In each translation of the above passage, the racial epithet has been repeated three times, instead of using a more neutral term. Griebenow has personalised the narration by changing “the Boers” to “ons Boere”, thus inadvertently disclosing his own ideological stance. He has also translated the phrase “to kill off” with the wrong collocation: *dood te kry* (BT: get [them] dead), whereas De Lange has used a single word, *uitmoor* (BT: massacre), which is a more acceptable choice in the given context. The merciless idea of saving ammunition if Makapan’s people die of starvation intensifies their plight.

As the siege continued for another week, the narrator indicates that the Boer leaders, Marthinus Wessel Pretorius and Paul Kruger, disagreed on how to proceed with the campaign. Kruger wanted to attack the enemy, but Pretorius felt that this was too dangerous. In the source text, Bosman has rendered Pretorius’ middle name as “Wessels” which is inaccurate. In their translations, De Lange has retained the error, whereas Griebenow has amended it to “Wessel”, conforming to Newmark’s (1988:204) suggestion that translators may correct the occasional referential slip in texts where “[their] first loyalty is to the truth”. Although Newmark was not alluding to literary texts, he might just as well have been referring to translation ethics because of the lexical combination, “loyalty” and “truth”.

ST p 18: Eventually Paul Kruger obtained permission to take fifty volunteers and storm the caves from one side, while Kommandant Piet Potgieter was to advance from the other side with two hundred men, to distract the attention of the kaffirs.

TT Griebenow, p 62: Paul Kruger het uiteindelik toestemming gekry om die grotte van een kant af met vyftig man te storm, terwyl kommandant Piet Potgieter van die ander kant af met tweehonderd man sou aanval om die kaffers se aandag af te trek.

TT De Lange, p 23: Uiteindelik kry Paul Kruger toestemming om met vyftig vrywilligers die grotte van een kant af te bestorm, terwyl kommandant Piet Potgieter met tweehonderd man van die ander kant af opruk om die kaffers se aandag af te lei.

De Lange has translated the word “volunteers” correctly as *vrywilligers*, whereas Griebenow has altered it to *man* in a military sense (BT: men), thereby omitting the idea of freely offering to do something, which has ethical implications as it undermines the truth. The source text specifies that Piet Potgieter was to “advance” with two hundred men, which De Lange has rendered accurately as *opruk*, but Griebenow has changed it to *aanval* (BT: attack), which is more forceful. The latter’s tinkering with the source text’s implied meaning has ethical implications, as noted above. Again, both translators have opted for repetition of the k-word as a translation strategy, rather than minimising its damaging effect by means of a more neutral designation.

The Van Rensburgs and Hendrik are selected for the more dangerous part of the operation under the command of Kruger, while a distressed Nongaas tries in vain to dissuade Hendrik from fighting.

ST p 19: “My baas,” he said to my brother Hendrik, “you mustn’t go and fight. They’ll shoot you dead.”

TT Griebenow, p 63: “My baas,” sê hy vir my broer Hendrik, “jy moenie gaan baklei nie. Hulle gaan jou doodskiet.”

TT De Lange, p 23: “My baas,” sê hy vir my broer Hendrik, “jy moenie gaan veg nie. Hulle gaan jou doodskiet.”

De Lange has transferred “go and fight” faultlessly as *gaan veg*, but Griebenow’s use of the word *baklei*, calls to mind the way schoolchildren talk. The source text phrase “shoot...dead” has been correctly transferred by both translators as *doodskiet*. It is also worth noting that in all three texts, Hendrik is addressed as “*my baas*” (BT: “my master”), indicating Nongaas’ submissiveness. Today this form of address is best avoided since it is considered to be degrading to the user (*HAT* 2015:72; MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:25). However, its repetition by both translators evokes an era of white domination, which already existed in pre-apartheid South Africa. Moreover, Nongaas’ warning is an instance of dramatic irony in that ultimately, he is killed while Hendrik survives.

Before the attack, the Boers pray and sing hymns such as “Rest my soul, thy God is king”, rendered by both translators as *Rus my siel, jou God is Koning*. Its funerary



connotation hints at the grim outcome of the story. Furthermore, this hymn was presumably equally well known in English and Afrikaans during the nineteenth century, pointing to the cultural proximity of the two languages.

Owing to the darkness of the caves, the Boers cannot see the enemy and the fighting itself is compared to “the lyddite bombs at Paardeberg”, a reference to a later historical event, the battle of Paardeberg (18–27 February 1900) during which the British besieged and eventually conquered the Boers. After Potgieter had been killed, his commando retreated. In the story, Kruger’s bravery in retrieving the body is not mentioned at all – only the defeat of his attacking party.

ST pp 19–20: They had shot many kaffirs, but there were still hundreds of them left, who fought all the more fiercely with hunger gnawing at their bellies.

TT Griebenow, pp 63–64: Hulle het baie kaffers geskiet, maar daar was nog honderde van hulle oor wat des te meer vurig baklei het weens die honger wat aan hulle mae knaag.

TT De Lange, p 24: Hulle het baie kaffers geskiet, maar daar was steeds honderde van hulle oor, wat al hoe dapperder geveg het, hoe erger die honger aan hulle mae knaag.

Predictably, both translators have retained the offensive k-word, although a tinge of admiration for the black people’s perseverance may be inferred. Makapan’s followers fought “fiercely” (owing to hunger) which Griebenow has translated as *vurig*, thereby employing one of several translation options. While the meaning is correct, it does not collocate with the verb *baklei*; *verbete* (BT: determinedly) would have been a more idiomatic choice. De Lange has altered “fiercely” to *dapperder* (BT: more bravely) which collocates with *geveg*, even if the transfer of information is not entirely accurate. Both the translators’ choices result in ethical implications that might have remained unnoticed if they had not been compared to the source text.

On learning that Hendrik has not returned, Schalk requests that a search party be dispatched, but an enraged Pretorius blames Kruger and threatens dismissal from the commando if anyone goes back to the caves.

ST p 20: “It was all Kruger’s doing. I was against it from the start. Now Kommandant Potgieter has been killed, who was a better man than Kruger and all his Dopper clique put together.”

TT Griebenow, p 64: “Dit is alles Kruger se skuld. Ek was van die begin af daarteen gekant. Nou is kommandant Potgieter dood. Hy was ’n beter mens as Kruger en sy hele Dopperklikek saam.”

TT De Lange, p 24: “Dis alles Kruger se skuld. Ek was van die begin af daarteen. Nou is kommandant Potgieter dood, wat ’n veel beter man was as Kruger en sy hele Dopperklikek tesaam.”

The epithet “Dopper” qualifying the noun “clique”, repeated by both translators as *Dopperklikek*, refers to members of the rigidly Calvinist *Gereformeerde Kerk* (Reformed Church), noted for their conservatism and austerity (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:68). Paul Kruger belonged to this separatist Afrikaner group, which explains Bosman’s juxtaposition of him and them. The oldest derivation of the word *Dopper* is from the basin or *dop* (BT: shell) which was placed on a person’s head; all the hair sticking out, was cut off. This unflattering pudding basin haircut<sup>10</sup> used to be common among the early Doppers who viewed their nickname as derogatory. The main point of interest here is that meaning changes over time: words – such as Dopper – that were once derogatory may now be somewhat more acceptable.<sup>11</sup>

Equipped with food and water, Nongaas goes in search of Hendrik; this courageous undertaking moves Schalk:

ST pp 20–21: That was a very brave thing to do. If Makapan’s kaffirs saw him they would be sure to kill him, because he was helping the Boers against them, and also because he was a Bechuana.

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<sup>10</sup> The hairstyle can also be described as resembling an “inverted calabash shell” on the head ([www.dsae.co.za/#!/word/2071/Dopper](http://www.dsae.co.za/#!/word/2071/Dopper)).

<sup>11</sup> The reverse is also true: although the k-word was not regarded as racist during the 1930s when the story was first published, it has no place in South Africa today.

TT Griebenow, p 65: Dit was 'n baie dapper ding om te doen. As Makapan se kaffers hom sien, sou hulle hom vir seker skiet omdat hy die Boere teen hulle help, en ook omdat hy 'n Betsjoeana is.

TT De Lange, p 25: Dis 'n baie dapper ding om te doen. As Makapan se kaffers hom sien, sal hulle hom sekerlik doodmaak, want hy is besig om die Boere te help, en daarby is hy 'n Betsjoeana.

In the story, Makapan's people are not given any identity but Nongaas is said to be a Bechuana. From the above, the inference can be made that at the time of the siege the Kekana and the Bechuana were foes. How the besieged would recognise Nongaas as belonging to another ethnic group, especially from a distance, is not clarified. De Lange has translated the verb "kill" accurately as *doodmaak*, but Griebenow has altered it to *skiet* (BT: shoot), thereby anticipating how Nongaas would die. This passage is an example of dramatic irony in view of the story's moving end. After a sleepless night, Schalk loads his gun and resolves to go to Hendrik himself, pondering that Nongaas may have been killed in the effort, which heightens the irony.

Schalk is unsettled by the sight of some *aasvoëls* (BT: vultures) near a cave. Although these large birds of prey have various symbolic meanings, one of these meanings is "death-dealing destruction" (Cooper 1978:186).

ST p 21: I looked towards the cave. Inside it seemed as though there was something moving. A minute later I saw that it was a kaffir coming stealthily towards the entrance. He appeared to be looking in my direction, and for fear that he should see me and call the other kaffirs, I jumped up quickly and shot at him, aiming for the stomach. He fell over like a sack of potatoes and I was thankful for my father's advice.

TT Griebenow, pp 65–66: Ek het na die grot gekyk. Dit het gelyk asof iets daarin beweeg. 'n Minuut later het ek gesien dat dit 'n kaffer is wat suutjies na die ingang toe sluip. Dit het gelyk asof hy in my rigting kyk, en omdat ek bang was dat hy my sal sien en die ander kaffers roep, het ek vinnig opgespring, na sy maag gemik en hom geskiet. Hy het soos 'n sak patats inmeaargesak, en ek was dankbaar vir my pa se raad.

TT De Lange, p 26: Ek kyk na die grot. Dit lyk asof iets daarbinne beweeg. 'n Oomblik later sien ek dis 'n kaffer wat versigtig na die uitgang beweeg. Dit lyk asof hy reg na my kyk, en uit vrees dat hy my sal sien en die ander kaffers sal roep, spring ek vinnig op en skiet op hom, en mik na sy maag. Hy val soos 'n sak patats en ek is dankbaar vir my pa se raad.

The k-word occurs twice in the above passage. Instead of using the translation strategies of firstly, substitution, 'n swart man (BT: a black man) and secondly, omission of the objectionable word, die ander (BT: the others), both translators have chosen to retain it. The phrase “coming stealthily towards the entrance” has been translated differently in each case. Griebenow has rendered it as *suutjies na die ingang toe sluip* (BT: slinking quietly towards the entrance), thereby adding the word *suutjies* (BT: quietly) which is already implied by the verb *sluip*, while De Lange has changed the physical perspective to that of the black man as “entrance” becomes *uitgang* (BT: exit). Griebenow has transferred the idea that he appeared to be looking in Schalk’s direction, precisely as *in my rigting kyk*. De Lange, however, has made a semantic shift to *reg na my kyk* (BT: looking straight at me), thus changing a random glance into something of an encounter from afar, provoking a nervous Schalk to shoot at him without hesitation in an attempt to prevent him from calling the others. In the original, the victim’s collapse is compared to “a sack of potatoes”, but in both translations the word “potatoes” has been replaced by *patats* (BT: sweet potatoes), the idiomatic equivalent in Afrikaans, albeit with a change in denotative meaning. Griebenow’s choice of word, *inmekaargesak* (BT: collapsed) is more dramatic than either “fell over” in the original or *val* in De Lange’s translation. The translators’ preferred strategies of addition, change of perspective and semantic shifts are optional with ethical implications for impacting on the inferred meaning of the passage, although the idiomatic change [from potatoes to sweet potatoes] is obligatory<sup>12</sup> and is thus not of ethical import. Schalk runs into the cave, expecting to be pursued by a host of men. As nobody comes after him, he starts looking for his brother. Having just slain a man, Schalk’s reference to his faith in the Lord to guide him is ironic, even though

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<sup>12</sup> Chesterman’s notion that translation strategies may be either obligatory, because of linguistic differences, or optional (Chesterman & Wagner 2002:60), has been referred to in Chapter 3, section 3.4.2.

the action takes place during a war. He soon finds Hendrik, suffering from a sprained ankle caused by a fall into a ditch, which accounts for his prolonged absence from the camp. He remained helpless in the dark cave until Nongaas came to his rescue. As the water had run out before Hendrik's thirst could be quenched, Nongaas went to fill the bottle at the pan, thereby putting himself in great danger. Hendrik fears for his friend's life, but Schalk reassures him, notwithstanding his own doubt.

ST p 22: "They will not kill him," I said. "Nongaas will come back." I said that, but in my heart I was afraid. For the caves were many and dark, and the kaffirs were blood-mad.

TT Griebenow, p 68: "Hulle sal hom nie doodmaak nie," sê ek. "Nongaas sal terugkom." Ek het so gesê, maar ek het 'n beklemming om my hart gevoel. Want daar was 'n klomp donker grotte, en die kaffers was bloeddorstig.

TT De Lange, p 27: "Hulle sal hom nie doodmaak nie," sê ek. "Nongaas sal terugkom." Ek sê dit, maar in my hart is ek bevrees. Want die grotte is eindeloos en donker, en die kaffers is bloeddorstig.

Despite similarity, there are also differences between the translations reflecting each translator's own interpretation. Griebenow has transferred Schalk's fright as *beklemming* (BT: constriction), but De Lange has used a word with a biblical undertone and one that belongs to a more formal register: *bevrees* (BT: filled with fear). These choices have ethical significance as they affect the truth, if compared to the source text.

The notion that black people are "blood-mad," rendered by both translators as *bloeddorstig* (BT: bloodthirsty) is a racist stereotype seemingly accepted by Oom Schalk. Thus, the prevalent attitude in Bosman's time towards people of another group is explicit, making the translators' repetition of the offensive epithet unnecessary.

Because of the perceived danger inside the cave together with the stench of the decaying bodies, Schalk carries his injured brother towards the entrance. Despite his pain, Hendrik experiences a moment of truth as he recalls that Nongaas was crying when he found him, realising the extent of his affinity. The sentence "He has been very good to me – so very good" is effectively a eulogy for Nongaas. Hendrik also regrets

that he threw stones at him the day they first met, when he discovered that the small boy had followed behind their wagons. For the last time, he expresses the wish for Nongaas' safe return. Schalk tries to hide his discomfort by attributing Hendrik's display of emotion to fever.

ST p 23: "Of course he will come back," I answered him. But this time I knew that I lied. For as I came through the mouth of the cave I kicked against the kaffir I had shot there. The body sagged over to one side and I saw the face.

TT Griebenow (2011), p 9: "Natuurlik sal hy terugkom," het ek hom geantwoord. Maar hierdie keer het ek geweet ek jok. Want toe ek by die bek van die grot kom, het ek teen die kaffer wat ek daar geskiet het, se lyk geskop, en toe die liggaam omrol, het ek die gesig herken.

TT Griebenow (2016), p 68: "Natuurlik sal hy terugkom," antwoord ek hom. Maar hierdie keer het ek geweet ek jok. Want toe ek by die bek van die grot kom, het my voet teen die kaffer wat ek daar geskiet het, gestamp. Die liggaam het eenkant toe geval, en ek het die gesig gesien.

TT De Lange, p 27: "Natuurlik sal hy terugkom," antwoord ek. Maar dié keer weet ek dat ek lieg. Want toe ek deur die bek van die grot loop, het ek geskop teen die kaffer wat ek vroeër daar geskiet het. Die liggaam het op sy sy gerol en ek het die gesig gesien.

In transferring the verb "lied", Griebenow has used a euphemism, *jok* (BT: fib) in both his 2011 and 2016 translations, while De Lange has used a harsher word, *lieg*, to underline the seriousness of the matter. Here, De Lange has translated in a more truthful and ethical way than Griebenow. It is stated in the source text that Schalk saw the face of the person he had shot, from which it can be inferred that he saw Nongaas' face, a face known to him since childhood and hence, the only one belonging to a black person that he could have recognised. In the 2011 translation, Griebenow has changed the verb "saw" to *herken* (BT: recognise) possibly with the aim of spelling it out to the reader and hence reducing the irony. This is unethical in that it misrepresents an inherent feature of Bosman's work, while De Lange has translated it accurately as *gesien*. In the 2016 version, Griebenow has amended *herken* to *gesien*.

A great deal has been written about this story. Gray (1986:26) describes it as “one of [Bosman’s] greatest achievements in the ironic mode”. Rosenberg (2005:76) views it as “one of the most powerful antiracist statements in South African literature”. To my mind, the story is only antiracist in as far as the friendship between Hendrik and Nongaas is concerned, a friendship which includes Schalk as well. MacKenzie and Sandham (2011:137) consider it “a tragedy of Greek proportions highlighting the futility of war”. This comparison to a Greek tragedy hinges on mistaken identity. Ironically, Nongaas is not killed by the enemy, but by his childhood friend, Schalk, who mistook him for one of Makapan’s “blood-mad” men.

Because of Schalk’s involvement in the story he tells, his reliability as narrator is in question. Abbott (2008:77) distinguishes between two kinds of unreliable narrators, namely “those whom we trust for the facts but not for their interpretation ... and those whom we cannot even trust for the facts”. Oom Schalk cannot be fully relied on to explain the facts, because he postpones identifying Nongaas as his unfortunate victim, whom he has shot in the stomach before entering the cave. Oom Schalk is thus not frank about Nongaas’ death; had he been frank, it would have undermined the story’s impact. Since both translators have retained the k-word that occurs thirty-six times in “Makapan’s Caves”, they evidently regard their ethical duty as mere fidelity to the author.

### **4.3.2 “The Rooinek”**

#### **4.3.2.1 Background**

This is a sombre tale about the unlikely friendship between an Afrikaner and an Englishman subsequent to the Second South African War.<sup>13</sup> The Afrikaans term *Rooinek*, a derogatory name for an Englishman, literally means “red neck”. It originated from the phenomenon that Englishmen, unaccustomed to the severe African sun, mainly burnt red in the neck as they wore inadequate hats ([www.dsae.co.za/#!/word/6098/rooinek](http://www.dsae.co.za/#!/word/6098/rooinek)). Conversely, when the Afrikaans community

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<sup>13</sup> The terms “South African War” and “Anglo-Boer War” are used interchangeably in this study, although I prefer the latter, since it is the term upheld by Fransjohan Pretorius (2000), an authority on this war.

has accepted an English speaker, its members employ this term as an endearment (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:193). Because of the last-mentioned connotation, it is understandable that both Griebenow and De Lange have retained the story's title: "Die Rooinek".

#### 4.3.2.2 Comparative analysis

The opening section of the story evokes the Second Anglo-Boer War, fought between Great Britain and the South African Republics from October 1899 to May 1902. Oom Schalk is relating his and his nephew's encounter with two English officers during this war:

ST p 24: Rooineks, said Oom Schalk Lourens, are queer. For instance, there was that day when my nephew Hannes and I had dealings with a couple of Englishmen near Dewetsdorp. It was shortly after Sanna's Post, and Hannes and I were lying behind a rock watching the road.

TT Griebenow, p 140: Rooinekke (het oom Schalk Lourens gesê) is vreemd. Dink nou byvoorbeeld aan die dag toe ek en my susterskind Hannes 'n paar Engelsmanne naby Dewetsdorp teëgekóm het. Dit was kort ná Sannaspos. Ek en Hannes het agter 'n rots gelê en die pad dopgehou.

TT De Lange, p 28: ROOINEKKE, Sê OOM SCHALK LOURENS, is vreemde goed. Vat byvoorbeeld die dag toe ek en my susterskind Hannes met 'n paar Engelsmanne naby Dewetsdorp te doen kry. Dis kort ná Sannaspos, en ek en Hannes lê agter 'n rots en hou die pad dop.

In the above, the translators have adhered to the source text's designations, "Rooineks" and "Englishmen", demonstrating their fidelity to the author. The translators have rendered the old-fashioned adjective, "queer", correctly as *vreemd* (BT: strange) but De Lange has used addition as a translation strategy: *vreemde goed* (BT: strange things), resulting here in a less formal register. The place names, Dewetsdorp and Sanna's Post refer to a town in the Free State, and the waterworks near Bloemfontein, respectively. The latter was the site of a brilliant victory for the Boers under the



command of General Christiaan de Wet at the end of March 1900 (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:197; Pretorius 2000:115).

Oom Schalk and Hannes fired simultaneously, wounding one of the Englishmen. The other soldier is said to have done “a queer thing” (p 25): after calmly lifting the injured man onto his horse, he walked on a few yards, before turning around and waving in the Boers’ direction, as if tempting them to shoot again. Owing to Oom Schalk’s astonishment at this man’s bravery, he depicts all Englishmen as queer.

A significant divergence occurs when Griebenow translates “the Boer War” as the *Vryheidsoorlog* (BT: War of Independence) as some Afrikaners call it, instead of using the more neutral term, *Boereoorlog* (BT: Boer War), as De Lange does. Oom Schalk refers to the devastation of the war: the ruination of his farm and the concentration camps into which the British forced many Afrikaner women and children. It is against this background that Afrikaner resentment should be viewed.

After receiving a sum of money from the new Government in compensation for part of their losses, Oom Schalk and his wife left the Free State to settle on a Government farm in the northern part of the Marico Bushveld. Having said that those who had trekked there were extremely bitter against the English, Oom Schalk reports in the next sentence: “Then it was that the rooinek came”. The repetition of this epithet recalls the beginning of the story. On hearing the news that an Englishman was going to live in the district, Koos Steyn remarks, “Always when the Englishman comes, it means that a little later the Boer has got to shift”, summing up the attitude of the Marico community. Oom Schalk uses the phrase “we Boers”, rendered by both translators as *ons Boere* to demonstrate Afrikaner solidarity against the unwelcome English immigrant in their midst.

Seen from a distance, the Englishman’s wagon is described as “strange”, linking it with the idea that the English themselves are “queer”, as expressed by Oom Schalk. Griebenow and De Lange have applied the same word, *vreemd*, to translate both designations. In this instance, the source text shows more variety in its vocabulary. Next, the people who accompany the wagon are named: “one white man and two kaffirs”. Both translators have repeated the objectionable k-word, instead of using a less expressive word.

The sole outward feature that distinguished the Englishman from the Boers was the detail that he wore socks (“kouse” in the Afrikaans translations), implying the cultural difference in his being more refined than the latter. The Rooinek, Webber (his first name is never given), shook hands only with Koos Steyn, who was to become his friend, and with Oom Schalk Lourens, because the other Afrikaners refused to do so. Oom Schalk explains his tolerance for the Englishman: the misery of the war was not truly his fault, but rather that of the bellicose and acquisitive English government who wanted access to the Transvaal’s goldfields:

ST p 28: It was the fault of the English Government, who wanted our gold mines. And it was also the fault of Queen Victoria, who didn’t like Oom Paul Kruger, because they say that when he went over to London Oom Paul spoke to her only once for a few minutes. Oom Paul Kruger said that he was a married man and he was afraid of widows.

