

Meta

Translation and Adaptation

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Volume 29, numéro 4, décembre 1984

URI : id.erudit.org/iderudit/003268ar
<https://doi.org/10.7202/003268ar>

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Éditeur(s)

Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal

ISSN 0026-0452 (imprimé)
1492-1421 (numérique)

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Citer cet article

Johnson, M. (1984). Translation and Adaptation. *Meta*, 29(4), 421–425. <https://doi.org/10.7202/003268ar>

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TRANSLATION, ADAPTATION AND CREATIVITY

Translation and adaptation are related disciplines entailing a great deal of transposition and reproduction. One of the easiest ways of perceiving the link between the two is perhaps to look at their *modus operandum*. According to Roman Jakobson, there are three distinct types of translation :

1. *Intralingual translation* or rewording, which is the interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs in the same language,
2. *Interlingual translation* or translation proper, in which verbal signs are interpreted by means of other languages and
3. *Intersemiotic translation* or transmutation, which is the interpretation of verbal signs by a non verbal (or a less verbal) sign system, such as the transposition of verbal art into music, painting, dance, cinema, etc.¹.

As in translation, adaptation is sometimes restricted to rewording, that is text simplification for accessibility to a particular category of the reading public or refashioning of texts of a distant past for modern consumers. Following Jakobson's examples, this exercise may be referred to as intralingual adaptation. Adaptation may also be interlingual, that is involving transposition from a source language into a target language. However, most adaptations have to do with transformation from one format or genre into another, otherwise known as intersemiotic translation. A common example is adapting a novel for the stage, or for a television performance or for a movie. This may call for detailed operations including the underlisted :

1. Recreation of characters
2. Dramatic transcription of action
3. Reorganization of discourse from prose to dialogue and elimination of digressions
4. Reorganization of intrigue
5. Adoption of new terminologies
6. Introduction of audio-visual effects such as music, dance, masks, pantomime, etc.
7. Indication of entries, exits, stage directions, position of the camera, decor, light effects, etc.
8. Different script presentation especially for television programs

Although translations and adaptations are hardly ever a flawless rendering of the original texts, a certain degree of fidelity is required. But while emphasis is on fidelity to both content and form in translation, it is more on the content in adaptation. In other words, the concession for loss of information is greater in adaptation than in translation. This concession makes adaptation more flexible, with

TRANSLATION AND ADAPTATION

SCOPE

The objective of this paper is to examine the operational similarities between translation and literary adaptation, identify some points of divergence and assess the extent to which the two disciplines overlap each other.

For the purpose of analysis, we shall examine some works by Albert Camus, a modern French writer having an outstanding number of adaptations to his credit. In his adaptations, Camus is concerned not only about theatre techniques but also about language which is an important aspect of translation. Camus's adaptations vary in time and source and are quite adequate for illustrating the various types of translation to be reviewed.

1. "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation", in Reuben Brower (1959) : *On Translation*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, p. 233.

room for modifications, additions and subtractions as dictated by the target format, although the assumption may not hold in certain cases. In some literary adaptations, two distinct operations are performed either simultaneously or consecutively, the choice depending on the linguistic competence of the adapter. The adapter may have to modify the language of the original text and present the content in a different literary form OR translate the original text into a different language and present the content in a different literary format.

Translation and literary adaptation both demand total application and discipline. They may have similar motivations, such as the desire to demonstrate and perfect one's linguistic skills, manifest one's aesthetic consciousness and project one's ideas or ideals. Literary adaptation is, however, more creative than translation, which most often adheres strictly to the original texts.

As in original writing, adaptation often passes through the four creative processes, with particular emphasis on the last two :

1. *ingestion* or data collection through reading, research and experience,
2. *digestion* or data processing and assimilation,
3. *projection* or tackling the various aspects of the work in view, searching for relevances, condensing, expanding, narrowing the focus, etc. and
4. *rejection* or editing, restyling, discarding redundancies, spotting weaknesses, eliminating, substituting with a view to making the work a masterpiece².

CAMUS'S TRANSLATIONS AND ADAPTATIONS

Albert Camus was not merely a writer, he was also a translator or a translation enthusiast, to be more precise. His translation projects include Shakespeare's *Tempest* and *Timon of Athens* as well as Italo Sievo's unpublished plays. Although many of these projects fell by the wayside, the writer's translation skill may be assessed in his published adaptations³.

Camus's adaptations are underrated by critics because they are not considered as a product of original thinking. They are regarded as works marking a sterile period in the writer's career and Albert Camus's pronouncements tend to confirm this rather negative impression, for he admitted in his correspondence that *The Rebel* is the last of his masterpieces, that the year 1953 is a turning point in his lit-

erary career and that subsequent publications [implicitly a large number of his adaptations] are not to be taken seriously⁴.

