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# The Translator-Function: Translating Bande-Dessinée for the Anglophone Reader

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Ryan Christopher Gomez

*Candidate*

Foreign Languages and Literatures

*Department*

This thesis is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication:

*Approved by the Thesis Committee:*

Dr. Francis Higginson, Chairperson

Dr. Marina Peters-Newell

Dr. Stephen Bishop

**THE TRANSLATOR-FUNCTION:  
TRANSLATING *BANDE DESSINÉE* FOR THE  
ANGLOPHONE READER**

by

**RYAN CHRISTOPHER GOMEZ**

**BACHELOR OF ARTS, LINGUISTICS & FRENCH  
UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO, 2015**

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

**Master of Arts  
French**

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Albuquerque, New Mexico

**May 2020**

## **DEDICATION**

In memory of my grandfather, Edwin Sandoval, who always believed in me.

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Connie and Hector, and my brother, Nathan, who have always encouraged me to pursue my passions inside and outside of academia. Without my family's support, my parents' values, and my brother's friendship, I would never have had the strength or courage to persevere. I am forever grateful for their guidance, their love, and for always doing their best to never let self-doubt get the better of me.

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**The Translator-Function:  
Translating *Bande-Dessinée* for the Anglophone Reader**

**Ryan Christopher Gomez**

**Bachelor of Arts, Linguistics & French  
Master of Arts, French**

**ABSTRACT**

The principal aim of this thesis is to examine the unique position of the translator by examining the products of translation (French-language *bandes-dessinées* and their English translations) and considering critical literary and translation theories. I will demonstrate the unique position held by translators and their work through the proposal of what I call the translator-function. Translation, I contend, is worthy of critical literary consideration rather than simply being a necessary function within the market forces of global literary industries. Translation figures perform essential and sometimes transformative functions in the transmission of literary and cultural information from one language to another, while oscillating between the positions of reader and author in very distinctive ways. The concept of the translator-function will assist in conceiving the translator's role and thus be formulated through a consideration of the translator's various roles in negotiating a source text's language, visual elements, influences, contexts, and target readership.

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## INTRODUCTION

The principal impetus for this project came from the casual observations of differences and innovations in translated language between various SL<sup>1</sup> texts and their TL texts.<sup>2</sup> It became clear through more thorough investigation that the translation work done in *bande dessinée*, a medium whose primary manner of expression is as visual as it is textual, demonstrates some of the most overt cross-sections of translator negotiation, considering elements like author intent, effect of the SL text on the reader, and the desired effect upon the reader of the TL text. Such an inherently pluridisciplinary practice demonstrates the uniqueness of the multidimensional space occupied by the translator and translation work, both of which have enormous potential for contribution to both literary and translation studies but have been historically underestimated or maligned. The need for an understanding and appreciation for the varied nature of translation work within the scope of literary and translation studies prompted me to attempt a characterization of this conceptual space, proposing a new paradigm that I will call the translator-function.

Conceiving this conceptual space relies on previous work done by literary scholars and prominent thinkers, particularly with regard to how these thinkers conceive of the spaces and limitations of things like authorship and readership. Writing and lectures done by Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault on the topic of what constitutes an *author* will be helpful in the beginning steps of this study, particularly in how one can interpret the roles of *reader* and *author* as well as identifying essential but decentralized

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<sup>1</sup> The abbreviations SL (source language) and TL (target language) shall be used throughout.

<sup>2</sup> An initial source of inspiration were the French editions of *Harry Potter*, and the manners in which they offered a distinct reading experience from their SL counterparts in English.

authorities over a text, as initiators of a discursive practice. In short, the space of the translator can be variously situated but generally finds itself on the threshold of the ostensibly opposing Barthesian *author* and *reader* roles. Instead, the translator and its more general functions (ergo the translator-function) occupies a decentralized position of authority over a text's significance. To determine the characteristics of this paradigm in literary production, I will examine how translators negotiate linguistic, visual, and cultural translations in French and English published editions of various *bandes-dessinées*. This medium is as visual as it is written in expression, and these elements open dimensions of translation analysis as it relates to broader concepts of cultural transmission that intersect with both literary and artistic disciplines, such as film.

In order to begin this work, a fundamental understanding of previous study regarding questions of authorship is essential, since the philosophical and theoretical question of authority over literary texts is one that remains central to the estimation of the translator in literary studies. One way of interpreting translation work is by breaking it down into two main categories: *reader* and *author*, characteristics of which the translator enacts in varying degrees to several ends, and often simultaneously. Here we begin with Roland Barthes and his own conceptions of both roles in his 1967 essay "The Death of the Author."

At its core, Barthes's essay is concerned with literary interpretation. The main problem Barthes addresses is a popular overreliance on an Author's biography in literary criticism.<sup>3</sup> According to Barthes, the Author has been afforded far too much credit for the significance of his or her texts in literary interpretation that is "tyrannically centered on

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<sup>3</sup> Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," *Image - Music - Text: Essays* (London: Fontana Press, 1967), 142-43.

the author, his person, his life, his tastes, his passions.”<sup>4</sup> The folly is in seeking meaning or explanation of a work “in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end,... the voice of a single person, the *author* ‘confiding’ in us.”<sup>5</sup> Instead, Barthes favors literary interpretation wherein a text’s *language* is the principal communicative figure in literature “which ceaselessly calls into question all origins,”<sup>6</sup> ostensibly including but not limited to that of the author. Such a model creates a distinct barrier between the roles of *author* and *reader*, wherein “the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author.”<sup>7</sup> For Barthes this essentially means that, ideally, the roles of reader and author are fundamentally incompatible. Barthes severs reader and author domains of influence with no possibility of overlap, offering a dichotomy that will be difficult to sustain in the face of the dual function of the translator. Attributing an Author to a text “[imposes] a limit on that text, [furnishes] it with a final signified,”<sup>8</sup> effectively closing its meaning and not permitting any line of criticism or interpretation not strictly linked to the Author. The Author’s death brings about the birth of the reader, wherein it is not the Author who holds any authority over the significance of a text, but the language itself is permitted to become the predominant voice of literary expression. As Barthes puts it, once the Author sets pen to paper, “the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, writing begins.”<sup>9</sup> Meaning is thus less concerned with a text’s origin and instead with its destination as it is inscribed in the reader. This means that if one is to conceive of a ‘sphere’ of influence over a text, the sphere at no point

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<sup>4</sup> Barthes, “Death,” 143.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 142.

encompasses both the reader and author at once, but instead immediately shifts from the latter to the former, and never moves in the opposite direction. In Barthes's model, a text is the thing that speaks for itself in the reader, and meaning is inscribed in that person who consumes the language of the text, not the identity of the Author. Thus, the Author dies, and the reader is born—giving a text its meaning.

In several ways, Barthes provides an important point of departure for the development of my own concepts in this essay. We will see that the translator-function, when brought to bear in interpretations of translated *bande dessinée*, do not seamlessly map onto Barthes's conceptions of reader and author roles for two principal reasons. First, Barthes's model does not permit any sort of overlap of influence for either role. Second, the direction of influence moves directly from author to reader, never in reverse. I propose instead that both overlap and multi-directionality of reader/author influence are hallmark features of translator roles. However, this is not to suggest that Barthes's model is altogether irrelevant or unserviceable for my ends. In fact, Barthes provides a useful map of what classically constitutes a reader and an author, both in his criticisms and his own ideal model. While Barthes apparently abhors any interpretation of literature that relies on an Author's biography, he nevertheless admits that consideration of an author's personhood is a common element in literary interpretation, albeit a problematic one. Where Barthes categorically rejects this element, I will champion a model of the translator-function that incorporates it among others without affording the author a centralized and genealogically superior position of influence. Barthes is certainly right to suggest that an interpretation of literary work that is explained solely by perceived elements of that man or woman's character is entirely too facile, arguing that such

interpretation excludes linguistic elements in the text that can and should speak for themselves.<sup>10</sup> I will favor a model that does not necessarily conceive of a translator's work and influence as a zero-sum struggle between the reader and the author. Instead, Barthes's criticisms and conceptions of reader and author will be mobilized to demonstrate the translator-function's multiplicity of roles and influences.

Incorporating both the author and the reader within this aforementioned multiplicity of influences necessarily begs the question of to what degree each exerts authority over a text, and to what extent either is more 'central' to a text's meaning than the other. As stated before, the conception of a translator-function includes the author as a person, and indeed his or her biography, without affording that person a centralized or genealogical authority/superiority of influence. In conceiving such a model, we turn to Michel Foucault for an interpretation that presents the author rather as a collective of influences and authorities without relying on facile biographical interpretations of a text and authorial essence, or Author (capital "A") criticized by Barthes. At the same time, unlike Barthes, Foucault does incorporate the personhood of an author. He just does not afford that person more authority over a text than is appropriate. Rather, Foucault speaks of the author-function.

Following the work done by Barthes, Foucault transforms the substance of the question away from a named *who* and toward an unnamed *what?*<sup>11</sup> For Foucault, the

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<sup>10</sup> This suggestion is not without its problems. One might argue that linguistic elements in text can never truly speak for themselves, as there will always be some kind of interpretive act in reading. Indeed, in some sense Barthes comes dangerously close to replacing the tyranny of the author with the tyranny of the reader, who in essence (and somewhat problematically) then becomes the very author that Barthes has tried to kill.

<sup>11</sup> Adrian Wilson, "Foucault on the 'Question of the author': A Critical Exegesis," *The Modern Language Review* 99, no. 2 (2004): 342, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3738750>.

Author's biography and psychology inevitably influence literary interpretation; however, this does not mean that the author ought to occupy a privileged space, or that biography and/or psychology are reducible to a singular master narrative. In fact, as Barthes suggests, giving the author too much importance distracts from other sources of authority. For Barthes, the solution is writing or *écriture*, and for Foucault it is discourse. In other words, as Adrian Wilson puts it, Foucault argues that we should no longer attend to the "supposedly personal voice of the named, individual author,"<sup>12</sup> but instead pay closer attention to the "anonymous murmuring of the collective."<sup>13</sup> It is for this reason that Foucault pivots away from a focus on the capitalized 'Author' and toward an *author-function*, which could ostensibly take the form of anything as general as biography, context, the writing itself, and of course a larger sense of collective discourse. Where Barthes criticizes the author figure, Foucault focuses on problematizing it.<sup>14</sup>

While many of Foucault's assertions reflect Barthes's, the most important distinctions come from a reframing, or what Wilson calls a *counter-history* of Barthes's original assertions regarding historical and contemporary authors and their relationship with their work.<sup>15</sup> In essence, Barthes suggests that "the apparent sovereignty of authors concealed the real source of authority, namely discourse itself."<sup>16</sup> However, Foucault argues that the total effacement of individual characteristics of the writer has already been carried out at the hands of literature itself.<sup>17</sup> Where Barthes envisioned the death of the Author as the act which would ostensibly bring about the liberation of literature,

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<sup>12</sup> Wilson, "Foucault," 342.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 346.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 342.

<sup>17</sup> This is framed within a discussion of Samuel Beckett when Foucault asks, "What matters who's speaking?"

Foucault perceived this act as having always already taken place.<sup>18</sup> So for Foucault, the task of literary criticism is not to precipitate the death of the Author, but rather how to reconcile the Author within literary discourse now that his or her death has been completed by literature itself. In other words, as Wilson puts it, the task is to catch up with what literature has achieved: to examine the consequences of the Author's effacement and to "take full measure"<sup>19</sup> of the event.<sup>20</sup> Foucault even goes so far as to say that the concept of *écriture*, Barthes' own concept in which writing loses its origin, ironically *sustained* the privilege of the author in that it simply "transposed the empirical characteristics of the author to a transcendental anonymity."<sup>21</sup> In other words, instead of dealing with the problem of the Author, the Author was essentially abstracted into an unnamed transcendental figure which remains ever less accessible. As Wilson puts it, "far from heralding a new dawn, [Barthes] has compounded the author problem by reinscribing it in a still more mystified form."<sup>22</sup> Thus, for Foucault the primary concern with regard to the Author is not its demise but its position within larger bodies of discourse; decentralized yet still intrinsically linked to their work.

Near the end of Foucault's lecture, after establishing the concept of discursive practices and positioning the *author-function* as the figure of the initiator of such practices, Foucault proposes a shift away from a study of the "expressive value and formal transformations" of discourse and toward an investigation of its "mode of

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 346.

<sup>19</sup> Michel Foucault, "What is an author?" in *Modernity and Its Discontents: Making and Unmaking the Bourgeois from Machiavelli to Bellow*, ed. Steven B. Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 302.

<sup>20</sup> Wilson, "Foucault," 346.

<sup>21</sup> Foucault, "What is an author?" 302.

<sup>22</sup> Wilson, "Foucault," 347.

existence.”<sup>23</sup> In other words, rather than placing a subject at the center of discourse, where it manipulates developments and “endow[s] them with meaning,”<sup>24</sup> one might investigate, perhaps from a more constructive point of view, the role that such a subject plays in discourse. As Foucault puts it, instead of asking how the subject manipulates and influences discourse, one could investigate the position that the subject occupies within discourse, moving away from the assumption of a subject’s centrality. As Foucault puts it, “the subject (and its substitutes) must be stripped of its creative role and analyzed as a complex and variable function of discourse.”<sup>25</sup> This subject and function can embody several different roles, but the entity upon which Foucault’s lecture is focused is what he terms the *author-function*.

This is perhaps the crucial link to the process of translation—the manners in which the practice enacts characteristics of discursive practices as Foucault describes them. Ideally, for Foucault, such discourse suspends the centrality of the “author-function” as the essential genesis of discursive development, and rather asks *where* the author lies in relation to subsequent development in a discursive field. In some aspects of translation practice and theory, this is the same activity with which the modern translator is tasked. As will be discussed in the first chapter, the modern translator simultaneously enacts roles characteristic of author and reader, riding a line between interpretive and creative agencies. In this process, the modern translator is constantly negotiating the position of the author, asking *where* the author’s voice belongs rather than assuming it

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<sup>23</sup> Foucault, “What is an author?” 313.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 314.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*



categorically does or does not belong throughout.<sup>26</sup> This means that while a sense of debt to the author may still be felt, the practice of translation is one in which translators are afforded the freedom to negotiate the position of the author in a source text and choose whether or not to represent this influence in their translations.<sup>27,28</sup> To speak more specifically, the sensations, emotions, and critiques intended by the author of the SL text may very well be retained, revised, or eliminated altogether in translation, and the degree to which this is done has to do with the place afforded to the author-function by the translator as a critical reader, insofar as that place ought to be represented in translation. It is often the case that shifts in authorship are done in translation where spaces of discursive influence previously occupied by the author-function of the source text are assumed by the translator, who functions as a new author-function in concert with the original.

If one considers the translator as an initiator of a discursive practice in the manner of Foucault (as I do here) there is a need to characterize the manner in which this initiator, or figure of influence, operates on a text. In a way similar to Foucault's author-function, the translator-function is a figure that operates as a decentralized position of authority in conjunction with a collectivity, or multiplicity, of influences. What is more,

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<sup>26</sup> This is a necessary consideration both in the interpretation of the original work and the creation of the translated work

<sup>27</sup> This freedom is certainly limited by other factors. Translators may be afforded the authority over these decisions to some degree, but it is certainly true that expectations of readership and the market will have a certain degree of sway over a translator's freedoms. This will be of particular interest in the second chapter when discussing translation decisions made in American editions of *Tintin in America* as a result of external influences.

<sup>28</sup> While the acknowledgement of this phenomenon might be a novel concept, this element of translation has always been an inherent factor of the practice. Perhaps one of the earliest far-reaching examples of this is the repeated and prolific translation of the Bible, which has informed translation studies for centuries. According to Susan Bassnett, the corpus of studies on Bible translation is a particularly rich source of examples of semiotic transformation.

Susan Bassnett, *Translation Studies* (London: Routledge, 2014) 33.

in the same manner that the author-function can be applied beyond the personhood of an Author, the translator-function can be applied beyond those who perform explicit translation work in the most traditional sense, wherein a person's name is included alongside the author as the 'translator.' In other words, this multiplicity of influences has the potential to include figures who are not strictly translators, such as authors. An examination of the interplay between the visual and textual elements of *bande dessinée* will contribute to the conception of the translator-function as a collective of influences, in the sense that the nature of translation is not necessarily restricted to the medium of linguistic text. In the essay that follows this introduction, each chapter will examine key elements of the roles a translator plays in literary discursive practices, via the medium of *bande dessinée*, in an effort to develop the concept of the translator-function.<sup>29</sup>

The methodology of this study is comprised of several parts that perform essential functions in translation study. In a discussion of translation history, the great translation scholar Levý first emphasizes the importance of understanding a translation's source,<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Earlier chapter drafts of this thesis focused too heavily on the theories of various thinkers (especially Barthes) and not enough on the real subject of this project: translation in *bande dessinée*. In subsequent revisions, models like that of Barthes and Foucault have been given in the body of this introduction as a means of providing a point of departure for this topic, and will prove to be useful in further developing the concept of a translator-function—characterizing the role of the translator in literary and translation studies demonstrated in translated *bande dessinée*, which is the primary objective of this project. Where Barthes and Foucault are referenced in the chapters that follow, it will be as a means of contextualizing the thought and ideas in the body of the study, rather than digressing into theoretical models ad absurdum.

<sup>30</sup> This is not always as easy to give as it might seem. Levý explains that some deviations in translation, when comparing the source text to a target language text, are themselves translations of another source text, and thus some deviations from the source are difficult to explain as direct translations. The example he gives is the 1889 French translation of Jan Neruda's tales published in the *Bibliothèque populaire* series under the title *Contes tchèques*. As Levý states, some errors clearly suggest that it was not a direct translation into French from the original Czech, but a translation from German versions. Understanding a source text's publishing and translation history is an essential factor in the ability to explain any translation deviations from the source. In the case of this thesis, things are much simpler in that the translations were done directly from the original French source texts into English. There are, however, some interesting historical changes that will inform some of the translation choices that reveal a great deal about the translators' influences upon the texts.

Jirí Levý, *The Art of Translation*, trans. Patrick Corness (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 2011) 171.

which in the case of this study is fairly simple; the source texts are the original French *bandes dessinées* and the target language texts were translated directly from French to English. Once these points of reference have been established, the main task of analyzing the fundamental principles governing a translator's working procedure can begin. According to Levý, "every translation...contains a higher or lower proportion of deviations from the original introduced by the translator. It is these deviations from the source which can best reveal the translator's artistic method and his view of the work he is translating."<sup>31</sup> It follows that the analysis must begin with a detailed comparison of the translation and the source, assembling "in a virtually statistical manner" the details of each deviation that can be found between the two. While some deviations might be chalked up to accidents, others (particularly in cases where patterns reoccur) reveal particular methodologies and processes at work in the translation that can only be revealed through this type of detailed text analysis. The principal method of analysis in this study very closely follows Levý's recommended procedure and permits a meaningful analysis of "the relationship between the translator's view of the work on one hand," in this case the French-to-English translators of *Persepolis* and *Tintin*, "and the objective idea of the work itself."<sup>32</sup>

Terms akin to "art" or "artistic method"<sup>33</sup> appear frequently in Levý's *Art of Translation* for good reason. According to Levý, the vast majority of translation studies reviews and articles tend to focus on accidental deviations that happen as a result of straightforward semantic errors, that "merely serve as evidence of the translator's

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<sup>31</sup> Levý, *The Art of Translation*, 173.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

language competence or attention to detail.”<sup>34</sup> These could otherwise be termed “mistranslations” or errors in translation. For Levý, these deviations are of “limited value” in studies of this nature, whereas other cases of deviation, or imprecisions, can fall into one of several sets that each describe “a particular type of semantic or aesthetic shift in relation to the source.”<sup>35</sup> These deviations, as opposed to mistranslations, best indicate the main guiding principles upon which a translator interprets a source and “illustrate clearly how the translator’s poetics can be reconstructed on the basis of frequently recurring features in the translation.” In other words, where a demonstrable change is systematically mobilized in translation, rather than simply slipping in accidentally, the translation studies scholar can analyze the translator’s process not in terms of competency or acumen, but in more agentive terms like those used by Levý: poetics and artistic method. Work like that of Levý demonstrates a shift in translation studies away from more utilitarian conceptions of translation (which can limit its theoretical applications), and toward an analysis of the translator as a literary agent whose influence on text can be on par with, though not identical to the author. Indeed, an integration of style and thought characterizes Levý’s view of translation practices which incorporates an account of the author’s linguistic style, poetics, method, and artistic view with that of the translator.<sup>36</sup> It

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 174.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> The specific example that Levý gives is the Czech writer and translator from French Karel Čapek. According to Levý, Čapek exerted a profound influence on the evolution of Czech verse through his translations of French poetry at a time when strict accentual-syllabic verse was going out of fashion as traditional rhyme patterns had become routine. Čapek’s reform of Czech rhyme and his modification of the alexandrine are based on his discoveries made in modern French poets, especially Apollinaire, “whose noetics of poetry was close to Čapek’s.” According to Levý, this similarity in noetics may account for Čapek’s sensitivity to it and his subsequent adoption of it as a translation stance, which Levý defines as “the fundamental principle informing [an] approach to the translation of [a text].” Ibid., 299-300.

is within this discursive shift in translation studies toward the artistry of translation that the translator-function will characterize translator roles and agency.

The first chapter will demonstrate the uniqueness of the translator's position within critical literary consideration. Using Roland Barthes' *author* and *reader* roles in his "Death of the Author" as a point of departure, I will demonstrate the difficulty of situating the translator squarely within either category, as defined by Barthes. Indeed, the translator slips between the two roles and in some cases enacts them simultaneously. I will accomplish this through a discussion of the English translations of Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* from its original French. The general purpose of this chapter is to introduce the primary element of the translator-function paradigm—that the latter cannot be squarely conceived within a zero-sum opposition between reader and author roles, but is indeed both, embodying a unique position within literary and translation studies.

