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TRANSLATING IRONIC INTERTEXTUAL ALLUSIONS

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Abstract

Based on a corpus consisting of Albert Camus's *La Chute*, Hugo Claus's *Le chagrin des Belges*, Fouad Laroui's *Une année chez les Français* and their Dutch versions, this article examines the ways in which ironic intertextual allusions are translated. It begins with a presentation of the theoretical concepts underpinning the analysis and subsequently identifies, through a detailed study, the following nine strategies: standard translation; literal translation; translation using markers; non-translation; translation into a third language; glosses; omissions; substitutions using intertextuality from the target culture; and substitutions using architextuality.

Resume

A partir d'un corpus constitué de *La Chute* d'Albert Camus, du *Chagrin des Belges* de Hugo Claus et d'*Une année chez les Français* de Fouad Laroui, ainsi que leurs versions néerlandaises, cette contribution s'intéresse à la traduction de l'allusion intertextuelle ironique. Elle présente d'abord les concepts théoriques qui sous-tendent l'analyse, pour ensuite étudier plus en détail les 9 stratégies rencontrées : la traduction standard, la traduction littérale, la traduction avec marquage, la non-traduction, la traduction

1. Unless otherwise indicated, quoted text that was not originally written in English has been translated by Trish Van Bolderen.

dans une troisième langue, les gloses, l'omission, la substitution par une intertextualité appartenant à la culture cible et la substitution par l'architextualité.

Keywords: Allusion. Intertextuality. Literary translation. Irony. Parody.

Mots-clés : Allusion. Intertextualité. Traduction littéraire. Ironie. Parodie.

1. Introduction

While the notion of intertextuality is frequently understood as a product of the 1970s and the *Tel Quel* group, literary borrowing proves a rather ancient and universal practice, if only in Western traditions, and has inspired a great deal of expert analysis. This literary technique, which goes by several names depending on its form and function, is sometimes even referred to as one of the defining features of literariness (e.g. Compagnon 1979: 67; Riffaterre 1979). Since translation plays such a critical role in the circulation of literary texts, it is easy to understand why literary borrowing might be of interest to those researching literary translation.

The following discussion responds to this interest by looking at a particular type of literary borrowing: ironic intertextual allusion. To address this matter, I begin by outlining a number of central theoretical concepts and then present, in some detail, the novels that make up the corpus for this study. Ultimately, the goal is to propose and discuss a list of strategies used for translating ironic intertextual allusions.

2. Theoretical concepts

Although this article cannot provide an in-depth review of how the notion of intertextuality came into being or how it has evolved over the years, it is important to highlight at least a few of its key historical moments. In response to the very broad understanding of intertextuality that Julia Kristeva presented in her writings (1969: 85), Gérard Genette proposed a narrower definition, which has since become widely accepted. He prefers distinguishing between various forms of *transtextuality*, including *intertextuality*, which according to him refers to “une relation de co-présence entre deux ou plusieurs textes [...], le plus souvent par la présence effective d’un texte dans un autre” (Genette 1982: 8) [“a relationship of co-presence between two texts or among several texts [...] typically as the actual presence of one text within another” (1997: 1-2)]. When defined in this way, intertextuality can be identified and studied based on relatively brief passages in which literary borrowings are recognized as *intertextual traces*.

Quoted text can, according to Genette, be inscribed in the quoting text in the following ways:

Sous sa forme la plus explicite et la plus littérale, c'est la pratique traditionnelle de la *citation* (avec guillemets, avec ou sans référence précise) ; sous une forme moins explicite et moins canonique, celle du *plagiat* (chez Lautréamont, par exemple), qui est un emprunt non déclaré, mais encore littéral ; sous forme encore moins explicite et moins littérale, celle de *l'allusion*, c'est-à-dire un énoncé dont la pleine intelligence suppose la perception d'un rapport entre lui et un autre auquel renvoie nécessairement telle pour telle de ses inflexions, autrement non recevable (1982: 8).²

Annick Bouillaguet (1989) explicitly develops Genette's two notions (i.e. quoted text, quoting text), building on *quotation* (which is literal and explicit), *plagiarism* (literal and undeclared) and *allusion* (transformed and non-explicit), and then adding a fourth category called *reference*, which is non-explicit and transformed. Based on these four forms of intertextuality, Geneviève Roux-Faucard (2006) reflects on intertextuality and translation.

Conceptually, these distinctions are useful, providing grounds for translation studies research, since “face à la traduction, ces quatre types de traces ont des comportements relativement différents” [when it comes to translation, these four types of traces behave relatively differently] (Roux-Faucard 2006: 104). Nonetheless, for the purposes of analyzing translations, it is important to consider these distinctions in combination with other notions that pertain to literary borrowing.

It may also be useful to recall that, collectively, these various forms of intertextual traces (of which *allusion* is only one, according to Genette's terminology) are called *literary allusions* by scholars who belong for the most part to the Anglo-Saxon research milieu (e.g. Ben-Porat 1976; Coombs 1984; Perri 1978; Pucci 1998). Since this is the definition of *allusion* that will be used in the following analysis, we will be interested in all intertextual traces, whether undeclared or explicit, literal or transformed. However, these allusions are *intertextual* in Genette's sense of the word, meaning that they pertain to the “présence effective d'un texte dans un autre” (1982: 8) [“presence of one text

2. “In its most explicit and literal form, it is the traditional practice of *quoting* (with quotation marks, with or without specific references). In another less explicit and canonical form, it is the practice of *plagiarism* (in Lautréamont, for instance), which is an undeclared but still literal borrowing. Again, in still less explicit and less literal guise, it is the practice of *allusion*: that is, an enunciation whose full meaning presupposes the perception of a relationship between it and another text, to which it necessarily refers by some inflections that would otherwise remain unintelligible” (Genette 1997: 2).

within another” (1997: 2)] and are therefore relatively easy to identify. Using this definition allows us to isolate passages in which allusions can in turn provide a basis for analyzing translations. Therefore, we will consider other forms of *transtextuality* identified by Genette, such as *hypertextuality*, *metatextuality*, *architextuality* and *paratextuality*.