TT Griebenow, p 145: Dit was die Engelse Goewerment wat ons goudmyne gesoek het se skuld. En dit was ook Queen Victoria, wat nie van oom Paul Kruger gehou het nie, se skuld. Want hulle sê dat, toe oom Paul Kruger Londen toe gegaan het, hy net een keer ’n paar minute lank met haar gepraat het. Oom Paul Kruger het gesê hy is ’n getroude man en hy is lugtig vir weduwees.

TT De Lange, p 32: Dis die Engelse regering se skuld, wat ons goudmyne wou hê. En dis ook koningin Victoria se skuld, wat nie van oom Paul Kruger gehou het nie, want hulle sê toe hy oor is Londen toe, het oom Paul net een keer ’n paar minute lank met haar gesels. Oom Paul Kruger het gesê hy’s ’n getroude man en versigtig vir weduwees.

Queen Victoria, the British monarch who reigned from 1837 to 1901, was, in Oom Schalk’s view, to blame as well. She evidently disliked Paul Kruger (1825–1904), the last president of the Transvaal Republic. He led several deputations to London, but apparently met her only once. Bosman highlights Queen Victoria’s widowhood. After the death of her husband Prince Albert on 14 December 1861, she remained in mourning for the rest of her life (Dennison 2013:82 and 91). Griebenow has repeated the reference to the sovereign as “Queen Victoria” in his target text, giving it a mocking

undertone by means of code switching, whereas De Lange has translated it accurately into Afrikaans as *koningin Victoria*.<sup>14</sup>

Webber admitted to Oom Schalk and Koos Steyn that he knew little about sheep, cattle or mealies, showing them his set of books on farming. Oom Schalk remarks: “It is lucky that those books are written in English, and that the Boers can’t read them”, a reference to the linguistic difference between the Englishman and the Afrikaans community. Being a good neighbour, Koos Steyn helped Webber by advising him on farming matters and showing him how things worked, and a close friendship developed. Webber was particularly fond of the Steyn couple’s baby daughter, Jemima, who was born a few weeks prior to his arrival in the Marico:

ST p 30: Right from the first Webber had taken a liking to that child ...

TT Griebenow, p 146: Webber het vanuit die staanspoor ’n sagte plekkie vir die kind gehad ...

TT De Lange, p 33: Reg van die begin af is Webber verknog aan daardie kind ...

In his translation, De Lange has intensified “liking” to *verknog aan* (BT: attached to), whereas Griebenow has resorted to sentimentality, probably owing to his unique lexical priming and idiolect: *Webber het ... ’n sagte plekkie vir die kind gehad*. (BT: Webber had a soft spot for the child.)

Next, the effect of their friendship on the rest of the community is described: “the other farmers around there became annoyed on account of Koos Steyn’s friendship with the rooinek”. Both translators have rendered “annoyed” into Afrikaans as *omgekrap* (BT: upset), making it more subjective than the original. Koos was accused of being a *hendsopper* (BT: “hands-upper”; someone who surrenders easily) and a traitor to his country because of his association with “a man who had helped to bring about the downfall of the Afrikaner nation”, although he was actually a Cape rebel who need not have fought in the war. Reference is made to an earlier historical event, the

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<sup>14</sup> Plowden (2016:255) describes Queen Victoria as “the formidable matriarch, grandmother of Europe and Regina Imperatrix who gave her name to an age”.

Slagtersnek rebellion of 1815–1816, which resulted in the execution of six Boers by the British (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:206) when Gerhardus Grobbelaar says:

ST p 30: “Boer and Englishman have been enemies since before Slagtersnek.”

TT Griebenow, p 147: “Boer en Brit is al vyande van vóór Slagtersnek af...”

TT De Lange, p 34: “Boer en Engelsman was al voor Slagtersnek vyande.”

Griebenow has used the word *Brit* in his translation, which is not derogatory – it simply means “a person from (Great) Britain” (*HAT* 2015:152). De Lange’s version is less wordy and more precise. By placing the word *vyande* (BT: enemies) at the end of the sentence, De Lange has given it less prominence than in Griebenow’s translation that replicates the source text’s word order. The change of emphasis in De Lange’s translation has ethical significance for altering the inferred meaning. Koos answers:

ST p 30: “When we get to understand one another perhaps we won’t need to fight anymore.”

TT Griebenow, p 147: “As ons mekaar leer verstaan, hoef ons dalk nie meer haaks te wees nie.”

TT De Lange, p 34: “As ons mekaar eers beter leer ken, sal dit dalk nie meer nodig wees om te veg nie.”

Griebenow has transferred the word “fight” by means of figurative language, *haaks ... wees* (BT: at loggerheads), while De Lange has applied the verb *veg*, a stronger word evoking the war, which is a more suitable choice in the given context. Koos mentions that Webber was speaking Afrikaans well and adds the prophetic phrase: “some day he might almost be one of us” and then jokes that if he stops bathing and brushing his teeth, “you will hardly be able to tell him from a Boer”, pointing to a cultural difference in personal hygiene.

ST p 30: “The only thing I can’t understand about him is that he has a bath every morning. But if he stops that and if he doesn’t brush his teeth any more you will hardly be able to tell him from a Boer.”

TT Griebenow, p 147: “Die enigste ding van hom wat ek nie kan kleinkry nie, is dat hy elke oggend bad. Maar as hy ophou daarmee en nie meer sy tande borsel nie, sal jy kwalik tussen hom en ’n Afrikaner kan onderskei.”

TT De Lange, p 34: “Die enigste ding wat ek nie kan kleinkry nie, is dat hy elke oggend bad. Maar as hy daarmee ophou en nie meer sy tande borsel nie, sal jy hom skaars van ’n Boer kan onderskei.”

Griebenow has manifested his ideological stance by substituting *Afrikaner* for *Boer*. Since the latter is sometimes used derogatively (*HAT* 2015:134), he has decided not to use it. De Lange, however, has retained the epithet *Boer* in his target text. Moreover, it is interesting to note that the Englishman is associated with cleanliness and hence, water, which contributes to the sad irony of the ending.

Following an outbreak of the *miltsiek* (BT: anthrax) which destroyed their cattle, five Marico farmers decided to trek to German West Africa [Namibia today], in search of independence from English rule. Ironically, the Englishman went with them – Webber sold his wagon and joined the Steyn family’s trek. According to Oom Schalk, it was not that he was so keen to leave as that “he and Koos Steyn had become very much attached to one another”. At the end of the first day, the party reached the Bechuanaland Protectorate [the colonial name for Botswana] and felt happier for being done with the Transvaal, even if they were still in British territory. The next sentence reports:

ST pp 31–32: We saw Webber every day now, and although he was a foreigner with strange ways, and would remain an Uitlander until he died, yet we disliked him less than before for being a rooinek.

TT Griebenow, p 148: Ons het Webber nou elke dag gesien, en hoewel hy ’n uitlander met vreemde gewoontes was, en tot sy dood ’n uitlander sou bly, het ons die feit dat hy ’n Rooinek is, minder as voorheen teen hom gehou.

TT De Lange, p 35: Ons sien Webber nou elke dag, en hoewel hy ’n vreemdeling met vreemde gebruike is en ’n Uitlander sal bly tot die dag van sy dood, verkwalik ons hom tog minder as vroeër dat hy ’n Rooinek is.

*Uitlander* means foreigner/immigrant; in the late nineteenth century, the term indicated a foreigner who came to South Africa for its diamonds and gold (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:231). Griebenow has translated the word “foreigner” by paraphrase, using a related word: *van vreemde afkoms* (BT: of foreign descent). Here, *rooinek* almost becomes a term of endearment because the Boers are closer to accepting the Englishman in their midst. In terms of style, Griebenow’s use of the past tense leads to a lengthy, stilted translation, while De Lange translates more fluently.

Malopolole was the last settlement with [brackish] water that they reached before their journey took them deeper into the Kalahari Desert. Oom Schalk recalls the religious service they held there. As they sat on the ground, listening to Gerhardus Grobbelaar reading from the Bible, and while the baby, Jemima, playfully tried to bite Webber’s fingers, Oom Schalk ponders that she did not know that he was not one of them and in that respect, she was wiser than the adults:

ST p 32: To her it made no difference that the man whose fingers she bit was born in another country and did not speak the same language that she did.

TT Griebenow, p 149: Vir haar het dit geen verskil gemaak dat die man wie se vingers sy byt in ’n ander land gebore is en nie dieselfde taal as sy praat nie.

TT De Lange, p 36: Vir haar het dit geen verskil gemaak dat die man wie se vingers sy probeer byt in ’n ander land gebore is en ’n ander taal as sy praat nie.

This is another reference to national and linguistic differences between Afrikaner and English people, and to their lesser importance in the narrator’s eyes. Griebenow has followed the source text closely, while De Lange has added the lexical repetition cohesive element, *probeer* (BT: try) to reinforce the paragraph’s cohesion. Moreover, Griebenow has adhered to the source text’s wording, *nie dieselfde taal ... nie* (BT: not the same language), while De Lange has emphasised the idea of *’n ander taal* (BT: another language), on the basis of “another country”, which has ethical relevance as it alters the inferred meaning.

As they were leaving, not knowing where they would find water again, Koos Steyn joked about the Great *Dorstland Trek* (BT: Thirst Land Trek) – a series of earlier treks northwards by settlers from the Boer Republics in pursuit of political freedom

(MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:94) – saying that fewer of them would die of thirst. Oom Schalk comments:

ST p 34: I thought it was bad luck for Koos Steyn to make jokes like that about the Dorstland Trek ...

TT Griebenow, p 151: Ek het gevoel dat Koos Steyn onheil oor ons gaan bring deur grappies te maak oor die Dorslandtrek ...

TT De Lange, p 38: Ek het gedink Koos tart die noodlot deur met die Dorslandtrek te spot ...

De Lange has amplified “bad luck” to *noodlot*, a word that can be back-translated as “fate”, with one of its meanings being “the unescapable death of someone” (*Concise Oxford English Dictionary* 2011:518). Griebenow has altered “bad luck” to *onheil* (BT: evil) in the Biblical sense, which Koos is bringing not only upon himself but on the whole group. Since none of the translators have selected the less expressive equivalent, *teëspoed*, which would have retained the inferred meaning, it can be assumed that their choices have ethical import.

The story continues: one morning the Boers discovered that their black attendants had deserted them during the night. In the source text, Oom Schalk calls them “our kaffirs”, a racial epithet that both translators have reproduced verbatim: *ons kaffers*. The possessive pronoun “our” preceding the offensive word gives the impression that, deprived of a distinct identity, they were regarded as mere objects, belonging to the white men. An alternative interpretation is that they were essentially part of the Boer trek, and thus valued to a degree.

Following the death of one of Abraham Ferreira’s daughters, the group abruptly decided to turn back, but Koos Steyn refused. His wife silently obeyed him, while the men tried to reason with him. Koos insisted that having made up his mind to cross the Kalahari, he was not turning back on a whim. Throughout the story, he is depicted as a stubborn individual who does not let anyone dictate to him – whether fighting in the war as a rebel, making friends with the Englishman, or continuing into the desert without water. At this point Webber’s loyalty becomes clear, with Oom Schalk explaining why he said earlier on that Englishmen are queer:

ST p 37: Webber must have known that if Koos Steyn had not actually gone wrong in the head, still what he was doing now was madness, and yet he stayed with him.

TT Griebenow, p 156: Webber moes geweet het dat – selfs al was Koos Steyn nie regtig van sy trollie af nie – dit wat Koos wou doen, gek was. En tog het hy by hom gebly.

TT De Lange, p 41: Webber moes geweet het dat, as Koos nie inderdaad van lotjie getik was nie, was sy optrede waansinnig, en tóg het hy by hom gestaan.

In the above, Griebenow has rendered the phrase “gone wrong in the head” by means of informal, figurative language, *van sy trollie af* (BT: to be off his rocker), in tune with modern parlance; De Lange has used a standard idiom, *van lotjie getik* (BT: to be wrong in the head), suggested by the bilingual *Pharos Dictionary* (2010:1044). In this instance, both translators have been truthful to the original, even though they have used different expressions.

After their ordeal in the desert during which several children died, Oom Schalk and the others eventually reached Malopolole and water, with two wagons and a few cattle. Later, they fitted out a wagon with fresh oxen and plentiful supplies of water and went back into the desert in search of the Steyn family [including Webber]:

ST p 38: With the help of the Sechuana kaffirs, who could see tracks that we could not see, we found the wagon.

TT Griebenow, p 157: Die Setsjoeana-kaffers, wat spore kan sien wat ons nie kan sien nie, het ons gehelp om die wa te vind.

TT De Lange, p 42: Met die hulp van Setsjoeana-kaffers wat spore kan sien wat ons nie kan sien nie, kry ons die wa.

Instead of using the translation strategy of omission of the offensive k-word that occurs eight times in this story, Griebenow and De Lange have insisted on translating it. This calls to mind an earlier reference in the story to the “Bakwena kaffirs” where both translators used the same translation strategy. This would seem to suggest that for Bosman, the Bakwena and Sechuana people in the Protectorate had stronger



identities than black people in South Africa. This idea has been reinforced by both the translators.

Despite the racial epithet, the Sechuana people are represented as wise because of their ability to decipher tracks. They found the Steyn couple's dead bodies side by side in the sand and near them the Englishman, clutching a bundle of rags and a child's clothes. The baby, Jemima, was not found and Oom Schalk concluded that her father must have buried her, as the adults would have survived longer in the desert than children:

ST p 38: We never found the baby Jemima. She must have died somewhere along the way and Koos Steyn must have buried her.

TT Griebenow, p 157: Ons het nooit die babatjie, Jemima, gekry nie. Sy het waarskynlik êrens langs die pad gesterf en Koos Steyn het haar begrawe.

TT De Lange, p 43: Ons het nooit die baba, Jemima, gekry nie. Sy moes iewers langs die pad gesterf het en Koos Steyn moes haar begrawe het.

Griebenow has changed "baby" to its diminutive form, *babatjie*, while adding the word *waarskynlik* (BT: probably) to *gesterf* (BT: died), followed by: *Koos Steyn het haar begrawe* (BT: Koos Steyn buried her), which is more definitive; consequently, his translation has ethical implications for diverting from the original. De Lange's translation replicates the source text. In his feverish state, Webber must have thought up until his death that he was carrying the little girl, according to Oom Schalk.

### 4.3.3 "The Gramophone"

#### 4.3.3.1 Background

The title of this early Oom Schalk Lourens story, "The Gramophone", which first appeared in *The Toulleier* in 1931, refers to an important invention in the history of recorded sound. In 1887, Emile Berliner invented the gramophone, which used a flat disc for recording, rather than a cylinder as had previously been the case. Flat discs had the advantage of being easier to mass-produce than cylinders (Pocket Eyewitness *Inventions: facts at your fingertips* 2016). Although the period of the narrative is

unspecified, it can be assumed that it takes place sometime during the 1920s when gramophones became universally popular. Today, gramophones are found in museums, antique shops and private collections as these old-fashioned machines have been superseded by record players and more recently, by compact disc (CD) players, mp3 files and iTunes.

Bosman's story "The Gramophone" is a gloomy Gothic tale of a marital break-up ending in murder. It is slightly reminiscent of Edgar Allan Poe's<sup>15</sup> murder story, "The Tell-Tale Heart" (2015), as MacKenzie and Sandham (2011:93) point out.

Krisjan Lemmer, a sturdy, stoical farmer and proud owner of the first gramophone in the Marico Bushveld, does not get along with his young wife, Susannah. Even though the gramophone provides entertainment or momentary escape from their unhappiness, it seems to drive the quarrelsome couple further apart. Susannah neglects her housewifely duties, for example by making weak coffee, but is nettled by Krisjan's complaints. Oom Schalk, the first-person narrator, plays the role of friend to the husband and comforter of the wife. Since Oom Schalk is an occasional visitor to the Lemmers' house, he is not wholly involved in the story he tells, which makes him a more reliable narrator than in some of the other stories, such as "Makapan's Caves."

#### 4.3.3.2 Comparative analysis

Narrated in the past tense, the story begins ominously:

ST p 53: That was a terrible thing that happened with Krisjan Lemmer, Oom Schalk Lourens said. It was pretty bad for me, of course, but it was much worse for Krisjan.

TT Griebenow,<sup>16</sup> p 96: Dit was 'n verskriklike ding wat met Krisjan Lemmer gebeur het (het oom Schalk Lourens gesê). Dit was natuurlik taamlik erg vir my, maar dit was baie erger vir Krisjan.

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<sup>15</sup> Bosman greatly admired the American short-story writer and poet, Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849) "for his bohemian lifestyle and ... intensely psychological fiction" (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:175).

<sup>16</sup> "The Gramophone" has only been translated by Griebenow. The reason De Lange has not translated it as well is simply that it was not included in the volume, *Best stories and humour of Herman Charles*

The narrative seems to start at a point after the end of the story, but in reality, there is no story until the narrative discourse<sup>17</sup> is expressed (Abbott 2008). Griebenow has successfully reproduced the lexical cohesion between the adjective “terrible”, and the degrees of comparison “pretty bad” and “much worse” as *verskriklike*, *taamlik erg* and *baie erger*. The unspeakable “terrible thing” is said to have happened at the time when the first gramophone arrived in the district:

ST p 53: Krisjan bought the machine off a Jew trader from Pretoria. It’s funny when you come to think of it. When there is anything that we Boers don’t want you can be quite sure that the Jew traders will bring it to us, and that we’ll buy it, too.

TT Griebenow, p 96: Krisjan het die masjien by ’n Joodse smous van Pretoria gekoop. Dis nogal snaaks as ’n mens daaraan dink. As daar enigiets is wat ons Boere nie wil hê nie, kan jy maar seker wees dat die Joodse smouse dit vir ons sal bring. En wat meer is, dat ons dit sal koop.

Bosman’s references to various groups of people in the course of the narrative are intriguing. To begin with, there is the unnamed “Jew trader”, a stock character appearing in several Bushveld stories (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011), who sold Krisjan Lemmer a second-hand gramophone, and Oom Schalk a thermometer. Griebenow has translated “trader” as *smous* (BT: itinerant trader) and not as *handelaar* (BT: trader). Still, the transfer of information is correct because a trader from Pretoria would have been obliged to travel in order to sell his wares to the Marico farmers. In the source text, the community is referred to as “we Boers” and Griebenow has retained this in his translation as “*ons Boere*”, despite the fact already noted that the epithet *Boer* is sometimes viewed as racist and derogatory (HAT 2015:134). By using the pronoun “we”, Oom Schalk associates himself with the Afrikaans community. In Bosman’s stories, both meanings of *Boer* are activated: farmer (spelled without the capital letter) and *Afrikaner*. The Afrikaans-speaking farmers are gullible, allowing the

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*Bosman*. MacKenzie, who selected the best stories, did apparently not consider “The Gramophone” to be one of them, and Gray, who chose the humorous ones, could certainly not classify it as such, since it is a “non-humorous” story as Lenta, (2003:118) affirms.

<sup>17</sup> Abbott (2008:238) defines **narrative discourse** as follows: “The story as narrated – that is, the story as rendered in a particular narrative”.

Jewish trader to persuade them to buy items they do not need or even desire. The word “Jew” refers to “a member of the people whose traditional religion is Judaism and who trace their origins to the ancient Hebrew people of Israel” (*Concise Oxford English Dictionary* 2011:763), but in Afrikaans it has the additional, derogatory meaning of a mercenary person (*HAT* 2015:558; my own translation), which Griebenow has activated here. It seems to amuse Oom Schalk that the Boers are less assertive than the Jews, for he jokes that if the latter had brought the *miltseik* (BT: anthrax), the former would have bought it too. Bosman was not anti-Semitic, since he had Jewish acquaintances and friends throughout his life, such as his classmate, Bernard Sachs, and later his pupil, Lionel Abrahams (Saks 2015).

Krisjan Lemmer owned one gramophone record, a drinking song in Afrikaans, *O Brandewyn laat my staan* (BT: Oh brandy, leave me alone):

ST p 54: Krisjan played that often; the man on the round plate sang it rather well. Only the way he pronounced the words made it seem as though he was a German trying to make “O Brandewyn laat my staan” sound English. It was just like the rooineks, I thought. First they took our country and governed it for us in a better way than we could do ourselves; now they wanted to make improvements in our language for us.

TT Griebenow, p 97: Krisjan het dit baiekeer gespeel; die man op die ronde plaat het dit nogal goed gesing. Die enigste probleem was dat hy, te oordeel aan sy uitspraak, ’n Duitser was wat “O Brandewyn laat my staan” Engels wou laat klink. Dit is tipies van die Rooinekke, het ek gedink. Eers het hulle ons land afgevat en dit beter namens ons regeer as wat ons self kon; nou wil hulle ons taal namens ons opknap.

Griebenow has translated correctly, except for replacing the word “only” at the beginning of the second sentence with the phrase *die enigste probleem was dat* (BT: the only problem was that), which constitutes unnecessary addition – spelling out what was suggested in the original. He further rendered the verb “took” as *afgevat* (BT: took away) which intensifies the source text’s inferred meaning: the English, called

“rooineks”<sup>18</sup> in the story, did not merely take the Boers’ country after the Second Anglo-Boer War; they took it **away** from them. Being stylistic expressions, these additions – whether intentional or not – can be seen as ideological insertions on the part of the translator. It would seem that Griebenow is not as keen on the English as the author was. Moreover, Griebenow’s additions interfere with Bosman’s ironic tone, which almost makes light of the Boer War’s outcome. In my view, it is unethical practice to reduce the original author’s distinctive irony in translation, although inaccuracy in itself is not necessarily unethical, as accuracy and ethics are two distinct concepts as argued in Chapter 1, section 1.6.1.

Having mentioned the Jew trader, the Boers, and the rooineks, Oom Schalk subsequently refers to the Indian storekeeper<sup>19</sup> when describing Susannah Lemmer’s quiet disposition, since – according to MacKenzie and Sandham (2011) – she merely states the obvious:

ST p 55: In company she hardly ever talked, unless it was to say that the Indian shopkeeper in Ramoutsa put roasted kremetart roots with the coffee he sold us ... Even the Indian storekeeper didn’t argue about the kremetart roots. He knew that was the best part of his coffee.

TT Griebenow, p 98: Sy het skaars boe of ba gesê in geselskap, behalwe as sy gesê het dat die koelie van die winkel op Ramoutsa gebrande kremetartwortels by die koffie sit wat hy aan ons verkoop ... Selfs die koelie van die winkel het nie gestry oor die kremetartwortels nie. Hy het geweet dit is die beste deel van sy koffie.

Griebenow has changed the neutral word “Indian”, denoting “a person of Indian descent” (*Concise Oxford English Dictionary* 2011:723) in the context of the story, to

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<sup>18</sup> The epithet *rooinek* can be interpreted as either derogatory or endearing. In this reference to the Second Anglo-Boer War, the implied meaning is derogatory. For a full explanation of the term’s uses, please refer to the background section of “The Rooinek” (4.3.2.1).