The second chapter will examine the active role played by Leslie Lonsdale-Cooper and Michael Turner in their translation of Hergé's *Tintin en Amérique* from French into English. In further developing the paradigm of the translator-function, this chapter will rely on elements of Michel Foucault's author-function concept from "What is an author?" in an analysis of the many changes effected in the TT<sup>37</sup> *Tintin in America*. The chapter will discuss the sensibilities of translation and the necessary considerations therein, invoking translation theory and practical translation guides, to demonstrate the agency needed in work of this nature. This chapter will employ textual examples from Hergé's ST and Lonsdale-Cooper's and Turner's TT to demonstrate not only the translator's dual role as reader and author but the critical role of the translator as an

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<sup>37</sup> The abbreviations ST (source text) and TT (target text) shall be used throughout.

initiator of a discursive practice, negotiating the position of Foucault's author-function in textual interpretation. This is primarily demonstrated by a series of divergences between the SL and TL texts that translation studies scholars deem "cultural turns." There are three categories of "cultural turns" that characterize the discursive and aesthetic shifts at work in *Tintin in America* that will also help to further develop the concept of the translator-function.

The discussion in these chapters and the following conclusions will be framed within a consideration of the translator's unique position, demonstrated by the nature of their work and its many essential considerations. In characterizing this position, a number of necessary considerations unique to the medium of *bande dessinée* will be a topic of primary interest, such as the influence of image upon text, and vice-versa. The more general question of what it means to translate something will also inform discussions on what sort of work constitutes translation work. As stated in Newmark's preface to his *Textbook of Translation*, "[translation] is a new profession, though an old practice ... the body of knowledge and assumptions that exists about translation is tentative, often controversial and fluctuating."<sup>38</sup> Not unlike translations themselves. It is in this very sense of fluctuation that I aim to place the role of the translator, invoking the Barthesian conception of *reader* and *author* roles and Foucauldian ideas of what constitutes an author and literary interpretation. The principal problem, in simple terms, concerns the qualification of the translator-function and its uses within literary and translation studies. Existing frameworks on authorship like those of Barthes and Foucault will be referenced as necessary points of departure, but each chapter will focus on developing the more

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<sup>38</sup> Peter Newmark, *A Textbook of Translation* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1988), xii.

general concept of the translator-function. In this study, I find that the modern translator occupies a space and role wherein the negotiation of author and reader roles is less like a unidirectional process and more like a network of traversable functions, where the translator and the author can perform roles characteristic of readership, authorship, and translation simultaneously or convergently.<sup>39</sup> Simply put, the translator finds himself or herself constantly at the threshold of Barthesian *reader* and *author* roles and within the liminal space between the two, as well as the initiator of discursive practices as suggested by Foucault.

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<sup>39</sup> As previously suggested, it is very likely that this has always been the case (see footnote 28). However, I propose the translator-function as a means of moving the field of translation studies toward a conscious and proper theorization of this conception of translation.

**CHAPTER 1**  
**Situating the Translator: *Persepolis***

Starting with the first volume in 2000, Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* is a series of complex and rich autobiographical *bandes dessinées* that explore a particularly fraught moment in Iranian history: the years immediately following the Islamic revolution of 1979. In the series, the author explores life as a girl and young woman growing up in the throes of the ideological and political struggles between 1978 and 1984 in Tehran. Only ten years old at the time of the 1979 revolution, Satrapi recounts her personal challenges as a rather progressive young woman in an increasingly conservative Islamic republic as well as her later identity struggles while living in Europe. Its dynamic (and occasionally unflattering) portrayals of Iran have been met with opposition in Satrapi's home country, particularly for its criticisms of the Islamic regime. However, the series humanizes these years of socio-political turmoil in ways that mainstream Western media has historically not. Many of the narratives in *Persepolis* do not fit more radical Western conceptions of the Middle East as a violent wasteland of degenerates. This coupled with the rather serious adult themes have made *Persepolis* controversial among parents and teachers of young readers in the United States.

The series of volumes was originally published in France by L'Association in four volumes between 2000 and 2003. The English translations (performed by Satrapi's husband Mattias Ripa, under the former's supervision) were later published by Pantheon Books in the United States in two volumes in 2003 and 2004 respectively. While consumed and critically praised the world over, this graphic novel has not always been warmly received. For example, several school districts have attempted to prevent the book's inclusion in curricula. Most notably in 2013, Chicago Public Schools attempted to



have the book removed from seventh-grade shelves as it was thought to “[contain] graphic language and images that are not appropriate for general use in the seventh grade curriculum,”<sup>40</sup> according to an email from the CEO. The backlash against this decision on the part of local students and faculty ultimately prevented this from happening.<sup>41</sup> This case in particular demonstrates not only the positive fervor that *Persepolis* has generated here in the US,<sup>42</sup> but serves Satrapi’s own motivations in opening social circles and spreading more personal narratives about cultures and countries far from one’s own.

Satrapi’s text constitutes part of an emerging class of graphic novel that addresses questions of trauma without necessarily depicting traumatic images, or at least packages them within a medium that is traditionally associated with levity and childhood. Indeed, it was after Satrapi’s exposure to Art Spiegelman’s *Maus*<sup>43</sup> that she began work on *Persepolis* in 1999, after multiple rejections from publishers on children’s book projects.<sup>44</sup> The first tome was a sensation in France, breaking bookstore records, and has been translated into over twenty-five languages. There is even an unauthorized Persian copy, despite an official translation not being available due to the political situation in Iran.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Betsy Gomez, “Furor Continues Over PERSEPOLIS Removal,” in *Comic Book Legal Defense Fund*, March 18, 2013

<sup>41</sup> Gomez, “Furor Continues,” 2013.

<sup>42</sup> By at least one account, *Persepolis* is on the syllabus of over 250 colleges and universities in the US. Hillary Chute, *Graphic Women: Life Narrative and Contemporary Comics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 137. Accessed March 27, 2020.

<sup>43</sup> *Maus* is a multi-volume comic series in which Spiegelman recounts his father’s experiences as a Jewish holocaust survivor at Auschwitz within the frame narrative of his father’s present-day life in Queens, NY. It is a well-known example of graphic novel that addresses trauma through a medium traditionally destined for younger readers. Satrapi was given a copy of *Maus* by a friend before beginning work on *Persepolis*. Art Spiegelman, *The Complete Maus* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1997).

<sup>44</sup> Hillary Chute, *Graphic Women*, 137.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

According to Hillary Chute's *Graphic Women*, in her graphic work Satrapi makes "political, collective claims by testifying to the very *ordinariness* of her trauma." Indeed, Satrapi's bande dessinée takes the form of minimalistic depictions of people and events, especially in the first tome in which the events are presented through the eyes of a child. While she does give the reader some context, Satrapi does not spend a lot of time on historical accounts of political and social events. Instead, the reader observes these events from Satrapi's young perspective, or through an adult character's careful explanations. As Chute says, "Satrapi's autobiography in words and images swerves from the amusing to the appalling, insisting on both as the lived reality of girlhood."<sup>46</sup> Unlike Spiegelman's *Maus*, *Persepolis* traces the author's own testimony and trauma as she lived it herself and in a geopolitical context not many Westerners fully understand or appreciate. Satrapi, an artist and writer of Iranian origin who has lived in Europe for many years, shares experiences in *Persepolis* in a way that is both "multigeneric and transnational,"<sup>47</sup> finding herself at the intersection of several different genres (the visual and the textual) and nations (Iran, Austria, France, etc.). Indeed, the graphic novel format is a medium well-suited to Satrapi's project in her representation of a place and moment in history (70s-80s Iran) that is often pejoratively referenced by Westerners. The "deceptively simple"<sup>48</sup> drawings and captions representing her upbringing in Tehran and her adolescence in Austria defy stereotypes and preconceived ideas of what life is like for young women in the Middle East at home and abroad.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>47</sup> Marie Ostby, "Graphics and Global Dissent: Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*, Persian Miniatures, the Multifaceted Power of Comic Protest," *PMLA: Publication of the Modern Language Association of America* 132, no 3 (May 2017) 558.

<sup>48</sup> Ostby, "Graphics and Global Dissent," 558-59.

Although these elements of *Persepolis* have been formally recognized and analyzed by scholars in literature studies, Satrapi herself has also spoken to this exact point. In a 2003 scholarly article discussing her motivations in writing *Persepolis*, Satrapi underlines the importance of cultural exchange, noting that extending one's circle of acquaintances beyond one's national borders might go a long way in solving many of the world's problems. She describes the manners in which, ever since moving to France in 1994, she has personally had to battle Westerners' erroneous notions about the Middle East, saying "I've been justifying why it isn't negative to be Iranian for almost twenty years."<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, her principal impetus for writing *Persepolis* was the desire to show Westerners that "[Satrapi] grew up just as other children do."<sup>50</sup> The work has a way of humanizing the Middle East in a way that is not typically done by Western media, and as such has the potential to break down stereotypes and prejudices of Iran and its people. Despite the polemics waged by some in the twenty years since its initial publication in France, *Persepolis* remains a unique model in the class of graphic political commentary as an example of autobiographical *bande dessinée* that effectively addresses socio-politics in the Middle East from a personal perspective. The transmission of this work in other linguistic communities (which is to say, outside of francophone regions) is of course facilitated by the process of translation.

As previously mentioned, *Persepolis* has been translated into many different languages from the original French. This chapter will focus on a comparative study of the original French edition of the first volume of *Persepolis* and its corresponding English

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<sup>49</sup> Marjane Satrapi, "Why I Wrote *Persepolis*," *Writing* 26, no. 3 (2003): 9.

<sup>50</sup> Satrapi, "Why I Wrote *Persepolis*," 11.

translation in the American edition of the first volume. Using Barthes's<sup>51</sup> and Foucault's<sup>52</sup> ideas of what constitutes authorship as a point of departure, the goal of this chapter will be to analyze the manners in which barriers between what might be considered authorship and readership are transgressed by the process of translation.<sup>53</sup> This transgression, even transcendence, of roles will constitute a necessary prerequisite in formulating what I have termed the translator-function. Such a paradigm aims to characterize the multifaceted and necessary nature of what might be considered a translator's purview in literature—in other words, the transmission of cultural information, texts, or images from one sociolinguistic community to another.

In my consideration of *Persepolis*, I aim to examine this shifting role between reader and author embodied within the role of the translator. This shift is most evident in cases where the translator performs work wherein the language of the TL text diverges notably from its counterpart in the SL text that represent a deliberate change that effectively represents independent authorial work by the translator. In other words, the language is not simply reproduced literally, and a divergence in form or meaning can demonstrate this shift in authority.

I aim to examine the language used as well as the interplay between language and image in Satrapi's SL text and compare them to those of the English TL text in the American publication. As discussed in the introduction, much of translation studies relies

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<sup>51</sup> Barthes, "Death," 143-47.

<sup>52</sup> Foucault, "What is an author?" 302-13.

<sup>53</sup> This chapter utilizes the product of a translation (the TL text) to inform theories about the translation process. Of course, I was not there observing the process of translating *Persepolis* from French to English myself, and so little regarding the translator's immediate motivations in his decision-making can be stated. However, working with a framework of translation studies permits an analysis of the process even without the translator's presence. Indeed, direct evidence can only be drawn from the product itself, but the product is so named because it is directly formed and informed by the process, and there is evidence of motivations in decision-making in the effects of the TL text as compared to those of the SL text.

upon a comparison of SL and TL texts, particularly where the two texts diverge meaningfully.<sup>54</sup> Thus, a principal focus of this chapter will be the points of divergence in translation terms, expressions, and necessary changes that occur as a result of the relationship between visual and textual elements. In some cases, the relationship between image and text is stronger in the original French and translation changes the meaning in English. In others, the translator makes clear decisions in the translated TL text that sufficiently change the text to represent a meaningful reworking that facilitates a fluidity of its expression in the TL, and for the target audience. In such cases, the translator acts simultaneously as a reader *and* an author, but never entirely both due to the nature of his or her work. The goal is to characterize the simultaneity of this role within the scope of a *translator-function* paradigm whose influences are multiple. Before moving toward an examination of *Persepolis*, it will be useful to situate historical cases of shifting translation roles as well as discuss relevant research in translation studies that addresses some of the issues at work here. A foundational understanding of the landscape of this larger discourse can provide further insight into the observations and text analysis that comes later.

### Historical Understandings of the Process and Products of Translation

One might object to the idea that the translator is anything but a reader of the original text who reproduces the text for a new target audience. Or otherwise that the translator simply becomes an author once he or she puts pen to paper. However, it is the simultaneity and collectivity of influences in the process and products of translation that

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<sup>54</sup> Levý, *The Art of Translation*, 174.

favors a model like that of the translator-function. While the translator may constitute a writer in his or her own right, he or she is not simply a reader, since elements of the practice of translation are emblematic of both interpretation and creation in literature, and from a multitude of influences. Thus, any translator figure resides at the threshold of both reader and author functions. To employ Saussurian terms, the translator possesses the unique ability to render the *signified* comprehensible in two or more systems of *signifiers*.<sup>55</sup>

Scholars in literary studies have not always fairly characterized this ability and its implementations, often the result of a hesitation to recognize translation as an intellectual exercise.<sup>56</sup> For example, not all scholarly work on translation recognizes that translations of text are more than a word-for-word correspondence exercise. For one language community, the signified may carry different connotations that skew meaning when represented in each respective system of signifiers. Or there may simply be no equivalent signified concept in the target language community, which then requires either a fair degree of elucidation on the part of the translator to render concepts clear for the target language community or finding an equivalent context in which the “feel” of the textual moment is adequately rendered. Fidelity to the ST is certainly important but many translators might disagree fundamentally to what extent faithfulness to the forms of a SL

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<sup>55</sup> Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, ed. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehay, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), 114-115.

<sup>56</sup> Literary studies often relegate translation to a stupid but necessary truth of publishing. Scholars will often cite faults and misunderstandings that come out of translation and yearn for the “essence” of a linguistically inaccessible source text and the ostensible truths that it may offer. However, as discussed in the introduction, even translation studies have not always done justice to the practice, and there are various approaches to the questions of translation therein. As Levý states, there is a tendency in translation studies to focus on the errors and accidentals of target language texts in relation to their source. As Levý himself demonstrates, the field of translation studies has evolved in recent decades to shift focus away from the language competencies of the translator. Instead, the field works to recognize the practice of translation as an intellectual exercise through which the translator offers his or her own artistry and literary voice.

text ought to be considered when essentially rewriting the text in the new language, or even what form such faithfulness ought to take. A more simplistic view of translation might view the English translation of *Persepolis* as nothing more than a one-to-one reproduction of Satrapi's work, however a more contemporary and multidimensional interpretation will see the translation process as a transformative exercise that incorporates both Satrapi's and the translator's influences, as well as those elsewhere, in the TL product. As a medium that is just as visual as it is textual, some of these divergences arise out of a need to accommodate artwork or visual space on the page. This is an element of expression that is integral to *bande dessinée* and one that adds another significant challenge to the translator who must negotiate language without the ability to make significant changes to artwork or visual real estate. This will prove to be vital in understanding a number of the divergences between the SL and TL texts that will in turn contribute to the development of the translator-function concept.

While there are important divergences in language in the SL and TL texts of *Persepolis*, much of the text is closely translated. Indeed, for some, adherence to the structure and format of the text with literal term-for-term cross-linguistic representation is the ideal method of translation, and this manner of translation was especially popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Paul Horguelin characterizes the nineteenth century by a certain "return of the pendulum,"<sup>57</sup> referring to translators' return to the ideas of faithfulness to the form of a text; otherwise stated, to literal translation. Literality was the favored method of translation during this period, supported by the supposition that "literal translations are

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<sup>57</sup> Paul A. Horguelin, *Anthologie De La Manière De Traduire : Domaine Français* (Montréal: Linguattech, 1981), 148.

the most faithful.”<sup>58</sup> This manner of translation was characterized by a scrupulous and attentive process wherein “meticulous word-for-word translation and systematic calques become the mark of the new ‘system of translation.’”<sup>59,60</sup> This accounts for widely-held

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<sup>58</sup> Horguelin, *Anthologie*, 148.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> One famous, even canonical example, of this is the case of Charles Baudelaire’s translations of Edgar Allan Poe. Baudelaire’s translation of Poe’s poetry and prose into French relies on the man’s biography in representing the texts for a new language community. Baudelaire felt Poe’s work to be an extension of his own psychology in many ways, expressing that he undertook the work of translating Poe so patiently because they were such similar beings: “The first time that I opened one of his books I was shocked and delighted to see not only subjects which I had dreamed of, but SENTENCES which I had thought and which he had written twenty years before.” While devotion to an author’s ideas and aesthetics is certainly not uncommon in those who read them, translation work as we often consider it today is undertaken in a much more detached manner than the case that Baudelaire’s translation of Poe presents to us. Curiously, Poe enjoys a relatively favorable reputation in France via Baudelaire’s translations, especially contrasted against Poe’s comparatively lukewarm reception in the United States. As stated previously, Baudelaire’s methods of translation relied on the popular strategy of the time, characterized by a strict literality and fidelity to form (not unlike his contemporaries in France, including Mallarmé). Underlining a meticulous adherence to form on the part of Baudelaire, Léon Lemonnier asserts that Baudelaire never summarizes a sentence and never seeks to dominate it, but rather follows it letter by letter and word-for-word: “[Baudelaire] was literal to the point of audacity, and clumsy to the point of genius.” Lemonnier suggests that Baudelaire’s literality in translation hedges on a sacrifice of the cadence of the language in French in order to remain faithful to the original text. However, while the French poet and others make claims about Baudelaire’s strict adherence to the form and words of Poe’s text, he betrays some artistic license in his translation that may result from his devotion to Poe and Poe’s own sensibilities. Indeed, Baudelaire often defended Poe’s work to those who may have perceived his translations as disingenuous. The French poet’s desire to render the American more palatable may be one of the principal motivations behind the former’s translation. If Poe’s lasting and generally favorable reputation in France is any indication, one might say that Baudelaire largely succeeded. Baudelaire’s influence is often seen as what fueled an enthusiasm for Poe’s work in France that he never experienced in the United States during his lifetime. Indeed, T.S. Eliot, referring to Baudelaire’s translation once said that the Frenchman “transformed what is often a slipshod . . . English into an admirable French.” Baudelaire’s reworking of Poe’s texts in translation from French to English are, it would appear, largely responsible for Poe’s positive reputation among the French. Indeed, when analyzing the key differences between Poe’s SL texts and Baudelaire’s TL texts, one finds a systematic simplification of Poe’s more convoluted syntactic constructions and several changes to key references or allusions. While Baudelaire professes a fidelity to form, Poe’s most nonstandard syntactic constructions are not retained in the translated TL text. The simplifications of syntax may even be the transformations to which Eliot alludes. Yet these differences, while significant, account for a comparatively small percentage of the corpus of Poe’s texts. The most consistent trend in translation strategy does appear to be a literal, or gloss, translation wherein Baudelaire renders the text in a manner that retains form above all else. This leaves the translation scholar in a bit of an analytical dilemma. If one is to believe that Baudelaire both ameliorated and remained faithful to the form of Poe’s texts, to what degree is Poe’s positive French reputation maintained under his own steam and how much is facilitated by Baudelaire? In truth, we many never know. At the very least, it is clear that Baudelaire, despite an ostensibly strict adherence to Poe’s form, nevertheless deviates from that form where the higher purpose of improving Poe’s reputation abroad calls for it. Lemonnier appears to find a preference in Baudelaire’s TL texts to form fidelity, even at the detriment of fluid language. While this is certainly true for the bulk of Baudelaire’s TL Poe texts, because of demonstrable differences in the form of these latter texts, perhaps this adherence to form is overstated in cases where Baudelaire makes the decision to simplify syntax and lexical items.



views of translation as an exercise of one-to-one equivalencies, but as with most translated texts, *Persepolis* incorporates divergences that come as a result of translator influence as well as the nature of translating bande dessinée, where visual and textual expression are inextricable. Thus, fidelity to form can only take the translator so far in a text like *Persepolis*.

Indeed, while a fidelity to form was certainly in vogue in the nineteenth century, translation studies has more recently shifted to a model that favors a dynamic and often multidisciplinary approach to translation problems that weigh the consideration of form and meaning in translation. Within some more recent texts of translation studies, one finds various disciplines that explain the approaches of various translation studies theoreticians and significant translators and how trends have developed. Translation studies has moved past a focus on the minutiae of sitting with a text and working through semantic, pragmatic, and grammatical constructions to render a comprehensible TL text. Indeed, the very concept of what it means to translate something has become a subject of interest in not only the practice of translation itself but also more generally in the way that humans use language and transmit information via a series of culturally bound and unbound signifiers. In a 1998 lecture to the *Assises de la Traduction Littéraire à Arles* (ATLAS), Jacques Derrida applauded the uniquely placed men and women who undertake translation while also extruding the most important facets of translation work

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Charles Baudelaire, *Baudelaire on Poe: Critical Papers*, ed. Lois and Frances Hyslop. (State College, PA: Bald Eagle Press, 1952), 30.

Léon Lemonnier, *Edgar Poe et la critique française de 1845 à 1875: les traducteurs d'Edgar Poe en France de 1845 à 1875, Charles Baudelaire* (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 2011), 185-86. Transl.: “[Baudelaire] a été littéral jusqu’à l’audace, et maladroit jusqu’au génie.”

Juliane House, *Translation: The Basics* (London: Routledge, 2018), 15.

Lefevere, André. “Literary Theory,” 4.

T. S. Eliot, “From Poe to Valéry,” *The Hudson Review* 2, no. 3 (1949): 336, [www.jstor.org/stable/3847788](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3847788).

and mapping them onto modes of human communication—in other words, addressing the multiple linguistic challenges of untranslatability that exist from one language to another:

Admitting more than one failure, I confess this double inadequacy that is all the more impossible to avoid because it bears a self-contradiction: if I need to address you in a single language, French (...), I am nevertheless always already inclined to leap over this language, my own, and I shall do it again, thus leaving undecided the question of a simple choice between language and metalanguage, between one language and another. At the word go we are within the multiplicity of languages and the impurity of the limit.<sup>61</sup>

Here, Derrida acknowledges that even while one might be, in the most literal sense, limited to a particular linguistic set of rules and lexical items, (by virtue of the fact that one is speaking one language that might be unintelligible from another) the words that he uses to express himself are nevertheless in a constant process of transmission themselves. As he later states, “there is no such thing as a word in nature,”<sup>62</sup> which in the context of his arguments essentially means that no word can be used without all of its accompanying histories of use, senses, contexts, and possibilities for extension—indeed that its very existence as a sign is dependent on these contingences. By underscoring the “impurity” of the limit, Derrida suggests that the traditional categorizations placed upon language and

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<sup>61</sup> Jacques Derrida, “What is a ‘Relevant’ Translation?” *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 424-25.