Although the term “literary allusion” is broadly used, Ziva Ben-Porat underscores its illusory nature (1976: 105-106). It goes without saying that this type of allusion does not appear solely in literary texts; nor does it relate exclusively to quoted texts from the *Belles Lettres*. In fact, a large number of non-literary artistic forms (e.g. painting, film, photography) and non-literary textual forms (e.g. journalistic articles, advertisements, political speeches) point to other texts and literary works that, in turn, often refer to non-literary artistic and textual material, such as songs, advertising, films and popular phrases. Ritva Leppihalme, who studies the translation of what she calls “allusive wordplay,” also proposes the term “frame,” which she defines as “a combination of words that is more or less fixed conventionally in the minds of a group of language users [...], an example of preformed linguistic material” (1996: 200).

Ben-Porat (1976: 110-113) also specifies that various steps are involved in identifying and recognizing literary allusions. First and foremost, the sign in the quoting text must be recognized as an expression that also belongs to the text being quoted. Recognizing the sign as an allusion often, though not always, implies that this quoted text has been identified. Establishing the relationship between the quoting text and the quoted text could allow, as a third step, the Initial Local Interpretation of the allusive sign to be modified and, as a potential fourth step, a renewed interpretation of the quoting text as a whole to be reached based on this text’s relationships with the quoted text. All four of these steps require extensive familiarity with the artistic and literary tradition of the text that houses the allusion. Where translation is concerned, the opportunity to identify and recognize literary allusions can be fundamentally altered insofar as the source text has been *decontextualized* and the target text reader’s cultural references are different. Decontextualization is low when the two cultures involved are alike; it is moderate when the target culture is aware of a translated version of the quoted text in the source text; and it is greatest when the quoted text is altogether unknown in the target culture (Roux-Foucard 2006: 106). Analyzing the translation of an allusion therefore involves looking at how a literary borrowing has been *recontextualized* in the target culture (Roux-Foucard 2006: 108).

While intertextuality may not always be ironic, we know that literary irony often owes a lot to intertextuality in general and to allusion more specifically. All of the literary borrowings whose translations will be examined here are rooted in works that are essentially ironic and that see intertextuality contributing significantly to developing the ethos of irony. Considered individually, the allusions are not necessarily humorous or ironic; rather, they become ironic as a result of the overarching effect of their intertextual functioning.

Irony can of course be created with the help of explicit and prominent rhetorical devices such as hyperbole, exaggeration, amplification, oxymoron, style blending, and apophasis. Intertextuality is often considered a subtler means of creating irony and, as a result, is seen as more delicate, more refined. Certainly when it comes to literary irony, general consensus is that “l’ironie la plus discrète est toujours la meilleure, en d’autres termes, l’ironie est d’autant plus réussie qu’elle recourt à moins de signaux pour se faire reconnaître” [irony is always best when it is more discreet; in other words, it achieves greater success when it relies on fewer markers to be recognized] (Shoentjes 2001: 158). This is a reality translators must confront not only as readers of the source text but also as producers of the target text. Driven by the desire to find an unequivocal way of representing the ironic or humorous dimension of intertextuality, the translator runs the risk of destroying its very subtlety:

[T]he translator may feel the need to turn covert forms of humor into more overt manifestations, especially if the translation is less effective than the original, in this case the translator conveys that there has been attempt at being funny, while acknowledging failure to render the actual funniness [...]. In any case, this kind of practice is quite common in translation on the whole, so much so that it has given rise to the hypothesis that translations have a universal tendency to be more explicit than their source texts. The down side of this practice occurs when humor is based, or relies on subtlety, tongue-in-cheek, irony, allusion and other such covert devices, but the translator resorts to broad brush, bluntness and denotative meaning to spell everything out to the text user in no uncertain terms, thus shredding the very fabric of this kind of humor. (Zabalbeascoa 2005: 190)

Therefore, we will examine the *translation of ironic intertextual allusions*, as these allusions appear in clearly identifiable passages. To do so, we will take into account how the allusion within the quoting text to the quoted material is *recontextualized* in the new source text.

3. Corpus

Three novels serve as the starting point for this analysis: *La Chute* (1956)³ by Albert Camus, *Het verdriet van België* (1983)⁴ by Hugo Claus, and *Une année chez les Français* (2010b)⁵ by Fouad Laroui.

La Chute is the last of Camus' works that were published while he was still alive. It came out one year before the author received the Nobel Prize for Literature and just as he was at the height of his celebrity. To date, there are two translations into Dutch of this text: the first is by Anne Maclaine Pont and was published in 1957, barely a year after the publication of the original; the second, published in 1985, is by Dolf Verspoor. But why use *La Chute* as a starting point for considering the central question of this article? To answer this, let's recall for a moment the subject matter of Camus' text. One Parisian meets another and strikes up a conversation. The fundamental themes of the novel are guilt and loss of innocence, and the story told by the narrator (Jean-Baptiste Clamence) is presented as an accusation that grows increasingly serious with each turn of the page. Nonetheless, Clamence's apparent self-critique gradually proves to be a critique and condemnation of 'modern man' in general and of the French intellectual more specifically. Indeed, one of the mainsprings of the text is its firm foothold in French language and culture: there are numerous allusions to French culture and literature. What's more, *La Chute* has been very well-received and was written by one of the most canonized French authors.