<sup>19</sup> The cunning shopkeeper at Ramoutsa, whose name is not divulged, features in many of Bosman’s stories (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011). We encounter him again in the analysis of “Splendours from Ramoutsa”.

the racial slur, *koelie*<sup>20</sup> (BT: coolie), an old-fashioned and contemptuous term for an Indian, one of the words that Mr Mandela urged South Africans in his 1994 parliamentary opening speech to avoid in the hope of ending racism. Why has Griebenow selected an offensive word over the more neutral and accurate designation, *Indiër*? His disturbing choice would seem unethical both with regard to the deceased writer and the modern reader for misrepresenting the original. However, as Bosman used this derogatory term in his Afrikaans story, “Glansverhaal uit Ramoutsa se winkel”, which the translator has apparently consulted as a parallel text, Griebenow’s choice is not as unethical as it appears at first glance. Bosman himself was being unethical, although the use of racial labels was the norm in his day.

The last group that Bosman refers to is black South Africans. Krisjan Lemmer is depicted as a placid man, but extremely violent once provoked (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011). In order to exemplify the extent of Krisjan’s brutality, Oom Schalk narrates an incident with a Mtosa chief:

ST p 55: [T]here was the time when the chief of the Mtosa kaffirs passed him in the veld and said “Good morning” without taking the leopard skin off his head and calling Krisjan baas. Krisjan was fined ten pounds by the magistrate and had to pay for the doctor during the three months that the Mtosa chief walked with a stick.

TT Griebenow, pp 98–99: Daar was byvoorbeeld die keer toe die hoofman van die Mtosa-kaffers in die veld verby hom geloop het en goeiemôre gesê het sonder om die luiperdvel van sy kop af te haal en Krisjan “Baas” te noem. Die magistraat het Krisjan met tien pond beboet én Krisjan moes drie maande lank die doktersbesoeke betaal terwyl die Mtosa-hoofman met ’n kierie geloop het.

The unfamiliar word in the source text, “Mtosa”, may refer to diverse Xhosa groups who lived in the Marico under Chief Sebe (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:150), although Bosman has presumably misquoted it because “the word does not exist as it is written here” (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:151). By following the source text unquestioningly, Griebenow has repeated the offensive k-word, instead of omitting it.

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<sup>20</sup> This offensive word is not even listed in the major Afrikaans dictionary, *HAT* (2015), indicating that its use is dated and undesirable today.

However, near the end of the quotation, mention is made of “the Mtosa chief” and this the translator has rendered accurately and ethically as *die Mtosa-hoofman* since there is no hint of derogation.

The above passage contains another objectionable word, namely *baas* (BT: master), used to address an employer, “especially a white man in charge of coloured or black people” (*Concise Oxford English Dictionary* 2011:94). Being a chief himself (who clearly operates outside white society), the Mtosa is not in the employ of Krisjan Lemmer, but the latter nevertheless expects to be treated as a superior. Today, this is absurd, but at the time of the story’s initial publication (1931), white supremacy was the norm. Krisjan assaulted the Mtosa chief for failing to show him respect: neither lifting the leopard skin off his head in salutation, nor addressing him as “master”. Bosman does not openly condemn Krisjan’s conduct, though Oom Schalk, the author’s construction as narrator, discloses that the magistrate found Krisjan culpable and made him pay ten pounds by way of punishment, in addition to the doctor’s fees for the time during which the chief could not walk unaided as the result of the injuries inflicted by Krisjan Lemmer. The inference can be made that Bosman regards Krisjan as a ruffian and the Mtosa chief as the victim, which Griebenow has transferred correctly.

Other references to black people include the following extract in which Oom Schalk prides himself on his manners, which resemble those of an Englishman. It is interesting to note that the English are now shown in a more favourable light; Oom Schalk regards politeness towards others as an essentially “English” quality:

ST p 56: When I am visiting strangers and they give me bad coffee I don’t throw it out and say that the stuff isn’t fit for a kaffir. I just drink it and then don’t go back to that house again.

TT Griebenow, p 100: As ek by vreemdelinge kuier en hulle gee vir my slegte koffie, gooi ek dit nie uit en sê dat ’n kaffer dit nie eens sal drink nie. Ek drink dit net en gaan nooit weer terug na daardie huis toe nie.

In his translation, Griebenow has retained the k-word instead of either omitting it or using a more neutral term such as *’n swart mens* (BT: a black person). Although the

underlying white prejudice cannot be eliminated from Bosman's original stories, the damaging effect thereof might be somewhat mitigated by toning down the offensive language. This extract implies that Susannah's coffee is unsuitable for human consumption. Bosman's references to black South Africans reflect the biased value system of Oom Schalk as representative of the Marico farmers, "usually show[ing] up the ignorance, self-importance and unthinking cruelty of the white men" (Mynhardt 2005:3). Griebenow has altered "not fit for..." to "a ... would not **even** drink it" (emphasis added), thereby accentuating the division between black and white instead of playing it down.

On a dark, windy night, three months later, Oom Schalk returns in the rain to the Lemmers' house – notwithstanding the weak coffee – with the intention of borrowing Krisjan's wagon-sail:

ST pp 56–57: I thought of pale strange ghosts that come upon you from behind ... suddenly [ellipsis in original]. I felt sorry, then, that I had not brought a kaffir along. It was not that I was afraid of being alone; but it would have been useful, on the return, to have a kaffir sitting in the back of the mule-cart to look after the wagon-sail for me.

TT Griebenow, p 100: Ek het gedink aan vreemde, vaal spoke wat 'n mens van agter af bekruipe ... sonder waarskuwing. Ek het toe spyt begin voel dat ek nie 'n kaffer saamgebring het nie. Dit is nie dat ek bang is om alleen te wees nie, maar dit sou gehelp het om met die terugkomslag 'n kaffer te hê wat agterop die muilkar sit om die bokseil vir my op te pas.

On his way to the Lemmers, Oom Schalk regrets not having someone for company, but denies being afraid: a helper would have looked after the wagon-sail which he, incidentally, never has the chance of borrowing because of the disturbing developments in the Lemmer household. In his translation of this passage, Griebenow uses the k-word twice, instead of decreasing its harmful effect. The offensive word appears five times in "The Gramophone".

Before considering the story's ending, it is imperative to trace some of the distinct patterns of lexical cohesion which run through it, namely the lexical chains dealing with references to children, juxtaposed with references to the devil.



In the course of the story, Oom Schalk mentions two of his own children: his daughter, little Annie, who inadvertently destroys the thermometer by stirring her coffee with it, and his youngest son, Willie, who occasionally recites texts from the Bible on request. The gramophone is said to “talk”, something that a child of seven is also capable of doing. Krisjan Lemmer is compared to a child playing with a new toy, for the way in which he operates his gramophone by turning its handle and putting in a needle. The needle had to be changed frequently to prevent damage to the record and deterioration in the sound quality (Calderbank 2016). Bosman describes gramophone needles as “little sharp pins” – probably by way of association with needles – which Griebenow has mistranslated as *skerp pennetjies* (BT: sharp little pegs). This amounts to a distortion of meaning, which is unethical. A more accurate translation would have been *skerp naaldjies*<sup>21</sup> (BT: sharp little needles).

The gramophone is associated not only with children but also with the devil. The inferred meaning of the following passage and its translation is that inventions such as gramophones promote a sinful way of life since they originated from the devil:

ST pp 53–54: The people who came to hear the gramophone said it was very wonderful what things man would think of making when once the devil had taken a hold on him properly. They said that, if nothing else, the devil has got good brains.

TT Griebenow, p 97: Die mense wat na die grammofoon kom luister het, het gesê dit is verstommend watter goed die mens sal uitdink as die duiwel eers 'n behoorlike houvas op hom kry. Hulle het gesê dat dit ten minste wys dat die duiwel baie vindingryk is.

Griebenow has translated “very wonderful” as *verstommend* (BT: amazing), thereby omitting the qualifier “very”, which could have been translated in this context as *heel* (BT: quite) in Afrikaans. In the second sentence, the phrase “has (got) good brains”, denoting intelligence (*Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* 2015:171), was transferred as *baie vindingryk* (BT: very inventive) instead of *skrand* (BT: intelligent).

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<sup>21</sup> The correct Afrikaans word is *grammofoonnaald* (HAT 2015:378), but these days, people are perhaps less familiar with terminology for obsolete items such as gramophones.

It would seem that Griebenow regards the invention of the gramophone as the consequence of inventiveness rather than intelligence, but Berliner, the inventor of the gramophone, probably needed both these attributes to achieve success. Thus, the translator's interpretation is not devoid of merit.

Later on in the story, the reader is given a glimpse of the unhappy state of the Lemmers' marriage when they quarrel over a trivial matter – Susannah's weak coffee – in Oom Schalk's presence. A part of their dialogue is reproduced; it is the woman who has the last word:

ST p 56: "Oh, go to hell," Susannah said.

TT Griebenow, p 100: "Ag, vlieg in jou moer!" sê Susanna.<sup>22</sup>

Griebenow has rendered the source text's curse by using a vulgar word for mother (*moer*), resulting in an Afrikaans translation of the informal expression of anger "get stuffed": telling someone in a rude manner to go away, not to mention the even ruder translation equivalents found in the bilingual *Pharos Dictionary* (2010). It might have been translated more accurately as "*Ag, gaan na die duiwel*" (BT: Oh, go to the devil), or even: "*Ag, vlieg na die duiwel*" (BT: Oh, fly to the devil). In this instance, the translator could easily have adhered to the source text's network of lexical cohesive elements with regard to the devil/hell by following either of the suggested translation options or something in similar vein. What Griebenow actually translates is his interpretation of the (implied) author's meaning. In the process, he draws heavily on his own idiolect without particular regard for accuracy, although the occasional inaccuracy does not necessarily imply his being unethical.

Oom Schalk's customary Bushveld farewell, "may the good Lord bless us all" (p 56), calls to mind the binary oppositions, good/evil and heaven/hell if juxtaposed with the aforesaid references to the devil; it can also be seen as an invocation for protection from harm. After this point, however, there is a shift as events take a turn for the worse. Three months later, as mentioned, Oom Schalk pays the Lemmers a nocturnal visit.

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<sup>22</sup> While Griebenow has transferred all names in the story by exact repetition, he has altered the spelling of the English name Susannah to *Susanna*, in accordance with Afrikaans usage, which is entirely ethical.

The narrator's account of his ride there – using words such as “queer”, “dark”, “death”, “ghosts”, “graveyard”, “buried”, “superstitious” and “shivering” – evokes an eerie, foreboding atmosphere. Griebenow has translated each lexical item in this chain correctly: *vreemd*, *donker*, *die dood*, *spoke*, *begraafplaas*, *begrawe*, *bygelowig* and *bewe*. When Oom Schalk arrives, the Lemmers' house is dark:

ST p 57: I knocked a long time before the door was opened, and then it was Krisjan Lemmer standing in the doorway with a lantern held above his head. He looked agitated at first, until he saw who it was and then he smiled.

TT Griebenow, p 101: Ek het lank geklop voor iemand die deur kom oopmaak het. Dit was Krisjan Lemmer wat met 'n lantern hoog bo sy kop in die deur staan. Hy het eers omgekrap gelyk, maar toe hy sien wie dit is, het hy geglimlag.

The above passage has been rendered less than accurately, yet not unethically. Since Krisjan Lemmer – “a big, strongly built man” – is standing in a confined space, Griebenow's minor addition of the word *hoog* (BT: high) does not appear feasible. Hewson (2011) posits that a given text (target text or source text) will bring about “a range of interpretations”, some of which may even be implausible or incorrect. Hence, it is worth paying heed to Hewson's (2011:20) advice, quoted in Chapter 1 section 1.6.1:

The [translation] critic cannot judge that the translator's work is based on an erroneous interpretation, but by envisaging other possible interpretations, can argue that the translational choices encourage an interpretation that lies outside the range that the critic has set out.

The remark that Krisjan seemed “agitated”, which connotes anxiety, uneasiness and nervousness – probably because he was expecting the police – has been translated by means of a near synonym, *omgekrap* (BT: upset), rather than *ontsteld*, the exact translation from *Pharos Dictionary* (2010:761). Since Schalk is a friend, Krisjan's smile is one of relief.

ST p 57: “Come in, Neef Schalk,” he said. “I am pleased you are here. I was beginning to feel lonely – you know, the rain and the wind and –”

“But you are not alone,” I replied. “What about Susannah?”

“Oh, Susannah has gone back to her mother,” Krisjan answered. “She went yesterday.”

TT Griebenow, p 101: “Kom in, kom in, neef Schalk,” sê hy. “Ek is baie bly jy is hier. Ek wou net begin eensaam voel – jy weet, met die reën en die wind en...”

“Maar jy is mos nie alleen nie,” antwoord ek. “Wat van Susanna?”

“Susanna is terug na haar ma toe,” antwoord Krisjan. “Sy is gister weg.”

The leading question from the above passage: “What about Susannah?” was correctly transferred, but the same cannot be said of the first sentence where addition has been used as a translation strategy. Griebenow has not only repeated Krisjan’s welcoming words (*kom in, kom in*) but has also inserted *baie* (BT: very) to qualify *bly* (BT: pleased). Given the true circumstances, it is hard to imagine that Krisjan is overjoyed at receiving anyone, although a guest is far better than the police. Unnecessary addition can be seen as “a kind of thumb-print” (Baker 2000:245) or stylistic trace that a particular translator leaves on his or her target texts, which may have ethical implications by altering the inferred meaning of the original. Krisjan’s explanation of Susannah’s absence, claiming that she has gone back to her mother, calls to mind the nameless narrator in Poe’s story, “The Tell-Tale Heart”,<sup>23</sup> who says that the old man whom he has just murdered is away in the country.

The lexical pattern evoking a sinister atmosphere is continued: Krisjan is depicted as restless, uncomfortable, laughing too loudly at Schalk’s attempted joke. This culminates in Schalk’s remark: “He seemed very queer about Susannah.” The narrator makes the jest in direct style/direct discourse<sup>24</sup> for the reader’s benefit:

ST p 57: “What’s the matter with you, Krisjan?” I asked. “You’re looking so unhappy, anybody would think you’ve still got your wife here with you.”

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<sup>23</sup> MacKenzie & Sandham (2011:93) call attention to the presence of “**shades of**” Poe’s story in Bosman’s, but they do not provide further details.

<sup>24</sup> This denotes “the direct expression of a character’s speech or thought” (Abbott 2008:231).

TT Griebenow, p 101: “Wat is fout, Krisjan?” vra ek. “Jy lyk so ongelukkig, ’n mens sal sweer jou vrou is nog hier by jou.”

At this point, the expression “many a true word is spoken in jest” is brought to mind. The translation of Oom Schalk’s words is somewhat shorter than the original due to minor omissions – “with you” and “you’ve ... got” – with the possible aim of producing a smooth text. Moreover, Griebenow has replaced the verb “think” with a more forceful word, *sweer* (BT: swear), presumably relying on his idiolect as suggested earlier in this section. Krisjan’s ensuing laugh affects Oom Schalk:

ST p 57: Krisjan laughed, and I wished he hadn’t. His laughter did not sound natural; it was too loud. Somehow I got a cold kind of feeling in my blood.

TT Griebenow, p 101: Krisjan het gelag, maar ek het gewens hy het nie. Sy lag het nie natuurlik geklink nie; dit was te hard. Om die een of ander rede het ek ’n koue rilling in my bloed gevoel.

The last sentence of this extract is the most crucial as well as the most problematic to translate. Bosman’s original text, “I got a cold kind of feeling in my blood”, evokes Poe’s short story, where the narrator says that the old man’s evil eye made “[his] blood [run] cold.” In his translation of Bosman’s story, Griebenow has replaced the word “somehow” with a phrase, *om die een of ander rede* (BT: for some or other reason) which is idiomatic in Afrikaans if not entirely accurate and somewhat wordy when compared to the source text. The rest of the sentence has been rendered rather awkwardly: *...het ek ’n koue rilling in my bloed gevoel* (BT: I felt a cold shiver in my blood). *Rilling* collocates with *koue*, but not with *bloed*; someone can feel **cold shivers** down his/her **spine**, but not in the blood. A more idiomatic translation might have been, *Op ’n manier het ek ’n koue gevoel in my binneste gekry* (BT: Somehow, I had a cold feeling inside). Griebenow seems to be leading the reader to expect the worst, while Bosman just hints at it. Griebenow’s apparent lack of subtlety has ethical implications. Oom Schalk’s unease continues:

ST p 58: It seemed different without Susannah’s being there. Also, it looked peculiar to me that she should leave so suddenly. And there was no doubt about it that Krisjan was acting in a strange way that I didn’t like.

TT Griebenow, p 102: Dit het anders gevoel sonder Susanna daar. Dit was vir my eienaardig dat sy so skielik geloop het. En Krisjan het ongetwyfeld op 'n vreemde manier opgetree wat my nie aangestaan het nie.

In the second sentence Griebenow has omitted the verb “looked”, thus implying that it is no longer merely Oom Schalk’s interpretation; he has also transferred the remainder of the sentence inaccurately: *dat sy so skielik geloop het* (BT: that she so suddenly walked). In this context, *geloop* is a mistranslation. If Oom Schalk could only reach the Lemmers’ farm by mule-cart (on account of the vastness of the district he would not have been able to walk), then surely, Susannah would not have walked all the way to her mother’s abode. The verb *vertrek* (BT: leave) would have made more sense and would not have suggested the implausibility of how she allegedly left the farm.

In an attempt to ease the tense atmosphere, Oom Schalk suggests that they play the gramophone. He takes the machine off its table, placing it on the floor where he can reach it without difficulty. Krisjan and Schalk listen to the same song that Susannah had listened to three months earlier. When the music stops, both men are “pleased” – echoing Krisjan’s words of welcome – which Griebenow has changed to *dankbaar* (BT: grateful), thereby intensifying the inferred meaning of the source text. As Oom Schalk takes a closer look at the floor where he placed the gramophone, he detects the truth, which he describes as “an awful thought”:

ST p 58: I saw that all round the place where the gramophone stood the dung floor of the voorkamer had been loosened and then stamped down again. The candle threw flickering shadows over the floor and over the clods of loose earth that had not been stamped down properly.

TT Griebenow, p 104: Oral om die plek waar die grammofoon staan, kon ek sien hoe die misvloer omgedolwe en weer vasgestamp is. Die kers het flikkerende skaduwees oor die vloer gegooi, en oor die los kluite wat nie ordentlik vasgestamp is nie.

Aside from a minor omission (“of the voorkamer”), Griebenow has rendered the last paragraph of the story not only faultlessly but also ethically. In the earliest South African homes, floors were made of clay stamped hard and covered with cow-dung to

preserve it (Simson 1981). The implication is that Krisjan has murdered Susannah and buried her under the floor (of the front room). In Poe's story, the victim's corpse is concealed under the floorboards. One can say that the same "formula" was used (Meihuizen 1991:39) in writing these stories: murder and burial under the floor, followed by the unexpected/sudden arrival of company – Oom Schalk in Bosman's story; three police officers in Poe's.

Since the story has an open ending, the reader is called upon to resolve the question of Susannah's fate, before closure can take place. Closure is best achieved by considering both constituent and supplementary events,<sup>25</sup> since the latter can be significant "for the meaning and overall impact of the narrative" (Abbott 2008:23). The incident with the Mtosa chief, that has already been discussed, is an example of a supplementary event that has been included in the narrative to demonstrate Krisjan Lemmer's violence: if the chief could barely walk for three months after the brutal attack, then Krisjan could have murdered his petite wife with ease.

#### **4.3.4 "Mafeking Road"**

##### **4.3.4.1 Background**

"Mafeking Road",<sup>26</sup> one of Bosman's best-known stories, is concerned with the Siege of Mafeking at the outbreak of the Second Anglo-Boer War. At that time, Mafeking was a strategically important town in the north-eastern corner of the British controlled Cape Colony, on the border of the Boer Republic of the Transvaal and the Bechuanaland Protectorate<sup>27</sup> (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:135). For seven months, from October 1899 to May 1900, the Boer force under the command of Generals Piet Cronjé and (from November 1899) J.P. Snyman laid siege to the British garrison at Mafeking,

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<sup>25</sup> According to Abbott (2008:231), constituent events move the story forward, whereas supplementary events are not essential to the story. The question arises: "Why has this supplementary event been included in this narrative?"

<sup>26</sup> This story gave its title to Bosman's major work, first published in 1947.

<sup>27</sup> Today, these place names are no longer used. Mafeking, now called Mahikeng ([www.mahikeng.gov.za/overview/](http://www.mahikeng.gov.za/overview/)), is the capital of the North-West Province (an area once part of the former Transvaal), while the Bechuanaland Protectorate is now known as the independent country of Botswana (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:26).

commanded by Colonel Robert Baden-Powell. The latter had successfully resisted the Boers' attempt to starve the town into surrender, until British reinforcements, such as the relief column led by Colonel B.T. Mahon, lifted the siege (Pakenham 1993).

The British celebrated, while the Boer commandos were scattered in the aftermath of the relief of Mafeking. Bosman's story deals with the distressing theme of treason (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011) when a cowardly son contradicts his father's values. Floris van Barneveldt, a proud man whose Dutch ancestors fought bravely in the Eighty Years' War (1568–1648) against Spain, is mortified that his young son, Stephanus, intends to surrender to the British corps for fear of death.

#### 4.3.4.2 Comparative analysis

Griebenow has translated the story's title as *Mafeking-pad*, which is too literal, because *pad* is merely substituted for the word, "Road"; De Lange's translation, "Die pad na Mafeking", is more idiomatic in Afrikaans.

At the outset the narrator, Oom Schalk Lourens, claims that storytelling is the effect of observation, only to immediately contradict himself when he says that the way in which a story is told is more important than the story itself:

ST p 119: The important thing is to know just at what moment you must knock out your pipe on your veldskoen, and at what stage of the story you must start talking about the School Committee at Drogevelei. Another necessary thing to know is what part of the story to leave out.

TT Griebenow, p 43: Die belangrike ding is om te weet presies wanneer jy jou pyp op jou veldskoen moet uitklop, en op watter tydstip van die storie jy oor die skoolkomitee op Drogevelei moet begin praat. Nog iets wat jy moet weet, is watter deel van die storie om weg te laat.

TT De Lange, p 55: Dis belangrik om te weet presies wanneer om jou pyp teen jou veldskoen uit te klop, en op watter plek in die storie jy oor die skoolkomitee op Drogevelei moet begin gesels. 'n Ander noodsaaklike ding is om te weet watter deel van die storie om uit te laat.



In the first sentence, Bosman has mistakenly referred to a *veldskoek*<sup>28</sup> (BT: a shoe worn in the field), instead of *velskoek* (BT: a shoe made of hide), the exact Afrikaans word denoting a “homemade leather shoe” (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:240) that both translators have used. Thus, they have corrected this minor error rather than retaining it, which is ethical in my view. In the last sentence, Griebenow has added the word *jy* (BT: you) unnecessarily: *Nog iets wat jy moet weet ...* whereas De Lange’s rendition, *’n Ander noodsaaklike ding is om te weet ...* is closer to the source text (“Another necessary thing to know ...”). Griebenow has translated the source text’s wording “to leave out” as *om weg te laat*, while De Lange has simply transferred it as *om uit te laat*, although both options are correct, consistent with the bilingual *Pharos Dictionary* (2010).