Omitted parenthetical section: “thereby recognizing that every so-called discourse *on* translation, every meta-language or meta-theorem on the topic of translation is fated to inscribe itself within the limits and possibilities of a single idiom”

<sup>62</sup> Derrida, “Relevant Translation,” 425.

modes of communication are less amenable to neat and orderly separation and classification than we might think.<sup>63</sup>

One example of this phenomenon from *Persepolis* that will be more closely examined in a later section is Satrapi's use of the term "poing américain," the translation of which is fraught with complication from the various contexts and underlying histories that such a term carries. The literal translation of the term from some perspectives makes sense, with the retention of "American" as an adjective, but for very different reasons between the SL and TL texts. Derrida urges scholars to seek these explications through a multidimensional consideration of language that looks beyond a term's most superficial forms and connotations. Naturally, this complicates translation to a significant degree and affords the translator a substantial level of influence, embodying a role that Derrida clearly respects. The lecture indicates the potential for multiplicity in meaning, whether interlocutors are aware of it or not, suggesting a genealogy of trans-linguistic and trans-cultural exchange that defies a hierarchy of linguistic systems.

The translator working to render the SL text to a TL text is thus tasked with considering the words he or she translates beyond simple one-to-one correspondences that accommodate only the most superficial equivalencies. The degree to which the translator (in the case of the first English volume of *Persepolis*, Satrapi's husband Mattias Ripa) remains faithful to Satrapi's form is thus largely determined by his interpretations

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<sup>63</sup> The example that Derrida uses is the word "relevant," which in and of itself carries histories simultaneously juxtaposed to its modern uses. As Derrida puts it, the word "relevant" "carries in its body an on-going process of translation" in that though its origins are Latin, the word is nowadays rather English, as the opposing words "relevant" and "irrelevant" suggest, and with this modern sense is in the process of being imported into the French language, "in the act of crossing borders and being checked at several intra-European customs points." The word, as Derrida deftly points out, not only serves to demonstrate the translative processes in play within the use of a single word but qualifies the practice itself as "relevant." Derrida, "Relevant Translation," 425.

of Satrapi's language and artwork. Rejecting a construction like "se poser des questions"<sup>64</sup> in favor of a more natural functional equivalent in English is a way of prioritizing function in the TL over form, rejecting the general premise that translation must remain formally faithful to an author's text.

One way of conceiving the hierarchical classification of language that puts linguistic form above all else is the concept of arborescence, a term borrowed from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.<sup>65,66</sup> The concept of arborescence in the Deleuzian sense characterizes a linear and binary derivation of concepts, of which linguistic units could be considered a part,<sup>67</sup> in a manner classically modeled after the genealogical tree. In such a model, everything follows from one source, splits, and moves further and further up (or down) the line of succession in a series of vertical binaries. Deleuze's opposing model, the rhizome, eschews the unidirectional verticality of the arborescent model in favor of a horizontal heterogeneous model in which all points can connect to any other point. In essence, no limits are imposed and the logic of connections, while not entirely random, is

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<sup>64</sup> Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis* (Paris: L'Association, 2000), 7.

<sup>65</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, transl. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: 1987), 5.

<sup>66</sup> Though Derrida and Deleuze/Guattari offer radically opposing systems of thought, Derrida's rejection of hierarchical linguistic consideration does help conceptualize the hierarchy that Deleuze opposes. Derrida's own insistence on the multiplicity inherent in a word like "relevant" does echo much of what Deleuze and Guattari prize about the possibilities of multiplicity in their model of the rhizome. However, I do not wish to conflate the two theoretical models or make the two approach one another anymore than is reasonable. Deleuze and Derrida are often used together to discuss theories of difference (or *différance*, to use Derrida's neologism), but there are of course key differences between the two, particularly when it comes to each thinker's conceptions of constructivism and deconstruction. However, it is useful to think about each thinker's models in that both embrace a multiplicity of collective influences. For Deleuze, "multi-" is perhaps the most useful and important prefix, as his theoretical model of the rhizome embraces multiples of direction, connection, possibility, influence, planes of reality, and what he terms "lines of flight," all while criticizing Chomsky's linguistics for a certain lack of sociopolitical perspective. Derrida's lecture on the relevance of translation embraces a word's potential for multiple meanings, sources and directions, and even more closely links these concepts to the process and practice of translation, highlighting the practice's relevance and importance, making no secret of his admiration for "the men and women who, to [his] mind, are the only ones who know how to read and write—translators."

Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 8.

<sup>67</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 6.

not restricted by direction or hierarchy, the way an arborescent model is (or by an origin or root).

In a way that echoes Derrida's rejection of linguistic limits, a rejection of linguistic arborescence permits Ripa to change Satrapi's aforementioned French construction to the English functional equivalent "to be puzzled."<sup>68</sup> In other words, Ripa is free of the linguistic limits,<sup>69</sup> and instead approaches translation the way that modern translation studies does, with a consideration of multiplicities and linguistic connectivity that more closely reflects Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome.<sup>70</sup>

Translation that operates on the thresholds of reader and author roles is rhizomatic, in that the direction of influence does not necessarily flow unidirectionally from an author's SL text to a reader's TL text. Ripa as the translator of *Persepolis* will invariably become a reader, but he slips between the latter role and that of author as he translates Satrapi. He adapts both to the TL community and remains consistent with Satrapi's artwork. In more ways than one, the work of a translator is thus not unlike

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<sup>68</sup> Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood*, transl. Mattias Ripa (New York: Pantheon Books, 2003), 9.

<sup>69</sup> Opposed, though in different ways, by both Deleuze and Derrida.

<sup>70</sup> Deleuze even links the dichotomy of arborescence and the rhizome to language in a rather poignant way in his criticisms of Noam Chomsky's hierarchical model of formal linguistics. The former cites the latter's source *S* and subsequent parceling of language by dichotomy as a classical example of linguistics' overreliance on dichotomy and hierarchy. Deleuze even goes so far as to say that Chomsky's grammar structure, the derivational and dominating *S* from which each of his models begin, "is more fundamentally a marker of power than a syntactic marker." Deleuze and Guattari mainly take issue with the fact that these linguistic models are not, in their view, as abstract as they ought to be, and "that they do not reach the abstract machine that connects a language to the semantic and pragmatic contents of statements, to collective assemblages of enunciation, to a whole micropolitics of the social field." The point made by Deleuze and Guattari is that classical linguistic models that attempt to relegate language to ostensibly simplistic utterances of parse-able structures do not do justice to the politics and social implications of human language. A rhizomatic model permits connections and transmission where hierarchies do not. Thankfully, this is largely the direction in which sociolinguistics and translations studies have gone in the last few decades. It is through this lens that I analyze the divergences of language found in *Persepolis*, and especially *Tintin* in chapter two, that demonstrate the politics of translation. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 7.

Derrida's consideration of the word "relevant."<sup>71</sup> The word's etymology comes full circle and is endlessly and always evoked in its use, and the translator's work is embroiled in the same kind of process. A collective of influences mobilizes the translator, or the *translator-function*, on the cusp of various roles, all while imbibing various influences in a collective multiplicity. This collectivity is not overdependent upon the author or their biography but incorporates them alongside the sociopolitical contexts of the ST and the TT, a consideration of the readership of both, as well as strategies and theories of translation studies. In short, the *translator-function* will invariably see a shift between one role and the other, and often enacts them simultaneously. The case of *Persepolis* in translation demonstrates this first crucial element of the translator-function wherein a multitude of authorities (author, reader, language, visual space, context, etc.) influence a translation.

#### The Translator's Shifting Roles: The Case of *Persepolis*

Thus far, it is clear that one of the most important questions in translation studies concerns the actual location of the translator in the author-reader binary. What we have seen, at least in abstract form is that the translator is at the threshold of both, and that the work performed by translators balances not only author and reader roles, but also influences outside the limits of words and their most superficial contexts and translated equivalents. In the case of *bande dessinée*, *Persepolis* in particular provides a unique example of how these important questions can play out. In particular, *bande dessinée* as a

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<sup>71</sup> Derrida, "Relevant Translation," 425.

simultaneously visual and verbal medium points to some unique problems that the following will investigate.

On several occasions in *Persepolis*, the translations in the English-language edition<sup>72</sup> diverge from the original French enough to represent work done by the author that does not simply reiterate concepts on a one-to-one basis of literal translation but changes them, such that the changes represent original work. One such example comes early on in the first volume, on the fifth planche,<sup>73</sup> where Marjane is recounting the three rules of Zoroastrianism. In both SL and TL texts, the reader is shown an image of Zoroaster explaining the rules in a speech balloon. The TL text appears as follows:

*You must base everything on these three rules: behave well, speak well, act well.*<sup>74</sup>

In the TL text, these three rules appear as imperative forms, whereas the original French of the SL text reads:

*Il va falloir baser tout sur ces trois règles : bon comportement, bonne parole, bonne action.*<sup>75</sup>

By the observable difference in the translation product, it is clear that translator made a decision to change the general substantive principles of the French SL text to imperatives

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<sup>72</sup> The English translations were done by Satrapi's husband Mattias Ripa in the first volume, which is the primary object of focus in this chapter. The translator of the second volume of the American publication is Anjali Singh.

<sup>73</sup> Note about pagination in *bande dessinée*: instead of page numbers, *planche* numbers are most often referenced (*planche* is the word used in French for a page of story artwork in BD and translates roughly in English to 'table' or 'board'). In most BD, *planches* in an album are marked with a small number somewhere in the corner, inked in by the artist. However, *Persepolis* has no such numbering, and no page numbers in the French edition from L'Association. The American edition from Pantheon Books does include page numbers, but they do not correspond to the *planche* numbers. For the sake of continuity between the SL and TL texts, *planche* numbers will be referenced instead of page numbers in this thesis.

<sup>74</sup> Satrapi, *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood*, 7.

<sup>75</sup> Satrapi, *Persepolis*, 7.

in English. This is simply one of many directions in which the translator could have gone with this part, but the form of the original SL text was not ultimately retained.

Indeed, part of the difficulty in translating this section comes from the origin of these principles. Levý demonstrates the significance of original text sources in *The Art of Translation*<sup>76</sup> and rightly so, for translations choices and mistakes are often much clearer when translation genealogies are made explicit. The question of origin with regard to a word or a term is one which the translator can reconcile in a number of ways, especially when translating a translation. In this case, the three “rules” cited in *Persepolis* come from three Avestan<sup>77</sup> words: *humata*, *hūxta*, and *huvaršta*. According to the *Encyclopædia Iranica*, these three words translate to English as “well thought, well said, well done,” but were later substantivized to mean “good thought, good word, good act.”<sup>78</sup> Elements of this translation appear in both the English and French versions of *Persepolis*, with one notable semantic exception in the first edict “good thought.” In French, the corresponding principle was given in the SL text as “bon comportement” and later translated to English as “behave well.” In the first rule, ‘thought’ appears in both editions as some form of the word ‘behavior.’<sup>79</sup> Here the translator made a choice to stick to the

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<sup>76</sup> Jirí Levý, *The Art of Translation*, trans. Patrick Corness (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 2011) 171.

<sup>77</sup> The term Avestan refers to the Avesta, the sacred text of Zoroastrianism, or to the ancient Indo-Iranian language in which it was written, closely related to Vedic Sanskrit.

<sup>78</sup> Mary Boyce, “HUMATA HŪXTA HUVARŠTA.” *Encyclopædia Iranica*, accessed 15 August 2019, [www.iranicaonline.org/articles/humata-huxta-huvarsta](http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/humata-huxta-huvarsta).

<sup>79</sup> In a manner reminiscent of Levý, this is a case in which understanding a translator’s source clarifies questions of translation divergence, as the translation from French to English explains the appearance of the lexical item “behavior” in the English edition. Looking at the TL text in comparison to the original Avestan words might lead one to believe that the English translator is responsible for this lexical shift. However, contextualized via the study of historical translation, we know that before the English text, the terms were first somehow translated from Avestan to French where the lexical change appears before that same change was simply reproduced in English. This shifts the responsibility of lexical agency from one translator to another, a shift that clearly cannot be accounted for without historical translation studies. This serves to underscore how seamlessly a translator can embody the roles of an interpretive agent (reader) or a creative agent (author) within the same act, depending on one’s perspective. It also demonstrates how decentralized



semantic meaning of Satrapi's SL text, despite the fact that the principle is represented differently outside Satrapi's work. However, Ripa did make a significant grammatical change from a substantive to an imperative. We can only guess why this might be,<sup>80</sup> but this may have been done to underscore these edicts as rules to be followed, or as commands, rather than general principles. In French, they are qualified as rules but given as substantives. In English, they are qualified as rules and given as rules. This represents a conscious choice made by the author that does not simply regurgitate the grammar of the original but represents a change that goes so far as to add an imperative mood where none exists in the SL text. The translator in this case has in fact retained the semantics of the original text but chose to represent it in a different grammatical mood. Reasons behind this change can potentially range from anything as simple as a stylistic preference on the part of the translator to a desire for more cohesion between the qualification of rules and imperatives, which appears to be the effect in comparison to the SL text. Thus, the translator is making a move toward decentralizing authority from the author and, while relying on the author's semantics, nevertheless exacts his own authorship on the text, even if in just a minor way.

Another change comes two pages later on the seventh planche, in a caption that in the French SL text reads:

*mes parents se posèrent quand-même des questions*<sup>81</sup>

and in the English TL text reads:

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one single person is in the process of translation, for the authority of this lexical change lies neither entirely with the author, nor the reader, and not even entirely with the translator but rather all three in a coalescence of influence that relies upon elements both internal and external to the texts.

<sup>80</sup> Efforts have been made to contact the translator, Mattias Ripa, about this decision, but as of the writing of this footnote no response has yet been received.

<sup>81</sup> Satrapi, *Persepolis*, 7.

*nonetheless, my parents were puzzled*<sup>82</sup>

Some semantic elements are retained in the English translation, indicated by the use of “nonetheless” for “quand-même,” however there remains a minor yet clear problem of untranslatability here, rendering a literal translation far from ideal. Were the translator to have chosen a literal translation such as:

*my parents nevertheless asked themselves questions*

or even

*my parents nevertheless questioned themselves,*

the majority of anglophone readers would likely have trouble understanding the functional intended message of such an utterance in the ST. In English, when one is puzzled one might pose questions to oneself, but most natural language inclinations prevent one from expressing uncertainty this way. Instead, one utilizes adjectival descriptions like “confused,” “bewildered,” or indeed “puzzled” as seen in the TL text. While in French, to ask oneself questions is a common and effective manner of expressing a character’s uncertainty, this is not the case in English. Therefore, a literal translation such as those suggested above risks obscuring the function of the action represented in the SL text, that of Marjane’s parents’ doubt. It would read as if the SL text had simply been plugged into a machine translator, which has little to no sense of context and would only be capable of yielding a literal translation. The reasons behind the change outlined above might vary, but given the potential for an unideal literal translation, it appears that the decision was made in translation to avoid the problem of untranslatability altogether in favor of natural expression in the TL.

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<sup>82</sup> Satrapi, *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood*, 9.

Yet another case of untranslatability with which the translator must contend appears much later in the text, on the forty-third planche, where the reader is presented with a young Marjane playing a somewhat disturbing game with her friends, in which they place nails between their fingers and make fists, attempting to recreate brass knuckles. In the TL text, a caption reads:

*My idea was to put nails between our fingers like American brass knuckles to attack Ramin.*

However, in the French SL text, the term ‘brass knuckles’ is represented differently:

*Mon idée, c'était de placer des clous entre les doigts à la façon des poings américains pour attaquer Ramine.*

Again, there is a translatability problem. The term in French for what we call in English ‘brass knuckles’ is either ‘poing américain’ or ‘coup-de-poing américain.’ Literal translation that remains faithful to form is clearly not ideal here, since the terms simply do not translate literally between French and English; linguistically, ‘American fist’ or ‘American punch’ are not permissible terms for ‘brass knuckles’ in English.

Naturally the translator uses the English-language functional equivalent.

However, there is an overt link to the ostensibly American origin of the object in the French term, where no such reference exists in the equivalent English term. Yet in the TL text, the apparently extraneous adjective ‘American’ is added to the term, even in English. One can make various conjectures as to why this was done, but in the translation product it nevertheless underscores the apparent American origin of the object, even if that’s not necessarily what the terms denote in French.<sup>83</sup> This represents a case in which

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<sup>83</sup> This underscores a problematic factor of this translation. The inclusion of the adjective ‘American’ identifies the object as American in origin, where in English such a distinction is not necessary. Nor is it

the translator, in an effort to produce functional equivalence, potentially obscures it. Even if the reader of the TL text might not be aware that there was a necessary reference to the brass knuckles as “américain” in French, they are still afforded this lexical item because it was retained, even somewhat unnecessarily, in the English version. This constitutes evidence that the translator is not simply providing a one-to-one translation as that would not include a reference to America. Here, America is a sign that the translator is making conscious decisions about how to represent the information based on how the author intended to represent the concept to her original audience. This case constitutes a moment in which the translator appears to attempt an equivalence of function in the TL, even with the questionable retention of the American-marked lexical item. This indicates of course that the translator is at liberty to retain or exclude explicit lexical items that do or do not serve as a functional equivalent to their SL counterparts. However, this also indicates that there is more at work here than the translator’s agency. Though the translator may be pursuing a functional equivalent, the connection to the function of the SL text is obscured rather than preserved, ironic in that it retains the form of the SL text. This demonstrates that retention of form in translation will not guarantee a retention of function; translation studies certainly tells us this much. However, there is a tendency in the latter to call out fault on the part of the translator in cases like these, rather than assign influence where it is due.

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historically accurate, given the widespread use of brass knuckles around the world. It would be a bit like translating the English term “French fries” to French as “frites françaises.” While they are close in form, they are not actually functionally equivalent since in English, even though we overtly reference France, the object itself is not pragmatically linked to conceptions of France. A more functionally equivalent translation would simply be “frites.”

Therefore, instead of simply calling the above a “poor translation” it is more useful to examine the interplay of influences that explain this divergence in meaning, despite the adherence to form. The translator is certainly the genesis (or at least the principal one among several) of this problem as the writer of the text, but it is the intervention of interpretive agents that make the functional equivalency impossible. After all, functional equivalence aims for similar effect upon a reader between SL and TL texts, and though the translator might retain SL form in an effort to preserve that effect, the difference in the product observable by the interpretive agent (the reader) makes the divergence clear. In other words, the translation problem itself is not only the result of the translator’s action but also that of his reader.<sup>84,85</sup> For this reason, the choice to deviate or not to deviate from form is not always an accurate predictor of equivalence.

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<sup>84</sup> Indeed, this provides a link to bodies of literary theory. Just as Barthes’s author has limited to no control over a text, nor does the translator when the text is in the hands of the reader. An equivalence attempt by the translator may or may not be successful, and this is often at the discretion of the reader. This points to another important element of the translator-function that reflects Foucault’s author-function: although the translator exerts authority on a text, this authority is not always the dominant driving expressive force. This chapter and the one that follows discuss at length the manners in which the translator-function is as creative an agent as the author-function. However, just as Foucault problematizes the author’s centrality to a text, it is important to do so for the translator as well. Thus, the translator enjoys authority but from a decentralized position in a non-hierarchical genealogy that shares connections with countless other influences.

<sup>85</sup> This shared influence is one that scholars often forget (or perhaps prefer to resist) when examining the complex power dynamics at play between readers, authors, and translators. Indeed, some authors consider deviations as a result of translation nothing more than base treachery against an author’s work, such as American writer Joel Agee who even half-jokingly refers to translators along with copy editors and fact checkers as “a writer’s nemesis.” In a talk called “The Author as Translator,” Agee toys with his own experience in the dual (and for him opposing) roles of author and translator. While he acknowledges the difficulties presented in translation and stops short of writing off the practice altogether, he nevertheless insists upon a rather antiquated notion that translations will never be equal or superior to their source texts. In other words, he relegates translation to a subordinate position in comparison to the more general practice of writing. Admittedly, he is right in a sense. The nature of translation invariably leads to divergences and conflict, even between authors and their translators, so that translations will never be an exact reproduction of their source text (though anyone familiar with translation studies knows that the ostensibly simple pursuit of an “exact reproduction” is a fraught undertaking from the start). Scholars like Agee, however, reinforce the idea of translation as flawed and subordinate to the practice of writing. While he does not reject translation as a practice, he does reject translation as a *creative* practice. What is more, he categorically rejects the influence of interpretation on the part of the reader, scoffing at the idea that one might find a translation to be of higher quality than its source (one wonders what he would make of E.A. Poe’s reputation in France). Agee, quite unlike Barthes and Foucault, does not problematize the author whatsoever and in fact underscores his importance, affronted at the very idea that a translation might read

However, once the decision is made to deviate from form, any number of possibilities exist, and the translator might even have given a narrower, or more literal translation than the ones given above. Nevertheless, these cases constitute evidence that the process of translation requires the translator to deviate from an author's written word, even at the risk of skewing meaning, to more closely align expression in the TL to the functions of the SL text. In other words, especially in cases of untranslatability, there is a necessary call to authorship on the part of the translator that nevertheless tends to be rescinded in the popular conception of what constitutes a translator. Once again, the translator is both reader and author, and mobilizes strategies of both in the pursuit of a cohesive translation product. This process essentially decentralizes authority from the author while still relying upon the SL text as the principal influence in creating a new TL text.

This is largely the direction in which translation studies has moved in recent decades. Prominent translation scholars such as Anton Popovič call for a descriptive, rather than prescriptive, study of the existing corpus of translations, wherein a text can be “considered one variant of a metatext among others.”<sup>86</sup> Modern translation studies incorporates linguistic and hermeneutic strategies to free itself from antiquated rule-oriented processes and instead favor decision-making. Jiri Levý and Itamar Even-Zohar

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better than a source text (again, think Baudelaire), even assigning authors and translators the roles of “Topdog” and “Underdog” respectively. While I will not argue that the translator is or ought to be “topdog” of any sort, my conceptualization of the translator-function, in concert with Foucault's author-function, argues for a pivot away from hierarchies of this nature and aims to characterize the *actual* relationships and politics of translation and writing, rather than relegating translation to a subordinate position vis-à-vis authorship. The two may certainly jockey for position at times but I personally believe that to broadly characterize translation as a nefarious practice and oppose it to the creative agencies of writing is at best antiquated and at worst irresponsible.