The second novel selected for this corpus enjoys comparable prestige in the literary field in which it emerged. Hugo Claus's *Het verdriet van België* is the major work of an equally major Dutch-language writer. This Dutch original was published in 1983, and Alain Van Crugten, a well-respected translator in the area of Dutch linguistics, translated it into French in 1985. *Het verdriet van België*—literally *the sorrow of Belgium*, versus *of Belgians*, as suggested by the title of the French-language translation, *Le chagrin des Belges*)—is a 714-page coming-of-age novel that is, to a great extent, autobiographical. It recounts the years between 1938 and 1947, which mark the emotional and intellectual development of the protagonist, Louis Seynaeve. Intertextuality plays a central role in *Het verdriet van België* and is meaningful thematically. Louis' father is what is known in Belgium as a "flamingant": someone who fights for the emancipation of the Flemish people in interwar Belgium. Louis'

3. *The Fall*, as per Justin O'Brien's translation (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1957).

4. *The Sorrow of Belgium*, as per Arnold J. Pomerans' translation (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990).

5. [A Year with the French]

family is also inclined to sympathize with the Germans, which helps to explain how, in 1940, influenced by his family's views, Louis is overcome with joy that "at last" the Germans have invaded Belgium! Thus intertextuality in *Het verdriet van België* tends to show, on the one hand, the superiority of German literature and culture and, on the other hand, what this catholic *flamingante* family considers to be good Flemish literature—namely, works by authors who were, for the most part, collaborators or from the extreme right. At the same time, this germanophile and hypocritically catholic upbringing paints an unflattering picture of French literature as decadent and amoral. According to the two-person rule, such a topic is in and of itself already ironic: whereas the narrator can hold nationalist views, these ideas are obviously not shared by the author, Hugo Claus, in 1983. It seems then that, more than just a coming-of-age novel, *Het verdriet van België* is a novel about the mechanisms involved in nationalist indoctrination, and that its intertextuality must therefore be appreciated within this context.

Fouad Laroui, who authored the third novel in the corpus, is Moroccan by birth and studied economics and engineering in France. Today, he is professor of French literature and Arab culture at the University of Amsterdam, in the Netherlands, where he now resides. He has published ten novels and six collections of short stories in French, most of which were published by Éditions Julliard. In 1996, when he began publishing his novels in French, he had already been living in the Netherlands for several years and had obtained Dutch citizenship. Aside from his French-language texts, he has also published an essay (2001b) as well as poems (2002b) and short stories (2006) directly in Dutch. Moreover, nearly all of his fictional works in French (1999, 2001a, 2002a, 2004, 2005, 2008, 2010a)—including the novel that we will analyze here (2012)—have Dutch translations. Laroui's Dutch translator, Frans Van Woerden, has an outstanding reputation within the Dutch linguistic field, owing essentially to his translations of Louis-Ferdinand Céline, which won him the 1988 *prix Matinus Nijhoff*, awarded each year for the best translation into or out of Dutch. *Une année chez les Français*—which Van Woerden renders as *De kleine bedrieger: een jaar bij de Fransen* (2012)—takes place in 1969 and tells the story of Medhi Khatib's first year at Lycée Lyautey in Casablanca. Medhi, a humble 10-year-old boy from rural Morocco, is admitted to this prestigious French lycée—geared towards children of French civil servants—by virtue of a scholarship administered by the French government and obtained by his teacher. Above all, the novel describes the culture shock that Medhi must face as a result of the contrast between his life at home with his Muslim family and his life at the lycée where French culture is obviously widely present and

valued. Intertextuality in *Une année chez les Français* is therefore constitutive of the novel's thematic thrust. Of course, this work does not have the same canonical status as the other two corpus texts, although it was short-listed for the 2010 Goncourt prize. The novel has been included in this analysis primarily because Fouad Laroui is so frequently associated with transnational, migrant and/or diaspora literature. I believe this type of text presents cases of intertextuality that are relevant to the main concern of this article.

It was important, in designing this corpus, to identify novels in which intertextuality was intrinsically linked to the work's themes. Intertextuality therefore plays a specific role and serves a particular function, which will need to be kept in mind during the analysis of the translations. I am also interested in reflecting the fact that translation occurs in two directions: from French into Dutch and vice versa.

4. How can ironic intertextual allusions be translated?

4.1. *Standard translation*

Intertextual allusion consists of a string of words in the quoting text that refers directly or implicitly to a quoted text. A logical process in translating this kind of allusion is to see whether the quoted text has already been translated into the target language and then either borrow that translation or else use it as the springboard for developing another version. This strategy is often referred to as *standard* (Leppihalme 1997: 83). We encounter it over and over again with translations of allusions to titles and to text fragments taken from great works of literature. The examples that follow, however, are more likely to show that it is not always easy to determine which translation would be understood as *the* standard translation or where the line might be drawn between standard and literal translation.