These features of storytelling are repeated<sup>29</sup> by Bosman and his translators – with variation – two paragraphs later, and again, at the very end of the story. Moreover, the idea that the gift of storytelling cannot be learnt is also repeated. Bosman gives more emphasis to the phrase “what part of the story to leave out” by placing it last, since that is precisely where Floris van Barnevelt’s narration fails – by disclosing every single detail of his tragic story. Ultimately, “Mafeking Road” can be viewed as Oom Schalk’s retelling of Floris’ story, in the way it should be told. Since he himself fought in the war, Oom Schalk is involved in the story he tells, but he does not play a role in the conflict between the Van Barnevelt father and son.

Oom Schalk describes Floris’ family tree as follows:

ST p 120: It goes back for over two hundred years, to the Van Barnevelts of Amsterdam. At one time it went even further back, but that was before the white ants started on the top part of it and ate away quite a lot of Van Barnevelts.

TT Griebenow, p 44: Dit strek meer as tweehonderd jaar terug, tot by die Van Barnevelts van Amsterdam. Dit het vroeër selfs verder teruggestrek, maar dit was

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<sup>28</sup> No such word can be found in the *HAT* dictionary (2015), only *velskoek* and the colloquialism, *vellies* (*HAT* 2015:1434).

<sup>29</sup> When analysing a story with the aim of arriving at a sound interpretation, it is worth taking note of words or phrases that are repeated (Abbott 2008). For the purposes of this thesis, it was also important to note whether and how the translators had dealt with repetition.

voor die rysmiere dit aan die bokant beetgekry en 'n hele paar van die Van Barnevelts opgevreet het.

TT De Lange, p 56: Dit gaan meer as tweehonderd jaar terug, na die Van Barnevelts van Amsterdam. Vroeër het dit selfs verder teruggegaan, maar dit was voor die rysmiere bo begin en 'n hele klomp van die Van Barnevelts weggevreet het.

Overall, the inferred meaning of the above has been translated fairly accurately, except for Griebenow's alarming mistranslation – *opgevreet* (BT: ate up) instead of *weggevreet* (BT: ate away) as De Lange has rendered it. The white ants have not literally **eaten** a number of Van Barnevelts; they have merely **eaten away** the part of paper with the names of the earliest members of this family. Griebenow's mistranslation is unethical as it distorts the message. The fact that Floris van Barnevelt has given his family tree pride of place on the wall of his front room suggests his reverence for his forbears and what they represent: a long tradition of patriotism and fortitude. The last entry on the list is the name of Floris' only son, Stephanus, followed by the words "Obiit Mafeking" in brackets. The Latin word, *obiit*, means "he died" (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:161), while Mafeking indicates approximately where this took place. At this point, the repeated designation of Floris as "the last of the Van Barnevelts" at the beginning of the narrative becomes clear, as he is the sole surviving member of this illustrious family.

In the original text, Oom Schalk speaks of the "Second Boer War", which De Lange has transferred correctly and neutrally as the *Tweede Boereoorlog*, while Griebenow has altered it to the *Tweede Vryheidsoorlog* (BT: Second War of Independence) as some Afrikaners still call it, as noted earlier in section 4.3.2.2. Consequently, Griebenow's translation choice is ideologically slanted. When the war broke out, Stephanus van Barnevelt was seventeen years old, a teenager in modern parlance, but he was not too young to fight as all able-bodied burghers between sixteen and sixty could be conscripted to join the Boer armed forces (Pakenham 1993; Pretorius 2011). The Marico commando, to which Oom Schalk and the Van Barnevelts belonged, was ordered to join the large commando at Mafeking:

ST p 120: We had to go and shoot a man there called Baden-Powell.

TT Griebenow, p 45: Ons moes 'n man met die naam Baden-Powell daar gaan skiet.

TT De Lange, p 56: Ons moet 'n man by name Baden-Powell daar gaan skiet.

The reference above is to the resourceful officer Robert Baden-Powell (1857–1941), who, as mentioned, successfully defended the town of Mafeking during the siege. Ironically, the Boers never carried out what they were ordered to do, according to Bosman. When the siege was lifted, Baden-Powell became a national hero all around the British Empire. In the story, he is given neither rank<sup>30</sup> nor title, whereas the *veldkornet* (BT: field cornet) leading the Marico Boers<sup>31</sup> has a military rank but remains unnamed throughout. It is fascinating to note the way in which Bosman mixes historical figures with fictional characters. Following the source text too closely, Griebenow has used the past tense *moes* (BT: had to) which is unnatural in Afrikaans, whereas De Lange's use of the present tense (*moet*) is more appropriate. Translators often have to make a difficult choice between accuracy and naturalness (Baker 2011:60) because of the tension that exists between these two equally ethical aspects of translation.

Bosman seems to subscribe to the belief that it was ostensibly a “white man’s war”<sup>32</sup> by excluding the black people featuring in his story from the actual fighting; they act as guides for the Boers instead. The *veldkornet*'s recurrent conversations with the black people encountered along the road provide comic relief by revealing his unfamiliarity with the route to Mafeking:

ST p 120: Of course, it was right that our veldkornet should explain to the kaffirs that it was war-time, now, and that the Republic expected every kaffir to stop smoking so much dagga and to think seriously about what was going on. But we

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<sup>30</sup> The reason is probably that Baden-Powell was promoted several times during his impressive military career; King Edward VII also knighted him, although he is best remembered as the founder of the Boy Scout movement ([www.thescoutingpages.org.uk](http://www.thescoutingpages.org.uk)).

<sup>31</sup> Pretorius (2001:62) argues that many Boer officers such as field cornets were elected not for their military qualities, but for social or political reasons.

<sup>32</sup> Despite this notion, both the British and the Boers employed innumerable black men as “unarmed scouts, grooms, drivers, and ... diggers of trenches” (Pakenham 1993:208) during the war.

noticed that each time at the end of the conversation the kaffir would point towards something, and that our veldkornet would take much pains to follow the direction of the kaffir's finger.

TT Griebenow, p 45: Dit was natuurlik reg dat ons veldkornet aan die kaffers moet verduidelik dat dit nou oorlog is, en dat die Republiek van elke kaffer verwag om op te hou om so baie dagga te rook en ernstig na te dink oor wat aan die gang is. Maar ons het opgemerk dat die kaffer elke keer aan die einde van die gesprek êrens heen wys, en dat ons veldkornet groot moeite doen om die rigting waarin die kaffer se vinger wys te volg.

TT De Lange, pp 56–57: Dis natuurlik reg van ons veldkornet om aan die kaffers te verduidelik dat ons nou in 'n tyd van oorlog verkeer, en dat die Republiek van elke kaffer verwag om nie so baie dagga te rook nie en ernstig na te dink oor wat aan die gang is. Maar ons kom agter dat die kaffer aan die einde van die gesprek na iets in die verte wys, en dat ons veldkornet dan groot moeite doen om in die rigting te ry wat die kaffer se vinger aangedui het.

Each of the translators has used the offensive k-word, reiterating it three more times for emphasis, instead of diminishing its harmful effect by using more neutral or less expressive words, such as the following translation options:

- “kaffirs” – *swart mense* (BT: black people);
- “every kaffir” – *elkeen* (BT: everyone);
- “the kaffir” – *die man; die mens* (BT: the man; the person);
- “the kaffir's” – *sy* (BT: his).

In the first sentence of the extract, Oom Schalk suggests a reason for their field cornet's frequent conversations, which invariably take place out of earshot. The discrepancy between what Oom Schalk imagines as his words and what he is actually saying is humorous. As it is wartime, even the black people are expected to act responsibly by restricting their [illegal] dagga smoking and reflecting on the situation. Griebenow's too literal translation, *om op te hou om so baie dagga te rook* (BT: “to stop smoking so much dagga”), retains the slight ambiguity of the source text. De Lange's interpretation, *om nie so baie dagga te rook nie* (BT: not to smoke so much

dagga), seems likelier, as it implies their cutting down on their smoking, not giving it up entirely. Far from lecturing the local black people as Oom Schalk assumes, the field cornet is asking them for directions to Mafeking, supposing that they would know the area better. They oblige by pointing in the required direction. Hence, the very people who are stereotyped as dagga smokers help a Boer officer – it is small wonder that the men’s trust in their leader is shaken: “Somehow, after that, we did not have so much confidence in our veldkornet” (ST p 121). For the remainder of the story he is associated with the black people for constantly seeking their help. The offensive term for them occurs ten times in the story.

The siege itself is dealt with rather cursorily as the story is mainly concerned with the events subsequent to the relief of Mafeking. During the siege, the Boers had inflicted much misery on the town’s mostly British inhabitants, but afterwards the tables were turned; the British relief troops brought large quantities of artillery with them. Unsurprisingly, the defeated Boers decamped:

ST p 121: And if we had difficulty in finding the road to Mafeking, we had no difficulty in finding the road away from Mafeking. And this time our veldkornet did not need kaffirs, either, to point with their fingers where we had to go.

TT Griebenow, p 45: En so baie soos wat ons gesukkel het om die pad Mafeking toe te kry, so min het ons gesukkel om die pad weg van Mafeking af te kry. Hierdie keer het ons veldkornet ook nie kaffers nodig gehad om met hul vingers te wys waarheen ons moet gaan nie.

TT De Lange, p 57: En as ons moeite gehad het om die pad na Mafeking te kry, het ons geen moeite om die pad uit Mafeking te kry nie. En hierdie keer het ons veldkornet ook nie kaffers nodig om met hulle vingers te wys waarheen ons moet ry nie.

On their way out of Mafeking, there was no need for anyone to point where they had to **go**, which De Lange has altered to *waarheen ons moet ry* (BT: where we must **ride**). This translation is still acceptable, since the Boers rode horses as can be inferred from the source text. In the translations of “Mafeking Road”, Griebenow tends to adhere to the source text’s **words**, while De Lange translates the **meaning** of the original, using a wider vocabulary. But once again, both translators have repeated the dreadful k-

word, instead of substituting it with something less offensive, such as *swart mense* (BT: black people). The narrator mentions them again when Floris van Barneveld asserts that he would return to Mafeking if ordered to:

ST p 123: "That's how a burgher should talk," the veldkornet said, feeling flattered. For he had had little authority since the time we found out what he was talking to the kaffirs for.

TT Griebenow, p 48: "Dis hoe 'n burger moet praat!" sê die veldkornet, duidelik gevelei. Hy het weinig gesag gehad vandat ons uitgevind het hoekom hy met die kaffers praat.

TT De Lange, p 58: "Dis hoe 'n burger moet praat," sê die veldkornet, gevelei. Want hy het min gesag oor sedert ons uitgevind het waaroor hy met die kaffers gepraat het.

In his translation, Griebenow has added an exclamation mark after the field cornet's direct speech, probably for dramatic effect, while De Lange has added a word: *hy het min gesag oor* (BT: he has little authority **left**), which is idiomatically sound. The adjective "little", expressing the field cornet's lack of authority, has been translated by substitution with near synonyms, *weinig* and *min*, found in the bilingual *Pharos Dictionary* (2010:1125), which are ethical choices. There is, however, a difference in register: Griebenow's translation choice, *weinig*, is somewhat high-flown according to the *HAT dictionary* (2015:1578); De Lange's choice, *min*, is more typical in present-day Afrikaans and possibly closer to Bosman's intention.

Before examining more references to the hapless veldkornet and his helpers, it is imperative to consider particular instances of lexical cohesion regarding the devastation of war. An Englishman, with whom Oom Schalk exchanged views long after the Second Anglo-Boer War, described the Boers' retreat from Mafeking as follows:

ST p 121: ... broken columns blundering through the dark.

TT Griebenow, p 46: ... gebroke kommando's wat deur die donker beur.

TT De Lange, p 57: ... versplinterde troepe wat deur die donker aanstropel.

As an outsider's perspective on the Boers' defeat, this is a challenging phrase to translate. Even though the word "columns" has an equivalent in Afrikaans, *kolonnes*, neither of the translators has used it because "column" is customarily associated with the British in the literature pertaining to the Boer War (Pakenham 1993:212). Griebenow has rendered it as *kommando's* (BT: commandos), and De Lange as *troepe* (BT: troops), thus opting for what is natural in the target language, rather than absolute adherence to the source text. De Lange's transfer of "broken" as *versplinterde* (BT: broken into splinters) in a figurative sense, is ethically and stylistically preferable to Griebenow's more direct translation, *gebroke* (BT: broken). The verb "blundering" has been transferred differently: Griebenow has used the more general word, *beur* (BT: struggle), whereas De Lange's choice, *aanstrompel* (BT: stumble along), would suggest that the Boer troops were on foot, although they were mounted on horseback as mentioned. De Lange's apparent inconsistency needs clarification. It might be inferred either that, some of the Boers had to walk part of the way, or that the Englishman merely thought of them as walking unsteadily in the darkness, as there was no moon.

The above extract is linked to Oom Schalk's recollection of the "frightened horses and desperate men" on the road:

ST p 121: The veld throbbed with the hoof-beats of baffled commandos. The stars looked down on scenes that told sombrely of a nation's ruin; they looked on the muzzles of the Mausers that had failed the Transvaal for the first time.

TT Griebenow, p 46: Die veld het gedreun onder die hoefslae van verslae kommando's. Die sterre het afgekyk op tonele wat somber van 'n nasie se ondergang getuig; hulle het afgekyk op die Mauser-lope wat die Transvaal vir die eerste keer in die steek gelaat het.

TT De Lange, p 57: Die veld sidder van die hoefslae van verblufte kommando's. Die sterre kyk af op somber tonele van 'n volk se ondergang; op die lope van mausers wat die Transvaal vir die eerste keer gefaal het.

In the first sentence, the adjective "baffled", describing "commandos" has been translated as *verslae* (BT: despondent) by Griebenow, while De Lange has rendered it as *verblufte* (BT: stunned). Despite minor differences in intensity, De Lange's

translation is probably closer to the original. In the second sentence, Griebenow has transferred the noun “nation” literally as *nasie*, whereas De Lange has used a synonym, *volk*, which is more typical in the story’s South African/Boer context. The translation of the verb “failed” has been handled differently: Griebenow has translated it by means of an expression, *in die steek gelaat* (BT: left in the lurch); De Lange has substituted the English word with the Afrikaans equivalent, *gefaal* (BT: failed). Although both translators’ choices are accurate, De Lange’s is clearly shorter but not more ethical, because the inferred meaning remains unchanged. Moreover, De Lange, the poet, has juxtaposed the homophones<sup>33</sup> *Transvaal* (BT: across the Vaal [river]), and *gefaal* (BT: failed) to considerable effect in describing the Mausers<sup>34</sup> that had let down the Boer forces of the Transvaal Republic for the first time. Hence, considering it his “duty” to get far away from English artillery,<sup>35</sup> Oom Schalk was riding at full speed on his own initiative, but young Stephanus van Barnevelt rode even faster:

ST p 121: He kept ahead of me all the time. He rode, as a burgher should ride when there may be stray bullets flying, with his head well down and with his arms almost round the horse’s neck.

TT Griebenow, p 46: Hy het heeltyd voor my gebly. Hy het sy plig teenoor die Republiek beter as ek uitgevoer – ten minste ’n dosyn lengtes beter.<sup>36</sup> Hy het gery soos wat ’n burger behoort te ry as daar dwaalkoeëls rondvlieg: met sy kop laag en met sy arms byna om die perd se nek.

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<sup>33</sup> A homophone is “a word that is pronounced like another word but has a different spelling or meaning, for example *some, sum*” (*Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* 2015:732). The words *Vaal* and *faal* sound the same, although they are spelled differently and have different meanings.

<sup>34</sup> “Mauser” refers to the “trademark for a repeating rifle or pistol” (*Vocabulary.com*), and to the German manufacturers of the weapons used by the Boers during both wars against Great Britain (*MacKenzie & Sandham* 2011:145).

<sup>35</sup> Here, “duty” is used ironically, because the Boers’ real duty was to stand firm, not to flee at the first sign of danger.

<sup>36</sup> ST (1935; edited by Griebenow, 2016) p 46: He did his duty to the Republic better than I did – by at least a dozen lengths.



TT De Lange, p 58: Hy bly heelyd voor my. Hy ry soos 'n burger behoort te ry wanneer daar dalk dwaalkoeëls kan wees, met sy kop baie laag en met sy arms amper om die perd se nek.

The first sentence of the above has been translated similarly, except for Griebenow's stilted use of the past tense in Afrikaans, rather than the present as in De Lange's translation. Griebenow has added an entire second sentence, which is neither in the source text nor in De Lange's target text. It is evident that Griebenow has not used the *Complete Oom Schalk Lourens stories* (Bosman 2006) as the source text for his translation. Rather than following this authoritative text, meticulously edited by MacKenzie, Griebenow has inflicted his own editing on the original version of "Mafeking Road", first published in *The South African Opinion*<sup>37</sup> in 1935. Suiderkruis Boeke, of which Griebenow is the proprietor, published *Mafeking Road* in 2016; on the page with the publisher's details it says: "Editing by Francois Griebenow."

Griebenow has rendered the idea that stray bullets may be flying, too literally, as *rondvlieg* (BT: flying about), whereas De Lange has translated it less expressively as *dalk ...kan wees* (BT: probably...may be). In the last part of the passage, Griebenow has translated "well down" as *laag* (BT: low), but De Lange has retained the full meaning as *baie laag* (BT: very low). The word "almost" has been rendered correctly by means of the synonyms *byna* and *amper*. De Lange's choice, *amper*, may be in the interests of assonance (of the "a") and alliteration (of the "m") at the end of the sentence: *met sy arms amper om* (BT: with his arms almost round [the horse's neck]). All in all, De Lange's translation would seem more ethical than Griebenow's. The fearful manner in which Stephanus was riding contrasts with his bravado at the beginning of the war:

ST p 120: Young Stephanus van Barnevelt was the gayest of us all...He said that, after we had invaded the whole of the Cape, our commando would have to go on a ship and invade England also.

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<sup>37</sup> Griebenow (2016) lists the names of the individual publications in which Bosman's stories first appeared, but without providing the dates. The year of the publication of "Mafeking Road" was found in MacKenzie and Sandham (2011:10).

TT Griebenow, pp 44–45: Jong Stephanus van Barnevelt was die vrolikste van ons almal ... Hy het gesê dat ons kommando op 'n skip sal moet klim om Engeland te gaan binneval nadat ons die hele Kaapland verower het.

TT De Lange, p 56: Jong Stephanus van Barnevelt is die opgewekste van ons almal ... Hy sê, nadat ons die hele Kaap verower het, sal ons Engeland per skip moet gaan aanval.

The first sentence above, “Young Stephanus van Barnevelt was the gayest of us all” may sound peculiar to the modern reader. Today, the adjective “gay” implies homosexuality, but prior to the 1940s it would have been interpreted as “light-hearted and carefree” (*Concise Oxford English Dictionary* 2011:590). The notion of Stephanus’ gaiety has been accurately translated by means of the synonyms *vrolikste* and *opgewekste*. Initially, Stephanus regards the war as the greatest adventure of his life, remarking that they would first invade the Cape and then England as well. He is naïve in assuming that the Boers would travel overseas to wage war on British soil. During the course of the story, Stephanus’ mood shifts from one of optimism to despair as he gains first-hand experience of war. When the burghers finally come to a halt, he jokes that next, they might be ordered to return to Mafeking, because the commandant may have left his tobacco pouch there. Despite his father’s admonition that he should be ashamed of his irreverence, Stephanus replies:

ST p 123: “I wouldn’t go back to Mafeking for anybody ... unless, maybe, it’s to hand myself over to the English.”

TT Griebenow, p 48: “Niemand sal my oortuig om terug te gaan Mafeking toe nie ... behalwe dalk om myself aan die Engelse oor te gee.”

TT De Lange, p 59: “Ek sal vir niemand teruggaan Mafeking toe nie, ... behalwe miskien om my aan die Engelse oor te gee.”

Griebenow has unnecessarily added the verb *oortuig* (BT: persuade), whereas De Lange has rendered the inferred meaning correctly, without any addition. In this passage, the idea of voluntarily laying down arms is mentioned for the first time in the story. Both translation equivalents for “maybe”, *dalk* and *miskien*, are correct and ethically sound. Instead of showing fortitude as commanded, Stephanus expresses

the wish to surrender to the enemy, which would be tantamount to turning traitor to his country. Thus, the central conflict in “Mafeking Road” is between Floris van Barneveldt and his unworthy son, Stephanus. Unlike their noble forebears who had been loyal to their country, Stephanus’ own safety is decidedly more important to him. Despite the veldkornet’s feeble warnings that Stephanus might be shot for treason, or that he could be mistakenly shot at night, the moment that more firing is heard, the latter jumps on his horse, and heads back to Mafeking with the plan to surrender. The reader learns that Stephanus is followed by his father, Floris, who calls out to him to show his bravery by fighting for his country. Two days later, Floris returns alone “in a very worn and troubled state” (ST p 123), remarking that he had difficulty in finding his way back to his compatriots. The following retort is directed at him:

ST p 123: “You should have asked the kaffirs,” one of our number said with a laugh. “All the kaffirs know our veldkornet.”

TT Griebenow, p 49: “Jy moes die kaffers gevra het,” sê een uit ons groep laggend. “Al die kaffers ken ons veldkornet.”

TT De Lange, p 59: “Jy moes die kaffers gevra het,” sê een van ons en lag. “Al die kaffers ken ons veldkornet.”

Again, their incapable leader is associated with the local black population. The translators have rendered the offensive k-word in the expected way, by using repetition as a translation strategy, resulting in similar translations. As stated in Chapter 1 section 1.2, it would seem that both translators regard ethical translation in a rather simplistic manner as fidelity to the author, without considering the source text’s compatibility with the target audience’s current sociocultural situation. The final reference to the unfortunate veldkornet occurs near the end of Oom Schalk’s narrative:

ST p 124: Our veldkornet was the first to be taken prisoner. And I often felt that he must feel very lonely on St. Helena. Because there were no kaffirs from whom he could ask the way out of the barbed-wire camp.

TT Griebenow, p 49: Ons veldkornet was die eerste wat gevange geneem is. Ek het dikwels gereken dat hy baie eensaam op St. Helena moes gevoel het. Want

daar was geen kaffers vir wie hy kon vra hoe om uit die kamp se doringdraadheining te kom nie.

TT De Lange, p 59: Ons veldkornet is die eerste om gevange geneem te word. En ek het dikwels gedink hy voel seker baie alleen op St. Helena. Want daar was geen kaffers vir wie hy die pad uit die doringdraadkamp kon vra nie.

After being captured, the veldkornet was sent to Saint Helena, an isolated volcanic island and British overseas territory in the South Atlantic Ocean, where Boer prisoners of war were interned (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:213) between 1900 and 1902. With no black people<sup>38</sup> there to turn to for help, the veldkornet might have felt “very lonely”, according to Oom Schalk, accurately and ethically transferred by Griebenow as *baie eensaam*, and by De Lange as *baie alleen* (BT: very alone/lonely). Escaping from St. Helena would have been impractical, even if the camps did not have barbed-wire fences, because of the island’s geographical remoteness. Ironically, Stephanus’ idea that the Boers would be going overseas by ship, becomes partially true, although they went as prisoners of war, not as invaders. Oom Schalk mentions Vereeniging, the site where the Boers surrendered to the British forces, bringing about “the signing of the Peace of Vereeniging at Melrose House in Pretoria on 31 May 1902” (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:241).