Joel Agee, “The Author as Translator,” *Agni*, no. 85 (2017): 78-83.

<sup>86</sup> André Lefevere, *Translating Literature: Practice and Theory in a Comparative Literature Context* (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1992) 11.

are two prominent voices responsible for pushing the field even further in this direction, wherein translation becomes not a process of rule application but that of decision-making: “translators decide, on their own, on the basis of the best evidence they have been able to gather, what the most effective strategy is to bring a text across in a certain culture at a certain time.”<sup>87</sup> Constrained and influenced by more than an SL text and its author, a translator exerts authority over a text but in a highly decentralized fashion that, in a manner similar to Derrida, takes into consideration all possible contexts of a word or concept across temporal and geographical borders. Even-Zohar in particular sees translation as the negotiation between two cultures, or what he terms a “polysystem,”<sup>88</sup> wherein “translation is acculturation.”<sup>89,90</sup> Susan Bassnett credits Even-Zohar’s polysystem research with transforming translation studies from a marginal philological branch of study to a primary focus of culture studies and inter-cultural research.<sup>91</sup> Indeed, Even-Zohar’s view of translation as cultural negotiation and transmission echoes the most important elements of the translator-function, in its consideration of all elements both internal and external to a text, its author, and its translator. Bassnett and Lefevere have developed this trend in translation studies, undergoing what Bassnett calls a *cultural turn*, wherein attention in the field is more focused than ever on “issues of context,

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<sup>87</sup> Lefevere, *Translating Literature*, 11.

<sup>88</sup> Itamar Even-Zohar, “Polysystem Theory,” *Poetics Today* 1, no. 1-2 (1979): 287-310.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> Despite including this citation, I hesitate to align translation with a word like “acculturation.” Such a term tends to imply the assimilation of one culture to another, and usually the dominant one. I do not believe that this is the ultimate goal of translation, nor do I believe that it is in this sense that Even-Zohar includes this term. By “acculturation,” he refers to a *negotiation* of cultural elements via translation, rather than a total assimilation. Though it is certainly possible that, depending on the translation, a product could certainly reflect a high degree of cultural assimilation. Things as simple as linguistic constraints sometimes require this. However, I do not wish to categorically equate the practice of translation with the concept of total cultural assimilation in a pejorative manner.

<sup>91</sup> Bassnett, *Translation Studies*, 85.

history, and convention.”<sup>92</sup> As Lefevere puts it, “the study of translation does not compartmentalize, it unifies.”<sup>93</sup> This unification is precisely the impetus for this thesis. Thus, a translator, indeed a translator-function, is necessary in negotiating roles, texts, and cultures, all influenced by multiple collective authorities: one’s own experiences and knowledge, those of other individuals, those of a discipline of study, and indeed those of the author. The author is therefore not altogether “dead” but is instead removed from a position of ultimate authority over a text.

Even so, there remains an element of *bande dessinée* that comes directly from the author, is integral to the texts’ expression, and is impossible for even the translator of text to ignore: the artwork. Marjane Satrapi herself illustrated *Persepolis*, and her visual spaces represent a challenge that in some cases the translator must overcome. Often, translations of language retain a close relationship between image and text in the *bande dessinée* even in the TL text. However, particularly in cases of untranslatability, there are moments where the translator is forced to make a decision that directly implicates the visual space on the page. Thus, the discussion of the integration of visual and textual elements merits further discussion and an analysis of this interplay in Satrapi’s texts is warranted. To these ends, it is prudent to situate the discussion of visual elements within translation studies discourse.

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.



## The Relationship Between Text and Image in Translating *Persepolis*

A consideration of diversity in agency can be ushered in by a paradigm that accounts for a multiplicity of influences, agents, and even media. On this latter point, my work will diverge slightly from the majority of established discourses in translation studies via a consideration of visual elements. This is not to say that translation studies wholly ignore translation processes and products pertaining to visual media, but that the focus does understandably tend to center on text. However, the nature of *bande dessinée* means that my work will necessarily focus on translation products that rely both on textual and visual elements to convey their messages. Politics of image and language register are inextricable and strongly at play not only in *Persepolis* but also in Chapter two's *Tintin en Amérique*. *Bande dessinée* cannot be treated like traditional prose since visual space and even cinematic progression are key elements of the medium. Thus, a discussion of visual space and image alongside text in translation studies is warranted, and in translation studies one often finds this discourse in the context of subtitling foreign films.

The discipline of subtitling foreign cinema finds itself in a curious liminal space—it is necessarily an exercise of translation but is often passed over by translation studies scholars and, despite being an essential element of foreign film accessibility, it is often relegated to the most utilitarian of classes in film studies; a necessary evil, if you will. Indeed, some scholars characterize subtitling as a “corrupt” practice, such as Markus Nornes<sup>94</sup> who criticizes subtitling and its practitioners as agents of a violent appropriation

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<sup>94</sup> Dr. Markus Nornes, or Abé Mark Nornes, is a professor of Asian cinema at the University of Michigan. While Dr. Nornes presents what some might view as a cynical and heavily critical view of subtitling, Nornes approaches the topic as someone who has spent time subtitling Japanese film into English himself, as he states in the cited article.

of a source text who are capable of hiding their work and “ideological assumptions” from their reader-spectators.<sup>95</sup> Elaborating on this point, Nornes states:

...in the process of converting speech into writing within the time and space limits of the subtitle [subtitlers] conform the original to the rules, regulations, idioms, and frame of reference of the target language and its culture.<sup>96</sup>

According to Nornes, due to the constraints inherent in the process of subtitling (namely that of concision with respect to visual and temporal restraints), the practice is one that conceals the violence of its appropriations and “domesticates all otherness” while presenting itself as a means of providing an audience with an authentically foreign experience.<sup>97</sup> Thus it is disingenuous in its aims and, instead of transmitting what is foreign in a medium that foreign audiences can consume, transposes the cultural sensibilities of the TL community onto a SL text. Nornes goes on to outline various dilemmas of this nature that subtitlers<sup>98</sup> have faced in the preceding seventy years and the manners in which they have overcome them. The objective, according to Nornes, is to identify these points of friction and via “strategic abusiveness”<sup>99</sup> work towards creative solutions. Nornes characterizes this “abusiveness” as “an experimentation with language and its grammatical, morphological, and visual qualities, to bring the fact of translation from its position of obscurity” and ultimately make the film an “*experience of translation*.”<sup>100</sup> The crucial difference here appears to be the covert disguising of

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<sup>95</sup> Abé Mark Nornes, “For an Abusive Subtitling,” *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (New York: Routledge, 2004), 449.

<sup>96</sup> Abé Mark Nornes, “Abusive Subtitling,” 449.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> Mainly in the context of English-language subtitlers of Japanese film

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 448.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 449.

translation—an ostensibly “corrupt” and disingenuous practice—contrasted against the use of creative strategies in language to transmit otherness via translation that relies on linguistic innovation in subtitling.

While discussions of visual media accompanying translated text is useful in the context of this essay, there are of course several key differences between the media of film and *bande dessinée*. For one, the process of subtitling normally involves a translation of audible speech to visual subtitles, and a consideration of time duration is not normally a concern in translating *bande dessinée*. However, the two principally and notably overlap in the visual realm. The first overlap has to do with a certain “harmony” of image and text. Here, Nornes heavily criticizes subtitles that do not contribute to the visual elements of film (actor expression, camera angle, etc.) in the same manner as actors’ speech. In a similar way, the translator of *bande dessinée* must be conscious of the manners in which character speech or captions rely upon visual information in the artwork to convey messages and must subsequently transmit that relationship in translation.

The second space of overlap in the two disciplines concerns the visual space afforded to a reader-spectator. A subtitler works within the spatial confines of a small portion of a film shot, and similarly a translator of *bande dessinée* must rely on the space provided in artwork in captions and speech bubbles, since translators rarely have any authority to change artwork to accommodate translated text. For this reason, one finds evidence of translation decision-making that takes this space into account.

This final analysis of *Persepolis* consists of a comparison between the manner in which visual space on the page is accommodated in translation, mainly by evaluating a

case of divergence between the SL text and the TL text. On the sixty-second planche, a noteworthy decision is made by the translator in a rare occurrence of English text in the original SL text. This difference focuses on one panel in particular, wherein Marjane and her family are at the airport waving goodbye to family and friends who are leaving the country to escape the sociopolitical turmoil. There are two bodies of text in this panel, one is an upper caption that runs the length of the panel, and the other is a speech bubble representing announcements made over loudspeakers by airport personnel. Represented below in Figures 1 and 2 are the ST and TT versions of the same panel.<sup>101</sup>

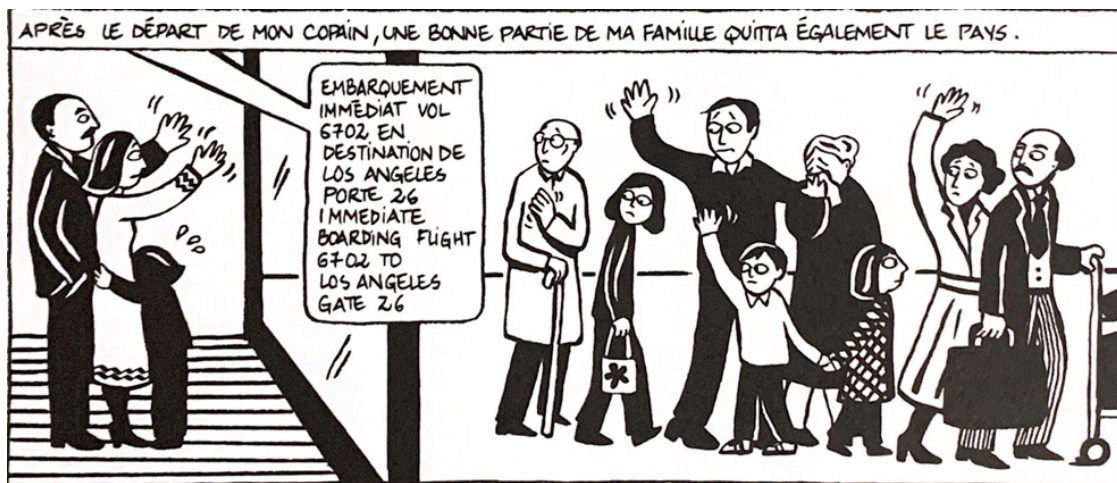


Figure 1: *Persepolis* [fr] 64A1

<sup>101</sup> Note about panel numeration in figure captions: Alongside each figure taken from *bande dessinée* in this thesis, there will be an annotation comprised of the shortened title of the work and then the panel number. These panel numbers are comprised of three parts, a *planche* (board or plate in English) number, a strip letter and then a panel number. *Planches* are counted from the first page of artwork in the story, which means that an album's page numbers and *planche* numbers may not necessarily be the same. The first number denotes this *planche* number. The letter that follows this number indicates the strip position on a page, so that four horizontal strips on a page will be labelled A, B, C, and D with A being with the topmost strip on the page and D being the bottommost. The last number after the letter denotes the position of the panel within the cited strip. For example, figure 1's panel comes from the French edition of *Persepolis*, so it is labelled *Persepolis* [fr] to distinguish it from the English edition cited in Figure 2. Its full panel number then follows, which is 64A1, which means that the panel depicted can be found on the 64<sup>th</sup> *planche*, or story artwork page (62), in the first strip, or topmost row of panels (A), and it is the first panel in the strip (1).

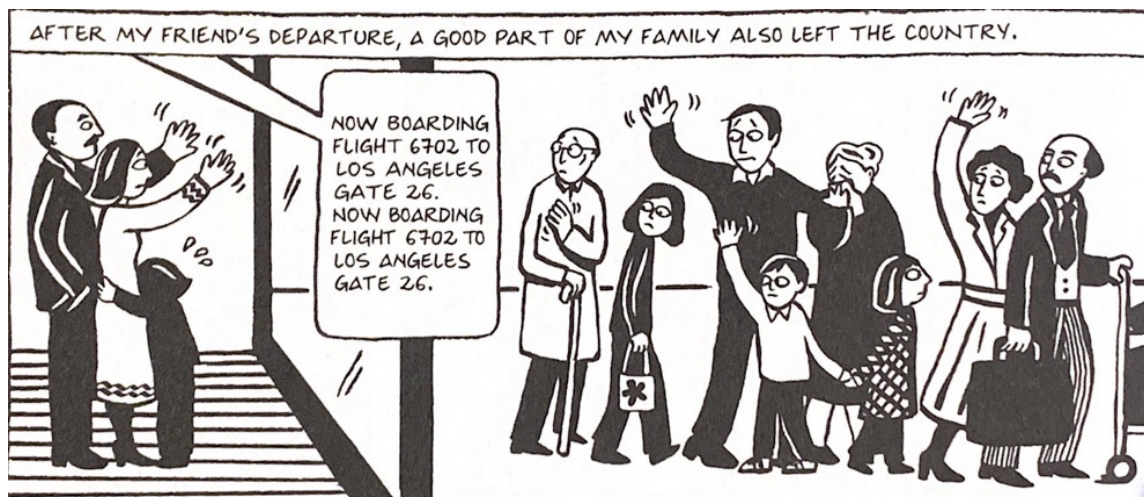


Figure 2: *Persepolis* [en] 64A1

The first obvious difference is in the change of the English text in Figure 1 to the somewhat more ‘natural’-sounding English of Figure 2. The TL version indeed changes the original English from “immediate boarding...”<sup>102</sup> (which is itself a narrow translation of the French text that precedes it: “embarquement immédiat”<sup>103</sup>) to “now boarding...”<sup>104</sup> This presents its own set of interesting meta-translation questions. The TL English is Satrapi’s own translation of the French that immediately precedes it, but it is rather awkward. The English of the TL text does not correspond to that of the SL, but is in essence a “corrected” version that rejects the literal translation in favor of a functional equivalent that equates the French “embarquement immédiat” with the English “now boarding;” equal in that both are what one would expect to hear at an airport for each respective language community. This demonstrates the extent to which the translator-function’s influence is crucial to translation as a negotiator of cultures. Choosing to look beyond the author’s linguistic form, Ripa has represented an equivalent

<sup>102</sup> Satrapi, *Persepolis*, 64.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Satrapi, *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood*, 64.

effect for the readers of the English-language text. This constitutes a very simple change that nevertheless embodies the very same collectivity of influences as the translator-function—looking beyond the author and the text to render a translated product.

Curiously, another noticeable difference in these panels does not necessarily constitute a translation of language. In fact, because the English text is (mostly) given in Figure 1, there is not much work to be done in the way of translation in the TL text. In the SL text, the announcement is first given in French and then repeated in English. However, Figure 2 demonstrates that the translator has opted to simply repeat the English-language announcement. This begs the question: why not keep the original French text along with the English? The translator's work was essentially already done for him, and yet the choice was made to repeat the (corrected) English and drop the French. This may have been done for several reasons.

For one, readers who have no idea that *Persepolis* was originally written in French might be very confused to see airport announcements in Tehran done in French. So why not make a choice that takes the geographical context into consideration? For example, why not replace the French text with Farsi text, since it is in an Iranian airport, and give the English underneath as is done in the original version? This might seem like the more obvious route when confronted with this translation problem.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Ultimately, it appears that the translator might have made the decision to most closely emulate the announcements typically heard in an airport for the TL community. Except perhaps for international flights, it is relatively rare for American air travelers to hear their flight announcements in languages other than English, as opposed to what a similar experience might look like in Europe, where multiple languages are necessarily accommodated. In Europe, an hour-long flight can easily put you in the next country, whereas in North America we are accustomed to domestic flights lasting several hours. This entails what might be a perceived lower necessity for announcements made in any language other than English, except as a courtesy to non-English speakers, as in international terminals. In this case, the translator appears to value the evoked sense of the airport environment rather than retaining the form of the original text. It would have been rather simple to leave the speech balloon entirely intact, but part of the translator's job is to

This problem presents a challenge to the translator precisely because even if he were to retain the original English text, he may decide not to keep the French for the reasons described above; he is then faced with the decision of what to do with the remaining space inside the speech bubble. This introduces an altogether new factor worthy of consideration, that of visual space in the panel. A factor inherent in *bande dessinée* that is not always an element of consideration in traditional literature is the interplay between words and the physical space available on the page, particularly as the dialogue of characters or captions rely on artwork elements to convey content effectively. The question of retaining the English and the French, changing the French to Farsi, or coming up with some other solution is rendered necessary only because the speech balloon is large enough to accommodate the repetition of dialogue in one or more languages. As seen in Figure 2, the translator ultimately made the decision to repeat the English text twice in the TL speech bubble to retain the visual volume of text found in the SL speech bubble.

This case is demonstrative of the translator's necessary consideration of visual space in working with texts like *bande dessinée*, or any graphic medium where artwork is a primary element<sup>106</sup> in storytelling and conveying information to the reader. Here, page real estate within artwork constitutes a literary element that, while not altogether ignored in the field of translation studies—as demonstrated by Nornes's discussion of subtitling cited above, is often considered in a tertiary or altogether separate manner from the most common disciplines of translation. Indeed, while distinctions of register, for instance that

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consider the intended effect of the author's text upon the reader, not simply the one-to-one conveyance of information.

<sup>106</sup> If not *the* primary element.

which exists between literary and technical texts, are often the focus of translation studies and methods, these most commonplace discussions of translation focus on traditional texts whose primary means of expression are language-based, not visual. Chapter two of this thesis will continue to analyze the relationships between visual and textual elements of *bande dessinée* within the context of translation study, with a close reading of *Tintin en Amérique* and its own English-language translation.

### The Translator's State of Flux: Reader and Author Roles

The goal with developing a concept like the translator-function is to broaden the scope of what is considered an exercise of translation within translation and literary studies beyond the prototypical entities of reader, author, translator, source text, and primary text and their arborescent unidirectionalities. Scholars such as Derrida have long argued for a view of translation that cuts past the “right” or “wrong” interpretations of translated texts and implores scholars to read translations as products of creative and intellectual exercises that encompass any number of considerations characteristic of comparative literature. These are ideas that have since been echoed by prominent translation studies scholars such as André Lefevere. In his introduction to *Translating Literature*, Lefevere asks that readers approach the question of literary translation with a perspective that eschews the traditional “right” or “wrong”-oriented goals of translation, and instead embraces a model that sees translators as the “artisans of compromise” :<sup>107</sup>

...imagine the translation of literature as taking place not in a vacuum in which two languages meet but, rather, in the context of all the traditions of

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<sup>107</sup> Lefevere, *Translating Literature*, 6.



the two literatures.... Translators mediate between literary traditions, and they do so with some goal in mind, other than that of ‘making the original available’ in a neutral, objective way. Translations are not produced under perfect laboratory conditions. Originals are indeed made available, but on the translators’ terms, even if these terms happen to produce the closest (literal) translation.<sup>108</sup>

Lefevere’s view of translation (and other views like it) are essentially the starting point of the translator-function. No matter how conservative or liberal a translation might be, one must begin with the basic premise that neither the SL text author, the translator, the languages, nor the language communities exist in isolation. All exert influences on one another, so much so that Lefevere immediately amends the above statement with:

...translations may be made on the translators’ terms, but those terms are not necessarily their own. Translators, too, are constrained by the times in which they live, the literary traditions they try to reconcile, and the features of the languages they work with.<sup>109</sup>

Indeed, a translator exerts as much influence on a TL text as is exerted upon himself by circumstance and influences external to himself or the texts.<sup>110</sup> The Barthesian “reader” and “author” certainly play their roles, and Foucault’s author-function provides a workable model for beginning the development of the translator-function, but none of these are the sole forces at work in literary translation.

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> The circumstances and goals of translation and the constraints within which a translator works and exerts change over a text will be a primary topic of concern in the following chapter centered on Hergé’s *Tintin en Amérique* and its English translation.

In discussing historical exercises of readership, authorship, and especially translation,<sup>111</sup> as well as the more contemporary and primary focus of this chapter: *Persepolis*, we have observed the manners in which the translator's activity and product demonstrate a constant shift between reader and author roles. The translator relies principally upon the author's SL text for source material, and is in a Barthesian sense a reader like any other, but he or she also relies upon the text's contexts, readership in the TL communities, and indeed inspiration from the author himself or herself, including the author's biography or ideologies. In other words, the author of a SL text is not entirely "dead" in translation work, thus the translator is no ordinary reader.

Yet, the degrees to which a translator may diverge from a SL text in form or meaning point to a different phenomenon. For example, a translator may choose to eschew the grammatical form of an author's SL text; systematically simplifying the syntax of a "slipshod" English in the manner of Baudelaire, or changing substantives of the SL text to imperatives in the TL, thereby changing the register of the language for the TL readership. One might even sidestep the generally thornier problems of untranslatability altogether, wherein the language in the SL text undergoes a rather radical transition, changing Satrapi's "se posèrent des questions" to the more functionally equivalent<sup>112</sup> adjective "puzzled" in English. Indeed, a certain liberty is afforded to the translator in the process of transmitting a product for consumption from one language community to another. This liberty permits the translator, who we have already characterized as an atypical reader, to act also as an author in his or her own right.

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<sup>111</sup> e.g. the case of Poe and Baudelaire

<sup>112</sup> In later chapters, particularly a third chapter that is not included in this thesis, I investigate other concepts of equivalence in translation studies. This includes (but is not limited to) equivalences of form, meaning, function, and effect.

However, this liberty is almost always constrained within considerations outside the translator's control – the fact of the SL author's voice, for a start. Indeed, this becomes a rather nebulous concept, considering that the text written in their hand is really that of another author. Who, then, holds “authority” over the text? Some certainly remains with the author of the SL text (his or her name is given as the author on the text's cover, after all) but this dominion is often, but not always, wrested from them in the process of translation, via the authorship of the translator. Yet the translator's product—his or her authored text—is always necessarily the text of another, transmitted cross-linguistically for a TL community. Thus, while the translator exercises authority over a text, he or she is not a typical author.