It goes without saying that certain texts have been translated multiple times, with the best-known example unquestionably being the Bible. When it comes to French texts that have many translations, we could name Corneille's *Le Cid* or Jean de La Fontaine's *Fables*, two cases of intertextuality that are found in Fouad Laroui's novel. In fact, Laroui makes numerous allusions to a variety of famous poets—François Villon, Joachim du Bellay, Alphonse de Lamartine, Victor Hugo, Charles Leconte de Lisle, Arthur Rimbaud, Paul Valéry, and the list goes on—but the most prized among them is surely Jean de La Fontaine. Not only are allusions to this well-known fabulist numerous (six in total) but the excerpts are also relatively lengthy. All of these allusions to French poetry are marked by signposts—most commonly quotation marks—that help the

reader to recognize them. The translator adopts the same markers and thereby also invokes the same strategy to signal the presence of these allusions. Van Woerden indicates at the beginning of the text that, when it came to translating the allusion to *Le Cid* (“La valeur n’attend pas le nombre des centimètres” (Laroui 2010b: 196), a nod to Corneille’s verse “Aux âmes bien nées, la valeur n’attend point le nombre des années”)—and no doubt especially when translating a long excerpt from the tragedy school children stage in drama class—he drew on Laurens Spoor’s Dutch-language translation. He did the same for the La Fontaine allusions, specifying that he used translations by Jan van den Berg.

It can sometimes be impossible to distinguish between a standard translation and a literal one. In *Het verdriet van België*, for instance, the main character dreams of being a writer and compares himself with well-known Belgian authors:

- Ex. 1 *Kaas van Elsschot is korter.* (1983: 714)
Fromage d’Elsschot est encore plus court. (1985: 827)

The novella *Kass*⁶ is a classic text in Dutch literature, but the French translation, *Fromage* by Xavier Hanotte, did not come out until 2003. Even if, strictly speaking, Van Crughten translated the allusion literally—since, when he was working on *Le chagrin des Belges*, *Fromage* had not yet seen the light of day—it is not particularly useful to make a distinction here between strategies used in standard translation and those used for literal translation.

In *La Chute*, Clamence compares Amsterdam to hell (“l’enfer”; the inferno), thereby making an allusion to Dante’s epic masterpiece. To create this intertextuality, Van Crughten also uses the expression found in Dutch translations of the *Divine Comedy*: “hellekringen.”

- Ex. 2 *Avez-vous remarqué que les canaux concentriques d’Amsterdam ressemblent aux cercles de l’enfer ?* (1962: 1483)
 Is het u opgevallen dat de grachtengordels van Amsterdam overeenkomen met de hellekringen? (1985: 610)

The first woman to translate *La Chute* did not use this expression but instead proposed a literal translation of the French expression:

Is het u wel eens opgevallen, dat die concentrische grachten van Amsterdam op de cirkels van de hel lijken? (Camus 1957: 16)

6. *Cheese*, as per Paul Vincent’s translation (London: Granta Books, 2003).

If, in fact, an allusion is “a *signifiant*, whose *signifié* [is] revealed in the merging of two texts by one sign” (Pucci 1998: 16), then surely this intertextuality is not presented in the same way in the target text as in the source text, insofar as the Dutch reader would likely not recognize the allusion to Dante based on the literal translation of “cercles de l’enfer.”

The subsequent part of this text fragment demonstrates once again how literal translation can actually erase intertextual allusion:

Ici, nous sommes dans le dernier cercle. Le cercle de... Ah! Vous savez cela? Diable, vous devenez plus difficile à classer. (Camus 1962: 1483)

What Clamence does not say, but what his readers seem to know, is that the last circle of Dante’s *Inferno* belongs to traitors and, more specifically, is home to Lucifer (which is plainly and explicitly referenced in the title of *La Chute*, i.e. The Fall). Clamence’s self-irony is subtle: intertextuality here demonstrates the extent to which he sees himself as a cultivated intellectual; at the same time, by placing himself in the same circle as Lucifer, he indicates that he sees himself as a traitor and underscores that he is aware of his own guilt. Here are both Dutch translations of the passage:

Hier zitten we in de allerbinnenste cirkel. De cirkel der... Aha, weet u dat al? Deksels [*bon sang*], ik kan u hoe langer hoe moeilijker plaatsen. (Camus 1957: 16)

Hier zitten we in de binnenste kring. De kring van de ... Hé, dat weet u? Verdraaid [*nom d’un chien*], ik kan u steeds moeilijker thuisbrengen. (Camus 1985: 610)

It is of course no coincidence that Clamence expresses his surprise by way of “diable” (literally “devil,” used idiomatically here as in “What the devil...?”). In Dutch, there is also an expression of surprise that features the devil (*verduiveld*), but neither of the translators uses it. They opt instead for wording that expresses “bon sang” [my goodness] and “nom d’un chien” [doggone it]. This no doubt illustrates how the challenge of translation lies in recognizing and identifying intertextual allusions in the source text as much as, or perhaps even more so than, it lies in producing irony in the target text.

In *Une année chez les Français*, Régnier—one of the school monitors at Lycée de Lyautey, who prefers the title of “pion” [pawn], since he knows he is among those who are “des pions dans le système de bourrage de crâne, des pions dans le Système” [pawns in the system of brainwashing, pawns in the System] (Laroui 2010b: 109)—quotes from the “Internationale”, the French

left-wing revolutionary anthem. The irony of the passage lies in the fact that Régnier attempts to show Mehdi that they both belong to the same social class, the proletariat and the oppressed, yet expresses this solidarity by using notions and expressions that are completely unknown to the young Moroccan: “C’est quoi, un *pro-lait-terre*⁷ ?” (Laroui 2010b: 110). Mehdi interprets these terms (“prolétaires” [proletariats] and “damnés de la terre” [damned of the earth]) as insults from the school monitor. To evoke this allusion, Van Woerden uses the best-known Dutch version of this revolutionary chant, which incidentally is by one of the great Dutch women poets, Henriette Roland Holst:

Ex. 3 ... nous sommes les damnés de la Terre ! (Laroui 2010b: 110)
 ... we zijn de verworpenen der aarde! (Laroui 2012: 97)

As with many other languages, Dutch has several translations of the “Internationale”. It makes sense that the translator chooses the translation that is most commonly used and therefore most likely to be recognized by the target text reader.