Finally, the reader is called upon to fill the gap that Oom Schalk has deliberately left in the narrative. It would seem that Floris van Barnevelt shot his only son, Stephanus, owing to the former’s disapproval of the latter’s cowardice. It is little wonder that as the best storyteller in the Transvaal, Oom Schalk has omitted the most humiliating part of Floris’ tragic story.

According to MacKenzie (2003:3), Bosman’s concern as a satirist was

to debunk the over-glamorised and embellished tales that he heard about the war. Writing between 1931 and 1951, in an era of increasing Afrikaner control of the state and its propaganda apparatus, he sought to expose the flaws in the

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<sup>38</sup> Once more, both translators have used the insulting term for black people.

developing Afrikaner nationalist ideology. He therefore wrote stories that drew attention to the darker, little-known and still less welcome secrets.

The spineless Stephanus van Barnevelt and the unnamed Boer veldkornet who repeatedly asks black people for directions, can both be regarded as flawed characters in this story about humiliating aspects of the South African War. By retaining the offensive k-word, the translators have been faithful to Bosman, rather than taking the current target situation into consideration.

### 4.3.5 “Splendours from Ramoutsa”

#### 4.3.5.1 Background

The next story, “Splendours from Ramoutsa”, also pertains to the theme of storytelling, albeit on a much lighter note. Its title refers to the magnificent, exotic tales of bejewelled princesses riding on adorned elephants told by the Indian storekeeper at Ramoutsa.<sup>39</sup> Here, the unnamed Indian already mentioned in “The Gramophone” is a main character, revealing himself as a storyteller who for a while assembles a willing audience of customers.

Ever since he found burnt mealies mixed with the coffee beans and Kalahari sand in the yellow sugar, Oom Schalk Lourens has been boycotting the Indian’s shop. The latter has retaliated by setting himself up as Oom Schalk’s rival as a raconteur. MacKenzie and Sandham (2011:212) describe this narrative as “a tongue-in-cheek Bushveld meditation on the art of storytelling”. On account of his involvement in the story he tells, Oom Schalk’s reliability as a narrator is in question, especially the extent to which his interpretation of the facts can be trusted (Abbott 2008:77). Should we believe that the Indian shopkeeper is as cunning as the narrator would have us think?

To complicate matters, there are four different Afrikaans variations of “Splendours from Ramoutsa” in existence. Bosman also wrote a **version** of this short story in Afrikaans, entitled “Glansverhaal uit Ramoutsa se winkel”, which Griebenow has had the temerity to **edit** twice<sup>40</sup> – rather than translate – as “Glansrykheid uit Ramoutsa” (2011; 2016). The only actual **translation** of Bosman’s original story is De Lange’s target text, idiomatically titled: “Prag en praal op Ramoutsa” (2013). Therefore, the comparative analysis focuses on Bosman’s English story (source text) and De Lange’s recent Afrikaans translation (target text).

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<sup>39</sup> Ramoutsa is a trading town in Botswana, situated north-west of Zeerust, the centre of the Marico community (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011).

<sup>40</sup> In his translator’s preface, Griebenow (2011:x) states that he has taken the liberty to **edit** the Afrikaans stories which appeared in Bosman’s lifetime (including “Glansrykheid uit Ramoutsa”), because the author professed to be more proficient in English than in Afrikaans.

#### 4.3.5.2 Comparative analysis

At the beginning of the story, Oom Schalk is pondering the reason people listen to stories, particularly if there is no drought in the Marico and the farmers cannot use his narratives as an excuse for neglecting their work, such as pumping water for their cattle. Then, he refers to a young man who was once charmed by a story:

ST p 156: There was young Krisjan Geel, for instance. He once listened to a story. It was foolish of him to have listened, of course, especially as I hadn't told it to him. He had heard it from the Indian behind the counter of the shop in Ramoutsa.

TT De Lange, pp 67–68: Vat nou maar vir Krisjan Geel, byvoorbeeld. Hy het op 'n keer na 'n storie geluister. Dit was natuurlik dwaas van hom om te luister, veral aangesien dit nie ek was wat die storie vir hom vertel het nie. Hy het dit by die koelie agter die toonbank van die winkel op Ramoutsa gehoor.

This implies that paying attention to this Indian's story was unwise, because Oom Schalk had not narrated it himself. De Lange has changed the inoffensive word, "Indian," to *koelie* (BT: coolie),<sup>41</sup> a contemptuous term for an Indian (*HAT* 1976:458) and one that has been excluded from subsequent editions of this dictionary, as stated in the analysis of "The Gramophone". It could well be asked: why has De Lange selected this racial slur over the more neutral and accurate designation, *Indiër* (BT: Indian)? His disturbing translation choice would seem unethical both towards the deceased writer and the modern reader by misrepresenting the original. However, Bosman has regrettably used this offensive term in his Afrikaans version of the story, "Glansverhaal uit Ramoutsa se winkel", which the translator might have consulted as a parallel text.<sup>42</sup> For example: "*Hy het dit by die koelie agter die toonbank in die winkel op Ramoutsa gehoor*" (Bosman 2001:98). Thus, De Lange's choice is not as unethical as it first appears.

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<sup>41</sup> As mentioned earlier, this is one of the derogatory words that president Mandela urged South Africans to avoid (Kruger 1996) in the interest of national unity, notwithstanding racial and cultural diversity.

<sup>42</sup> Trainee translators are often advised to collect parallel texts (in the target language) which might assist the translation process; however, the danger also exists that these texts may mislead the unwary. Rather than following a parallel text slavishly, translators are meant to concentrate on the given source text. [This comment is based on my own experience as a marker of students' translations at honours level for the Unisa's Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages.]

Unimpressed by the Indian's story as narrated to him by Krisjan Geel, Oom Schalk points out its numerous flaws, while Krisjan attempts to defend the Indian:

ST p 157: Krisjan Geel said he had no doubt that I was right, but that the man who told him the story was only an Indian, after all, and that for an Indian, perhaps, it wasn't too bad.

TT De Lange, p 68: Krisjan Geel het gesê hy het geen twyfel dat ek reg is nie; die man wat hom die storie vertel het, was maar net 'n koelie, maar miskien was dit nie te sleg vir 'n koelie nie.

Krisjan's reference to the shopkeeper as "only an Indian" hints at the dated notion of white supremacy, which the translator has augmented, perhaps unintentionally, by using an offensive term as mentioned. In his eagerness to support the Indian, Krisjan ironically insinuates that he is dishonest:

ST p 157: He also said that there were quite a number of customers in the place, and that made it more difficult for the Indian to tell the story properly, because he had to stand at such an awkward angle, all the time, weighing out things with his foot on the scale.

TT De Lange, p 68: Hy het ook gesê daar was heelwat klante in die winkel, wat dit nóg moeiliker gemaak het vir die koelie om sy storie behoorlik te vertel, want hy moes die hele tyd op 'n baie ongemaklike manier staan, so met sy voet op die skaal, terwyl hy negosiegoed afweeg.

In keeping with times past, De Lange has used an archaic collective noun, *negosiegoed* (BT: wares) to refer to the "things" that the Indian shopkeeper is weighing while simultaneously putting his foot on the scale to add more weight. In this way, the Indian overcharges his customers since prices at a general store are mostly determined by weight. It is worth noting that both Oom Schalk and Krisjan Geel depict the Indian as cheating his customers, whether by adding sand to the sugar, or weight to the goods. Krisjan's interpretation of "the facts" confirms Oom Schalk's, which enhances the latter's reliability as a narrator.

Nevertheless, Krisjan's evident sympathy for the shopkeeper elicits a firm response from Oom Schalk:



ST p 157: “The Indian in the store at Ramoutsa,” I said, “has told me much better stories than that before today. He once told me that there were no burnt mealies mixed with the coffee-beans he sold me. Another one that was almost as good was when he said –”

TT De Lange, p 68: “Die koelie in die winkel op Ramoutsa,” sê ek, “het my voorheen veel beter stories vertel. Hy het my op 'n keer vertel dat daar geen gebrande mielies ingemeng was by die koffiebone wat hy aan my verkoop het nie. Nog een wat amper so goed was, was toe hy gesê het –”

In his translation of the passage above, De Lange reiterates the racist epithet for Indian, instead of sticking to the source text's more neutral term. Bosman activates two different meanings of “**story**”: Oom Schalk mentions the **lies** that the Indian told him – denying the inferior quality of the coffee beans and sugar – but Krisjan interrupts him, recounting the Indian's romantic **tale** about a princess waiting by a well. As the two men are at cross purposes, an amusing interchange ensues, concluding with Krisjan's assertion that the princess was in love with the young man she had once seen at the well and Oom Schalk's remark about how quickly the pigs ate the sugar that he had blended with their food. After that, Krisjan Geel remained silent:

ST pp 157–158: No doubt he realised that I wasn't going to allow him to impress me with a story told by an Indian; and not very well told either.

TT De Lange, p 69: Hy het ongetwyfeld besef ek gaan hom nie toelaat om my te beïndruk met 'n storie wat 'n koelie vertel het nie; en nie baie goed vertel het nie, daarby gesê.

Krisjan Geel acts as an intermediary by retelling the Indian's stories to Oom Schalk, as the competing storytellers do not meet face-to-face because of Oom Schalk's boycott of the shop. Once more, De Lange has repeated the derogatory term for “a person of Indian descent” (*Concise Oxford English Dictionary* 2011:723). Initially, Oom Schalk assumes that the Indian's elaborate stories concerning princesses, palaces and trained elephants wearing yellow and red hangings, all consistent with his culture, give him an unfair advantage:

ST p 158: At first I felt it was very unfair of the Indian to come along with stories like that. I couldn't compete. And I began to think that there was much reason in what some of the speakers said at election meetings about the Indian problem.

TT De Lange, p 69: Aanvanklik was dit onregverdig van die koelie om met sulke stories te kom. Ek kon nie meeding nie. En ek het begin dink daar steek nogal waarheid in wat sommige van die sprekers tydens verkiesingsvergaderings oor die koelieprobleem sê.

Oom Schalk is out of his depth, possibly suspecting that his stories may be rather prosaic if set against the novelty of the Indian's sumptuous tales. Some of the Marico farmers propose that further excitement be introduced into his narratives: a king and princes together with elephants wearing Namaqualand diamonds.<sup>43</sup> But he declines, realising that stories based on first-hand experience are more convincing. The trouble caused for Oom Schalk by one individual is equated with "the Indian problem",<sup>44</sup> which constitutes a gap that the modern reader must fill by means of historical research, combined with inference.

In 1860, the first Indian indentured labourers arrived in South Africa to work on the sugar cane fields in Natal.<sup>45</sup> After completion of their contracts, most of them preferred staying [in their adopted country] to returning to India, causing a serious housing problem as their places of accommodation soon became overcrowded slums ([www.sahistory.org.za](http://www.sahistory.org.za)). During Bosman's lifetime, successive governments of the Union of South Africa (Gray 1986:31) sought to segregate and even repatriate the Indians, who were classified as aliens (Naidoo 2013). At the time, Indians along with black Africans<sup>46</sup> were repressed, since white supremacy was the norm. It should also be noted that in the first half of the twentieth century, South Africa and India were both

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<sup>43</sup> Namaqualand is a dry region along the west coast of the Northern Cape, known for its spring flowers and diamond deposits.

<sup>44</sup> Similarly, in one of the *Voorkamer Stories*, titled "... At this time of year", Bosman (2011:197) alluded to "the Indian problem" when an Indian store opened next to the Doppe Church in Bekkersdal.

<sup>45</sup> Today, the province is called KwaZulu-Natal.

<sup>46</sup> It is significant that in "Splendours from Ramoutsa" black people are not mentioned at all, thus contributing to the story's foreign ambience.

members of the British Commonwealth of Nations. Thus, the Indians in South Africa could appeal to other countries in their struggle against restrictive legislation on trading and residential rights. Today, the South African Indian community is an integral part of our so-called “rainbow nation”.

It would seem that De Lange emphasises the former inferior status of SA Indians by his linguistic/ideological choice, *koelieprobleem* (BT: coolie problem), rather than considering the effects of his translation on current readers. Moreover, Bosman (2001:100) uses the neutral term, *Indiër-probleem* (BT: Indian problem), in his Afrikaans version of this story. Here, De Lange’s choice is indeed unethical as it does not represent the author truthfully. It is unclear whether this decision was entirely the translator’s; it may have been the choice of the publisher.

After some deliberation, Oom Schalk concludes that there is something that he could always do better than the Indian, namely disclosing the princess’ inner feelings in a few words, which would be more meaningful than lavish embellishments; “glossy trappings [cannot] improve a weak story” (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:212):

ST p 158: Perhaps the Indian realised the truth of what I am saying now. At all events, after a while he stopped wasting the time of his customers with stories of emperors.

TT De Lange, p 70: Dalk het die koelie die waarheid besef van wat ek nou sê. Ewenwel, ná ’n ruk het hy opgehou om sy klante se tyd te mors met stories oor keisers.

De Lange has persisted in his use of the derogatory word for Indian, possibly with the aim of evoking the time when the source text was written by keeping its racist viewpoint intact, while rendering the phrase “at all events” by way of a somewhat dated word, *ewenwel* (BT: nevertheless), consistent with an earlier form of Afrikaans, more common when the source text was written.

Eventually, Krisjan Geel admits that one could have too much of these opulent tales, except for the one about the princess waiting by the well. Ironically, Krisjan is so fascinated by the romance of the Indian’s story that he fails to notice that Lettie Viljoen, a graceful Bushveld girl, is in love with him, in the same way that the young man in the

story is oblivious of the princess' affection. Oom Schalk depicts Lettie Viljoen as follows:

ST p 160: The sun shone on her upturned face and on her bright yellow hair.

TT De Lange, p 72: Sy kyk in die lug op en die sonlig val op haar gesig en op haar glansende blonde hare.

De Lange's translation of the sentence above is longer than the original on account of the absence of a suitable Afrikaans equivalent of "upturned" in this context. He has changed the marked collocation,<sup>47</sup> "**yellow** hair", which the author repeatedly uses, to the more idiomatic *blonde hare* (BT: **blonde** hair). MacKenzie and Sandham (2011:257) argue that the underlying clumsiness of Bosman's linguistic/stylistic choice indicates that "he was intending to convey something about the girls' and [the] district's lack of sophistication, and yet rustic allure". Although this connotation is lost in translation because of the stylistic shift caused by De Lange's own personal imprint on the target text, this is not entirely an ethical issue since the denotative meaning of the original has been retained.

Bosman draws a parallel between Krisjan Geel and the young man in the Indian's story: neither of them is able to recognise his princess. It may be concluded that human nature transcends cultural/racial differences.

The next story to be analysed in this chapter, "Unto Dust", was written in a more serious vein as it deals largely with death.

#### 4.3.6 "Unto Dust"

##### 4.3.6.1 Background

Bosman's momentous but controversial short story, "Unto Dust", was published in February 1949 in the journal, *Trek*. The story also has an Afrikaans version "Tot Stof", which appeared somewhat earlier on 21 December 1948 in *On Parade*. If one

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<sup>47</sup> Baker (2011:55) defines a **marked collocation** as "an unusual combination of words, one that challenges our expectations as hearers or readers".

considers the opening line of the story in Bosman's Afrikaans version, it appears that this text has not influenced De Lange's translation:

Bosman's Afrikaans text p 63: Jy het al seker opgemerk hoe jy met die dood van 'n jong persoon die gevoel kry van 'n *mooi* soort aandoenlikheid [Italics in the original].

ST p 262: I have noticed that when a young man or woman dies, people get the feeling that there is something beautiful and touching in the event, and that it is different from the death of an old person.

TT De Lange, p 100: EK MERK OP DAT, wanneer 'n jong man of vrou sterwe, mense reken dat daar iets moois en ontroerends omtrent die gebeurtenis is, en dat dit verskil van die dood van 'n bejaarde mens.

Since the original Afrikaans text mentions only the death of a young person, De Lange has clearly followed the English source text. The above also demonstrates that Bosman's English story is a different version of his Afrikaans one, not a translation.

The title "Unto Dust" alludes to excerpts from the Bible – Genesis 3:19, King James Version (KJV):

In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and **unto dust** shalt thou return (emphasis added).

The same wording is found in Job 34:15 (KJV): "All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again **unto dust**." Both these biblical verses, routinely used at funerals, refer to death, the central theme of this story: when we die, we are turned to dust.

Although his name is not mentioned, Oom Schalk Lourens is presumably the principal narrator of "Unto Dust". Snyman (2003: 94) suggests that his "presence" is implied in the style and substance of the story, while MacKenzie (2006) has included it in the *Complete Oom Schalk Lourens stories* that he edited. I see no reason to doubt their stance. The second narrator, Stoffel Oosthuizen, recounts part of the story concerning a skirmish that took place during a bygone Transvaal Native War, waged between the Boers and the black people, presumably about disputed territory. The historical

reference in “Unto Dust” is somewhat vague, although Bosman’s fictional narrative<sup>48</sup> does not claim to be factually true.

#### 4.3.6.2 Comparative analysis

The narrative discourse begins with the thought that people’s attitudes to death range from sympathy to indifference, depending on the deceased’s age group, even though things are not always what they seem:

ST p 262: She was a flower that withered before it bloomed, they say, and it all seems so fitting and beautiful that there is a good deal of resentment, at the funeral, over the crude questions that a couple of men in plain clothes from the landdrost’s office are asking about cattle-dip.

TT De Lange, p 100: Sy was ’n blom wat verwelk het voor dit kon bloei, sê hulle, en alles lyk so gepas en mooi dat daar nogal heelwat wrewel tydens die begrafnis is oor twee mans van die landdroskantoor, in gewone drag geklee, se onvanpaste praatjies oor beeste dip.

In the source text, the romance of a girl’s premature death is spoiled at her funeral by two investigators’ crass questions regarding cattle-dip, which suggests how she died (i.e. that she was poisoned), although the narrator provides no motive. This might be considered a gap in the narrative for the reader to fill, from either “experience or imagination” (Abbott 2008:234). In the target text, however, a different reading is presented. De Lange has changed the phrase: “crude questions ... about cattle-dip” to *onvanpaste praatjies oor beeste dip* (BT: inappropriate talk about dipping cattle) which implies that the men from the magistrates’ office were merely indulging in idle talk, rather than gathering evidence. Hence, De Lange’s translational choice – i.e. altering “questions” to *praatjies* (BT: talk) and changing the noun, “cattle-dip” to the verb, “dipping” – is of ethical import as it suggests an interpretation that departs from the inferred meaning of the source text.

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<sup>48</sup> Abbott (2008:147) classifies nonfiction narrative as being falsifiable, whereas the same does not apply to fiction “because the story it tells is neither true nor false”.

The elderly Andries Wessels sees “angels” with “cloven hoofs” and forks around his deathbed, but he has evidently mistaken devils for angels. Despite his confusion, he is said to have died in a “hallowed sort of calm.” Both deaths can be viewed as supplementary events because they do not move the story forward (Abbott 2008:231). The implied author has included these cases by way of introducing the constituent events of the story. From the outset, the themes of death and confusion of identity are linked, preparing the reader for the rest of the story, which adds burial to the equation. Meihuizen (1991:38) has identified “prejudices about the dead” and “death the leveller” as the story’s main themes.

While suffering from a severe bout of malaria, a feverish narrator, whom I assume is Oom Schalk, regards the world as a vast graveyard. After his recovery, he is pleased to reflect that white people have proper burial places on their farms where traditional Christian funeral rites can be performed:

ST p 263: ... so I was very glad, when I recovered from the fever, to think that we Boers had properly marked-out places on our farms for white people to be laid to rest in, in a civilised Christian way, instead of having to be buried just anyhow, along with a dead wild-cat, maybe, or a Bushman with a clay pot, and things.

TT De Lange, p 101: ... toe ek van die koors herstel, was ek baie verlig om te weet dat ons Boere behoorlik afgebakende plekke op ons plase het vir wit mense om op 'n beskaafde, Christelike manier begrawe te word, in plaas van sommer enige plek, saam met 'n dooie kat, miskien, of 'n Boesman met 'n kleipot en goed.

In the above passage, there is a strong suggestion of racial segregation – even for the dead. By linking “white people” with “civilised” (correctly translated as *beskaafde*), the implication is that only white people are civilised, chiming with the outdated notion of white superiority. The principal inferred narrator, Oom Schalk, who considers himself one of the Boers (“we Boers”), would rather not be buried along with a wildcat, or a “Bushman” and his meagre possessions. In his translation, De Lange has altered the noun “wild-cat” to *kat* (BT: cat), which is inaccurate as it denotes a domestic cat that is kept as a pet rather than its wild, more aggressive counterpart. This could simply have been translated as *wildekat*. The idea that Oom Schalk does not want to be buried just “anyhow” has been rendered incorrectly as *enige plek* (BT: any place). Both

these instances of careless translation are unethical in that they distort the meaning of the original.

De Lange has transferred the word “Bushman”<sup>49</sup> via the Afrikaans equivalent *Boesman* that may sometimes be regarded as derogative (*HAT* 2015:135), rather than using, for example, the collective term *Khoi-San* (BT: Khoisan), denoting the original inhabitants of South Africa (*HAT* 2015:612). In the late 1970s, the term “San” was favoured over “Bushman” in academic writing, but at present, the latter is again in vogue among scholars, as the former is believed to be derogatory ([www.dsae.co.za/#!/word/6222/San](http://www.dsae.co.za/#!/word/6222/San)). Thus, De Lange’s translation of this term may now be deemed politically correct. The *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* (2015:196) merely defines “Bushman”; it does not stipulate that the word should be avoided. Therefore, the same applies to the Afrikaans word, *Boesman*.

Oom Schalk and Stoffel Oosthuizen discuss the notion of death as the great leveller/equaliser, alluding to James Shirley’s poem, “Death the Leveller”.<sup>50</sup> The gist of this poem, that everyone becomes equal in death, is strongly denied by Stoffel Oosthuizen, who affirms that one of the reasons for the Boers leaving the Cape was that:

ST p 263: ... the British Government wanted to give the vote to any Cape Coloured person walking about with a kroes head and big cracks in his feet.

TT De Lange, p 101: ... die Britse regering wou stemreg gee aan elke Kaapse Kleurling wat met ’n kroeskop en gebarste voetsole rondloop.

Stoffel Oosthuizen would have been pleased if the coloured people in the Cape had not been given equal status through voting rights. It explains his unflattering portrayal

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<sup>49</sup> **Bushman** refers to “a member of one of the races of people from southern Africa who live and hunt in the African bush” (*Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* 2015:196). The *DSAE* defines it as “a name originally given by the Khoikhoi to a member of an indigenous people of southern and south-western Africa, traditionally hunter-gatherers, now living mainly in the Kalahari regions of Angola, Botswana, and Namibia, in dwindling numbers.”

<sup>50</sup> Consider the following lines, quoted from the poem: “Death lays his icy hand on kings:/Sceptre and Crown/ Must tumble down, /And in the dust be equal made/With the poor crooked scythe and spade” (Naidoo 2010).



of them – from head to foot. The adjective, *kroes* (BT: frizzy) found in both source and target texts, signifies very curly hair (*HAT* 2015:690); the dictionary neither relates it to race, nor represents the word as offensive. However, in the context of the story, *kroes* specifically refers to coloured people’s hair, implying that the word may have offensive connotations and therefore, ethical implications. De Lange has transferred “kroes head” correctly as *kroeskop* and “big cracks in his feet” by omission of the qualifier “big”, while adding the suffix *-sole* (BT: soles) to *voet*. This is an example of a compensatory technique, cursorily referred to in Chapter 3 (3.4.2) that translators sometimes use “to make up for any loss of meaning, emotional force or stylistic effect” (Baker 2011:86) at another point in the target text.