To summarize this concept, the two sides of the translator's coin—being both an atypical reader and author—are constantly in a state of flux in the process of translation. The degrees to which a translator exercises characteristics of these roles depends on a collective of rhizomatic processes and influences, wherein a translator's gaze is constantly and even simultaneously looking back to the author and forward to the TL readership, and to every possible connection that exists between and around these entities outside himself or herself. This is why the question of a translator's role is not necessarily a Barthesian one,<sup>113</sup> for here readership and authorship are not a zero-sum game, but nor is it a process in which the translator completely usurps the author and exerts total dominion over a text. A model like Foucault's author-function helps to conceptualize how a decentralized model of authority works. Such a model, applied more specifically to the role of the translator, is a collective of influences that rejects an arborescent and

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<sup>113</sup> Though Barthes does help to characterize the concepts of reader and author, in a particularly mutually exclusive sense.

unidirectional conception of the translation process, and places the translator in a necessary place of influence only in the sense that all influences in the process necessarily contact him or her at some point. However, the translator is not necessarily a dominating presence, for his or her composition is multiple, as are the influences and processes under which he or she must necessarily work in his or her field of practice. While this model is not necessarily fully conceived (and perhaps by its nature it ought not be totalized anyway) we can at least reject the notion that the translator as a figure of influence is ever only either a reader or an author.

As stated in the introduction of this thesis, Foucault theorizes that the author-function might have applications beyond the question of a text's authority. In a similar way, I argue that the translator-function plays a similar role in conceptualizing the transmission of cultural information more generally outside the specificities of text translation. It is here that *bande dessinée* in particular assists in conceptualizing a space for the translator even further. As previously stated, such a paradigm is characterized by a collective of multiplicity (multiple roles, influences, agencies, etc.) and one focus of this chapter has discussed to what degree visual space on the page is a necessary consideration in translation of graphic media. Indeed, consideration of visual space will prove to be a useful tool in developing the concept of a translator-function, for just as the paradigm is not uniquely concerned with the translator as a person, neither is it solely focused on the most traditional interpretation of what constitutes a translation exercise, thus incorporating the translator's negotiation of visual space in practices like foreign film subtitling and translating *bande dessinée*.

## CHAPTER 2 The Cultural Turns: Translating Hergé

Hergé's<sup>114</sup> early work incorporates various social and economic criticisms and a desire to expose a foreign system at odds with his own worldviews. *Tintin en Amérique* in particular is one such work. Around the time of his first publications in the 1930s, Hergé's earliest conception of Tintin was as a fictional character working as a reporter for the Belgian newspaper *Le Vingtième Siècle*, under whose title the first *Tintin* works were published.<sup>115,116</sup> Tintin's earliest adventures took him to Soviet Russia, the Belgian Congo, and of course the United States. In each of these *bandes dessinées*, Tintin encountered various foreign societies whose problematic economic and social systems Hergé criticized in his publications. The result is that these first three Tintin adventures, later published in album form under the titles *Tintin au pays des Soviets*, *Tintin au Congo*, and *Tintin en Amérique*, each contain notable degrees of criticism of the politics or economics of the powers at work in each respective nation.

Hergé's work with *Tintin* is known and beloved the world over. Before World War II, the spread of *Tintin* outside francophone Europe was slow, but midcentury demand rapidly spiked. So much so that Tintin is a household name in more language communities than many works of literature ever reach. Indeed, Hergé's reporter has been translated into practically every living language, including some dead ones like Latin and

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<sup>114</sup> The name 'Hergé' is actually a verlanized pronunciation of Georges Remi's first and last initials: G.R. > R.G. = /εʁʒε/

<sup>115</sup> Harry Thompson, *Tintin: Hergé and his Creation* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1991), 24-25.

<sup>116</sup> Tintin's principal duty in these days was to travel the world and uncover the politics, economics, and social spheres of foreign nations. Tintin's various adventures abroad were then reported in *bande dessinée* form in *Le Petit Vingtième*, an accompaniment to *Le Vingtième Siècle* designated in particular for a child audience.

Ancient Greek.<sup>117</sup> Much has been written about Tintin and Milou's adventures and the man who created them, and opinions range from scathingly critical to adoring. Many write about Hergé and his creation with reverence; a paragon of Franco-Belgian literary and artistic prowess. Indeed, some are willing to downplay or even overlook some of the problematic elements of Hergé's work. Jean-Luc Marion and Michael Syrotinski, for example, describe Hergé's early years in a rather forgiving tone.<sup>118</sup> Amid championing Hergé's intelligence and anti-capitalism, Marion and Syrotinski do admit that "his colonialism was of course paternalistic to begin with, but then inverted into a militant anti-colonialism (from *Tintin in America* and *The Blue Lotus* onwards...)." <sup>119</sup> This is the context in which the two scholars invoke *Tintin in America*; indeed colonialism, American imperialism, and questions of race relations and the treatment of indigenous populations figure prominently in the BD (as explained below). However, one rather surprising assertion comes a couple lines later where the two scholars claim that "[Hergé] was fortunately anti-racist." Indeed, this may well have been true in the sense that he outspokenly criticized the state of race relations in places like the United States, but this assertion does ignore some of his more problematic portrayals of different races, particularly black people. Still, hearing Hergé referred to as an "anti-racist" might raise some eyebrows.

Yet Marion and Syrotinski are far from alone in their reverence of Hergé and his portrayals of America; indeed, there has long been a degree of fascination with the United States, the American frontier, and American everyday life in post-World War II

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<sup>117</sup> Jean-Luc Marion and Michael Syrotinski, "Terrifying, Wondrous Tintin," *Yale French Studies*, no. 131/132 (2017), 224.

<sup>118</sup> In a manner not unlike the argument: 'he didn't know any better.'

<sup>119</sup> Marion and Syrotinski, "Tintin," 231.

Europe. Even while evoking some of the problematic elements of American history and directly referencing *Tintin en Amérique* (among other icons of American media like *Citizen Kane* and *The Great Gatsby*), Jacques Pothier paints a nostalgic and romantic picture of America as it was imagined by the twentieth-century European mind. Indeed, he tells us:

À six ans, l'Amérique c'était les Indiens... Franchement mon vieux Milou, cette Amérique était fantastique : en l'espace d'une demi-journée, Tintin découvrait un puits de pétrole, une demi-douzaine de pétroliers surenchérisaient pour le lui racheter, de 5 000 à 100 000 dollars, avant de l'enlever à La-Taupé-au regard-perçant pour la modique somme de 25 dollars ; une heure plus tard l'armée expulsait les Indiens à la pointe de la baïonnette ; deux heures après les premiers échafaudages se dressaient, pour ériger du jour au lendemain la ville verticale où Tintin, encore habillé en *cowboy*, se réveillait le lendemain matin comme Rip van Winkle de la Vieille Europe.<sup>120</sup>

This invocation does begin with a rosy childhood image of the US, but much of this idyllic picture is juxtaposed against the harshness of American industry and its unfair treatment of indigenous Americans, so that the passage comes across rather tongue-in-cheek. The somewhat ironic parallel drawn between Tintin and a literary figure like Rip van Winkle would also indicate that the levity expressed in this passage is a sort of 'rire jaune.' Indeed, despite the injustices of American history and the many criticisms levied by Europeans against the US (Hergé is indeed no exception), American life remains a

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<sup>120</sup> Jacques Pothier, "RFEA," *Revue française d'études américaines*, no. 100 (May 2004), 115.

part of the European imaginary, to which Hergé has certainly contributed. This evocation of the harsh realities that Hergé depicts in his work, with reminiscence and a hesitant sort of criticism, is a manner of acknowledging the positive and the negative elements inherent within the nostalgia that the United States has historically inspired on the European continent.

Criticism, both direct and indirect has been charged against Hergé for as long as his work has been widely available, particularly in the most recent decades when standards for acceptable children's content is constantly debated. One interesting study performed by four scientists published in the *British Medical Journal* examines Hergé's entire body of work for evidence of prejudice against mental illness. The controversy that Hergé has ignited in some circles throughout his career is immediately acknowledged, as Medrano et al. note that *Tintin in the Congo* was removed from a New York Library and nearly removed from sale in the United Kingdom by the Commission for Racial Equality because of its "hideous racial prejudice."<sup>121</sup> This historical criticism of Hergé prompted scientists to investigate evidence of prejudice of another kind in Hergé's work. Indeed, the scientists write that "Although Hergé has been sternly criticised for racism, anti-Semitism, male chauvinism, and cruelty towards animals, nobody seems to have noticed his unfavourable depiction of mentally ill people."<sup>122</sup> However, the criticisms levied against Hergé are attributed to societal norms in this study. Rather than accuse Hergé himself of prejudice, the scientists emphasize that the depictions are merely the result of the stigma faced by mentally ill people for decades. Thus, there are many different lenses

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<sup>121</sup> Juan Medrano, Pablo Malo, José J Uriarte, and Ana-Pía López, "Stigma and prejudice in Tintin," *BMJ: British Medical Journal* 339, no. 7735 (December 2009): 1406.

<sup>122</sup> Juan Medrano et al, "Stigma and prejudice in Tintin," 1407.



through which one can interpret the controversial nature of Hergé's content.<sup>123</sup> Be they the product of circumstance or Hergé's own personal views, in at least some cases Hergé does appear to have oriented his work toward depicting the injustices suffered by marginalized peoples at the hands of unfair sociopolitical systems.

In particular, *Tintin en Amérique* examines the various social, political, and economic systems of the United States in the first half of the twentieth century with a heavily critical eye.<sup>124</sup> Since childhood Hergé expressed an interest in the lives of what he called "redskins" or American Indians, and deeply lamented their treatment at the hands of Anglo-American economic and political powers.<sup>125</sup> Indeed, some of the most incisive criticisms of the United States in *Tintin en Amérique* involve impoverished Native

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<sup>123</sup> It may interest the reader to know that while preparing for a presentation of this thesis, I experienced a firsthand reaction to Hergé's questionable racial portrayals. I was asked to contribute an image to accompany my name and the title of the thesis on a flyer announcing departmental thesis presentations. I submitted an image of the front cover of the modern edition of *Tintin en Amérique*, wherein Tintin is tied to a wooden post, surrounded by teepees and an angry-looking American Indian chief wielding a tomahawk. Perhaps due to my rather close proximity to the work, I initially thought nothing of it. At least, not until I received a response from the event coordinator asking me to contribute a different image with the message, "I know that's the original cover, but I also know plenty of students who would be really offended by this." I was amused initially until I truly removed myself from the situation and imagined what it might be like to see it out of context. Indeed, even just the cover art of *Tintin en Amérique* out of context is rife with complication. In hindsight, I see this as a perfectly reasonable request and a wise decision, but especially so given how much of New Mexico's population and UNM's student body is of American Indian origin and how objectively insensitive the image can be when spread around campus.

<sup>124</sup> The very first publication of *Tintin en Amérique* appears between 1931 and 1932 in *le Petit Vingtième* before publication as an album in 1932. A later colorized edition is drawn in Hergé's *ligne-claire* style in 1945, whose artwork appears in the editions currently in publication today. The first English-language editions of *Tintin in America* appear in 1973, translated by Leslie Lonsdale-Cooper and Michael Turner. This edition was initially published in the UK by Methuen and in the US by Little, Brown & Co. Modern English-language editions are also published by Egmont UK Ltd. This latter edition is the source of panel images for the TL text in this thesis.

Thompson, *Tintin*, 46.

Michael Farr, *Tintin: The Complete Companion* (San Francisco: Last Gap, 2011), 29.

<sup>125</sup> It should be noted that the point of view from which Hergé operates is a particularly European one, informed by media portrayals of American life and not by personal experience. In fact, Hergé had never visited the United States prior to his work on *Tintin en Amérique*. However, despite his geographic removal from the United States and its various problems, Hergé nevertheless demonstrated a certain fascination with the indigenous peoples of North America.

Americans<sup>126</sup> being forcibly removed from their ancestral lands to make way for the ravenous machinations of American industry. No one reading *Tintin en Amérique* will deny, despite the apparent levity with which this concern is expressed in BD form, that Hergé's distaste for American treatment of indigenous populations is a prime matter of concern.<sup>127</sup>

Hergé's work is often characterized by satirical commentary, of which *Tintin en Amérique* is no exception. There are themes that one might consider controversial, even if the exposition of these themes is more tongue-in-cheek than incisive and harsh. In *Tintin en Amérique*, these themes cast a critical eye on the United States, commenting on aspects of the American people and nation that, despite the overall light-hearted approach, might seem deeply unflattering from an American perspective and perhaps even shocking for twenty-first century audiences. Such themes include organized crime, lawlessness, American capitalism, and especially race relations. The America portrayed in *Tintin en Amérique* plays on the image of the country developed by Europeans thanks to the pervasive influence of American cinema abroad. Michael Farr, a British expert on

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<sup>126</sup> It is heavily implied that this state is the fault of Anglo-American society. The Native Americans of Hergé's United States are little more than a corny tourist attraction to whom measly donations can be made by those whose interests in Native Americans are superficial.

<sup>127</sup> It should be noted that while Hergé's principal concerns with a work like *Tintin en Amérique* incorporated a critique of the American government and its relationship with indigenous peoples, his were not the only criticisms levied against the United States in the final version of the *bande dessinée*. Indeed, at the time of *Amérique's* publication, Hergé worked on his various projects under his mentor, the Abbé Norbert Wallez. A strong supporter of right-wing Belgian movements of the 1930s, and especially of social Catholicism, Wallez was the head of *le Petit Vingtième*. While the initial impetus for *Tintin en Amérique* for Hergé was a deep-seated interest in Native Americans, and a criticism of the poor treatment they received by the United States government, this subject was not of particular interest to Wallez. However, in line with his political and social beliefs, Wallez took issue with the rapacity of American industry and capitalism, and so permitted Hergé to publish *Tintin en Amérique* as the third *Tintin* instalment after his first two works *Tintin au pays des Soviets* and *Tintin au Congo*, both of which also contained rather thinly-veiled commentary on the Soviets and the Belgian Congo. Pierre Assouline, *Hergé, The Man Who Created Tintin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 26-29.

*Tintin* and Hergé, characterizes this relationship in his book *Tintin: The Complete Companion* thus:

Hergé paints a picture of 1930s America that is exciting, hectic, corrupt, fully automated, and dangerous, one where the dollar is all powerful. It rings true enough, at least as much as the image projected by Hollywood at the time.<sup>128</sup>

As Farr suggests, Hergé largely takes his cues about the United States from American popular culture. Though his personal experience with Native Americans or even American people was very limited, his vision of America is understandable as the product of the American film industry of the time, essentially painting this picture themselves. It is therefore unsurprising to find European portrayals of life and society in the United States that are heavily submerged in crime, general unease, and corruption not unlike that found in American film.

These aforementioned categories are the general topics of interest that will prove to be an important foundation for the work undertaken by the English translators of *Tintin en Amérique*, Leslie Lonsdale-Cooper and Michael Turner. They routinely take advantage of these elements to identify key character groups whose identities are already largely stereotyped in Hergé's SL text. The translators perform linguistic work that further enhances the stereotypes of each of these "nonstandard" character groups, which are in most (but not all) cases based on racial identities. The translators perform work that ultimately accomplishes two ends in the TL text: a systematic enhancement of the more colloquial elements of language that results in heightened stereotypes, and a subtle but

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<sup>128</sup> Farr, *Tintin*, 39.

highly noteworthy softening of criticisms levied against the United States as compared to those in Hergé's SL text. Evidence of both will be discussed in greater detail below.

Translation work of the nature described above certainly demonstrates the translator's sphere of influence in a text, particularly in terms of socio-political commentary. However, the translators themselves are not the only agents at work in the process of translation that fundamentally modifies Hergé's original work. Even before Lonsdale-Cooper and Turner got their hands on the SL text, choices were made in the artwork of the domestic publication. What is more, when Hergé later set his sights on publishing *Tintin* in the US, further changes were made to the visual elements of the SL text at the request of American publishers that effectively represent a different kind of translation—such a manner of translation is just as concerned with effect upon a readership but more generally wishes to transpose cultural information that is not limited to language. Not just Hergé's words, but his artwork was “translated” for American readers. This constitutes another important element of the translator-function, in that translation is not uniquely concerned with cross-linguistic representations but cross-*cultural* representations that, like more traditional translation work, takes effect upon the reader into account and ultimately (though sometimes problematically) has a profound effect on the TL text's function, particularly in hindsight and compared to its SL counterpart. Within the scope of translation studies, this consideration is referred to as a “cultural turn,” of which there are three main categories in Lonsdale-Cooper and Turner's translation of *Tintin en Amérique*.

## Stereotypes and Visual Space in Translating Hergé

Hergé's most interesting and upsetting critiques come in his portrayals of the problematic clashes between various socioeconomic groups. In the BD, most of these relations rely on visual or linguistic information to convey a nonstandard, colloquial, or stereotypical portrayal of certain socio-economic groups and races. Some of these stereotyped groups are less racially charged than others. For example, Hergé visually contrasts what might be a "normal" citizen against those who belong to other groups, such as rural Americans or urban gangsters. Various elements of their appearance and behavior demonstrate these differences. However, there are some groups whose inclusion within a certain category is racially determined. In *Tintin en Amérique*, these groups are Italian-Americans, Mexicans, and especially Native Americans. Their "otherness" is also demonstrated by visual cues such as dress and physical appearance, but unlike their comparatively "white" counterparts, these characters receive linguistic treatment in their dialogue that sets them apart from an ostensibly standard or unmarked character.

Crime of some sort also tends to be a recurring theme in Hergé's *Tintin* series, and the American flavor of crime of the early twentieth century naturally includes plenty of conflict with crime syndicates, 'old west' style standoffs, and the questionable ethics of American industry and government. *Tintin en Amérique* centers on Tintin's pursuit of lawless individuals in the midwestern and western United States, and crime tends to be the theme that links all of these disparate groups together and leads to various clashes of interest and conflict. This is established from the very beginning of the BD, where the translators are tasked with representing the language of Chicago's most dangerous gang

boss, Al Capone. The latter's very first dialogue represents an enhancement of stereotypical representations like those described above.<sup>129</sup>

Graphic media like *bande dessinée* incorporates visual and textual elements as a medium of expression. As such, the image needs to accommodate the text, just as the text must accommodate the image. However, as discussed in the first chapter, translation of *bande dessinée* presents translators with a unique problem: as a translator, one can change nearly every textual element, whereas the artwork must remain static. This is a challenge to which Lonsdale-Cooper has spoken in reference to her work on the *Tintin* series in particular. When discussing these challenges, Lonsdale-Cooper states that “the principal [difficulty] at the beginning was you’ve got to fit the text into the boxes, and English and French, as languages, are not of the same word count.”<sup>130</sup> Lettering of the albums was initially done on a cellophane surface that was placed over a copy of the artwork without text in the boxes to make sure that the text fit, and if it did not, it was then adjusted. This means that, quite apart from any creative or expressive agency, some changes were necessarily done for the sake of visual formatting, a dimension of consideration rather unique to the medium of *bande dessinée* and other graphic work. While this is an important element of the interplay between text and image, a further

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<sup>129</sup> From the very first panel of *Tintin en Amérique* we are presented with a version of Chicago where it seems everyone is at the mercy of criminals. The first caption reads, “À Chicago, où règnent en maîtres les bandits de toutes espèces, ...” and is accompanied by a drawing of a thief with a handkerchief covering the lower half of his face, a wad of cash in one hand and a smoking gun in the other. Tintin arrives in Chicago, much to the chagrin of the crime bosses of the city, and it is not long after Tintin alights from the train that about four panels later, he is unwittingly kidnapped by a gangster disguised as a cab driver. From this point the story consists of a series of traps or attempts on Tintin's life until, as we know he must, he finally overcomes Chicago's worst criminals and departs for Europe with much fanfare and celebration, the city of Chicago owing him a debt of gratitude.

<sup>130</sup> Michael Turner and Leslie Lonsdale-Cooper, “Interview with Michael Turner and Leslie Lonsdale-Cooper,” interview by Chris Owens, *Tintinologist.org* (The Cult of Tintin), July 10, 2004, <http://www.tintinologist.org/articles/mt-llc-interview.html>.

discussion of the influence of image in *bande dessinée* will be discussed later in the chapter that further develops the general concept of a translator-function with even greater significance.

This phenomenon can be found on the very first page of the album, in the second panel. Al Capone himself explains to his associates that Tintin has arrived in Chicago and orders them to eliminate him.<sup>131,132</sup> The boss' speech bubble here takes up nearly a quarter of the panel. Being the second panel in the album, it plays an expository role, explaining the premise of the entire plot to come. However, this presents an immediate translation parameter, in that the dialogue is already lengthy and crammed into the speech bubble. Any translation attempt must consider this dimension. Figure 3 depicts the original panel from *Tintin en Amérique*, and figure 4 shows its translated counterpart in *Tintin in America*.



Figure 3: *Amérique 1A1*

<sup>131</sup> Hergé, *Tintin en Amérique* (Paris: Casterman, 1973), 1.

<sup>132</sup> Interestingly, he cites prior run-ins with him in the previous album, *Tintin in the Congo*.