4.2. *Literal translation*

As a strategy, standard translation often applies when allusions relate to literary works that are translated on a regular basis. However, significant differences can be observed with respect to the language of the original text. Ever since the work of Lawrence Venuti (1995, 1998) and translation sociologists thereafter (Heilbron 1999, 2000, 2008; Heilbron & Sapiro 2007), we know that there are major numerical differences between translations *from* a given language (*extranlation*) and translations *into* a given language (*intranlation*). When it comes to the language pairing at play here (French and Dutch), this discrepancy is significant. When the Index Translationum was consulted⁸ to see how many literary texts were translated between 1950 and 2015 from French into Dutch, the result was 6823; the same search conducted for the opposite language direction yielded 1466. This principle seems to explain why there are so many more examples of standard translations in the translations of French originals than in *Le chagrin des Belges* (i.e. the translation of *Het verdriet van België*). Recalling Roux-Foucard’s distinctions (2006: 108), we see that, where translating French texts into Dutch is concerned, decontextualization tends

7. Phonetic interpretation of “prolétaire” [proletarian].

8. Consulted in June 23, 2016.

to be low to moderate whereas, for French translations of Dutch texts, decontextualization is much more likely to be high.

Literal translation is also necessary when allusions are tied to a textual genre that is translated only rarely, such as political speeches or songs. One of the best-known lines from Charles de Gaulle's political speeches is "Je vous ai compris !" [I have understood you!], from 1954 in the middle of the Algerian War. This line, which has been logged in the annals of French politics, is sometimes known abroad in its original French wording, but obviously does not have a standard translation. In Laroui's text (2010b: 73), the supervising monitor uses it in order to react to a perfectly mundane situation, and the translator therefore translates it literally—"Ik heb het begrepen!" (Laroui 2012: 66)—thereby eliminating the intertextual allusion.

4.3. Translation using markers

Songs also tend to cross borders in their original language, versus via translation. The example of the "Internationale" (Ex. 3) is actually an exception to the rule since, in most cases, songs are not translated at all. It follows then that Van Woerden did not have the option of drawing on a standard translation to express the allusions to French songs in *Une année chez les Français*:

- Ex. 4 ... et tout cela fait d'excellents Français ! (Laroui 2010b: 67)
... en dat waren allemaal eersteklas Fransen! (Laroui 2012: 61)
- Ex. 5 Les aristocrates, à la lanterne! (Laroui 2010b: 88)
Aan de lantaren met die aristocraten! (Laroui 2012: 79)
- Ex. 6 Tiens bon la vague et tiens bon le vent... Hissez haut ! Santi-a-a-no
Si Dieu veut, toujours droit devant, nous irons jusqu'à San Francisco !
(Laroui 2010b: 219)
Hou zee en hou goeie wind... Hijsen-hi, hijsen-ho! Santi-ááá-no!
Met Gods ge-nááá Tot in... San Francis-cooo! (Laroui 2012: 192)
D'y penser j'avais le cœur gros
En doublant les feux de Saint-Malo (Laroui 2010b: 223)
Daaraan denk ik keer op keer Met een hart zo vol met zeer, Oho! oho!
bij het zien van de vuurtoren van Saint-Malo...oho! (Laroui 2012: 97)

All three cases involve songs that are very well-known in the source culture. "Ça fait d'excellents Français" was sung by Maurice Chevalier in 1939, in an effort to lift the spirits of the French who had just been enlisted. When one of the French lycée monitors alludes to the song in front of the school's war

memorial, it is done less for the purpose of explaining how, in wartime, the French set aside their political differences and privileged lives than to show that teachers and students who had fought for France during the Second World War were from various backgrounds (Italian, German, Jewish, Romanian...). “Ah! ça ira, ça ira, ça ira” was one of the first revolutionary songs and in some ways could be considered the very symbol of the Revolution. In the midst of some teenaged squabbling, Ramón—a Spanish student who makes no secret of his republican sympathies—launches into the song as a way of intimidating an Arab classmate from a rich family of land owners. Lastly, “Santiano” is one of Hugues Auffrey’s most popular songs. It was released in 1961, instantly topping the charts, and remains popular to this day. The song also appears in most camp and campfire songbooks. In Laroui’s novel, the song is used to express Mehdi’s sorrow—“D’y penser j’avais le cœur gros” [I was heavy-hearted just thinking about it]—as he realizes that, despite the kindness shown to him by, among others, his best (French) friend’s parents, who invited him out on the boat with them, they will never consider him one of their own.

Even after finding suitable equivalents for these formulations, a translator will not be able to evoke among readers the same sentiment as is felt by francophone audiences who can readily identify and recognize these allusions within the source text. There are indeed very few textual genres that touch us as deeply as certain songs do. So often linked to our childhood, songs double the intellectual pleasure of recognizing an allusion, injecting it with an emotional dimension. A translation can nonetheless partially express the formal structure of the allusion or reflect wordplay as a way of marking the expression. In Ex. 4, Van Woerden implicitly establishes a link with the world of war. “Eersteklas” (literally “first class”) is indeed equal to “excellents” [excellent], but it simultaneously speaks to the military rank of “first-class soldier,” thereby referencing the army. As per Ex. 6, which provides the translation of part of “Santiano,” the rhythm of the naval song—which is indicated only once in French (“Santi-a-a-no”)—is repeated in the target text (“Gods ge-nááá”; “San Francis-cooo!”) and reinforced by typical cries of the genre (“Hijsen-hi, hijsen-ho”; “Oho! oho!”).