It is not within the scope of this paper to compare Camus's adaptations and the original works. Such a comparison does not seem valid, considering that the writer had ascribed to himself a different role in each case. In his original works, Camus's objective was to create and express himself, while his part in the adaptations was that of a producer at work in consonance with some technical ideals⁵.

Camus's adaptations fall within two periods : the 1930s and the 1950s. Since the texts of the former (*le Temps du mépris*, *le Retour de l'enfant prodigue* and *Prométhée enchaîné* by Malraux, Gide and Aeschylus respectively) are not available, this paper will only examine the latter, namely :

1. *les Esprits* by Larivez (1953)
2. *la Dévotion à la croix* by Calderon (1953)
3. *le Chevalier d'Olmedo* by Lope de Vega (1957)
4. *Un cas intéressant* by Dino Buzzati (1957)
5. *Requiem pour une nonne* by Faulkner (1956)
6. *les Possédés* by Dostoievsky (1959)

Although the original versions of these texts are in French, Spanish, Italian, English and Russian, Camus's problems are not primarily linguistic, since the majority of the texts are available in translations.

Let us briefly examine how Camus handled the various versions of the works selected for adaptation and assess how close the adaptations are to the original works.

Les Esprits is an example of intralingual translation. The adaptation is based on a sixteenth century rather stenographic French translation by Lorenzino de Medicis. Camus's goal was to render this Renaissance version into modern French and, in the process, educate himself about French comedy, for Larivez's writings belong to a transitional period between the Italian "Commedia dell'arte" and the French classical drama. Camus's adaptation is an abridged form of Medicis's translation, with fewer characters, a more compact intrigue, three acts instead of five, a prologue replacing a number of scenes, plus some additions such as background music, masks, and pantomimes.

The translation entailed in the adaptation of *les Esprits* is a phylogenic exercise which belongs to the realm of diachronic linguistics. The adaptation reflects some linguistic changes in the French language since the sixteenth century. During the Renaissance there was a remarkable development in the French language through the influence of a group of seven poets (Daurat, Du Bellay, Baif, Belleau, Tyard, Jodelle and Ronsard) known as "*la Pléiade*", who worked relentlessly to safeguard and

2. Newspaper Institute of America (NIA), Special bulletin on "What to Write About".

3. See Raymond Gay-Crosier (1967) : *les Envers d'un échec*, Paris, Minard ; Ilona Coombs (1968) : *Camus, homme de théâtre*, Paris, Nizet ; and Edward Freeman (1971) : *The Theatre of Albert Camus*, London, Methuen.

4. Albert Camus (1962) : *Théâtre, récits, nouvelles*, Paris Gallimard, p. 2029.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 1725.

enrich the French language. Their reform was an unvaluable service to French literature, despite their pedantic tendencies and preciosity.

Nevertheless, Renaissance French differs considerably from modern French, particularly in the underlisted aspects :

1. *orthography* which was still unsettled in the sixteenth century,
2. *grammar* (the genders of some nouns were undetermined ; demonstratives, prepositions and adverbs had peculiar usage),
3. *syntax* (the word order, method of negation, use of articles were different) and
4. *moods* (the subjunctive was autonomous).

Camus had to concentrate on these areas, among other things, in *les Esprits*, and a comparative study of his version and that of Lorenzino de Medicis may be of interest to students of translation and diachronic linguistics.

The adaptations from Spanish literature are significant in view of Camus's predilection for Spanish art and culture⁶. The selected writers are Lope de Vega (1562-1635) and Calderon (1600-1681), celebrated poets and dramatists very often compared to Shakespeare in stagecraft and prolificness. Lope de Vega and Calderon were contemporaries and were very popular for their religious drama known as "autos sacramentales". Their works were solicited by Marcel Herrand for the Festival of dramatic arts in Angers in 1953 and 1957 respectively. The works in question (*le Chevalier d'Olmedo* and *la Dévotion à la croix*) had been previously translated, but the available versions were not close enough to the original works in tone and substance and were considered inappropriate for actors. What Marcel Herrand wanted was a faithful and readable production script for actors, which made it obligatory for Camus to combine word for word translation with adaptation.

Camus was handicapped by his inadequate knowledge of Spanish and this makes his solution to the problem rather singular and noteworthy. The following procedures seem to emerge from Roger Quilliot's comments :⁷

1. *Audition* : Camus requested a Spanish friend with a sound knowledge of French to read the Spanish texts to enable him to grasp the tone of the works and the authors' intentions.
2. *Translation, interpretation and transcription* : The next step was a word for word translation and/or interpretation by the reader and simultaneous transcription into French by Camus.
3. *Reproduction* : This is the final process encompassing some of the aforesaid creative

processes, particularly projection and rejection.