Moreover, the noun *Kleurling*, formerly used to label people of mixed descent, has become obsolete, racist and offensive (*HAT* 2015:632), and is best avoided today. Hence, in a modern translation it should either be omitted or used as an adjective (*elke gekleurde mens in die Kaap*).<sup>51</sup> Since this epithet appears only once in the target text, it may be considered less detrimental than the repeated use of the k-word. The focalisation of events in “Unto Dust” stems from two racist narrators, even though the story in effect satirises racist ideologies. In order to illustrate his view, Stoffel Oosthuizen tells Oom Schalk how his friend, Hans Welman, died in what he calls, “a bygone Transvaal kaffir war”:

ST pp 263–264: Our commando had been ambushed by the kaffirs and was retreating. I could do nothing for Hans Welman. Once, when I looked round, I saw a tall kaffir bending over him and plunging an assegai into him. Shortly afterwards I saw the kaffir stripping the clothes off Hans Welman. A yellow kaffir dog was yelping excitedly around his black master. Although I was in grave danger myself, with several dozen kaffirs making straight for me on foot through the bush, the fury I felt at the sight of what that tall kaffir was doing made me hazard a last shot ... I saw the kaffir fall forward beside the naked body of Hans Welman.

TT De Lange, p 102: Ons kommando is deur die kaffers in ’n lokval gelei en was besig om terug te val. Ek kon niks vir Hans Welman doen nie. Toe ek ’n slag omkyk, sien ek ’n kaffer oor hom buk en ’n assegaai in hom steek. Kort daarna sien

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<sup>51</sup> The back-translation is “every coloured person in the Cape”.

ek die kaffer stroop Hans Welman se klere van hom af. 'n Geel kafferbrak tjank opgewonde rondom sy swart baas. Al is ek self in groot gevaar, met 'n paar dosyn kaffers wat te voet deur die bosse op my afeil, laat die woede wat ek ervaar toe ek sien wat daardie lang kaffer doen, my 'n laaste skoot waag ... Ek sien die kaffer vooroor val langs Hans Welman se kaal liggaam.

The frequent occurrence of the k-word in “Unto Dust” – twenty-two times in all – has led to isolated incidents at schools where the story has been taught, culminating in the dismissal of a white teacher in 1999, and the expulsion of a black pupil in 2014.<sup>52</sup> In the above extract from the source text, the objectionable word appears seven times, and in each case De Lange has transferred it without fail by way of repetition. Even though Bosman used the word in a non-offensive and ironic way, the persistent use of racist language cannot be perceived as innocent today and the problems caused by its high frequency are exacerbated in translation. As argued earlier, the racial slur could have been replaced by Afrikaans equivalents for “black people”, “black men/man” or “warrior”, followed by pronouns, and in the case of the dog, omission of the epithet. The offensive and obsolescent term “kaffir dog” refers to a hunting dog kept by indigenous peoples all over southern Africa ([www.dsae.co.za/#!/word/3587/kaffir dog, n. phr.](http://www.dsae.co.za/#!/word/3587/kaffir%20dog,%20n.%20phr.)). This breed of dog is noted for its leanness, long snout and short coat. Today, the dog of Africa is called the “Africanis”<sup>53</sup> ([www.brandsouthafrica.com/investments-immigration/africanis](http://www.brandsouthafrica.com/investments-immigration/africanis)). De Lange has transferred the word “dog” as *brak* (BT: mongrel), rather than the more neutral *hond*. This is inaccurate, given the above definition.

According to Stoffel Oosthuizen, a tall black warrior killed Hans Welman, and then disrespectfully stripped him naked. An incensed Stoffel risked a final shot, which killed the black man, the master of a yellow dog. The two dead men, one white and one black, lay together, unburied for about six months, before a few burghers returned to the battleground to retrieve the remains of Hans Welman for proper burial on the farm, at his widow’s request.

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<sup>52</sup> For more details, see Chapter 2, section 2.4.3.

<sup>53</sup> This name is derived from “Africa” and the Latin word for dog, *canis*.

ST p 264: Indeed, Hans Welman had been killed not very far from his own farm, which had been temporarily abandoned ... during the time that the trouble with the kaffirs had lasted. We drove up to the spot where I remembered having seen Hans Welman lying dead on the ground, with the tall kaffir next to him.

TT De Lange, p 102: Hans Welman is naby sy eie plaas vermoor, wat ... tydelik verlate was vir die tydperk wat die probleme met die kaffers geduur het. Ons ry tot by die plek waar ek onthou dat ek Hans Welman dood op die grond sien lê het, met die lang kaffer langs hom.

In the first sentence, De Lange has intensified “killed” to *vermoor* (BT: murdered) which is unusual in this context since the Afrikaans word, *sneuwel*, is normally used as the translation equivalent for being killed in action/battle (*Pharos Afrikaans-Engels/English-Afrikaans Woordeboek/Dictionary* 2010:1101). The translator’s choice of word hints at his interpretation of the skirmish in terms of ideology: a Boer was murdered, as opposed to being killed, by the enemy. The source text’s understated reference to the war as a time of “trouble”, in the singular form, has been amplified in the target text to the plural *probleme* (BT: problems). The fact that De Lange’s rendition is not as subtle as Bosman’s indicates the translator’s ideological stance, and thus has ethical implications as it reflects an ideology that I find unacceptable. The last part of the second sentence, “with the tall kaffir next to him”, has been transferred by means of a calque construction:<sup>54</sup> *met die lang kaffer langs hom*, which is grammatically sound, albeit unethical from an activist viewpoint since it retains the offensive word.

There was not much left of the two men, other than “pieces of sun-dried flesh and the dismembered fragments of bleached skeletons” because “the sun and wild animals and birds of prey” (ST pp 264–265) had carried out their destructive tasks. In Stoffel Oosthuizen’s words:

ST p 265: But we could not tell which was the white man and which was the kaffir...  
Another thing was that Hans Welman and the kaffir had been just about the same size.

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<sup>54</sup> Hewson (2011:59) describes the use of this linguistic term as “choosing the target-text form that reproduces as closely as possible the structure of the original”.

TT De Lange, p 103: Maar ons kan nie uitmaak watter is die wit man s'n en watter die kaffer s'n nie... Die ander probleem is dat Hans Welman en die kaffer omtrent dieselfde grootte was.

Even though the Boers cannot distinguish between Hans Welman's remains and those of the black man, they are reluctant to admit their ineptitude. If they do, it would point to racial equality, which they cannot allow. Moreover, the two men were of a similar size, which made the decision more perplexing, while also accounting for the removal of Hans Welman's clothes, as they would have fitted the black man.

ST p 266: Stoffel Oosthuizen said that the little party of Boers spent almost a whole afternoon with the remains in order to try to get the white man sorted out from the kaffir.

TT De Lange, p 103: Stoffel Oosthuizen sê dat die klein geselskap Boere amper 'n hele middag by die oorskot deurgebring het in 'n poging om die wit man en die kaffer van mekaar te skei.

Lawson (1986:149) posits that for Bosman, the irony is that they should have attempted to separate the remains of the two men at all. The Boers' actions reflect their preoccupation with race and racial segregation. It is remarked by one of the party that if some remains of an Englishman had ended up in a Boer's coffin, it would not have mattered so much, since they were both white. The racism of the white men, coupled with their self-deception regarding their inability to differentiate between the two corpses, is the object of Bosman's irony.

ST p 266: Stoffel Oosthuizen added that, no matter what the difference in the colour of their skin had been, it was impossible to say that the kaffir's bones were less white than Hans Welman's. Nor was it possible to say that the kaffir's sun-dried flesh was any blacker than the white man's. Alive, you couldn't go wrong in distinguishing between a white man and a kaffir. Dead, you had great difficulty in telling them apart.

TT De Lange, p 104: Stoffel Oosthuizen sê voorts dat, ongeag die verskil in hulle velkleur, dit onmoontlik was om te sê dat die kaffer se beendere nie so wit soos Hans Welman s'n was nie. Nóg was dit moontlik om te sê dat die kaffer se songedroogde vlees enigsins swarter as die wit man s'n was. Lewend kan jy

sonder enige moeite tussen 'n wit man en 'n kaffer onderskei. Dood is dit uiters moeilik om hulle uitmekaar te ken.

It is impossible to determine skin colour by looking at a dead person's bones. Although this story dates from the late 1940s, it is modern for contradicting the notion of white supremacy, which corresponds with my assumptions in the thesis. The evidence that death is indeed the great leveller is provided in the above quotation and its translation, reported by Oom Schalk as told to him by Stoffel Oosthuizen. If we are all equal in death, why not in life?

Ultimately, the yellow dog's instinct and his sense of smell are shown to be more reliable than the supposed reason of the humans. On a clear night, Stoffel Oosthuizen encounters the yellow dog in the graveyard on the Welman farm, the dog's devotion implying that the wrong man has been buried there:

ST p 264: "I could not help feeling that there was something rather stirring about that beast's fidelity, even though it was bestowed on a dead kaffir."

TT De Lange, p 103: "Ek kan nie help om te voel dat daar iets ontroerends is omtrent die dier se toewyding nie, al is dit aan 'n dooie kaffer."

Thus, ironically, Hans Welman's remains were buried "just anyhow", while the black man was given a civilised Christian funeral by mistake.

"Unto Dust" is among the best of Bosman's writing in the ironic mode, but if the k-word is not toned down in current translations, it might be better not to translate at all, as Pym (2012) suggests. This could be why Griebenow, publisher of his own Afrikaans translations, has chosen not to translate it.

The next story, "Funeral Earth", also deals with war, resulting in death and a funeral, as the title suggests.

### 4.3.7 “Funeral Earth”

#### 4.3.7.1 Background

“Funeral Earth,” the final story to be analysed for this study, is also one of the last that Bosman wrote before his sudden death in October 1951. This story is among the author’s best, as indicated by the fact that MacKenzie has selected it as such for the volume, *Best stories and humour of Herman Charles Bosman*, translated into Afrikaans by De Lange (Bosman 2013). Griebenow, who has focused on the earlier Oom Schalk stories featured in *Mafeking Road*, has not as yet translated it.

Narrated in the first person by Oom Schalk Lourens, “Funeral Earth” concerns the encounters of a group of Boers during two different wars: a Native War waged on the Mtosa people, and subsequently, the Second Anglo-Boer War. They experience “two similar incidents” (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:86) involving a motif in the story, the soil. Ultimately, the story pertains to the futility of war when faced with the poignancy of death, or, to put it differently, its theme is life-affirming.

#### 4.3.7.2 Comparative analysis

De Lange has translated the title, “Funeral Earth,” rather literally but nonetheless ethically as “Begravnisgrond”. Oom Schalk Lourens begins his narrative succinctly:

ST p 342: We had a difficult task, that time (Oom Schalk Lourens said), teaching Sijefu’s tribe of Mtosas to become civilised.

TT De Lange, p 105: DIT WAS ’n MOEILIKE TAAK (sê oom Schalk Lourens) om Sijefu se Mtosa-stam beskaafdheid te leer.

The opening sentence exemplifies the dated and unpalatable notion of white superiority, implying that the Mtosas<sup>55</sup> are uncivilised. Bosman has used the word “tribe”, which is accepted in historical contexts but best avoided today owing to its association with “past attitudes of white colonialists towards so-called primitive or

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<sup>55</sup> As noted in section 4.3.3.2, “Mtosas”, may refer to different Xhosa groups; Bosman has probably misquoted this unusual word (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:150–151).

uncivilised peoples” (*Concise Oxford English Dictionary* 2011:1540). The dictionary recommends using alternatives such as **community** or **people** to refer to traditional societies. De Lange has rendered it closely as *stam* (BT: tribe) in his translation. The *HAT* dictionary defines this word as “a group of people with the same customs/habits/language, who usually live together in a particular area” (2015:1243; my own translation), but surprisingly does not raise any objections to its use in modern contexts.

Although the Mtosa warriors were hiding in the thick bush after the Boers had torched their huts, Veldkornet Joubert claimed that he could sense their presence with their assegais:

ST p 342: “I can sense these kaffirs all around us,” Veldkornet Andries Joubert said to our seksie of about a dozen burghers when we had come to a halt in a clearing amid the tall withaaks.<sup>56</sup> “I have been in so many kaffir wars that I can almost *smell* when there are kaffirs lying in wait for us with assegais. And yet all day long you never see a single Mtosa that you can put a bullet through” [*Italics in original*].

TT De Lange, p 105: “Ek kan hierdie kaffers oral om ons aanvoel,” sê veldkornet Andries Joubert vir ons seksie van omtrent ’n dosyn burgers toe ons in ’n oopte tussen die hoë withaakbome tot stilstand kom. “Ek was al in soveel kafferoorloë dat ek amper kan ruik waar die kaffers met hulle assegaie vir ons lê en wag. Maar heeldag al sien mens nie ’n enkele Mtosa deur wie jy ’n koeël kan jaag nie.”

In the above passage, Bosman uses the offensive k-word three times in succession, as well as the more neutral but lesser-known word, Mtosa, to refer to black people. De Lange has replicated the racist epithet, which occurs five times in this story, in his translation. This is unethical from an activist perspective. Since he also reproduces the word “Mtosa,” it is evident that he has adhered to the source text throughout.

The word “assegai”, already encountered in “Unto Dust,” refers to “a weapon consisting of a long stick with a sharp metal point on the end, used mainly in southern

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<sup>56</sup> The word “withaak” refers to the *Acacia spirocarpoides*, an indigenous thorn tree (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:254).

Africa” (*Oxford English Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* 2015:75) for throwing or stabbing, as elaborated on in “Funeral Earth.” It is worth noting that the Mtosas were equipped with assegais, while the Boers had guns, as inferred from “bullet” in the quoted passage, and the veldkornet’s statement that they would forget how to use a gun if the war were to be prolonged.

Veldkornet Joubert’s next remark sounds contradictory:

ST p 343: “Let us get out of here as quick as hell, men,” he said, speaking very distinctly. “Perhaps the kaffirs are hiding out in the open turf-lands, where there are no trees. And none of this long tamboekie grass, either.”

TT De Lange, p 106: “Laat ons hier wegkom, manne, so vinnig soos die duiwel,” sê hy, elke word duidelik. “Die kaffers skuil dalk in die oop grasveld waar daar nie bome is nie. En ook nie van hierdie lang tamboekiegras nie.”

It may be gathered from his words “as quick as hell” that the veldkornet is rather tense, which De Lange has transferred as *so vinnig soos die duiwel* (BT: as quick as the devil). Since the original is not an idiom, and “devil” collocates with “hell”, the translation is acceptable. Bosman’s distinctive humour is at work in the above quotation, as there certainly is no hiding place in the open field. What is more, in the bush the Boers are in greater danger of being taken by surprise, owing to the limited view of their surroundings. When they emerge from the bush, they encounter another group of Boers under the leadership of Combrinck, who had adopted the same strategy:

ST p 343: You could see that Veldkornet Joubert was pleased to think that he had, on his own, worked out the same tactics as Combrinck, who was known as a skilful kaffir-fighter.

TT De Lange, p 106: Mens kon sien veldkornet Joubert is tevrede dat hy op sy eie dieselfde taktiek as Combrinck bedink het. Combrinck was bekend as ’n gedugte kaffervegter.

The above implies that Veldkornet Joubert is becoming “skilful” at fighting black warriors, since his manoeuvres are identical to those of Combrinck, the more



experienced fighter. De Lange has reproduced the offensive compound word, “kaffir-fighter” literally in Afrikaans as *kaffervegter*, instead of either omitting the offensive part or toning it down, for example by means of paraphrase. Since Combrinck is eventually killed in another war, one may assume that his fighting skills could not match those of the English.

The following lines are interjected by Fanie Louw, a callow youth and joker in Veldkornet Joubert’s section:

ST p 343: “Maybe we should even go back to Pretoria to see if the Mtosas aren’t perhaps hiding in the Volksraad,” he said. “Passing laws and things. You know how cheeky a Mtosa is.”

TT De Lange, p 106: “Dalk behoort ons selfs terug Pretoria toe te gaan om te sien of die Mtosas nie dalk in die Volksraad wegkruip nie,” sê hy. “Besig om wette te maak en so aan. Julle weet hoe parmantig ’n Mtosa is.”

As the capital of the former *Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek* (ZAR or Transvaal), Pretoria was the seat of the Volksraad (legislative assembly or parliament). Strictly speaking, the Mtosas would be just as unable to hide there as in the open turf lands. In the early 1950s, near the end of Bosman’s life, it was probably unthinkable for many white South Africans that a black government would someday rule them; even more so in the late nineteenth century, the period of this story. In the narrative, however, Combrinck remarks that the Mtosas’ laws cannot be worse than the ones that have already been passed, from which criticism for the President may be inferred. The reference is probably to Paul Kruger, the last president of the ZAR since the narrated events took place prior to the onset of the Second Anglo-Boer War.

While looking about the turf lands for a spot to camp, the Boers suddenly notice the Mtosas approaching them from afar, without making any attempt to hide. Instead of carrying assegais and shields, they carry heavy burdens on their heads, from which the Boers deduce that they must be women:

ST p 344: For that reason we took our guns in our hands and stood waiting. Since it was women, we were naturally prepared for the lowest form of treachery.

TT De Lange, p 107: Om daardie rede neem ons ons gewere in ons hande en staan en wag. Omdat dit vroue is, is ons voorbereid op die laagste vorm van verraad.

This implies that the burghers are ready to shoot, should the women deceive them by only appearing to be unarmed. It seems likely that the Boers distrusted black women even more than black men. As it turns out, the women, following Ndambe's lead, are bearing gifts from their chief, Sijefu, who wishes to make peace.

ST p 344: As the column drew nearer we saw that at the head of it was Ndambe, an old native whom we knew well. For years he had been Sijefu's chief counsellor.

TT De Lange, p 107: Soos hulle nader kom, sien ons dat Ndambe, 'n ou inboorling wat ons goed ken, heel voor loop. Hy is al jare lank Sijefu se hoofraadgewer.

In the context of this story, "native" is an old-fashioned, offensive word, "used in the past by Europeans to describe a [black] person who lived in a place originally, before white people arrived there" (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* 2011:999). De Lange has translated it accurately rather than ethically as *inboorling* (BT: native) since the Afrikaans equivalent is just as damaging. Ndambe talks to the Boers, comparing them to venomous rinkhals snakes, while Oom Schalk remarks:

ST p 344: We knew, of course, that Ndambe was only paying us compliments in his ignorant Mtosa fashion.

TT De Lange, p 107: Ons weet, natuurlik, dat Ndambe ons net op sy oningeligte Mtosa-manier komplimenteer.

The above concerns a condescending racist stereotype, according to which black people are perceived as ignorant and uneducated. In the source text, Ndambe is described as a "Mtosa", an inoffensive term that De Lange has retained in his translation, which is ethical. Bosman uses the noun "compliments" ironically; Ndambe is actually insulting the Boers. Nonetheless, the Mtosas are offering them presents such as animal skins and elephant tusks, beads and bangles, the haunch of an ox and pigs cut in half, white beer and, what the recipients value most, witch-doctor medicines for protection from harmful magical powers. Ndambe considers a pot of wet black

earth, saved for last, as the supreme offering, although the Boers do not appreciate it since there is no shortage of mud in the turf lands, particularly on their shoes.

ST p 345: It was when Ndambe spoke again that we saw how ignorant he and his chief and the whole Mtosa tribe were, really.

TT De Lange, p 108: Dis toe Ndambe weer praat wat ons sien hoe onkundig hy en sy hoofman en die hele Mtosa-stam regtig is.

Oom Schalk reiterates the idea of the Mtosas' ignorance as Ndambe takes a handful of soil from the clay pot, pressing it together between his fingers. He states that his people are privileged that the Boers are fighting against them:

ST p 345: Then he told us how honoured the Mtosa tribe was because we were waging war against them. In the past they had only had flat-faced Mshangaans with spiked knobkerries to fight against, he said, but now it was different.

TT De Lange, p 108: Toe vertel hy ons hoe geëerd die Mtosa-stam is dat ons teen hulle oorlog voer. In die verlede het hulle net platgesig-Mshangaans met skerp-gemaakte knobkieries gehad om teen te veg, maar nou is dit anders.

The Mshangaan [or Shangaan] people are named after their founding chief, Soshangane ([en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/shangaan](http://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/shangaan)), who was a Zulu. Today the Shangaans live in “parts of Mozambique and Mpumalanga and Limpopo Provinces” (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:150). Oom Schalk reports Ndambe's insulting description of them as “flat-faced”, which De Lange has rendered accurately as *platgesig-*, rather than omitting it for ethical reasons. The Shangaan warriors were armed with “knobkerries”, suggested by the Afrikaans plural form *knopkieries*, which De Lange has used in his target text. A “knobkerrie” is “a short stick with a knobbed head, used as a weapon by South African tribesmen” (*Concise Oxford English Dictionary* 2011:788).

Ndambe announces that the black people would like to stop fighting, because it is time for sowing. In order to demonstrate the excellent quality of the soil, he runs it through his fingers and even asks the Boers to taste it, which they turn down. However, they accept the Mtosa chief's presents and peace is declared.

Shortly thereafter, the Second Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902) breaks out. Oom Schalk's narrative skips two years. In the meantime, Veldkornet Joubert has been promoted to *kommandant* (BT: commandant), while Combrinck has been killed at the Battle of Dalmanutha, the last conventional battle of the war.<sup>57</sup> Although the Boer forces are in a wretched state, they are unwilling to make peace.

Oom Schalk remarks that through shared suffering, they have all become rather attached to Fanie Louw, despite his jokes. However, in the next paragraph, the reader learns that Fanie has died in a skirmish near a blockhouse.<sup>58</sup> The remainder of the story relates to his funeral:

ST p 346: When Kommandant Joubert stooped down and picked up his handful of earth, a strange thing happened. And I remembered that other war, against the Mtosas.

TT De Lange, p 109: Toe kommandant Joubert buk en 'n hand vol grond optel, gebeur 'n vreemde ding. En ek onthou weer die ander oorlog, die een teen die Mtosas.

At Fanie Louw's open grave, Kommandant Joubert forgets that he is holding funeral earth and he starts to knead it as Ndambe had done, reminding Oom Schalk of the war against the Mtosas. As this passage does not feature an offensive word, it does not pose ethical difficulties for a translator. As Oom Schalk begins to make sense of the events and to appreciate the wisdom of the Mtosa warriors who were also farmers, he stops thinking about them in terms of offensive epithets:

ST p 346: I understood then how, in an earlier war, the Mtosas had felt, they who were also farmers.

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<sup>57</sup> This battle was followed by the guerrilla phase of the war, from September 1900 to May 1902 (Pretorius 2000).

<sup>58</sup> Kitchener, the British commander-in-chief, devised a system of blockhouse lines, linked by barbed wire to trap the Boers and hence, crush their leaders and bring the war to an end (Pakenham 1993).