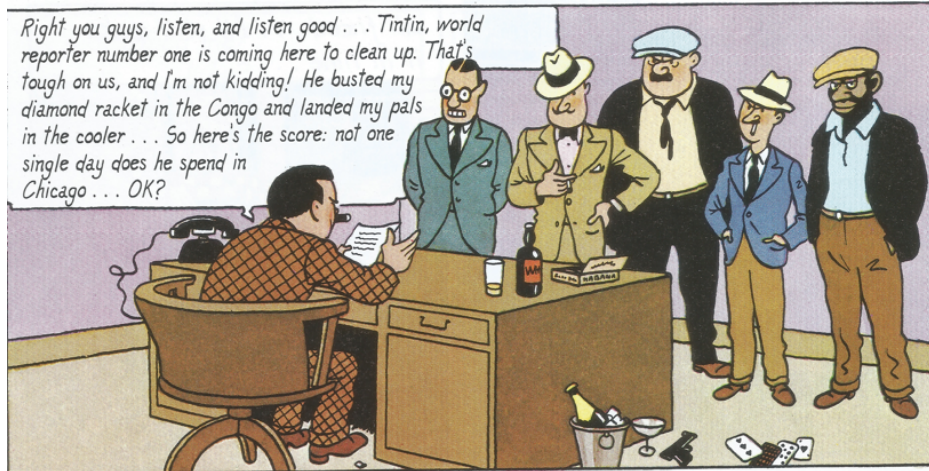


Figure 4: America IAI

The language in figure 4, though conveying the same essential expository plot information, changes its form rather radically: there is no attempt to literally translate the passage. This shows how translation, in concert with the graphic nature of *bandes dessinées*, forces a discursive shift. One could certainly attempt a word-for-word translation of the second panel, but the linguistic differences between English and French make this undesirable, since physical and visual space is a necessary consideration in translating *bandes dessinées*. If such a literal translation had been attempted, it might have looked like the text in figure 5 below:



Figure 5: America [my translation] IAI



Comparing the more literal translation in figure 5 to that of Lonsdale-Cooper and Turner in figure 4, one can see immediately that a potentially more literal translation, or one that relies more heavily on the form and text of the original French, looks quite different from what one finds in the published English-language version of *Tintin in America*. It is rather more cramped, as the translation in figure 5 is sixteen words longer than the English translation in figure 4 resulting in a markedly smaller text size. As Turner acknowledges in an interview about the translation process for *Tintin*, visual space on the page presents one of the greatest challenges. Speaking about his work on early versions of *Tintin*, Turner says:

It's not the French that's the problem; it's rather more mechanical things like copy fitting within the space available for the English edition. That is not at all easy and it takes up a great deal more time than the initial translations we did.<sup>133</sup>

Considerations of this nature speak to the necessity for intervention, not only on the part of the translator, but the entire copy-editing team. The lack of one-to-one correspondence from one language to another makes translation a formidable task in any context. However, the latter in concert with the inevitable restrictions of visual space on the page of graphic work and the practical decisions made on numerous levels, especially those of the translators, are all factors of the translation of *bandes dessinées* and their inherent challenges that render the authorial intervention of the translator not simply ideal but necessary. In the case of *Tintin in America*, such intervention fundamentally changes the

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<sup>133</sup> Turner and Lonsdale-Cooper, interview.

effect of the characters' language in the TL text upon the reader when compared to the rather more sterile language used in the SL text.

### Equivalence and the Cultural Turn of Translation Studies

Addressing problems like the one outlined above is but one of many difficulties that a translator must address. One might opt for a literal word-for-word (or term-for-term) translation, the ultimate goal being what scholars of translation studies call the obtention of equivalence. However, a literal translation does not suffice in effectively addressing the problem of visual space on the page, nor does it reflect the direction that Lonsdale-Cooper and Turner have gone in the TL text.<sup>134</sup> This is not terribly uncommon, for Susan Bassnett states in the fourth edition of her *Translation Studies* that it is

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<sup>134</sup> As demonstrated above, Lonsdale-Cooper and Turner appear to have largely eschewed a pursuit of equivalence along with any literal approach to the translation of the SL text in *Tintin en Amérique*, partly out of concern for available space on the page which certainly complicates the matter. However, as demonstrated above, literal word-for-word translation is only one approach to the obtention of equivalence. In his work on translation studies in the 1970s, Israeli linguist and translator Menachem B. Dagut highlighted the particular problem of translating idioms and metaphorical language, pointing to the futility of a desire for precise one-to-one equivalence between SL text and TL text, especially in the case of metaphorical language: “[A] metaphor in the SL is, by definition, a new piece of performance, a semantic novelty, it can clearly have no existing ‘equivalence’ in the TL.” “What is unique, he adds, “can have no counterpart.” In essence, Dagut argues that since idiom and metaphor are inherently innovations of unique language, one cannot simply map the linguistic features of a TL to the idiom of a SL and expect a satisfactory result. Instead, one must accept the incongruous nature of language and find a way to create another sort of ‘equivalence:’

Here the translator's bilingual competence – ‘le sens,’ as Mallarmé put it ‘de ce qui est dans la langue et de ce qu'il n'en est pas’ is of help to him only in the negative sense of telling him that any ‘equivalence’ in this case cannot be ‘found’ but will have to be ‘created.’

Dagut goes on to delineate a distinction between translation and reproduction, seemingly arguing for the untranslatability of metaphor. In other words, Dagut posits that some features of language are sufficiently untranslatable as to warrant, and indeed necessitate, the creation of language by the translator. On this point there appears to be some divergence where theories and manners of translation are concerned. Some, such as Dagut, argue for the necessity of creation and language transformation, especially in a context of metaphorical or idiomatic language. However, other translators and theories of translation have addressed this problematic of equivalence by eschewing the practical dichotomy between simply mapping linguistic features of the SL onto their closest counterparts in the TL and creating new language. These theorists have developed a far less mathematical concept of equivalence to more closely reflect an equivalence of *effect*. Menachem Dagut, “Can ‘metaphor’ be translated?” *Babel Revue Internationale de la Traduction/ International Journal of Translation* Babel 22, no. 1 (1976): 24.

incumbent upon the typical translator to do more than replace lexical and grammatical items from the SL to the TL to arrive at a satisfactory translation of the ST.<sup>135</sup> And yet equivalence often is the goal of translation. How, then, does one achieve equivalence in translation? After all, it is an established fact that languages carry their own sets of cultural coding and contexts. As notable American linguist Edward Sapir states:

No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached.<sup>136</sup>

Taking into account this established relationship between language and culture, achieving an equivalence of effect may sound impossible. Or depending on one's experience with language and translation, it may seem straightforward. However, like much of translation practice, the application looks different than popular perception might assume. It is not uncommon for people outside of translation studies to presume a one-to-one correspondence of terms and grammar from one language to another. The popular trend of relegating translation to a simplistic process of reproduction, "does not take into account the view that sees translation as semiotic transformation."<sup>137</sup> Indeed, the consideration of translation studies as a semiotic transformation beyond formulaic linguistic equivalencies is the direction in which translation studies has developed in the most recent decades. It is difficult to speak of translation work without understanding equivalence, and while much of *Tintin en Amérique* is translated rather faithfully, there

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<sup>135</sup> Susan Bassnett, *Translation Studies* (London: Routledge, 2014) 35.

<sup>136</sup> Edward Sapir, *Culture, Language and Personality* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1956), 69. Quoted in Bassnett, *Translation Studies*, 24.

<sup>137</sup> Bassnett, *Translation Studies*, 35.

are notable exceptions to this method, particularly as it pertains to character dialogue and notable changes to socio-politically heavy moments in the text.<sup>138</sup> Discussing historical ideas of equivalence in translations studies in contrast with the strategies employed by Lonsdale-Cooper and Turner will help to understand to what degree the translators have eschewed certain ideas of equivalence in favor of significant shifts in register and intensity of criticism, particularly as it pertains to reader effect. This will, in turn, help understand the translator-function as an agent that can do (and does) more than pursue the most commonly discussed types of equivalences in translation. Thus, further investigation into recent translation studies is warranted, working toward the shift in the consideration of translation as an element of cultural transmission rather than a purely linguistic exercise. The historical development of the concept of equivalence in translation plays a significant role in this regard.

Slovak translation scientist and text theoretician Anton Popovič proposes four types of equivalence in translation.<sup>139</sup> Three of these equivalences involve a systematic reproduction or replacement of linguistic features from the SL to the TL in translated texts: ‘linguistic equivalence’ replaces words, ‘paradigmatic equivalence’ replaces elements of grammar, and ‘textual equivalence’ reproduces form and shape.<sup>140</sup> The last of these equivalences, ‘stylistic equivalence,’ concerns a “*functional* equivalence of elements in both original and translation aiming at an expressive identity with an invariant of identical meaning.”<sup>141</sup> In other words, this last equivalence concerns not the

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<sup>138</sup> As demonstrated in the Al Capone example given above.

<sup>139</sup> Anton Popovič, *Dictionary for the Analysis of Literary Translation* (Edmonton: U of Alberta, 1975), 6.

<sup>140</sup> Popovič, *Dictionary for the Analysis of Literary Translation*, 6. Cited in Bassnett, *Translation Studies*, 35.

<sup>141</sup> Bassnett, *Translation Studies*, 35. Emphasis mine.

reproduction or replacement of linguistic SL features found in the ST, but rather an expression's function within the text and its replacement with similarly functioning language items in the TL.<sup>142,143</sup> A distinction between focus on form and sensation is a feature of translation studies to which American linguist Eugene Nida has contributed as well. Nida identifies two main types of equivalents, one 'formal' and one 'dynamic.'

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<sup>142</sup> Let us take the example of a well-known English idiom, "beat around the bush." This phrase comes from the fifteenth century when rich hunters would hire people to whack bushes with a large stick to drive out the birds. A gloss, or a literal translation in French of the English expression "beating around the bush," is the expression "battre autour du buisson" which carries with it no sense of idiomatic meaning and can only be taken literally, where it is nonsensical. However, a translation reflecting stylistic equivalence would yield: "tourner autour du pot." Referencing the large cooking pots used in the fifteenth century, this French expression is the closest idiomatic expression to its English counterpart: both mean to arrive at something in an indirect manner or to use indirect language in explaining something, not daring to speak frankly. Both expressions are obscure unless used idiomatically. The literally translated French expression would be unlikely to convey this idiom to a French speaker, so an ostensibly more 'correct' translation would look like the 'stylistic equivalency' given above using the native French expression whose 'function' is the same as the original English expression.

"Beating Around the Bush," Bloomsbury International, accessed August 8, 2019, <https://www.bloomsbury-international.com/en/student-ezone/idiom-of-the-week/list-of-idioms/1805-beating-around-the-bush/>. Bassnett, *Translation Studies*, 35.

<sup>143</sup> Questions of equivalence between an SL and TL text are central to any translation exercise, and certainly in *Persepolis* and *Tintin en Amérique*. The degree to which properties of equivalence are eschewed in the latter serve to highlight the translator-function's active socio-political role. However, there are other *bande dessinée* whose English translators negotiate the register of language very differently and aim for a closer equivalence of effect than Lonsdale-Cooper and Turner. One example is the English translation of Goscinny and Uderzo's *Astérix chez les Bretons*. In the SL text, British character speech is marked by nonstandard grammar constructions and the inclusion of lexical items that differ from the more standard French of the Gaulois characters (examples being the systematic switching of nouns and adjectives to more closely reflect English grammar, as well as gloss lexical items like "bonté!" for "goodness!") The English translators of *Astérix chez les Bretons*, Anthea Bell and Derek Hockridge, are tasked with accounting for the difference in language between French and British-marked characters, but of course in English. They do this by juxtaposing a more standard, casual English against the comparatively more uppity and stereotypically British-sounding English of the Breton-marked characters. In this, they rely more heavily on lexical differences than the grammatical or orthographic strategies used in the SL text but achieve an equivalence of effect nevertheless in their linguistic distinction between the French and British-marked characters. Naturally, there are key differences between the translation features found in *Asterix in Britain* and the most basic features of Popovič's 'stylistic equivalence.' However, it is the latter more than any other one of Popovič's equivalences that most closely reflects the manner in which Bell and Hockridge have transformed Goscinny's French in *Astérix chez les Bretons* into its clever TL equivalent. Both in Popovič's stylistic equivalency and the translations effected in *Asterix in Britain*, the focus is less on the *form* of language and more on the *function* of language, especially as it pertains to reader experience or sensation.

René Goscinny and Albert Uderzo, *Astérix chez les Bretons* (Paris: Hachette, 1999).

René Goscinny and Albert Uderzo, *Asterix in Britain*, trans. by Anthea Bell and Derek Hockridge (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2016).

Eugene Nida, *Toward a Science of Translating* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1964), 159.

Formal equivalences, according to Nida, focus attention on the message of the language used in a text, taking into account both its form and content.<sup>144</sup> In such a method, the translator is concerned with “such correspondences as poetry to poetry, sentence to sentence, and concept to concept.”<sup>145</sup> It essentially comes down to an elemental parceling of language such that elements of meaning and form of the ST are preserved as closely as possible in the TT. Such a manner of translation would closely embody the concept of a ‘gloss translation,’ a term already used in this thesis and which, according to Nida, is a translation in which the translator “attempts to produce as literally and meaningfully as possible the form and content of the original.”<sup>146</sup> Nida cites the example of the translation of a Medieval French text into English, whose purpose might be teaching students about early French literature without needing to know the language. Indeed, translating the relatively sterile French of *Tintin en Amérique* would not present too much of a challenge to the translator who elects to pursue formal, or literal, equivalence. In most cases, such a method would simply produce a similarly standard English TL text. Naturally issues of untranslatability will crop up as in every translation exercise, so there will perhaps be some key differences. Yet, it is possible.<sup>147</sup> Indeed,

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<sup>144</sup> Nida, *Science of Translating*, 159.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Indeed, it is possible. However, in translating a work like *Astérix chez les Bretons* into English, attempting to preserve meaning *and* form is nearly impossible, particularly in cases where Goscinny relies upon nonstandard French syntax to characterize nonstandard dialogue. These language features that are used to mark character language distinctions in French are heavily reliant on linguistic features of the English language and elements of British culture as they are perceived specifically by the French, and thus represented in the French language using certain methods that would be nearly impossible to replicate satisfactorily in English. For example, in *Astérix chez les Bretons*, Goscinny employs the use of nonstandard syntactical structures to mark British characters in the text. This is a nod to the commonly understood difference between French and English regarding noun-adjective word order. In Goscinny’s ST, the English-like syntax is applied to the French dialogue of British characters in order to mark these characters’ language apart from the standard French of the *gaulois* characters. This really only works in the ST because it is a representation of a foreign language within the SL. In an English translation where there would be no conflict of syntax to play upon, preservation of this feature of the ST would risk sacrificing the

much of the more innocuous text in *Tintin en Amérique* is reproduced rather closely in the TL text. However, as the following sections will show, there are significant moments in the TL text demonstrating that this is certainly not always the direction in which Lonsdale-Cooper and Turner have gone. Though some of the text in *Tintin in America* is translated this way, character speech and several key political moments in the text have been drastically edited so that their equivalence has been diminished, not amplified. Indeed, there is very little evidence of pursuit of formal equivalence between the SL and TL texts.

Nida's contrasting concept to 'formal equivalence' is 'dynamic equivalence.'<sup>148</sup> Such a method of translation is based on the principle of 'equivalent effect,'<sup>149</sup> meaning that a translator should aim as closely as possible for a similar effect upon the reader of the TT as that upon the ST's reader. Or as Nida puts it, "in such a translation one is not so concerned with matching the receptor-language<sup>150</sup> message with the source-language message, but with the dynamic relationship..., that the relationship between receptor and message should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original

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clarity of the TT. Thus, a formal equivalence of translation, at least where it concerns character coding through language in *Astérix chez les Bretons*, is not really possible.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> The principle of 'equivalent effect' is here cited by Nida from Emile Victor Rieu and John Bertram Phillips's 1954 article "Translating the Gospels," from volume 25 of the *Concordia Theological Monthly*. This article takes the form of a discussion between Rieu and Phillips. In it, Rieu describes the principle of equivalent effect as "the lodestar of the translator's art," and "the idea...that that translation is the best which comes nearest to giving its modern audience the same effect as the original had on its first audiences." Rieu then takes the example of translating the French term of endearment *mon chou* in English as *my cabbage*, a poor translation which he says "[goes] as far as possible as you can from the principle of equivalent effect." In his discussion of historical Biblical translations, Rieu says also that "we have very often too literal a translation [of the Bible] to produce equivalent effect."

<sup>150</sup> Nida's use of the term 'receptor-language' is more or less equivalent to my use of 'target language' or TL.

receptors and the message.”<sup>151,152</sup> There is nothing inherently wrong with the concept of ‘dynamic equivalence’ in its most general theoretical form. In fact, this is largely the direction in which translation studies have recently moved. However, Nida’s rather loose definitions of ‘formal’ and ‘dynamic equivalence,’ while useful in categorizing the characteristics of existing translations, are somewhat problematic when applied as principles of translation practice. In this vein of thought, Bassnett cites Rieu’s<sup>153</sup> decision to translate Homer into English prose as an example of one problematic application of “dynamic equivalence.”<sup>154</sup> This constitutes a dynamic equivalence that correlates the significance of epic form in Ancient Greece to the significance of prose in modern Europe.<sup>155</sup> This is a questionable translation choice in and of itself, but it also demonstrates some inherent conflict with Nida’s categories, particularly in the fact that the above example constitutes the application of dynamic equivalence to a text’s formal properties.<sup>156</sup> Here we might discuss the microcosms and macrocosms of translated literature, and the manner in which one might apply equivalencies, of effect or otherwise. In the above example taken from Bassnett, we see the application of effect equivalency on the text as a macrocosm, where this application might work better in a microcosm. In other words, the text’s entire form was changed because the translator considers the effect and function of the text’s genre as a holistic element before considering the effect and

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<sup>151</sup> Nida, *Science of Translating*, 159.

<sup>152</sup> This principle in particular is what most closely reflects the translation choices evident in *Asterix in Britain*, even more so than Nida’s principle of ‘dynamic equivalence.’

<sup>153</sup> The same Emile Victor Rieu mentioned in a previous footnote.

<sup>154</sup> Bassnett, *Translation Studies*, 36.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.



function of the language within, the elements of which constitute microcosms.<sup>157</sup> While the changes effected in *Tintin in America* are significant, the changes themselves are microcosmic rather than a complete overhaul of the medium of the text. Moreover, the divergent effect between the SL and TL texts indicates that the changes were mobilized not in pursuit of any equivalence to the SL text, as in the example cited above, but for another reason entirely. Thus, Nida's equivalences, while useful in understanding some changes, do not explain the shift in language register that we see in *Tintin in America*.

While Bassnett ends her discussion of Nida's "dynamic equivalence" by citing its shortcomings and problematic applications, it nevertheless shares important characteristics with other important principles of translation studies, particularly Albrecht Neubert's hierarchy of three semiotic categories. According to Neubert, equivalence in translation must be considered a 'semiotic category,' of which there are three components: the 'syntactic,' the 'semantic,' and the 'pragmatic.'<sup>158</sup> Hierarchically, these components are arranged with semantic equivalence taking priority over syntax, and both these considerations are conditioned and modified by pragmatics. The relationship among these categories is synthesized thusly:

Equivalence overall results from the relation between signs themselves, the relationship between signs and what they stand for, and the relationship between signs, what they stand for, and those who use them. So, for example, the shock value of Italian or Spanish blasphemous expressions can only be rendered

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<sup>157</sup> This latter manner of applying dynamic equivalence, on a microcosmic level, more closely reflects the manner in which translators Bell and Hockridge have sought an equivalence of effect between the language of the ST and that of the TT

<sup>158</sup> Albrecht Neubert, *Text and Translation* (Leipzig: VEB Verlag Enzyklopadie, 1985). Cited in Bassnett, *Translation Studies*, 37.

pragmatically in English by substituting expressions with sexual overtones to produce a comparable shock effect, e.g. *porca Madonna* – fucking hell.<sup>159</sup>

While more precisely defined and theorized than Nida's more general principle of dynamic equivalence, the focus of Neubert's semiotic categories nevertheless remains on effect, where pragmatics guides semantic choices before syntactic choices to reach a satisfactory translation equivalence. This pursuit of equivalence and the intersectional consideration of these categories heavily influences language selection in the TL. However, it is important not to confuse equivalence in translation with sameness. Pursuit of equivalence in translation is not (and according to Bassnett, should not be) a search for sameness. A group of ten translators working on the same ST would yield ten different TTs. Sameness is not attainable between different TTs, let alone between a ST and a TT.<sup>160</sup> Indeed, sameness does not appear to be the goal of translation between *Tintin en Amérique* and *Tintin in America*.<sup>161</sup> In comparing Al Capone's dialogue on the first page of the SL and TL texts, it is clear that the translators pursue changes that arrive at essentially no equivalence of either effect or form, despite the essentially unchanged

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<sup>159</sup> Bassnett, *Translation Studies*, 37.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>161</sup> In the alternative case of *Astérix chez les Bretons* and *Asterix in Britain*, pursuing sameness is not only inadvisable, it is impossible, even without the added difficulty of providing equivalent effect in the face of SL-specific language strategies. What is pursued, therefore, is not formal equivalence or adherence to the form of the language, but an equivalence of effect that permits the experience enjoyed by readers of the TL text to mirror as closely as possible that of readers of the SL text. This strategy contrasts against that of Lonsdale-Cooper and Turner in that the translators of *Tintin in America* have not pursued equivalence or sameness in their translations, but systematically pursue a divergence of effect when it comes to racial and ethnic caricatures as well as a troubling and noticeable reduction in criticisms of the United States. In the case of *Astérix*, translation is an exercise in finding innovative equivalences whereas in *Tintin*, translation is a demonstration of the sociopolitical ramifications of linguistic and cultural transmission. Both demonstrate the dynamic and multifaceted role of the translator-function in scope of its creative agencies and its social and political influence.

content of the message. We will find instead that Lonsdale-Cooper and Turner maintain a distance of register in the SL and TL texts.

While some of these latter translation scholars continue to pursue and develop theories of equivalence, a concept that elicits debate in translation studies to this day, others appear to have accepted the necessity of language transformation and creation as a by-product of the untranslatability of language.<sup>162</sup> More specifically, some translators appear to favor a creation of language rather than a strict pursuit of equivalence between the SL in the ST and their translated TT. There are numerous observable examples of language transformation in *Tintin in America* that reflect a movement away from the pursuit of equivalence of form and effect, retaining equivalence in only the loosest sense of the word, and further highlighting liberties characteristic of authorship. Indeed, despite some adherence to form in the more innocuous language of the texts, Lonsdale-Cooper and Turner have pivoted away from a pursuit of equivalence of this type, and instead turn their attention to cultural elements of the texts and essentially rework their representations for an English-speaking readership. While this might seem to fly in the face of the developments in translation studies outlined above, there is nevertheless a very strong link to translation studies, even if formal, dynamic, or effect equivalence is not adopted. This link comes in the form of what Susan Bassnett calls a “cultural turn.”<sup>163</sup>

Following on the heels of equivalence pursuits comes what is referred to in translations studies as functionalist theory. A pragmatic approach of the 1990s, functionalist theory acknowledges a translator’s liberty to decide what purpose a text

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<sup>162</sup> In a manner reminiscent of Dagut.