These procedures yielded good results according to Mr. Coste's assessment⁸ and Camus's versions are considered to be as close as possible to the original texts.

Camus adapted *Requiem pour une nonne* because of his friendship and admiration for the American novelist, William Faulkner (1877-1962), born in Albany, Mississippi, a pessimistic naturalist whose career culminated in the award of the Nobel Prize in 1949. Faulkner had a great influence on many French writers apart from Albert Camus.

This adaptation was facilitated by a number of factors.

1. The dramatic qualities of the novel, which make some aspects of the adaptation less tedious.

1. Availability of different versions and editions, for example those indicated below on which Camus's adaptation was based :

a) Faulkner's original text, Royal Court edition, 1951.

b) Ruth Ford's theatrical version (a typed copy preserved in the Royal Court archives in London), and

c) the French translation of the novel by M.E. Coindreau.

3. Preoccupations similar to those of William Faulkner with regard to the language of tragedy.

As the novel is fairly lengthy, Camus's approach was to eliminate many elements of the locale and concentrate on the drama of suffering so as to achieve an appropriate translation of some important human aspects of the work — the idea of justice, conscience, love and sacrifice, hope and destiny, freedom and salvation.

One of the major problem in adapting *Requiem pour une nonne* was how to adapt Faulkner's rather complex style for the stage. William Faulkner seemed to be addicted to an intricate literary style recently labelled "fancy writingitis"⁹. His style is characterized by minute description (a common tendency among naturalists), compounding and amassing of adjectives, accumulation of epithets (very unpopular in French), lyricism, alliteration, and especially the period — a longish and unending type of sentence structure. The typical Faulknerian sentence is usually about three pages of text with the main clause intercepted by strings of subordinates that are so arranged that the reader is completely lost en route and has to read the passage over and again in order to disentangle the relevant from the irrelevant and finally extract the meaning. Camus had to simplify and neutralize the style but, despite acknowledged fidelity to the tone and substance of the original work, the adaptation reveals the adapter's

6. M.A. Johnson : "Camus, homme méditerranéen", *Proceedings of the 3rd International Congress of Studies on Cultures of the Western Mediterranean*, Vol. 1, pp. 121-125.

7. Albert Camus, *Théâtre, récits, nouvelles*, p. 1852.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 1725.

9. NIA copy desk, "Little preachments" reprints.

inability to cope with a number of aspects including cultural concepts, speech mannerisms and colloquialisms of the South. The end result is a version that is almost in classical French¹⁰.

Camus's last adaptation is *les Possédés* by Dostoievsky (1821-1881), a Russian novelist whose works have been translated into numerous languages including English and French. Dostoievsky himself knew Latin and French and was notable for his translation of Balzac's *Eugénie Grandet* and Schiller's *Don Carlos*.

Camus was one of Dostoievsky's admirers. He was indebted to the Russian novelist for what the latter revealed in his work about human nature and psychology. Moreover, Camus's themes and preoccupations were similar to those of Dostoievsky, a good example being his reaction to nihilism. Nihilism which is the central theme of *les Possédés* is incidentally also one of the major themes in Camus's last play — *les Justes* (1949). *les Possédés* by Camus's estimation, is a great novel, comparable only to Homer's *Odyssey* and Tolstoi's *War and Peace*.

Before Camus's version, *les Possédés* had been translated, one of the available versions being that of Boris Schloezer (1955 : Gallimard), but one is not certain about the version or versions used for Camus's 1959 adaptation. Camus acknowledged having seen the stage production of the novel on a number of occasions. However, despite this previous knowledge and the dramatic qualities of the novel, which might have added to the attraction, the adaptation claimed years of persistent composition.

The first title of Dostoievsky's novel was *les Démons*, when it comprised 8 chapters, 28 characters and 268 typed pages. The novel was later reduced to 7 chapters and 23 characters and given the title *les Possédés*, which Camus adopted. In Camus's version, the 7 chapters and numerous subdivisions were compacted into three parts and 22 "tableaux". In this version, the objectives, which were to abridge the lengthy novel, minimize characters and decor and guide the audience, seem to have been attained thanks to the narrator introduced into the drama.

SOME PROBLEM AREAS : DISCOURSE AND TITLES

In addition to cultural concepts, translators and adapters often have problems with discourse and titles. Let us first illustrate the problem of discourse which is of greater pertinence to adaptation.