TT De Lange, p 109: En toe verstaan ek hoe, in 'n vroeër oorlog, die Mtosas gevoel het, hulle wat ook boere was.

Even though the black people are initially depicted as uncivilised and ignorant, they are shown to be wise beyond expectation for choosing life (planting seeds in the ground) above death and the destruction of war. Whether black or white, they are all farmers who must live off the rich soil. Lenta (2003:115) sums up this story as follows: “the Boers’ will to despise black people collides with the evidence of their wisdom”.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

In Chapter 4, seven Oom Schalk Lourens stories have been subjected to comparative analysis. Five of these narratives concern the major theme of war, whether waged on black people or the British forces; one is a Gothic murder story (“The Gramophone”), while one deals with the art of storytelling (“Splendours from Ramoutsa”).

All these stories contain offensive, dated racial epithets that Bosman’s translators have retained, instead of toning them down for modern target-text readers. Hence, Griebenow and De Lange have shown fidelity to the dead author, while disregarding the current target situation. In 1994, South Africa’s apartheid system of racial discrimination was supplanted by a democracy in which there is clearly no place for racist language since each person is considered equal before the law.

In Chapter 5, conclusions are reached, and recommendations made for further research.

## CHAPTER 5

### Conclusion and recommendations

#### 5.1.1 Summary of findings

Herman Charles Bosman (1905–1951) continues to be a popular South African writer as evidenced by the publication of his collected works in a fourteen-volume *Anniversary Edition* to celebrate his centenary in 2005. The persistent occurrence of the now highly offensive k-word in his writings, however, has caused problems that have been exacerbated in translations. Modern translators working in a changed political climate face an ethical dilemma when compelled to decide where their loyalty should lie. Loyalty is an interpersonal category that has replaced the dated, intertextual concept of fidelity (Koskinen 2000; Pym 2001; Van Wyke 2013).

Even though the discipline of Translation Studies is presently dominated by ethical considerations, there are reasons to believe that these have been neglected in recent translations into Afrikaans of Bosman's English short stories. It would seem that his translators, Griebenow and De Lange, have conformed to a simplistic fidelity-driven perception of translation ethics, while more attention should have been paid to "sensitive" aspects of the original Oom Schalk Lourens stories, written between 1930 and 1951.<sup>1</sup> The research problem in this study was how to address this gap that exists in translation practice, which in turn raised the question: How would one translate Bosman's stories in an ethically responsible manner for the twenty-first century?

Before drawing any conclusions, a brief overview of the chapters is required. In Chapter 1, the background of the research problem was sketched, which included biographical information about Bosman to encapsulate the complexity surrounding this enigmatic author. This was followed by the research problem and the research

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<sup>1</sup> As specified in Chapter 2 section 2.2.1, some translation associations compel translators to keep up-to-date and well informed on all aspects of conducting their professional tasks properly ([www.iapti.org/code\\_of\\_ethics/](http://www.iapti.org/code_of_ethics/)). Hence, they either cannot or should not plead ignorance of current theories in Translation Studies.

questions, with the latter consisting of an umbrella question and sub-questions. The aims of the study are restated here as follows:

- encouraging translators to reflect carefully, before settling for the first, literal equivalent that they recall, and
- prevailing upon them to assume responsibility for their ethical choices rather than imposing this on a dead author, especially when translating racially prejudiced texts from the past, or texts that could be perceived as such.

Subsequently, the study was delineated, and significant terms defined.

In Chapter 2, the literature review, it was argued that the traditional notion of translators' ethical duty as fidelity to the source text and author is no longer viable. Fidelity has been superseded by the functionalist concept of loyalty (Nord 2007), as mentioned. Translators are required to be loyal to all agents in a translation project, including the author, the sender, the client, and the readers. Moreover, translators are responsible for the target texts (translations) that they produce and for the effects thereof on their readers (Pym 2012). Nowadays, translators are called upon to be visible in their translations. Hence, they are urged to take their visibility, responsibility and accountability seriously. In translation theory, attention is drawn to translators' visibility but in practice, translators are paradoxically often expected to remain invisible by producing fluent texts. Chesterman (2001) defines four models of translation ethics, focusing on different ethical values, such as trust and truth. The chapter was also concerned with translators' style which may ultimately be a sign of ideological positioning, even though style and ethics are not necessarily linked. Subsequently, the grouping and reception of Bosman's short stories were discussed, followed by critics' comments on the new Afrikaans translations of his stories by Griebenow (Bosman 2011b; 2012; 2016b) and De Lange (Bosman 2013).

Chapter 3 dealt with the methodology chosen for this study: a qualitative research type and a narrative approach were followed. The research design combined features of interdisciplinary research, textual analysis, comparative analysis, and critical discourse analysis. The data consisted of existing texts in printed form, while the *tertium comparationis* outlined the ethical and stylistic aspects that were focused on during comparative analysis. The ethical aspects comprised terms of address and

references to cultures and historical contexts – especially references to historical figures, events and place names – and the transfer of irony for which Bosman is renowned. It is crucial that the intended meanings of the implied author are conveyed in a truthful manner because truth is a significant ethical value. The stylistic aspects included translators' stylistic choices and translation strategies. A committed approach, which considers translation as an activist and interventionist cultural activity (Brownlie 2011), formed the analytical framework of this study.

In Chapter 4, the source texts and their translation(s) were briefly compared at macro-level, followed by detailed comparative analyses of seven Oom Schalk Lourens short stories at micro-level, while adhering to the chronological order in which they had originally appeared:

**“Makapan’s Caves”** deals with the friendship between a black man, Nongaas, and his white master, Hendrik Lourens, Oom Schalk’s elder brother. The narrative is antiracist as far as their friendship is concerned, even though most of the action happens during a war between black and white people – the 1854 Siege of Makapan. MacKenzie and Sandham (2011) compare the story to a Greek tragedy, as it ends with Schalk accidentally shooting and killing Nongaas. The translators have repeated rather than replaced the k-word that occurs an astounding thirty-six times in the source text. Other racial epithets include Hottentot, piccanin, and *baas* (BT: master).

**“The Rooinek”** is concerned with another unlikely friendship: a Boer, Koos Steyn, befriends a newcomer to the district, an Englishman named Webber, after the Second Anglo-Boer War. Sadly, both men eventually die of thirst in the Kalahari Desert. Although the epithets *Rooinek* and *Boer* could be regarded as derogatory, they may also be used as terms of endearment and are consequently not nearly as offensive as the k-word, which appears eight times in the story. The translators have insisted on repeating every racial epithet used in the source text.

**“The Gramophone”** is a Gothic murder story, reminiscent to some degree of Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart” (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:93). It pertains to the troubled marriage of Krisjan Lemmer, resulting in the murder of his wife, Susannah. Bosman’s references in this story to various groups of people are of interest: the Jew trader [who sold Krisjan the gramophone], the *Boers*, the *rooineks*, the Indian



storekeeper, the Mtosa kaffirs,<sup>2</sup> and *baas*. Griebenow has not only repeated all the epithets, but has also changed the inoffensive term, “Indian”, to the racial slur, *koelie* (BT: coolie), in his translation. However, this is not as unethical as it appears since Bosman himself used the offensive term in one of his Afrikaans stories. It must be reiterated that during Bosman’s lifetime, the use of racial epithets was the norm.

The woeful events in “**Mafeking Road**” take place at the onset of the Second South African War, subsequent to the relief of Mafeking. Floris van Barnevelt’s cowardly son, Stephanus, intends to surrender to the British forces, which would be equal to turning traitor to his own country. The reader is called upon to fill the gap regarding Stephanus’ death that Oom Schalk has deliberately left in the narrative. The story also concerns the veldkornet, the leader of the Marico Boers, who habitually asks black people that they come across for directions. The translators have repeated the offensive k-word, which appears ten times in the original, instead of diminishing its harmful effect.

The theme of “**Splendours from Ramoutsa**” is the art of storytelling. The Indian shopkeeper at Ramoutsa installs himself as Oom Schalk’s rival by telling exotic tales about princesses. Since there is no mention of black people the foreign atmosphere of this story is emphasised. In his translation, De Lange has changed “Indian” to the offensive term, *koelie*, possibly with the aim of evoking the time when the source text was written with its racist viewpoint intact.

“**Unto Dust**” involves a skirmish during a bygone Transvaal Native War, in which two men, one white and one black, die side by side. Six months later, a few Boers return to the battleground to retrieve the remains of Hans Welman for burial, but they cannot distinguish between the two corpses, thus calling attention to the themes of death and confusion of identity. Ironically, the wrong man has been buried on the Welman farm. Although the focalisation stems from two racist narrators, Oom Schalk Lourens and Stoffel Oosthuizen, the inferred meaning of the story points to racial equality. De Lange has repeated the k-word that occurs as many as twenty-two times in the original, despite its being extremely offensive today.

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<sup>2</sup> The offensive k-word occurs five times in “The Gramophone”.

“**Funeral Earth**” deals with similar episodes during two different wars: a Native War waged on the Mtona people, followed by the Second Anglo-Boer War. Towards the end of the story, Oom Schalk begins to appreciate the black people’s wisdom for choosing life (i.e. the soil) above death and destruction. De Lange has translated the offensive terms – tribe, the k-word [appearing five times], native, and flat-faced Mshangaans – by means of repetition.

## 5.2 Conclusions

It is clear from the analyses in Chapter 4 that Griebenow and De Lange regard it to be their ethical duty to show fidelity to Herman Charles Bosman, the author of the source texts. By using the repetition of racist epithets as a translation strategy, the translators have undeniably disregarded the socio-cultural and political context of reception. Dated epithets applied to others should instead be avoided, especially in present-day South Africa where the apartheid system of segregation and racial discrimination has been superseded by a democracy in which every person is deemed equal before the law.

Hence, the sub-questions which are related to the research question can be answered as follows:

- The offensive language of the source texts has been repeated verbatim in the target texts owing to the translators’ distinct preference for faithful translation. This is consistent with the findings of Kruger and Crots (2014), who conducted a survey among SATI members, as mentioned in Chapter 2, section 2.2.4 (Ethical considerations in translation). When dealing with ethical issues, Griebenow and De Lange incline towards imposing all responsibility on the deceased author. Moreover, a shared dislike of risk-taking may be inferred from the line of least resistance they have chosen. This corresponds with translators’ former low status and their ensuing reluctance to interfere with source texts, which explains why Bosman’s translators did not take risks.

- The effect of retaining dated racial epithets in current translations, ignoring South Africa's political change, is to hurt, offend, and hence, provoke those at whom the epithets are directed as well as their supporters. The objections raised against retrospective tampering with Bosman's stories in the 1980s, concerned his **original** texts, not the translated ones as these were only translated in the twenty-first century. Since cooperation between people of different cultures is a significant objective of translation (Pym 2012), it stands to reason that racial slurs should be toned down for modern target-text readers. There is absolutely no place for racism in a democratic society.
- If faced with racial epithets in the original, translators may select from strategies that offer alternatives to repetition, such as omission, paraphrase, or using more neutral and less expressive options. One could omit the offensive k-word altogether, if viable, for example in compounds; paraphrase it as *'n swart mens* (BT: a black person); or replace it with a more neutral word, such as *bediende* (BT: attendant) [Section 4.3.2.2], *handlanger* (BT: helper) [4.3.3.2], *kryger* (BT: warrior) [4.3.6.2], depending on the context, while explaining in a translator's preface why the change is required. When a racial slur occurs more than once in a given passage, it may be replaced by a pronoun, for example, *sy* (BT: his) [4.3.4.2]. This answer might also take care of Hermans' (2009) questions, cited in Section 2.2.4, regarding how to translate the offensive "k-word" if it appears in an historical document, even though it can be argued that Bosman's stories are literary texts and not historical documents.

The translators' repetition of the offensive racial epithets in the source texts conflicts with the tenets that I have set out as a committed researcher. They have been faithful to the dead author, rather than to the necessary cause of reshaping South African society, by for example avoiding racist epithets. If ethics is a choice between worthy principles, I would strongly recommend selecting the latter option; otherwise, it may be better not to translate at all, as Pym (2012) suggests. Ideological changes are certainly needed in current translations of the Oom Schalk Lourens stories, particularly if the target readership is young, i.e. individuals born in the twenty-first century. While

differentiation among people on linguistic grounds is still tolerated, the use of racist language, in defiance of South Africa's political transformation, is totally unwarranted.

### **5.3 Contribution**

The study contributes in the following areas:

#### **5.3.1 Translating Bosman**

Although other aspects of Bosman's works have been researched,<sup>3</sup> the ethical challenges and stylistic issues of translating his stories, for a new generation of South African readers in radically changed circumstances, have not been explored before.

#### **5.3.2 Committed approaches**

In this thesis, suggestions were made from the theoretical perspective of a committed approach in Translation Studies. Activist research procedures, as opposed to merely descriptive ones, were promoted.

#### **5.3.3 Translating racial epithets**

The study's modest contribution is predominantly on the applied level (translation practice), suggesting alternative local strategies such as the semantic strategy of paraphrase or the pragmatic strategy of omission when dealing with racist epithets. The overall aim should be nation-building.

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<sup>3</sup> These aspects incorporate topics such as Bosman's bilingual writing (Snyman 2003), the irony in the Oom Schalk Lourens stories (Mac Donald 2003), and Bosman's juvenilia (Kretschmann 2013).

## 5.4 Limitations

The study was limited to selected Oom Schalk Lourens stories. The *Voorkamer* stories were initially considered too, but not included.<sup>4</sup> Owing to Bosman's substantial literary output, a careful selection from his narratives was required for comparative analysis.

Bosman's translators were not solicited for their opinions, because the study regarded translation as a finished product rather than a work in progress.

Despite the non-replicability of the research results, the risks of subjectivity and of imposing interpretations on the texts, the findings of this study are still worthwhile in that they provide a rich, nuanced assessment of how Bosman's English stories have been translated into Afrikaans.

## 5.5 Recommendations

South African texts from the pre-apartheid and apartheid periods, whether literary or not, are likely to provide translators with similar ethical challenges, owing to the ubiquity of epithets referring to people of other races. Naturally, translators are not required to consult this thesis. Ethical issues in translation also comprise other types of taboo language that should be explored. Further research in the field of translation ethics could combine qualitative and quantitative methods by conducting surveys in an attempt to uncover translators' thought processes.

Future research on the writings of Bosman could include in-depth studies of the *Voorkamer* pieces, as prior to the *Anniversary Edition*, only half of this sequence was available in book form. A further topic of interest in the discipline of English Studies would be a comparative investigation, tracing the influence of the American short story writer, Edgar Allan Poe on Bosman's fiction.

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<sup>4</sup> See the Appendix for analyses of two *Voorkamer* stories.

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## APPENDIX

### *Voorkamer* stories

#### 1.1 Introduction

A criterion used in this study for the selection of stories was the degree that they exemplify the research problem of translating racial epithets for modern readers, who live in atmosphere of political correctness. Since the *Voorkamer* (BT: front room) stories contain few racial insults, they do not pose serious ethical translation problems. For this reason, it was decided to include these as an appendix, rather than in the main thesis.

Bosman wrote the *Voorkamer* stories at the end of his life, between April 1950 and October 1951, to a weekly deadline for the leftist Johannesburg periodical, *The Forum*, as a comic counterpoint to the publication's solemn political commentary on topical issues.

These stories marked an exciting new development in Bosman's writings; while the Oom Schalk Lourens stories employ a single narrator, the *Voorkamer* series<sup>1</sup> feature a set of speakers, all vying for a turn to speak and hence, for the reader's attention. The local farmers gather in Jurie Steyn's voorkamer, which doubles as the Drogevelei post office, and engage in idle talk while ostensibly waiting for the post lorry that conveys their letters and empty milk-cans from Bekkersdal (MacKenzie 2003; 2011). An item of news (a race classification muddle), an event in the district (the arrival of a stranger), or an enduring theme (money) usually starts a meandering conversation, which is imparted to the reader by an anonymous narrator, "a kind of minutes-taker" (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:245–246). Thus, Bosman's backveld forum provides an entertaining Marico perspective on matters of the day.

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<sup>1</sup> According to MacKenzie (2000:75), the *Voorkamer* stories may be more accurately defined as "sketches" or "conversation pieces" because they rarely have a strong narrative line, in contrast to the Oom Schalks.

In this section, two *Voorkamer* stories and their translations are analysed: “The Budget” and “Secret Agent”.

## 1.2 “The Budget”

### 1.2.1 Introduction

“The Budget” is the first story in the *Voorkamer* sequence. Even though the title refers to a financial term, the story ironically deals with a constant lack of money, as the Marico farmers are impoverished. In this story, we encounter the rather slovenly postmaster, Jurie Steyn, who once sold someone a postal order smeared with buttermilk, and the regulars of his voorkamer/post office. These are Gysbert van Tonder, his neighbour, who has turned hostile owing to a boundary dispute; At Naudé, who likes repeating the news bulletins that he has heard on his wireless;<sup>2</sup> Johnny Coen, the most romantically inclined of the group; Chris Welman, originally from the Eastern Cape; and Oupa Sarel Bekker, the elder statesman who closely resembles Oom Schalk Lourens.<sup>3</sup> The disgruntled *Voorkamer* companions, situated a generation<sup>4</sup> after Oom Schalk, oppose change as their world is being encroached upon (MacKenzie 2000:85–86). However, they derive pleasure from provoking or deceiving one another (MacKenzie 2011:10).

### 1.2.2 Comparative analysis

The first discussion is prompted by At Naudé’s remark that Jurie Steyn’s post office must pay the government, since he can increase the price of postage stamps. Neither Jurie Steyn, nor the government profits from the Drogevlei post office: he is employed

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<sup>2</sup> The old-fashioned word for radio (*Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* 2015:1726) that Bosman used.

<sup>3</sup> Comparable to *Oom*, Bosman applied *Oupa* as a term of respect; *Oom* (BT: uncle) relates to older men, and *Oupa* (BT: grandfather) to very old men.

<sup>4</sup> There is an interval of about thirty years between Oom Schalk and his long-standing Boer War friends who are situated in the 1920s, and the *Voorkamer* cronies and their stories, set in the early 1950s as implied above.

as postmaster without remuneration and is therefore pleased that his post office does not earn any money for the state. An incensed Jurie replies as follows:

ST p 20: “Anyway, At,” he said, “even twopence a half-ounce is cheaper than getting a Mchopi runner to carry a letter in a long stick with a cleft in the end. But, of course, you wouldn’t understand about things like progress.”

TT Griebenow, p 3: “Weet jy, At,” het hy gesê, “selfs twee pennies vir ’n half-ons is goedkoper as om ’n Mchopi-bode te kry om ’n brief in ’n lang mikstok af te lewer. Maar jy sal natuurlik nie verstaan van dinge soos vooruitgang nie.”

TT De Lange, p 117: “Hoe ook al, At,” sê hy, “selfs twee pennies vir ’n halfons is goedkoper as om ’n Mchopi-boodskapper te kry om ’n brief in ’n lang mikstok af te lewer. Maar jy sal uiteraard nou nie dinge soos vooruitgang kan verstaan nie.”

Jurie Steyn argues that despite the fact that he charges more for stamps, it is still cheaper for the community to post a letter than to send it with a Mchopi runner [the custom in former times]. It is interesting to note that Griebenow and De Lange have adhered to the source text’s unfamiliar term, rather than using the more familiar but offensive one for a black person, which is ethical translation on two counts: towards the author, and in terms of a committed approach in Translation Studies. The curious word, “Mchopi”, presumably refers to “a member of a minor Tswana clan” (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:145). The translators have altered the noun “runner” to “messenger”– Griebenow has transferred it as *bode* and De Lange as *boodskapper*. In this context, substitution is an acceptable translation strategy because a messenger ultimately delivers a letter, containing a message, even though the sense of urgency is lost in the target texts. Griebenow has rendered “of course” accurately as *natuurlik*, while De Lange has employed a synonym, *uiteraard* (BT: naturally). Here, the translators’ choices differ only in terms of register: Griebenow’s choice of word is less formal than De Lange’s.

Johnny Coen jokes that postage may cost less, but it is not better, quicker or even cleaner than a Mchopi runner, thereby recalling the incident of the smudged postal order, as mentioned. In the meantime, Chris Welman narrates a story concerning a

letter that had been posted at Christmas in Volksrust, but only reached its destination, Magoeba's Kloof, on Dingaan's Day,<sup>5</sup> twenty-eight years later:

ST p 20: "If a native runner took twenty-eight years to get from Volksrust to Magoeba's Kloof," Chris Welman said, "we would have known that he didn't run much. He must at least have stopped once or twice at huts along the way for kaffir beer."

TT Griebenow, p 3: "As 'n swart bode agt en twintig jaar gevat het om van Volksrust af Magoebaskloof toe te hardloop," het Chris Welman gesê, "sou 'n mens weet dat hy nie baie kon gehardloop het nie. Hy sou ten minste een of twee keer by hutte langs die pad moes gestop het vir kafferbier."

TT De Lange, p 117: "As 'n swart boodskapper agt-en-twintig jaar gevat het om van Volksrust tot by Magoebaskloof te kom," sê Chris Welman, "sou ons weet dat hy nie veel gehardloop het nie. Hy moes ten minste een of twee keer op pad by 'n hut gestop het vir kafferbier."

Bosman's distinct sense of humour is demonstrated by Chris Welman's understatement that the runner must "at least have stopped once or twice," as he had probably spent more time drinking than running, if he ran at all.<sup>6</sup> Bosman used the word "native" to describe the messenger, while his translators have changed it to *swart* (BT: black) which is politically correct at present<sup>7</sup> and ethically sound in accordance with the committed approach of this thesis. However, both the translators have rendered the obsolete and offensive source-text term "kaffir beer," denoting "grain sorghum beer" (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:117) quite literally as *kafferbier*, instead of using the more neutral term, *sorghumbier*, as found in the HAT dictionary (2015:1210). Still, this is the only time that the k-word occurs in the first of the

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<sup>5</sup> This was the former, unofficial name for the Day of the Covenant, "a public holiday commemorating the vow made by a Voortrekker group to keep the day holy should they defeat a Zulu army at the Battle of Blood River on [16 December] 1838" ([www.dsae.co.za/#!/word/1990/Dingaan's Day](http://www.dsae.co.za/#!/word/1990/Dingaan's%20Day)). After the ANC came to power, it was renamed the Day of Reconciliation (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:67) in the interests of nation building ([www.mieliestronk.com/savaksie.html](http://www.mieliestronk.com/savaksie.html)).

<sup>6</sup> In view of the delayed letter, it is quite understandable that the translators have substituted "runner" for "messenger".

<sup>7</sup> The issue of racial appellations is evidently governed by time.

*Voorkamer* sketches, which is less frequently than in the Oom Schalk Lourens stories that were analysed in Chapter 4.

Next, it is Oupa Bekker's turn to participate in the conversation. Since he is hard of hearing and "a bit queer in the head" (Bosman 2011:20) owing to advanced age, he has misconstrued what the others have been saying as Jurie Steyn running down the road with a letter in a cleft stick. However, since he anticipates the story's conclusion, it can be inferred that Oupa Bekker is shrewd, despite his infirmities. His account of the Republic of Goosen's Minister of Finance, who lost the total amount of State revenues in the bar after a game of poker at the Mafeking Hotel, is interrupted when Jurie Steyn insists on knowing what the story's relevance to his post office might be. Oupa Bekker gives him the following answer:

ST p 21: "I said that even when things were very bad in the old days, you would still never see a white postmaster running in the sun with a letter in a cleft stick," Oupa Bekker explained, adding, "like a Mchopi."