<sup>163</sup> Bassnett, *Translation Studies*, 85.

should serve and then translate according to that objective.<sup>164</sup> Essentially, this means that a translator can reconfigure a text to align with the expected norms of that text type in the target language.<sup>165</sup> As cited by Bassnett, scholars like Edwin Gentzler go so far as to say that functionalist theory is so important to the field of translation studies precisely because it effectively “breaks the two thousand year-old chain of theory revolving around the faithful vs. free axis.”<sup>166,167</sup> In a manner of speaking, the theory permits a translator to consider target culture in a more profound way, freeing translators from the structures of the source text to negotiate what the text should do in the TL culture with what it does in the SL culture.<sup>168</sup> This is in step with the “cultural turn” that translation studies was undergoing in the 1990s according to Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere.<sup>169</sup> In this era, as Bassnett puts it, “attention was now focused on issues of context, history, and convention.”<sup>170</sup> In explaining this idea further, Bassnett has this to say:

Translation, [André Lefevere and I] argued, is never an innocent activity. A text is produced in one context for another readership with a different history and different expectations.... there is always going to be a discrepancy between the reception of a text in the source context and its reception in the target system. A consideration of what happens a) during

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<sup>164</sup> Bassnett, *Translation Studies*, 84.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Edwin Gentzler, *Contemporary Translation Theories*, 2nd ed. (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2001) 71.

<sup>168</sup> It should be noted that this theory has been met with criticism for its assimilative tendencies. Attention is shifted away from the source toward the target culture. Some, like Lawrence Venuti who argues for a “foreignization” strategy, find that it too readily assimilates a text to another culture, with what Bassnett calls “an inclination toward domestication.” This has given rise to debate about how to evaluate functional translations, and the extend of the translator’s responsibility to the source.

Bassnett, *Translation Studies*, 84.

<sup>169</sup> It must be noted that this process has likely been happening in the translation process since the very beginning—albeit unconsciously, perhaps. Translation has always been “with a purpose,” as it were.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 85.

the actual translation process; and b) when that text is received in the target system can shed light on the ways in which one culture views another.<sup>171</sup>

Acknowledging the motivations at work in translation can help us understand the ways in which texts are manipulated as they transmit cross-linguistically. Moreover, this permits us to evaluate to what extent the translator-function, which is in essence the crossroads of all of the aforementioned considerations, is enacting authority over a text. Bassnett cites Maria Tymoczko and Edwin Gentzler who reaffirm this cultural turn, asserting that “translators, as much as creative writers and politicians, ‘participate in the powerful acts that create knowledge and shape culture.’”<sup>172</sup> At the hands of the translator (or indeed the translator-function), a text is reconfigured according to the values of a target culture. In some cases, a text is distorted, or its values are concealed to meet the expectations of a target culture.<sup>173</sup> This is precisely the act, many years before this theory was given in scholarship, that Leslie Lonsdale-Cooper and Michael Turner perform in their translation of *Tintin en Amérique*. Indeed, the equivalence that the translators pursue is not an equivalence to the source, but rather an equivalence to the various expectations of English-speaking readers and, despite the translators’ British nationality, Anglo-American readers in particular.

Thus, the issue at hand is no longer a question of adherence to the source, but the same kind of transformation that Bassnett and Lefevere describe: a cultural turn. This turn comes in three main forms. The first is a significant pivot away from a standard

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

register of French<sup>174</sup> in the SL text toward a highly developed and stylized American English discourse of crime, particularly in the dialogue of criminal characters. The second employs similar strategies of the first and comes in the form of heightened caricatures of certain racial or ethnically non-white identities (with one very obvious omission, which will be discussed later in the chapter). Both these first and second forms are essentially increased or inserted caricatures and (often racist) stereotypes that are based on preestablished Anglo-American discourses surrounding crime and race. The third, heavily linked to the topic of race relations, is a systemic reduction of criticism levied in the SL text against the United States.

All of these forms rely upon the premise of the translator's anticipation of the target culture's expectations, and play upon those established discourses rather effectively, calling upon easily recognizable Anglo-American stereotypes to enhance caricatures and align the *bande dessinée* more closely with what an American reader might expect of a comic book. I started the discussion of *Tintin in America* with the example of Al Capone's speech and the manner in which it accommodates the space on the page. However, this also marks the initial example in the TL text of the first form of transformation effectuated by the translators, regarding the portrayal of criminal characters' speech.

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<sup>174</sup> The register in the SL text is considered "standard" in this thesis mainly as it contrasts against the marked language and semantic shifts enacted by the translators in the TL text. Indeed, by some measure, the register in the SL text is less "sterile" or "standard" and more reflective of Hergé's own sociodemographic contexts, mobilizing what one might call "jeunesse catholique" French.

## The First Cultural Turn: Stereotypical Criminal Characters

The liberty taken in the case outlined in figures 3 and 4 takes its form in the clear difference between the “correct” French of the SL text and the highly stereotyped, even *film* or *roman noir*-esque nonstandard language (or slang) employed by the translators of the TL text in their translation of the character’s monologue. Indeed, this would seem to indicate a rather stark divergence from any ostensible pursuit of equivalence in that the register of language radically changes. However, this is not to say that the translators are not taking into consideration the experience of the reader and the text’s effect upon them—quite the opposite. There is evidence to suggest that the changes in language register carried out by the translators reflect a certain appeal to the expectations of the TL text reader in English. A reader of graphic crime fiction might expect a certain tone or vernacular that, at the time of *Tintin in America*’s translation in the 1970s was well-established as a viable dialect of English, however stereotypical it may be.<sup>175</sup> Lonsdale-Cooper and Turner mobilize a cultural turn through an amplification of colloquial and stereotypical language and language patterns.<sup>176</sup> This method, very heavily used in the translation of *Tintin in America* from its original French, might be a somewhat obvious translation decision given the cultural context of the setting of *Tintin en Amérique*. After all, the work is set in the largely anglophone United States during a period of American history that includes personages of varying degrees of disrepute that by the late 1970s

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<sup>175</sup> In fact, a functionally equivalent dialect of language was also well-established in France at that point as well. It is extremely unlikely that the language in *Tintin en Amérique*, had it been written in the 1970s, would resemble the current SL text. The register of language used is very dated in France by the 1970s and reading the SL text would be a heavily nostalgic experience for the French reader—an effect that the translators could have sought to reproduce had they wanted to.

<sup>176</sup> This change relies upon an understanding on the part of the translators that the original French text translated literally would not have sounded as ‘colorful’; a problem, it could be said, the French SL text suffers from.

would certainly be easy enough to caricature in a native English-language context.<sup>177</sup>

However, the vast quantities of colloquial, stereotypical, and indeed racist language that appear in the TL text in the form of character speech patterns and idiomatic language simply do not exist in the SL text. In the case of Al Capone's "gangster" register of language, this is for a very good reason.

The type of colloquial "gangster" language used by Lonsdale-Cooper and Turner in the TL text is a product of a well-developed dialect of "tough-guy" talk in the American noir genre. The development of this dialect or language register began with the hard-boiled novels of the late 1920s and later appeared in Hollywood films of the 1930s. Such examples include the various gangster characters in W.R. Burnett's *Little Caesar*<sup>178</sup> or Bogart's well-known portrayals of hard-boiled detective characters like Sam Spade and Philip Marlowe in the Hollywood film adaptations of *The Maltese Falcon*<sup>179</sup> and *The Big Sleep*,<sup>180</sup> respectively. These characters, informed by the wit and literary backgrounds of their creators, are formative figures of the American hard-boiled crime fiction genre that grew out of the pulp magazines of the early twentieth century.<sup>181</sup> However, this was not necessarily the case in the French context.

In the development of a more Continental genre of detective fiction, France largely took cues from American and British crime fiction. By the 1940s, the French had developed a taste for American and British hard-boiled novels and demand for

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<sup>177</sup> These stock characters have a long history by the early twentieth century. Even by the 1920s, they would have been easy to caricature. Indeed, it must be noted that by the 1970s this is something of a tired noir cliché.

<sup>178</sup> W. R. Burnett, *Little Caesar* (New York : The Dial Press, 1929) 25-255.

<sup>179</sup> Dashiell Hammett, *The Maltese Falcon* (Franklin Center, PA : Franklin Library, 1987).

<sup>180</sup> Raymond Chandler, *The Big Sleep* (San Francisco : Arion Press, 1986).

<sup>181</sup> R. W. Lid, "Philip Marlowe Speaking," *The Kenyon Review* 31, no. 2 (1969): 158-59. Accessed 30 January 2020.



publication in France (and in French) grew. One notable example is the now-famous *Série noire* developed by French surrealist editor and translator Marcel Duhamel. The initial moves of the esteemed publishing imprint included the marketing of American and British crime novels translated into French for a new readership. This proved to be a challenging undertaking, as translating anglophone strains of “tough-guy” speech literally into French would not have been an ideal TL rendering. Instead, the “rough” and heavily stereotyped working-class Parisian dialects of French stood in for their anglophone counterparts and came to be just as inextricably associated with crime fiction in France, though much later than in the US. However, the absence of this linguistic register is notable in *Tintin in America*, a work whose plot plays heavily on the tropes of American crime fiction, but is explained by the simple fact that the association of a “tough” register of language with crime fiction had not yet begun to develop in francophone Europe at the time of Hergé’s work in the 1930s. Such an equivalent language register would have drastically changed the original French version, which feels somewhat dated whereas the English version still holds up.

Instead, the reader of the SL text gets an Al Capone who speaks rather sterile, standard, or unmarked French. The liberties taken by the translators permits a radical change in register that at the time of Hergé’s creation of *Tintin en Amérique* was not necessarily possible in French. Without this developed and established register of language, it would be fairly difficult to mark Al Capone as a Chicago gangster in written French by means of his speech patterns. The task of translating the same speech from French into English, the native language of the geographical context as well as that of the majority of characters, presents an opportunity to the translators to linguistically mark Al

Capone as a crime boss of 1930s Chicago, largely by means of adding or amplifying the colloquial nature of the characters' dialogue. In terms of effect upon the reader, this method lends credence to the caricature of various characters in an exaggerated form and enhances the verisimilitude of the plot as its events occur in an anglophone context. In turn, this enhanced verisimilitude on the linguistic plane comes as the result of a swapping of a rather undeveloped, or even unsophisticated) discourse on and of the "criminal underworld" or "underclass" to a register that is highly stylized, well-established, and formalized through a lengthy history that had fully matured (into parody) by the time of the 1973 translation into English.

This thesis does not have the space to numerate and examine all instances of colloquial amplification found when comparing *Tintin en Amérique* and *Tintin in America*. It will therefore examine the particular instances of colloquial amplification starting at the very beginning of the album that best represent the general trends found throughout Lonsdale-Cooper's and Turner's translation. Note, for instance, the first sentence uttered by Al Capone as he addresses his colleagues. In the ST, the sentence is expository in nature but is rather more general in its pronouncement – "la situation est bien nette,"<sup>182</sup> whereas the utterance that replaces it in the TL text not only appears as a call to attention - "All right, guys, you listen and listen good"<sup>183</sup> - but utilizes the most common North American informal form of address to a group of people, "guys," and the everyday expression, "listen and listen good." This has the effect of more heavily associating the Capone character with American English right from the beginning and,

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<sup>182</sup> Hergé, *Amérique*, 1.

<sup>183</sup> Hergé, *Tintin in America*, trans. Leslie Lonsdale-Cooper and Michael Turner (London: Egmont UK Limited, 2003), 1.

especially in comparison to the Capone of the SL text, with a certain social (stereotypically criminal) class of people.<sup>184</sup> Overall, the linguistic treatments examined here serve to contextualize the caricatures of the inhabitants of the United States. The translation and the decisions made within the process represent a transmission of cultural information that, as it passes under the hands of the translators, enhances the already-present cultural associations with figures like the drunken small-town Sheriff, the working-class rail workers, and Chicago “tough guys.” Accents and language patterns of various American regions are distinct enough that stereotypes can be drawn using these language patterns based on existing cultural associations with the dialects and language registers. In other words, the strengthening of stereotypes using colloquial language works because there are already well-established cultural conceptions of these caricatures that are associated with these registers of language in Anglo-American society by the time the 1970s English translation appears.

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<sup>184</sup> Chicago gangsters are not the only class of people who receive this linguistic treatment. Indeed, another group that receives this caricatured linguistic treatment are rural Americans. About halfway through the album, Tintin and Milou are making their way through the American west on a train in their pursuit of the outlaw Bobby Smiles. At one point, the reader encounters Jem (Bill in the ST) and Slim, two railroad workers attempting to clear the tracks of a large boulder that threatens to derail any oncoming trains. While they discuss the problem, the translators once again modify the register of language to appear much more colloquial, with the result that the characters are more heavily marked as rural working-class Americans in the TL text. In another case, across a series of panels of page thirty-six, Tintin has been accused of robbing the Old West Bank and an angry mob is attempting to hang him from a tree branch. While drinking whiskey in his office, the town’s Sheriff hears on the radio that the real culprits have been caught. Wanting to prevent the mob justice underway at the time, the Sheriff (who shows every sign of alcoholism) takes to drinking before he leaves to free Tintin from the mob. He drains nearly an entire bottle of whiskey before he passes out drunk beneath a sign outlining the Volstead Act. (This is heavily ironic mainly because the Volstead Act was the act of legislation in the twentieth century that laid the groundwork for alcohol prohibition in the United States.) In a demonstration of the interplay between artwork and language, the Sheriff’s speech in the SL text does get special syntactic and orthographic treatment, becoming less and less coherent the drunker he visually gets.

Hergé, *Amérique*, 31, 36.

Hergé, *America*, 31, 36.

Thus far, we have seen the ways in which Lonsdale-Cooper and Turner mobilize the cultural currency of various language patterns to caricature certain socioeconomic groups. While these add dynamics to the TL text, they are certainly not the only groups who receive enhanced linguistic stereotyping. Indeed, there are portions of the SL text that contain unflattering visual and linguistic racial and ethnic stereotypes.

### The Second Cultural Turn: Racial Stereotypes and Caricatures

In the TL text, language registers associated in English with certain racial or ethnic groups (including Mexicans, Italian Americans, and especially American Indians) are mobilized to enhance caricatures, which in turn heightens the racially charged stereotypes already present in Hergé. Most gangsters in *Tintin in America* are linguistically marked in ways that have been previously discussed in this chapter. One gangster, however, receives a unique kind of linguistic treatment in the TL text that the others do not. This character is the Italian American gangster Pietro. If his name does not highlight his ethnicity, his appearance surely does, as he is drawn with a much deeper russet or tan skin tone than other characters.<sup>185</sup> In the SL text, however, Pietro's language is standard French. This changes in the TL text where his speech is distinctly Italian American, employing patterns of Italian-accented English that are well-established American stereotypes of Americans with Italian origins. Early in the album, Pietro holds Tintin at gunpoint and informs him of his boss' imminent arrival. A comparison of the same panel in the SL and TL texts demonstrates to what degree the register of language has been changed at the hands of the translators:

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<sup>185</sup> This is a technique of racial marking that occurs throughout Hergé's work and indeed in much of the Franco-Belgian *bande dessinée* tradition.



Figure 6: *América 5C3*



Figure 7: *America 5C3*

Some elements of caricature are present in both the SL and TL versions, such as Hergé's use of deeper skin pigmentation. However, Pietro's language register differs significantly, not only through the use of stylized orthography but with the inclusion of the Italian lexical item *bambino*, indicating a degree of code-switching common in the speech of bilingual speakers of English.<sup>186</sup> This term replaces the French "petit ami," and

<sup>186</sup> Lexical changes are not the only noteworthy linguistic coding to be found in the Lonsdale-Cooper/Turner translation. Orthographic inflections meant to represent accented speech are ever-present in language marked as nonstandard, and this trend continues in Pietro's speech. In figure 11, these inflections take the form of a supplementary word-final vowel insertion after the verb *to get*: "I gotta you covered" and after the contraction *he's*: "he's-a coming." This is meant to be contrasted against the language of SAE which would likely yield *I've got you covered* and *He's coming*. Nearly every iteration of foreign-accented English has its stereotypes. This is simply a result of the incongruous nature of interlinguistic phonetic systems. In other words, there are sounds in some languages that simply do not exist in the phonetic systems of other languages. These linguistic truths are then exaggerated or hyperbolized for comic effect, sometimes cruelly. For example, a common stereotype of French-accented English is the replacement of dental fricatives (English *th* sounds) with postalveolar fricatives (*s* or *z* sounds), yielding *zis* for *this*, or *zat* for *that*. Because there is no distinction in French between dental and postalveolar fricatives, there are no minimal pairs upon which to refer when pronouncing English words which makes the task of pronouncing *th* sounds difficult for francophone people. A contrasting example would be the vast difference in rhotic articulation between French and English, rendering the task of pronouncing French 'r' sounds very difficult for most English speakers. The word-final vowel insertion in Italian-accented English is yet another one of these common stereotypes held in the American perceptions of foreign-accented speech. And there are more examples of this in *Tintin in America* where Pietro is concerned, with utterances such as "whatta hit me?" "I getta my own back," and the ridiculous, "I losta my gun, but this make justa gooda weapon..." where we see three cases of stereotypical word-final vowel insertion and even the elision of auxiliary verbs in the SAE construction *this will make*. As we will see later, the elision of auxiliary verbs in SAE verb constructions is a common way of marking 'foreign' and even 'primitive' speech. Hergé, *America*, 5.

constitutes a clever use of an unmistakably Italian word that is readily recognized by many Americans, especially in the twentieth century.<sup>187</sup>

Hergé himself does include clues in the artwork that the characters who receive this linguistic treatment are somehow ‘other.’ Yet, as they do in countless other places, the translators take it upon themselves to amplify the colloquial and nonstandard nature of the characters’ speech in such a way that the characters are even more strongly identifiable with their given socioeconomic or ethnic identities, particularly as they would appear in an English-language work in reference to the United States. This amounts to a sort of compounded racism. While one might understand (if not necessarily forgive) this manner of portrayal in the comparatively unenlightened 1930s, the fact that the translators double down on the stereotypes and make them even more evident to anglophone readers as late as the 1970s is shocking. In a sense, one might say that Hergé’s overt racism found the perfect translators.

While the Italian example is striking, the most prominently featured non-white<sup>188</sup> ethnic characters in *Tintin en Amérique* are certainly American Indians. As discussed

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<sup>187</sup> Similar work is done with the representation of Mexican characters in Hergé. Unlike the Italian character, the Mexican character, Pedro, does receive linguistic marking in the SL text, where nonstandard orthography (“S’il mé voit, je souis pris!... yé crois que y’ai oune bonne idée!”) and Spanish lexical items (“caramba!”) are utilized in the French to mark Pedro’s speech as Mexican. This would suggest that wherever feasible, Hergé as an author does perform work similar to what the translators ultimately do with Italian and American Indian characters in English, insofar as these characters are all marked linguistically as “ethnic.” As it is, the translators take Pedro’s nonstandard speech even further in the TL version, continuing the trend of amplifying stereotypical portrayals of certain ethnicities via the methods discussed above.

Hergé, *Amérique*, 34.

<sup>188</sup> While today Italian and Hispanic people are often (though not always) considered white, this has not historically been the case. Nell Painter in *The History of White People* explains to what degree “whiteness” as a racial category has shifted in the past to include or exclude certain people in the United States. Like the Irish, Italians and Spaniards (this question is a bit more complex for people of specifically Mexican descent) were rarely included in the category of white that other people of European origin occupied. The stereotypes portrayed in Hergé and mobilized in translation take their cues from a stereotypical representation of Southern Europeans as being differently marked from people of Northern or Western European descent, at least in terms of skin pigmentation. In an American context, this is reflective of a time period in which socio-ethnic hierarchies are constantly shifting, particularly in regard to what constitutes

earlier in this chapter, this group occupies a significant place in Hergé's motivation for creating *Tintin en Amérique*. Despite his sympathies for them and their lot at the hands of the American government, Hergé does mark this group in a similar way to that of others in the album, a coding of which the translators have once again taken advantage in order to further entrench the caricatures within their given socio-ethnic groups.

Tintin's earliest contact with American Indians happens as a result of his pursuit of the outlaw Bobby Smiles as he flees further west to Redskin City.<sup>189</sup> Far from the home of the Washington Redskins football team,<sup>190</sup> it appears to be a small western frontier town near an Indian Reservation where people walk around dressed in cowboy garb.<sup>191</sup> As we've previously seen, the most common devices used to augment the colloquial and nonstandard nature of American Indian speech can be separated into two main categories: group-specific lexical items, and changes to orthographical or grammatical conventions that reflect stereotypical speech patterns associated with the group. Though the speech of American Indians is coded as such in the ST, Hergé largely

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'whiteness.' Certain people of European descent, despite their European origin, were not considered to be fully-fledged white people. Americans, especially recently immigrated Americans, from these 'less-desirable' regions such as Ireland, Italy, and Iberia were considered to be inferior to those of the 'superior' white race, variously termed Saxon, Anglo-Saxon, Nordic, and Aryan in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In step with such perceptions of 'whiteness,' an Italian American might be considered 'less white' than Anglo-Americans and in turn might be somehow 'less American.' Thus, to the anglophone mind, it would make sense that such a person would speak with a thicker Italian-influenced accent. Nell Irvin Painter, *The History of White People* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010), 201-206.

Bruce Baum, "On the History of America Whiteness," *Reviews in American History* 39, no. 3 (2011): 490-493, <http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.unm.edu/stable/23014351>.

<sup>189</sup> The name "Redskin City" is retained in the TL text, though in the SL text it is stylized as "Redskincity."

<sup>190</sup> Today, Native Americans seem to be the only ethnic group about which grotesquely racist caricatures remain even moderately acceptable in American society. The controversial name of the Washington Redskins is a testament to this phenomenon.

<sup>191</sup> Tintin's very first encounter of an American Indian does retain a reference to the color red from the original French, but every subsequent use of the French *peaux-rouges* in the ST is systematically replaced with "Indian" in English. This is the only systematic change associated with American Indians that actually dampens stereotypes of American Indians. Every other change, especially those made to the speech of American Indian characters, follows the established trend of amplifying the nonstandard nature of the group's speech patterns.

limits himself to the insertion of various lexical items that reference elements of Native American culture.<sup>192</sup> Otherwise, the American Indians in the ST speak relatively standard French, as is evident in the first meeting of outlaw Bobby Smiles and the Chief of the Blackfeet Indians, pictured in figures 8 and 9 below.