4.4 Non-translation

It goes without saying that Dutch linguistics—and Dutch-speaking Belgium, more specifically—has a better understanding of French culture than the other way around. In fact, several intertextual allusions appear in French in *Het verdriet van België* and remain intact in the target text. These allusions speak as much to French cultural referents—such as the song “Malbrough s’en

va-t-en-guerre” (p. 688) and the verse from Corneille’s *Cinna*: “si l’on doit le nom d’homme à qui n’a rien d’humain, à ce tigre altéré de tout le sang romain” (p. 170)—as to cultural referents that are more international but that, in mid-20th-century Belgium, were better known in French (e.g. “Toujours sourire, le cœur douloureux” (p. 143), which is the translation of the tune “Immer nur lächeln” from the Franz Léhar operetta *Das Land des Lächelns*).⁹ Clearly, these allusions belong as much to highbrow culture as to popular culture. For one of the passages, namely an allusion to a 1902 song by Félix Mayol, the translator indicates “en français” [in French] in a footnote:

Ex. 7 In uw conversatie, mon cher, hoor ik het air dat ik zong in de loopgraven in Veertien-Achttien, ‘Viens, poupoule, viens, poupoule, viens!’ (1983: 430)

Dans votre conversation, *mon cher* (footnote: “en français”), j’entends l’air que je chantais dans les tranchées de quatorze-dix-huit: *Viens Poupoule, viens Poupoule, viens!* (footnote: “en français”) (1985: 499-500)

It is useful to underscore the fact that, of the four cases of non-translation that are isolated here, three are songs. In *La Chute*, the only example of this strategy—which is used in both Dutch versions—is also a song, namely “Femmes, que vous êtes jolies!” (Camus 1962: 40), which dates back to 1912 but was made very popular by Tino Rossi in the late 1940s.

Where Laroui’s novel is concerned, non-translation is used in references to French literature: *Vipère au poing*¹⁰ (2012: 64) refers to Hervé Bazin’s novel, and *Le théâtre et son double*¹¹ (2012: 65) refers to Antonin Artaud.

Non-translation or verbatim copying (Desmet 2001: 34) of the allusion is also used for passages where a third language—i.e., neither the source nor the target—comes into play. This strategy becomes possible when the third language enjoys a privileged status and is understood by readers of both the source and target texts. English or Latin are featured in all of the examples in *Une année chez les Français*.

Ex. 8 I shall return! (2010b: 27)
I shall return! (2012: 24)

9. [The Land of Smiles]

10. *Viper in the Fist*, as per W. J. Strachan’s translation (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1951).

11. *The Theatre and Its Double*, as per Victor Corti’s translation (London: Calder & Boyars, 1970).

Ex. 9 Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori. (2010b: 66)
 Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori. (2012: 59)

Ex. 10 De profundis, morpionibus¹²... (2010b: 91)
 De profundis, morpionibus... (2012: 82)

Whether a famous phrase by American General Douglas MacArthur (Ex. 8), lines from one of Horace's *Odes* (Ex. 9), or the beginning of the refrain from a bawdy song written in French by Théophile Gautier (Ex. 10), the allusions remain unchanged in the translation.

4.5 Translation into a third language

For a given passage, a third language can be used to convey an allusion that was initially expressed in French, i.e., the source text language:

Ex.11 *La Petite musique de nuit* de Mozart (Laroui 2010b: 211)
Eine kleine Nachtmusik van Mozart (Laroui 2012: 184)

The first time this Mozart reference appears, it is not ironic; it is simply used in the context of Mehdi's classmate's French family that is celebrating Christmas Eve, drinking champagne and hot chocolate, and listening to classical music while sitting quietly together in the living room. As this allusion is repeated many times over, however, it gradually becomes ironic, even while melancholy and nostalgia are mixed in. And if Mozart's Serenade in G major is better known in French as *Une petite musique de nuit*, the same cannot be said for the Dutch which, instead, borrows directly from the German title.

4.6 Glosses

When decontextualization is high, translators need to be mindful of ensuring thorough recontextualizing in the target culture. To do so, they can call upon various markers and means of clarification. Strategies such as capitalization, italics and the use of quotation marks can help alert the reader to the allusion. In order to facilitate the identification of literary borrowings, footnotes and endnotes can be used, as can glossaries and explanations in prefaces or post-faces, for instance. Glosses intended to support such identification should,

12. The word "morpionibus" is an invention by the writer of this song; it is composed of "morpion" (i.e. crab) and a suffix (-ibus) that is made to sound like Latin and, seemingly, to coordinate in terms of its sound with the suffix of "profundis."

however, be carefully thought out: on the one hand, they encourage a more subtle appreciation of the work; on the other hand, however, if used too systematically, they risk spoiling some of the readerly pleasure of the text. As Linda Hutcheon reminds us, understanding irony—including how it operates and what phenomena lie along its borders—also contributes to “intellectual satisfaction”, “including the delight in one’s own interpretative virtuosity” from recognizing an ironic allusion, and even “feeling a certain pleasure of superiority” (1994: 42) on account of that recognition. If a reader suspects that the breadth of their general knowledge or the depth of their literary subtlety is not being adequately appreciated, then they will enjoy the translation much less. Glosses can be incorporated in order to make explicit not only the intertextual allusion but also its humour.