The style of some novels is not easily projected in a dramatic format, as revealed by Faulkner's *Requiem for a Nun*. Another good example in French literature is Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, in which the heroine's dreams and wishes are immersed in the novelist's insinuating comments in free indirect style. Although it may be possible to

make bovarism (malady of illusion) and hypertrophy of the imagination come alive on the stage, it is not very easy to find a dramatic equivalent for the free indirect discourse which Flaubert uses to influence our judgement and to translate his ideal of impersonality — an ideal regarding the writer in relation to his work as a little god in his own universe, ever present but hardly ever seen.¹¹ The only alternative is probably to introduce the monologue into Emma's discourse — a thing which is likely to falsify the image of the character. Emma lacks the lucidity, self evaluation and introspection which the monologue is intended to reveal. Similarly, Camus's problem with discourse in *Requiem pour une nonne* was resolved by simplification and neutralisation which reduced Faulkner's novel to a skeleton.

Another problem area which is common to translation and adaptation is the title. Titles in translations and adaptations are very often approximations carrying less meaning than contained in the original. The translation of titles generally demands comprehension and interpretation, which are highly subjective. This explains why some works have varied titles in translation and why some critics prefer to use original titles in their criticisms. Here are some common examples of works with two different titles in translation :

Albert Camus, *l'Étranger* translated *The Stranger* (Germaine Brée) and *The Outsider* (other translators) ;

Albert Camus, *les Justes* translated as *The Just* (Penguin edition) and *The Just Assassins* (Germaine Brée) ;

Jean-Paul Sartre, *les Séquestrés d'Altona* translated as *Altona* (Penguin edition) and *The Prisoners of Altona* (Germaine Brée) ;

Camara Laye, *l'Enfant noir* translated as *The African Child* by some translators and *The Dark Child* by others.

Titles are usually pregnant with meaning, part of which may be lost in translation. Let us take Camara Laye's *l'Enfant noir* as example. *The Dark Child* appears to be more appropriate and up-to-date in view of the contemporary interpretation of Negritude which the works of Camara Laye and many other African writers attempt to underline. Negritude has to do with cultural awareness not only in Africa but in the entire negro world.

Another example of inadequate translation of title is Jean-Paul Sartre's *Morts sans sépulture*, which literally means "dead without sepulchre" but which has been translated as "men without shadows". The title is related to Sartre's central theme of commitment. According to the existentialist, commitment is an enterprise, project or cause willfully undertaken and accomplished. In as much as it connotes "reflection", the word "shadow" seems to be an acceptable translation for "sepulchre" which Sartre used meta-

10. T.Ph. Couch (1959) : "Camus's dramatic adaptations", *The French Review*, Vol. XXXIII, N° 1, pp. 27-36.

11. Gustave Flaubert (1923) : *Correspondances*, Paris, Loui Conard, N° 52, Vol. 3.

phorically. However, assuming that the word "men" is also acceptable in its general sense (people, humanity), this translation excludes the idea of death, a finality which, in Sartre's thinking, automatically puts an end to man's commitments and freedom of choice. The members of the Resistance in the play (some young men, a young lady and a teenage boy mutually strangled by others to avoid betrayal) were trapped and executed before accomplishing their mission. In other words, they were forever deprived of the chance to justify their existence. From this viewpoint, the original title literally meaning "men who died without justifying their existence" is certainly more effective than what it is in translation.

CONCLUSION

Although translation and adaptation operate on similar levels, the degree and nature of mental application vary in each case. Adaptation is a more extensive exercise and it often embraces translation. Adaptation is also a lot more creative than translation and it is more flexible because it gives room for modifications and allows a greater concession for loss of information. However, translation appears to be more taxing and intensive, for it requires greater rigour and fidelity to the original text. Whereas the adapter may choose to narrow the scope of the original work and concentrate on some areas of specific interest, the translator is constrained to reproduce all the information.

Camus's adaptations and translations are justly lumped together because the works entail both operations in varying degrees. These translation and adaptation projects are very ambitious, the selected authors being among the greatest of literary giants.

The various types of translations are exemplified by Camus's adaptations, even though the adapter's objectives are mainly theatrical. In his adaptations, Camus regarded himself as a producer at work in consonance with some technical ideas. His success varies from one adaptation to another, his greatest difficulties being with *Requiem pour une nonne* and *les Possédés*. The former was difficult as a result of the style as well as the cultural background against which the novel was written. The latter was also difficult because of the extensiveness and the chaotic structure of the novel.

In two of the adaptations, Camus had to resort to translation via audition and interpretation by a third party, which, one would assume, can only produce a second-hand translation. Despite the acclaimed success of these adaptations, one cannot really attest to the validity of the method employed, for a good translation requires possession of both the source language and the target language.

The sad thing which one should not fail to underline is the ironic fate of Camus's adaptations and translations. These works which consumed time and energy, which tell us a lot more about the writer, and which are a rigorous test of literary scholarship are totally neglected by critics.

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