TT Griebenow, p 4: "Ek het gesê dat selfs toe dinge skeefgeloop het in die ou dae, jy nooit 'n wit posmeester in die son sou sien hardloop met 'n brief in 'n mikstok nie," het Oupa Bekker verduidelik en bygevoeg "soos 'n Mchopi."

TT De Lange, p 118: "Ek het gesê selfs toe dinge sleg was in die ou dae, jy steeds nooit 'n wit posmeester met 'n mikstok in die son sou sien hardloop nie," verduidelik Oupa Bekker. "Nes 'n Mchopi," voeg hy by.

De Lange has transferred "very bad" as *sleg* (BT: bad), thereby omitting the intensifier, while Griebenow has changed the inferred meaning to *skeefgeloop* (BT: went wrong), which implies that things were usually good, in the old days. The translators' modifications are not sufficiently grave to be of ethical import. Oupa Bekker is merely suggesting that even when circumstances were unfavourable, a white man would never have done a black man's work – the postmaster would not be seen running in broad daylight with a letter in a cleft stick, resembling a Mchopi. Nevertheless, Oupa Bekker provides an anecdote about Goosen's Minister of Finance, who remained in Mafeking, working as a porter after he had lost the Republic's surplus. The implication is that the white minister behaved no better than the black runner, as both had lost or misplaced something while drinking, whether at a bar or a hut. In fact, the white man's



behaviour was far worse because he had also been gambling, integral to playing poker.

When it transpires that Oupa Bekker had once been the Minister of Finance in the Republic of Ohrigstad, Jurie Steyn mumbles that he must have lost the state's money while playing snakes and ladders, a children's board game, which hints at the postmaster's cynicism. Oupa Bekker's former glory makes an impression on the others, though. He mentions that although there was no money for education or hospitals, they had to spend money on defence, as they were anticipating trouble – not from the black people as one may have expected – but from Paul Kruger and the Doppers. The fact that despite their poverty they still had money to defend themselves against another Boer in-group, emphasises their acrimony. Moreover, they speak of this group in a manner that could be deemed unethical in some quarters, evoking the quotation "Paul Kruger and ... his Dopper<sup>8</sup> clique" from "Makapan's Caves".

In order to meet the challenge of working out a popular budget, Oupa Bekker imposed taxes that the seventeen income-tax payers were never required to pay. Even though these "taxes" failed to bring in money, the people were pleased that they could avoid them. However, when one person contemplated moving to the Cape because of a heavy opium tax, this tax had to be abolished:

ST p 23 "... This income-tax payer had a yellowish complexion and sloping eyes, and ran the only laundry in the Ohrigstad Republic."

TT Griebenow, p 6: "... Die betrokke inkomstebelastingbetaler het 'n gelerige gelaatskleur en skrefiesoë gehad, en het die enigste wassery in die Ohrigstad-republiek besit."

TT De Lange, p 121: "... Hierdie belastingbetaler het 'n gelerige gelaat en skuins oë gehad en het die enigste wassery in die Ohrigstad-republiek gehad."

It is clear from this description of the income-tax payer's appearance [a yellowish complexion and sloping eyes] and occupation [running a laundry], together with his partiality to opium, that he is Chinese. Bosman gives a description of the individual

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<sup>8</sup> See Chapter 4 section 4.3.1.2 regarding how the epithet "Dopper" used to be considered as offensive.

rather than using a derogatory epithet. This avoidance of racial epithets may have been intentional since the *Voorkamer* sequence appeared in an anti-government journal.

The translators have rendered the taxpayer's "yellowish complexion" accurately as *gelerige gelaat*, although Griebenow has unnecessarily added the word *-kleur*, thus emphasising the colour of his skin. De Lange has translated "sloping" correctly as *skuins*, while Griebenow has altered it to *skrefiesoë* (BT: slitty eyes), which is unkind. Thus, in depicting the Chinese in this way, Griebenow's target text is neither as neutral, nor as tolerant as De Lange's, indicating stylistic differences with ethical implications.

Jurie Steyn speculates that Oupa Bekker could not have been born at the time when the Ohrigstad Republic existed, while Chris Welman replies that he does not know. Since the short-lived Boer Republic of Ohrigstad was established in 1845, Oupa Bekker must have been about one hundred and thirty years old at this time, as MacKenzie and Sandham (2011:28) point out. It appears that Bosman used Oupa Bekker in the same way as he used Oom Schalk Lourens – strategically, rather than in a historically accurate way.

The story ends with Jurie Steyn running after the post lorry with a registered letter that he had forgotten about, and Chris Welman's comment is a significant repetition of Oupa Bekker's words "... like a Mchopi ..." (Bosman 2011:24). It implies that Oupa Bekker has been right all along – things were indeed better in the good old days. The reader can make the same inference from the Afrikaans translations.

### **1.3 "Secret Agent"**

#### **1.3.1 Introduction**

"Secret Agent", selected by Gray for inclusion in *Best stories and humour of Herman Charles Bosman* (2013), is a truly humorous story. Its theme is discourtesy towards strangers, while the humour exists in the mutual misunderstandings arising between people belonging to clashing cultures.

A stranger, Org Losper, arrives on the government lorry at Jurie Steyn's post office, but the reason for his visit remains a mystery to the Marico farmers for most of the story. The main function of this narrative is to amuse and entertain the reader, although it may also be interpreted as a scathing criticism of the National Party government for giving special positions to those who had helped them during the elections. Bosman uses humour to attract the reader, while the story ultimately leads to serious thought. Losper has been rewarded – for tampering with the electoral list – with a specially created job, although he is under oath not to disclose what he will be investigating for the Department of Defence. As it turns out, his task seems unnecessary, compared to more pressing issues.

### 1.3.2 Comparative analysis

From the outset, Gysbert van Tonder is set apart from the voorkamer group for his lack of manners since the time he had accompanied two American tourists on an African safari. Bosman makes fun of him and the tourists:

ST p 36: That trip with the two Americans influenced Gysbert van Tonder's mind, all right. For he came back talking very loudly. And he bought a waistcoat at the Indian store especially so that he could carry a cigar in it.

TT Griebenow, p 23: Daardie safari saam met die twee Amerikaners het beslis 'n indruk op Gysbert van Tonder gemaak. Want toe hy terugkom, het hy baie hard gepraat. En hy het spesiaal 'n onderbaadjie by die Indiërwinkel gekoop sodat hy 'n sigaar daarin kan rondra.

TT De Lange, p 289: Daardie rit saam met die twee Amerikaners het Gysbert van Tonder se gemoed beïnvloed, dis vir seker. Want sedert hy terug is, praat hy baie hard. En hy het 'n onderbaadjie by die koeliewinkel gekoop spesifiek sodat hy 'n sigaar daarin kan dra.

De Lange has transferred the idea that taking a trip<sup>9</sup> with the Americans had “influenced Gysbert van Tonder's mind” accurately, whereas Griebenow has altered it

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<sup>9</sup> It is worth noting that Griebenow has changed “trip” to *safari*, placing it in an African context, while De Lange has adhered closer to the source text with the word, *rit* (BT: ride).

to *het beslis 'n indruk op Gysbert van Tonder gemaak* (BT: had definitely made an impression on Gysbert van Tonder), thereby omitting the word “mind” which may seem unethical. However, since the mind is an integral part of a person, the omission does not have serious implications, ethical or otherwise. The extent of the Americans’ influence on Gysbert van Tonder is indicated by his comic attempts at imitating them in both his speech [“talking very loudly”], and his dress: he bought a waistcoat with a pocket for his cigar.

Griebenow has transferred “Indian store” correctly as *Indiërwinkel*, but De Lange has used the offensive word, *koeliewinkel* (BT: **coolie** store), an old-fashioned, taboo word, which is unethical from a committed perspective. De Lange’s dubious translation choice is probably in the interests of lexical consistency, because the volume he has translated for Human & Rousseau contains selected *Voorkamer* as well as *Oom Schalk Lourens* stories, whereas Griebenow has published his *Voorkamer* translations on their own, entitled: *'n Bekkersdal-marathon en ander Voorkamerstories*.

There is bound to be discord when Americans, belonging to an individualistic culture, travel to Africa where they meet different collectivist communities. Gysbert van Tonder recalls a comical incident involving an American tourist and a local chief, as reported in the third person:

ST p 37: He said he could still remember how one of the Americans slapped Chief Umfutusu on the back and how Chief Umfutusu, in his turn, slapped the American on the ear with a clay pot full of greenish drink that the chief was holding in his hand at the time.

TT Griebenow, p 23: Hy het gesê hy onthou nog hoe een van die Amerikaners hoofman Umfutusu op die rug geklap het, en hoe hoofman Umfutusu op sy beurt die Amerikaner teen sy oor geklap het met 'n kleipot vol groenerige drank wat die hoofman op daardie stadium in sy hand gehou het.

TT De Lange, p 290: Hy't gesê hy onthou steeds hoe een van die Amerikaners vir hoofman Umfutusu op die rug geklap het en hoe hoofman Umfutusu, op sy beurt, die Amerikaner teen die oor geklap het met 'n kleipot vol groenerige vloeistof wat die hoofman op daardie oomblik in sy hand gehad het.

Chief Umfutusu<sup>10</sup> takes offence when one of the Americans gives him a jovial slap on the back, which points to the opposing customs of the two cultures. Neither of them acted as the other expected. Thus, the very notion of ethics as concerned with the oppositional difference between the self and non-self/other<sup>11</sup> is evoked in this story. The chief succumbs to his first instinctive reaction by hitting the stranger on the ear with a pot of “greenish drink”, which Griebenow has translated as *groenerige drank*, closely following the source text. De Lange, however, has selected a more general word for “drink”: *vloeistof* (BT: liquid) that is more acceptable, especially to a sensitive reader who might find a “greenish drink” rather sickening.

Rather than becoming annoyed, the American is happy to think of the chief’s reaction as a local custom to welcome “distinguished white travellers” (Bosman 2011:37), but he is mistaken as the Africans neither admire nor respect these tourists. Their next encounter with the indigenous Mshangaan [or Shangaan] community<sup>12</sup> also turns out badly:

ST p 37: Later on, when Gysbert van Tonder and the Americans came to a Mshangaan village that was having some trouble with hut tax, the American who kept the diary was able to write a lot more about what he called an obscure African ritual that that tribe observed in welcoming a superior order of stranger. For the whole Mshangaan village, men, women and children, had rushed out and pelted Gysbert and the two Americans with wet cow-dung.

TT Griebenow, p 24: Later, toe Gysbert van Tonder en die Amerikaners by ’n Mshangaanstat gekom het wat probleme opgetel het weens hutbelasting, kon die Amerikaner wat dagboek gehou het, baie meer skryf oor dít wat hy genoem het “n vergete Afrika-ritueel vir die verwelkoming van meer gesiene vreemdelinge” wat deur daardie stam beoefen is. Danksy die feit dat die hele Mshangaanstat – mans,

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<sup>10</sup> It is not stated of which group he was the chief.

<sup>11</sup> See Chapter 2 section 2.2.3 (Visibility and responsibility).

<sup>12</sup> They are named after their founding chief, Soshangane ([en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/shangaan](http://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/shangaan)), who was a Zulu. Today the Shangaans live in “parts of Mozambique and Mpumalanga and Limpopo Provinces” (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:150).

vroue en kinders – uitgestorm het en Gysbert en die twee Amerikaners met vars beesmis bestook het.

TT De Lange, p 290: Later, toe Gysbert van Tonder en die Amerikaners by 'n Msjangaanstat aankom wat probleme het met hutbelasting, kon die Amerikaner met die dagboek nog heelwat meer skryf oor wat hy 'n obskure Afrika-ritueel genoem het om 'n deurlugtige soort vreemdeling te verwelkom. Want die hele Msjangaanstat, mans, vroue en kinders, het uitgehardloop en Gysbert en die twee Amerikaners met nat beesmis gegooi.

The Shangaans chased the two Americans and their guide away by hurling wet cowdung at them. Bosman plays fair by providing a reason for their antagonism: they were already facing problems with hut tax when the strangers turned up, uninvited.

The translators have rendered “village” correctly as *stat* (BT: African village), an historical concept in Afrikaans that is not considered derogatory (HAT 2015:1247). The American diarist ironically misinterprets the Shangaans’ hostility as an obscure kind of welcome for “a superior order of stranger”, thus emphasising the dated notion of white superiority as opposed to African subordination. The translators have rendered the word “obscure” used to describe “African ritual”, differently: Griebenow has modified its meaning to *vergete* (BT: forgotten), whereas De Lange has adhered rather literally to the source text with *obskure* (BT: obscure). In transferring the quoted phrase, Griebenow has used the plural form: *meer gesiene vreemdelinge* (BT: more esteemed strangers), while De Lange, the poet, has translated it idiomatically: *'n deurlugtige soort vreemdeling* (BT: an illustrious kind of stranger), which is the better of the two translations.

An incident involving a Bavenda [Venda] community and the well-known Victorian explorer, Stanley, is cited as a supplementary event, which does not move the story forward (Abbott 2008:231):

ST p 37: In his diary the American compared this incident with the ceremonial greeting that a tribe of Bavendas once accorded the explorer Stanley, when they threw him backwards into a dam – to show respect, as Stanley explained, afterwards.

TT Griebenow, p 24: Die Amerikaner het hierdie gebeurtenis in sy dagboek vergelyk met die seremoniële groet wat 'n Bavenda-stam eenkeer aan die ontdekkingsreisiger Stanley betoon het toe hulle hom – om respek te betoon, soos Stanley ná die tyd verduidelik het – agterstevoor in 'n dam gesmyt het.

TT De Lange, p 290: In sy dagboek het die Amerikaner hierdie gebeure vergelyk met die seremoniële groet waarmee 'n Bavenda-stam eenkeer die ontdekkingsreisiger Stanley vereer het, toe hulle hom agterstevoor in 'n dam gegooi het – om respek te betoon, soos Stanley agterna verduidelik het.

In the above, Bosman has used the word “tribe” again, which is accepted in historical contexts, but best avoided today owing to its association with “past attitudes of white colonialists towards so-called primitive or uncivilised peoples” (*Concise Oxford English Dictionary* 2011:1540). The dictionary recommends using alternatives such as **community** or **people** in reference to traditional societies. Both Griebenow and De Lange have used the Afrikaans word *stam* (BT: tribe) in their translations. The *HAT* dictionary defines this word as “a group of people with the same customs/habits/language, who usually live together in a particular area” (2015:1243; my own translation), but surprisingly does not raise any objections to its use in modern contexts. De Lange has transferred the verb “threw” correctly as *gegooi*, but Griebenow has resorted to an informal register with the word *gesmyt*, which is somewhat inappropriate for a written text because it is mainly used in spoken language.

One may well ask: why did Bosman, or the implied author, include the controversial explorer, Stanley in this narrative?

A cursory glance at Sir Henry Morton Stanley’s biography is necessary at this point. He was born John Rowlands in Wales during 1841. His parents were unmarried and at the tender age of five, he was sent to a workhouse in St Asaph. In 1859, he left for New Orleans to start a new life, changed his name, participated in the American Civil War and subsequently became an itinerant newspaper reporter and explorer. The *New York Herald* sent him on an African expedition in search of the Scottish missionary and explorer, David Livingstone; upon finding him, he reportedly remarked, “Dr Livingstone, I presume?” Stanley played a significant part in the exploration and

colonisation of central Africa. He developed the Congo region, paving the way for the creation of the Congo Free State (today, the Democratic Republic of the Congo), under the sovereignty of King Leopold II of Belgium, and thus became associated with the brutal regime that caused the death of countless Congolese. Stanley was knighted in 1899, and he died in 1904 ([www.britannica.com/biography/Henry-Morton-Stanley](http://www.britannica.com/biography/Henry-Morton-Stanley)).

Although Stanley visited South Africa in 1897, it is doubtful whether he ever met the Vendas,<sup>13</sup> let alone being thrown into a dam, as described in “Secret Agent.” Bosman probably placed him in a fictional setting, because Stanley stayed in Bulawayo, Johannesburg and Pretoria, from where he wrote the letters published in his book, *Through South Africa*. Interestingly, in the images I found of him on the internet, he is either the centre of attention, or holding a gun, but not in the sort of situation described by Bosman, noted for his sharp wit. The author highlights African resistance to Western intrusion by involving the explorer in his story. If Stanley was a controversial figure in his lifetime, he is even more so today, owing to his role in the colonial history of the Congo. In 2011, a bronze statue of him was unveiled in his hometown, Denbigh, despite fierce protests from those who consider him guilty of crimes against humanity ([www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-north-east-wales-12775441](http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-north-east-wales-12775441)). The concept of decoloniality is currently gaining ground globally; Bosman was certainly ahead of his time in writing a story about African hostility towards European colonisers.

White people of the Marico district are demonstrated to be equally hostile towards strangers when Losper recounts all the losses he has suffered as a member of someone else’s family; he was nearly killed in the process. His diatribe concludes as follows: “If I have much more Bushveld hospitality I might never see my wife and children again” (Bosman 2011:40). In response to Gysbert van Tonder’s question regarding the nature of his business, Losper answers that he will be investigating if *something has been seen* (Bosman’s emphasis) in the Marico, although he is under oath not to disclose any details. The *Voorkamer* habitués soon learn the truth:

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<sup>13</sup> It is known that he encountered a number of African pygmies in the Congo, but Vendas are not mentioned in any literature pertaining to Stanley.



ST p 40: As it happened, we found out within the next couple of days. A Mahalapi who worked for Adriaan Geel told us.

TT Griebenow, p 27: Op die ou end het ons binne 'n paar dae uitgevind. 'n Mahalapi wat vir Adriaan Geel werk, het vir ons vertel.

TT De Lange, p 294: Toevallig vind ons binne die volgende paar dae uit. Ons hoor dit by 'n Mahalapi wat vir Adriaan Geel werk.

“Mahalapi” probably denotes a black person from Mahalapye, a small town in eastern Botswana [the Bechuanaland Protectorate in Bosman’s day], as MacKenzie and Sandham (2011:136) suggest. Both the translators have adhered closely to the source text by means of repetition of the unusual term “Mahalapi”. Thus, an unnamed servant from Mahalapye finally reveals the details of Losper’s investigation for the Department of Defence. As a result, the farmers no longer envy Losper his government job, since knowing the Mtosas – a group already encountered in “The Gramophone”<sup>14</sup> – they understand just how challenging Losper’s occupation is:

ST p 40: For instance, there was only one member of the whole Mtosa tribe who had ever had any close contact with white men. And he had unfortunately grown up among Trekboers, whose last piece of crockery that they had brought with them from the Cape had got broken almost a generation earlier.

TT Griebenow, p 27: Daar was byvoorbeeld net een lid van die hele Mtosa-stam wat ooit enige kontak met witmense gehad het. En hy het ongelukkig tussen 'n klomp trekboere grootgeword, wie se laaste stuk breekgoed wat hulle saam met hulle uit die Kaap gebring het, byna 'n geslag vroeër gesneuwel het.

TT De Lange, p 294: Daar is net een lid van die hele Mtosa-stam wat ooit nabye kontak met wit mense gehad het. En hy het ongelukkig grootgeword by Trekboere, wie se laaste stukkies breekgoed wat hulle nog van die Kaap af saamgebring het, al deur 'n vorige geslag gebreek is.

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<sup>14</sup> The unfamiliar word, “Mtosa”, may refer to diverse Xhosa groups who lived in the Marico under Chief Sebe (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011, 150), although Bosman has presumably misquoted it because “the word does not exist as it is written here” (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:151).

In the above passage, each translator has omitted a word from the phrase, “any close contact,” since in Afrikaans the pronoun *enige* and the adjective *nabye* are mutually exclusive. Griebenow has transferred it as *enige kontak* (BT: any contact), whereas De Lange has rendered it more accurately as *nabye kontak* (BT: close contact). Only a Mtosa who had had close contact with white people would be familiar with crockery, such as cups [for drinking tea or coffee] and saucers, commonly found in English and Afrikaans homes. Thus, crockery may be regarded as a symbol of Western culture. The Trekboers among whom the Mtosa grew up<sup>15</sup> did not have any crockery left, because they did not stay very long in the same place, and, what is more, crockery, generally made of porcelain, breaks easily. In transferring the idea that the Trekboers’ last piece of crockery broke a generation earlier, Griebenow has created an unusual or marked collocation: *gesneuwel* (BT: die in battle), possibly for humorous effect, whereas De Lange has adhered more closely to the source text with the verb, *gebreek* (BT: broken). As far as accurate transfer of information is concerned, De Lange’s translation is clearly more accurate and hence, more ethical, too.<sup>16</sup>

In the last paragraph of the story, the reader eventually discovers the exact nature of Losper’s secret mission: he must find out whether the Mtosas have seen any strange objects in the sky, such as flying saucers. A flying saucer would indicate contact from aliens from outer space (MacKenzie & Sandham 2011:132).

ST p 40: We felt that the Department of Defence could have made an easier job for Org Losper than to send him round asking those questions of the Mtosas, they who did not even know what ordinary kitchen saucers were, leave alone flying ones.

TT Griebenow, p 28: Ons het gereken dat die Departement van Verdediging vir Org Losper ’n makliker werk kon uitdink as om hom te stuur om die Mtosas – wat nie eens weet hoe gewone kombuispieriings lyk nie – te ondervra oor die vlieënde soort.

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<sup>15</sup> Here, we have a similar situation as in “Makapan’s Caves”, where Nongaas grew up with the Lourens brothers. In South Africa, white families sometimes raise black children.

<sup>16</sup> I do not imply that Griebenow’s translation is entirely unethical, only that he added his own witticism to the original.

TT De Lange, p 294: Ons reken die Departement van Verdediging kon 'n makliker pos vir Org Losper geskep het as om hom rond te stuur om daardie vrae vir die Mtosas te vra – hulle wat nie eers weet wat gewone kombuispierings is nie, wat nog te sê vlieënde pierings.

In the original, the word “saucers” is lexically substituted with “ones” that Griebenow has followed in his target text, whereas De Lange has repeated the noun, *pierings* (BT: saucers) in his translation. If the Mtosas do not know what ordinary saucers look like, how will they be able to identify a flying saucer<sup>17</sup> from outer space? Ultimately, Bosman does not make fun of the Mtosas for their ignorance regarding crockery – his target is the government of his own time for paying attention to insignificant issues, while overlooking the important ones.

The regulars in the *Voorkamer* do not always get along with each other, let alone with strangers. It can only be imagined how much more difficult it would be to befriend aliens from another planet. Even though the people of the Marico<sup>18</sup> – black and white – claim to be polite, in the story they are shown to be abusive towards strangers. Hence, beings from other worlds would certainly not receive a warm welcome here.

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<sup>17</sup> The *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* (2015:587) defines the term, **flying saucer** as follows: “a round spacecraft that some people claim to have seen and that some people believe comes from another planet”.

<sup>18</sup> The Marico represents South Africa in Bosman’s stories.

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