Certain intertextual references are anchored in the thematic composition of the novel and therefore must be understood by the reader, for fear of the entire text proving largely illegible. One important aspect of *Le chagrin des Belges* concerns Flemish nationalism, and certain references to it are made explicit via footnotes:

- Ex. 12 [H]ij die altijd zei: ‘Alles voor Vlaanderen, Vlaanderen voor Christus!’ (1983: 607)
 [L]ui qui crient toujours Alles voor Vlaanderen, Vlaanderen voor Kristus! (1985: 704)

Van Crughen does not translate this slogan, which is among the most famous in the Flemish Movement; insofar as the movement was led first and foremost against francophones, a translation into French would almost be nonsensical. He supplements this non-translation, however, with the help of a footnote: “‘Tout pour la Flandre, la Flandre pour le Christ!’ slogan des nationalistes flamands” [“Everything for Flanders, Flanders for Christ” Flemish nationalist slogan] (1985: 704).

In other cases, it is the humorous nature of the allusion that is made explicit in the footnote. Accordingly, in *La Chute*, when Clamence uses wordplay that is attributed to Christ in the New Testament, the translator adds the footnote indicated below:

- Ex. 13 Pierre, vous savez, le froussard, Pierre, donc, le renie: « Je ne connais pas cet homme... Je ne sais pas ce que tu veux dire...etc. » Vraiment, il exagérât! Et lui fait un jeu de mots : « Sur cette pierre, je bâtirai mon église ». On ne pouvait pas pousser plus loin l’ironie, vous ne trouvez pas? (Camus 1956: 122)

Footnote:

De woordspeling Pierre-Petrus en pierre-rots gaat in het Nederlands uiteraard verloren.¹³ (Camus 1957: 117-118)

Indeed, in the Dutch translation of the Gospel according to Matthew, and as compared to the French version, there is no wordplay; only the use of metaphor:

Ik zeg jou: jij bent Petrus; op die steenrots zal Ik mijn kerk bouwen.¹⁴
(*De Bijbel: Willibrordvertaling* 1995, Matt. 16,18)

However, in certain translations, such as the *Traduction Willibrord* quoted above, the wordplay is also explained.

4.7 Omissions

Allusions can of course simply be omitted in the translation. However, there are not many examples of that strategy in our corpus. In *Le chagrin des Belges*, Louis recounts what he did while visiting his family:

Ex. 14 *Vijftiende dag*.¹⁵ Emma zegt dat ik vuil ben als een jood. [...] *Zestiende dag*.¹⁶ Ik heb de HJ 'Ouwe Taaie, jippiejippiejee' geleerd. Zij denken dat het een Vlaams volkslied is. [...] *Achttiende dag*.¹⁷ [...] *Negentiende dag*.¹⁸ Wat een Geschichte. (1983: 451)

On the sixteenth day, he refers to a song that is commonly sung by Girl and Boy Scouts or kids on a school trip. Yet Louis' family assumes the song is a kind of Flemish national anthem. The irony here is two-fold: not only are these rural family members with whom he is staying not familiar with current music but, most notably, they bring everything back to the only idea that interests them, namely the importance of Flemish culture. Rather long explanations would be required for francophone readers to understand, on the one hand, the reference to this pop culture song and, on the other, the ironic remark about the

13. [The wordplay between Pierre (Peter, the Apostle) and pierre (meaning "stone") is obviously lost in Dutch.]

14. [Well, I'll tell you what: you are Peter, the rock upon which I will build my church.]

15. [fifteenth day]

16. [sixteenth day]

17. [eighteenth day]

18. [nineteenth day]

family's interpretation of the song. They are dropped in the translation, along with two of the vacation days:

*Quinzième jour*¹⁹: Emma dit que je suis sale comme un Juif. [...]
Seizième jour.²⁰ Quelle histoire! (Claus 1985 : 524)

4.8 Substitutions using intertextuality from the target culture

Intertextual allusions therefore deal with the presence of another (quoted) text within a quoting text. In order for it to function as literary, one could replace the quoted material found in the source document with another quoted text that already belongs to the target culture. Bogaert (2001: 13-17) and Roux-Faucard (2006: 107) analyze this strategy with respect to translations of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* and of Umberto Eco's *Foucault's Pendulum*, respectively.

In Laroui's novel, for instance, we find the term "la chienlit" (2010b: 60), which for the French makes direct reference to General de Gaulle, who used the words to express his negative assessment of the May 1968 events in France. Frans Van Woerden substitutes this reference with "de grote kladderadatsch" (Laroui 2012: 55), a term more commonly used in Germany, including by Marx and Engels, to recall the system collapse that led to disorder and chaos. When Claus refers to "rijen rijen op een wagentje" (1983: 546), a very popular Dutch children's song, his translator replaces it by "Hue hue à dada" (1985: 633), which has a very similar status in French culture.

Although the strategy of substituting intertextuality may initially seem to be an elegant solution to translating literary allusions, it cannot be used systematically. First of all, if allusions are too frequently replaced, the novel risks being truly relocalized. As we have seen, Fouad Laroui's translator uses a variety of strategies to reflect allusions to French songs, but substitution is not one of them: the narrator lives at a lycée in Casablanca and is immersed in French culture; replacing songs quoted in French with Dutch equivalents would conflict with the novel's geographical backdrop.

It is also critical to consider what purpose the intertextuality serves. It can be a mark of admiration, just as it can be neutral, ironic, sarcastic, even hostile. Where this last option is concerned, Hatim & Mason refer to *contratextuality* (1990: 130-131). It is important to keep in mind the significance of the allusion when we look for corresponding intertextuality within the target culture. A segment from Claus's novel offers an interesting example. At one point, the

19. [fifteenth day]

20. [sixteenth day]

main character is asked to recite part of a poem written by Guido Gezelle, who is often considered in Flanders to be the greatest poet of the 19th century. However, for Hugo Claus, Gezelle—a catholic priest—was also the very symbol of conservative Flemings, and on more than one occasion, he mocked the way his home country worshipped him. In *Het verdriet van België*, Louis starts by reciting the beginning of “Het Schrijverke,” one of Gezelle’s well-known poems. When asked to repeat it, however, Louis presents a scatological parody, and no one is any the wiser:

Ex. 15 Ik heb vanavond: ‘O krinklende winklende waterding, met ’t zwarte kabotseken aan’, enz. gereciteerd. Ik moest het nog eens doen en zei: ‘O stinkende, winkelende paterding, schart er uw rokske maar aan.’ (1983: 451)

It was not until 2011 that the poem was translated, under the title “Le Tourniquet”. Here are the relevant lines in French:

Ô chose tournoyante et louvoyante,
bête aquatique au noir chapeau.

On the one hand, the quoted text that serves as the basis for the literary borrowing is highly valued in the source culture; on the other hand, however, it is mocked by the narrator, who says something along the lines of “Ô petite chose puante et louvoyante du cureton, frottes-y ta jupe”. The irony is as much parodic as it is satirical because it is directed not only at Gezelle the poet but also at Gezelle the representative of Flemish catholicism, which was reproached for such flaws as sexual hypocrisy and lack of personal hygiene.

In his search for an intertextual equivalent, the translator should take into account the ambiguity between the literary status that Gezelle traditionally enjoys and the way Claus presents him. Moreover, making the main character in *Le chagrin des Belges* recite a French poem would practically be a contradiction in logic, since French literature—and all that is French, for that matter—is precisely what Louis Seynaeve’s militant Flemish family rejects.

4.9 Substitutions using architextuality

Van Crugten himself explains that, to translate this poem and its parody, it was necessary to “inventer un extrait de poème ressemblant vaguement à une traduction de Gezelle” [invent a poetic excerpt that vaguely resembled a translation of Gezelle] (1989: 30). He actually moves away from Gezelle and

introduces a few conventional and mundanely lyrical verses. Then, he develops a parody of this poetic concoction by also incorporating scatological elements:

Ce soir, je leur ai récité: ‘O murmurante chuchotante source douce avec tes reflets noirs moirés’ etc. On m’a demandé de le répéter et j’ai dit: ‘O purulente et chiante soupe aux choux avec tes reflets merdorés.’ (1985: 524)

In this case, the translator has substituted intertextual allusion with a pastiche of the genre and, from that point on, intertextuality is replaced by architextuality (Genette 1982: 8). This solution is also used when, rather than referring to a specific work, the allusion references a literary genre that is specific to the source culture. When Mehdi is welcomed to the new lycée in *Une année chez les Français*, it becomes clear that he has not brought along enough clothing. The director and one of the teachers try to resolve this problem:

- Ex. 16 – Il lui manque... il lui manque la moitié des affaires ! Des chaussettes, des mouchoirs...
 – Peut-être un cul-de-jatte qui jamais s’enrhume ?
 M. Lombard réprima un sourire.
 – Ah, ah, très drôle... Et bravo, c’est un alexandrin. (2010b: 22)

The irony of this passage lies in the stylistic gap whereby the reaction to such a prosaic situation is expressed via a poetic form traditionally reserved for serious matters. The literary allusion is presented as explicitly humorous (“sourire”; “drôle” [smile; funny]); yet the Alexandrine is not a common form of writing in Dutch poetry. The humour that results from an Alexandrine being used therefore does not come through in the translation, where the person who invents comical, flat rhymes receives congratulations from his colleague:

‘Wat zal ik mokken zonder sokken, want ben ik van boven goed... dan kan ik ook wel zonder ondergoed! (...) Bravo, meneer de dichter.²¹ (2012: 20)

5. Results and conclusion

Close reading and analysis of ironic intertextual allusions in translation seem to indicate that drawing quantitative conclusions about allusion types and the strategies used is challenging. Two elements prove most important for evaluating translation strategies: 1) the thematic significance of the allusion within the source text, and 2) the degree of recontextualization that is required in the

21. [Congratulations, Mr. Poet.]

target text. Which strategy is used depends less on the nature of the allusion than on the significance of this allusion in creating meaning within the source text. If the allusion is central to the literary work in terms of its content, then the reference is translated in a more explicit way. Quantifying the key themes of certain types of intertextuality for the text being analyzed is of course difficult. However, I believe relevant examples exist, and that these can be analyzed in meaningful ways; hence the reason our corpus only includes works in which intertextuality proves crucial to the way each text as a whole is interpreted. This same criterion can also serve as the basis for analyzing strategies in which the architextuality or target culture intertextuality is used as a substitute for the allusion in the source text.

When a source culture is relatively well-known to the target culture and has had numerous texts translated into the language of that target culture, fewer explicit strategies are required to translate the text than if the circumstances were reversed. When the source text belongs to a culture that is *less* familiar to the target text culture, the translator must be mindful of providing more substantial and thorough recontextualization. In the first instance, we find a greater number of standard translations and more instances of non-translation. In the second, glosses are more frequently used, and we also see more omissions. Needless to say, an analysis of three novels cannot provide definitive results. It can, however, stimulate subsequent research.

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