Figure 8: *Amérique 19B2*

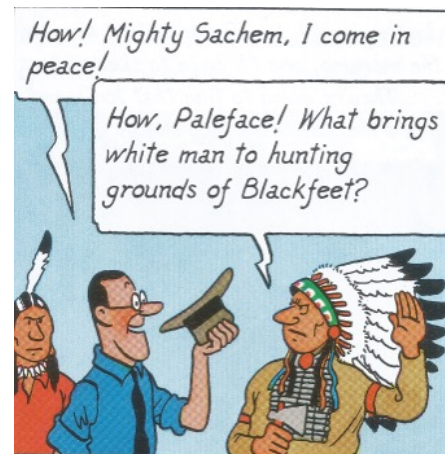


Figure 9: *America 19B2*

There are explicit references in the French of the SL text to the Indian lexical item “paleface” with the use of “Visage-Pâle.” This is clearly a nod to the American English expression and the American culture industries that utilize the term in their own portrayals of American Indians. Once again, there is evidence not only that Hergé derives much of his portrayal of America via the pervasion of American culture throughout Europe in the 1920s and 1930s, but also that he is performing work like the translators ultimately do decades later insofar as he dialogues with American culture via established stereotypes and tropes.

<sup>192</sup> One notable example is the expression “nom de Calumet!” uttered by an American Indian. This example is interesting because it incorporates a Native American lexical item (a calumet) with an established formula for French exclamations (“nom de...”) which might yield “Holy calumet!” in English. Hergé, *Amérique*, 27.



The use of “Visage-Pâle” aside, the language used by the Indian chief is relatively standard as seen in figure 8.<sup>193</sup> This is contrasted against the changes made in the English of the American Indians in the TL text, where “Salut” becomes “How”<sup>194</sup> and there is a noticeable (and stereotypical) omission of the definite articles in “to hunting grounds of Blackfeet.”<sup>195</sup> Subject pronouns are also replaced with nouns; second-person “tu” in the SL text becomes third-person “white man,” though still used as a form of second-person address.

While lexical changes are easier to spot and assess, these grammatical changes intended to mark the dialogue of particular characters in a certain way are a much more effective way of amplifying the character’s caricature. For an American reader, the changes effected in the translation provide a certain verisimilitude, even if that portrayal is essentially stereotypical.<sup>196</sup> In fact, this usually has less to do with linguistic accuracy and more to do with popular perceptions of accented language, and the case of American Indian speech is no exception. It is evident in the examples given thus far pertaining to gangsters, Italians, and American Indians that similar techniques are used over and over

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<sup>193</sup> Glossed into English, this reads “Hello, oh Paleface! What brings you to the hunting grounds of the Blackfeet?”

<sup>194</sup> Unlike many words used to represent American Indian culture in popular media, *how* does come from a real American Indian word, as various sources attribute the greeting *háu* to Lakota Sioux tribes of American Indians. Despite its apparently authentic origins, the term has largely come to be associated with American Indians in general, despite being historically associated with only one American Indian language. By the mid-twentieth century the term was so widely accepted as a stereotypical general referent to American Indians that it even appears in the Disney animated film *Peter Pan*, where it is the preferred greeting of the American Indian tribe and features prominently in the song “What Made the Red Man Red?” which has understandably received a fair amount of criticism for its overt racial stereotypes. David S. Rood and Allan R. Taylor, “Sketch of Lakhota, a Siouan Language” in *Languages*, 479. Vol. 14 Handbook of North American Indians. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1996). *Peter Pan*, produced by Walt Disney. (1953; Burbank, CA: Walk Disney Productions/RKO Radio Pictures, 2019), Digital file.

<sup>195</sup> Hergé, *America*, 19.

<sup>196</sup> Indeed, it is likely *because* they are so stereotypical that such a semantic shift is possible (if not inevitable), as I will discuss shortly.

again in caricaturing the host of identities that are all anchored within American cultural consciousness, including the modification of grammatical features, altered orthography representing alternative pronunciations, and the inclusion of various lexical items. The aforementioned consciousness is effectively the source from which both the SL and TL texts draw their inspiration in their stereotypes of various characters. However, though there is a connection, the cultural contexts of each are rather different and as a result of the translation process, wherein the above-mentioned strategies are mobilized, there is a significant semantic shift.

Both Hergé's SL text and the Lonsdale-Cooper/Turner TL text rely upon the American cultural machine.<sup>197</sup> Europe's surge in American cultural influence in the 1920s and 1930s is the principal contributor to this, and it is clear in Hergé's work that certain elements of those tropes pervade European media of the time. Thus, Hergé is in dialogue with the same established American cultural tropes that Lonsdale-Cooper and Turner mobilize some thirty years later. Hergé uses this cultural currency to enhance a character's caricature, but in translation. However, as this chapter has demonstrated, the differences in character language register between the SL and TL texts are significant. Hergé's occasional use of these same techniques<sup>198</sup> proves that this is more difficult but not impossible to accomplish in French. Indeed, one might have made translation decisions that did not significantly alter the register of language between the two versions, but instead glossed Hergé's initial language into a correspondingly standard, somewhat sterile English. Indeed, the English-language context permits but does not

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<sup>197</sup> I have previously cited a couple of cases in which Hergé himself performs work similar to that of his 1970s English translators. The above-mentioned "Visage-Pâle" is a useful demonstration of this phenomenon.

<sup>198</sup> The Mexican caricature; see footnote 187.

*necessitate* the changes. The reasons behind the decision to alter the language register so significantly in translation make more sense when one considers the differences in proximity to the subject matter between the SL and TL texts. While they both draw from similar sources of inspiration, it is true that the Belgian Hergé and anglophone translators working to produce a product destined for an American readership are very differently positioned when it comes to the issues addressed (or not addressed) in *Tintin en Amérique*.

Given that the setting of the text is the United States and the translated text's target language is English, it makes sense that one might aim for a less sterile register of language than a gloss translation might offer.<sup>199</sup> However, when taking the text's effect upon readership into account, the effect of the language used in the TL text suggests a more compelling rationale. It is true that Hergé mobilizes racist stereotypes that themselves are products of the American cultural machine. However, the initial impetus for Hergé's *Tintin en Amérique* came from a criticism of that same cultural machine on a number of matters including capitalism, hypocrisies surrounding policymaking (such as alcohol prohibition) and indeed racism.<sup>200</sup> Thus, Hergé's position vis-à-vis Anglo-America is largely critical. Such an overtly critical portrayal of the United States was not without some opposition when the *bande dessinée* was considered for publishing in the

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<sup>199</sup> This is due to the relatively close proximity of the linguistic communities (who are translating and consuming the English text) to the text's subject matter.

<sup>200</sup> It should be noted that Hergé's work is often criticized for its own brand of racist portrayals of various ethnic groups (and rightly so). However, in his work Hergé demonstrates both negative and what might be termed "positive," paternalistic, or benevolent racism. In other words, a racism that believes it is somehow helping its objects. By the standards of 1930s Hergé, Americans are indeed the real racists and the project mobilizes a more "positive" racism against the ostensibly more "negative" and vicious racism committed by the United States.

United States.<sup>201</sup> How might one negotiate the publishing of such a critical piece of literature in the very country that constitutes the album's object of criticism? Levity is a key element in resolving this issue.

Much of this chapter has discussed how alterations to language register can amplify a sense of verisimilitude that is based entirely on stereotypes. However, as unfunny as these stereotypes might be today,<sup>202</sup> the levity of caricature certainly has a lightening effect as well. Ostensibly humorous caricatural language renders the text less critical than it would be if it were expressed in more standard language. What is more, caricatures have a tendency of trivializing and even dehumanizing their subjects. This levity coupled with a certain disengagement from the caricatured subjects is effectively a coping mechanism that permits an anglophone translator and readership to consume media that references—and problematically simplifies—complex race relations in the United States. Once again, while the English language permits this levity, it is not the *language* that necessitates it, but the very transmission of the criticism from one linguistic community (and one culture) to another. Thus, the translation becomes a task requiring more than a mastery of the respective languages, it requires a compromise of equivalency in the name of cultural transmission. In other words, the translation of the work requires an assessment of how the TL text will be received in the TL community. And since changes to artwork to these ends are limited (though not as much as one might think), language change is the medium through which these changes are executed.

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<sup>201</sup> There are changes that were executed in the artwork of later editions of the album that were requested by American publishers. See footnote 213.

<sup>202</sup> Perhaps funny only in the sense that today's reader can look upon the products of a "less enlightened" era with a sardonic smile.

A lightening of criticism might seem like a rather roundabout manner of explaining the phenomenon of increased caricature and stereotypes in the TL text, but there is more than enough direct evidence that the English translation of *Tintin en Amérique* lightens the criticisms levied against the US. While there is a systematic enhancement of colloquial language in character dialogue, this is normally done where stereotypes demand a certain degree of levity in the TL text. However, the more overt reductions in criticism in the TL text are principally accomplished through changes in language that deviate radically from the language of the SL text.

#### The Third Cultural Turn: Reduction of Criticisms

Hergé's principal motivation for creating *Tintin en Amérique* was his deep personal interest in American Indians and his desire to decry the injustices they suffered at the hands of American government and industry. The fact that the editor of *Le Vingtième Siècle* was himself critical of American industrial practices further explains why *Tintin en Amérique*'s criticism of various aspects of life, law, and industry in the United States of the twentieth century was readily accepted.

The shift in degree of this criticism from the SL to the TL represents perhaps the most striking changes in *Tintin in America*. Without being able to pinpoint the exact motives behind this reduction (not having been present for publisher/translator meetings), it follows logically that a publication destined for Anglo-American readers might influence translation choices. Such a text might even be denounced if criticism of the United States were perceived as being too heavy. Changes would therefore be made to attenuate this criticism. Since the bulk of *Tintin en Amérique*'s criticism is levied against

the US, it makes sense that the translation, *Tintin in America*, would dampen this criticism. The United States has a long-standing reputation for its questionable past regarding race relations, and historically Americans have been known to resist confronting their own racist policies. This may have been true in the 1930s, around *Tintin en Amérique*'s first publication, however the Lonsdale-Cooper/Turner translation for the American edition was published in the 1970s. The normally high degree of American nationalism was particularly low following events of the Vietnam War and the period represents a moment when institutional racism was beginning to face sustained criticism. Thus, the translation is all the more striking in that it is a rather backward-looking product in its racist stereotypes and appeals to attenuated criticism in the name of nationalism.

As striking as many of the augmented stereotypical colloquialisms or character coding may be in the TL text, even more telling are the instances where criticism of the US has been tempered from the SL text to the TL text. I've already discussed to what extent race plays a central role in both versions of the *bande dessinée*, and what truly marks the incisiveness of Hergé's work is a recurring focus on the plight of certain racial groups. As one might imagine, lightening the criticisms in such a work also centers on the question of race. Of course, due to the nature of *bande dessinée* as a visual medium, it would be impossible to eliminate all elements of criticism in the album without resorting to censorship and fundamentally changing portions of the story,<sup>203</sup> but the most severe

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<sup>203</sup> It is true that the translators had no authority to make changes to artwork. However, this is not to suggest that no changes were ever made to the artwork. Even before the current iteration was published in Europe, Hergé's artwork in *Tintin en Amérique* underwent various stylistic changes; most notably, the colorized 1946 second edition redrawn in Hergé's *ligne-claire* style. The artwork in publication today mostly comes from this edition. Even these changes had the effect of lightening the BD's critical severity; for instance, changing a panel depicting an American Indian begging for change under a tourism sign to an American Indian simply sitting wrapped in a blanket (see below). In the first edition, Hergé's criticisms of American

assessments of the US in the TL text have been softened via the one element entirely under the translators' control: language.

One such instance takes place when Tintin first arrives in Redskin City and walks into a shop to buy Western attire, leaving Milou outside. As Tintin enters the shop, Milou is approached by two dogs with feathers on their heads and tails, suggesting they are 'Amerindian' dogs. Visually, Milou is sitting very upright, his body turned away and his head facing back toward the dogs, as if he cannot be bothered to fully face them. His nose is turned up against them, his eyes closed. This body language should suggest Milou's standoffishness and sense of superiority.

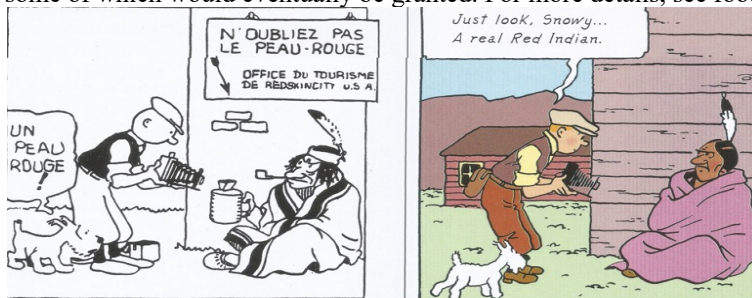


Figure 10: *Amérique* 16D2



Figure 11: *America* 162

treatment of indigenous peoples were severe, underscoring “how the circumstances of the proud natives of the continent had been reduced by the white man’s ‘civilization.’” The second *ligne-claire* edition suggests that even as early as 1946, some of these early criticisms were tempered. No further changes were made to the artwork of *Tintin en Amérique* until a few decades later at the request of Hergé’s American publishers, some of which would eventually be granted. For more details, see footnote 213 below.



Farr, *Tintin*, 31.

Insofar as one can attribute an ethnic identity to a dog, Milou is clearly positioned in this panel as a ‘white’ dog, contrasted against the ‘redskin’ dogs, who in addition to carrying feathers are both much darker in color. Milou’s body language and contrasting appearance to the ‘redskin’ dogs are clearly meant to represent the attitudes of white people toward American Indians. Representing encounters between these two groups of people, this cuts to the core of fractured relationships between Anglo-Americans and American Indians. Far from depicting a serendipitous encounter of American mythology, seen in other graphic media such as the Peanuts story *The Mayflower Voyagers*,<sup>204</sup> this meeting between Milou and the indigenous dogs portrays an uncomfortable truth about white settlers in North America and their attitudes toward indigenous peoples. This panel, small as it is, constitutes the first significant criticism of race relations the United States in *Tintin in Amérique*.<sup>205</sup>

The translators effect changes to the language in this panel that effectively minimize the severity of the SL text’s criticism. In his dialogue, Milou uses the phrase *se figurer (que)* that in English roughly yields *to think (that)* or *to imagine (that)*, but contextually more closely means *to delude oneself into thinking (that)*. Because this phrase has no direct equivalent in English, there is wide variation in the possible English translations. However, taking into account the meaning of the phrase as discussed, Milou’s dialogue glosses roughly in English to one of various potential translations:

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<sup>204</sup> Charles M. Schultz, writer, “The Mayflower Voyagers,” in *This is America, Charlie Brown*, October 21, 1988.

<sup>205</sup> It does seem odd that Milou would be used to express this fractured relationship. It may simply be a tongue-in-cheek manner of addressing more serious sociohistorical power structures. Indeed, Milou is (ironically enough) consistently used as the more “human” and fallible foil to Tintin’s moral and mental perfection. This is an evident strategy that Hergé uses to juxtapose different kind of behavior, as Milou will later demonstrate when he abandons Tintin out of fear, even berating himself for it.



*If they imagine that I will speak to redskin dogs!...*<sup>206</sup>

In addition to the vicious double entendre implicit in the phrase *redskin dogs*, all of the above translations retain Milou's incredulity at the notion that indigenous dogs would dare to interact with him. It is a fundamentally dehumanizing attitude.<sup>207</sup> If we are to take this interaction (or lack thereof) as emblematic of race relations in the United States, this represents a criticism levied against the historically dehumanizing attitudes held by white Americans toward indigenous peoples. If Milou's body language does not convey this meaning, his dialogue in the ST unquestionably does.

Here the translators deviate from their established practice of enhancing Hergé's language and instead take substantial liberties in reworking the text. The English of the SL text is completely different from its SL text counterpart; neither form nor effect nor meaning is retained, and Milou does not function the same way between the two versions of this panel.<sup>208</sup> Milou still undoubtedly conveys a sense of superiority in the TL text, an element inescapably borne out of his body language in the artwork, something which the translators must accommodate, and this carries forth in his language. However, the sense of superiority is of a different nature: more patronizing than outright hostile. In other words, Milou is presented as someone who might have something to teach the indigenous

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<sup>206</sup> This is probably one of the more literal possible translations, and it seems to precede the possible and implied second part of this phrase, ...*they've got another thing coming!* Other looser translations that are nevertheless rather close might look like any of the following:

*If they delude themselves into thinking that I will speak to redskin dogs!...*

*If they dare imagine that I will speak to redskin dogs!...*

*As if I would speak to redskin dogs!...*

*As if they'd delude themselves into thinking that I'd speak to redskin dogs!...*

Each of these translations carries various nuances and degrees of severity, some more incisive than others, but generally they all point to the same thing.

<sup>207</sup> This is perhaps forgivable only in the sense that the characters are not, after all, human. This demonstration of prejudice is relegated to the "dog kingdom," and provides an example of behavior that might be seen as unfit for people.

<sup>208</sup> Instead of turning up his nose at the notion of communicating with the indigenous dogs, he is presented as worldlier, knowing, and still somewhat standoffish and condescending but somehow more patronizing.

dogs. Carrying undertones of cultural exchange between white and indigenous people, this change not only mitigates the severity of criticism in the SL text, it implicitly plays off of and propagates the mythology of benevolence on the part of white Americans, insofar as they believe themselves to have brought worldliness or civilization to the American Indians.

While this case of European and indigenous contact is a telling example of softened criticism in relation to race in the US, there are even more compelling cases later in the text. This essay has discussed the problematic portrayal of race in Hergé's work and in the Lonsdale-Cooper/Turner translation. However, there is one noticeably absent racial group in both versions, visually in the SL text and entirely so in the TL text: black Americans. *Tintin en Amérique* was first published in the early 1930s, long before the Civil Rights Movement of the 50s and 60s.<sup>209,210</sup> Despite the establishment of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People about two decades prior in 1909,<sup>211</sup> black Americans were subjected to gross injustices at the hands of a white nationalist nation. The landmark Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education* would not declare school segregation unconstitutional until 1954, about eight years after the second *ligne-claire* edition of *Tintin en Amérique* was published. Initial publication and republication of the SL text occurred well before the events of the Civil Rights Movement,<sup>212</sup> during a time where black Americans were actively persecuted by the

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<sup>209</sup> Farr, *Tintin*, 29.

<sup>210</sup> Patricia Sullivan, "Civil Rights Movement," in *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience*, ed. by Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 1999), 446-55.

<sup>211</sup> Kate Tuttle, "National Association for the Advancement of Colored People," in *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience*, ed. by Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 1999), 1,388.

<sup>212</sup> For reference, Rosa Parks made her infamous stand on a Montgomery, Alabama bus in 1955, about nine years after the second edition of *Tintin en Amérique* had been published.

nation's laws. The second major reduction of criticism attenuates a moment in the SL text that references this persecution rather directly and even flippantly, which renders the criticism even more striking.

While there are no black characters included in the *bande dessinée* artwork,<sup>213</sup> black Americans are very briefly (but notably) mentioned a couple times in the SL text. More specifically, “nègres” are mentioned on page thirty-four after the *Banque de l'Ouest* (*Old West Bank* in the TL text) has been robbed, and a witness speaks to two law enforcement officers about the incident (see figures 12 and 13 below).



Figure 12: *Amérique* 34B2

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<sup>213</sup> There is a very specific reason for this. When *Tintin in America* was being considered for publication in the United States, Hergé's American publishers made two requests: the first, that every black character in the artwork be redrawn to look more Caucasian or Hispanic. It is not entirely clear why, but Frédéric Soumois in *Dossier Tintin* claims that this change to the artwork was requested because the American publishers did not want to encourage racial integration among children. It may simply be that the request was made to avoid any accusation of racist portrayals of black people as nannies, doormen, and gangsters. The latter explanation might be more compelling than the former, as by 1973 segregation had been de jure—if not de facto—illegal. Hergé ultimately acquiesced to this request, which is why no black characters appear in the most recent copies of *Tintin in America*. The second request concerned the moment in the text that most heavily criticizes the US, where American Indians are forcibly removed from their land to make way for rapid urban development. According to Benoît Peeters, Hergé was asked whether he would consider removing these scenes in the American edition. Hergé refused. This exposes another dimension to the concept of translation as a practice, in that the practice is comprised of more than linguistic transmission. Indeed, it includes cultural transmission as well that incorporates the visual and the textual. Hergé, *Tintin in America*, 29.

Benoît Peeters, *Tintin and the World of Hergé* (London: Methuen Children's Books, 1988), 36.

Frédéric Soumois, *Dossier Tintin: sources, versions, thèmes, structures* (Bruxelles: Éditions Jacques Antoine, 1987), 58-59.



Figure 13: America 34B2

The criticism is brief and casual, sandwiched among the rest of the dialogue in the SL text: “On a immédiatement pendu sept nègres, ...”<sup>214</sup> which is given in the TL text as “...we hung a few fellers right away...”<sup>215</sup> This is a subtle change, yet it speaks volumes. Perhaps it is the casual manner in which the man mentions the hanging of seven “nègres” in the SL text that is most disturbing,<sup>216</sup> but perhaps even more striking is the conscious effort to avoid this implied criticism altogether in the English version of this panel. The criticism of American lawlessness is still present in the TT, as the mention of the hanging of “a few fellers” is casually thrown out in front of law enforcement who do not seem to care, but the removal of any mention of black Americans effectively occults the critique of America’s violent racial oppression. Hergé’s critique here is clear: a society with law enforcement tasked with the protection of its people that does not bat an eye at such injustice plainly has a misaligned moral and aesthetic compass. However, the racial

<sup>214</sup> Hergé, *Amérique*, 34.

<sup>215</sup> Hergé, *America*, 34.

<sup>216</sup> Clearly, the intent is to demonstrate how, even in front of law enforcement, the callous and casual murder of black Americans is considered less noteworthy than the escape of a bank robber in the eyes of white Americans. This is a scathing appraisal not only of white America in general but also the warped priorities of American government and law enforcement who apparently find it more important to pursue a criminal offender who robbed a capitalist institution than to seek justice for the seven black Americans who were lynched.

dimension of the critique all but disappears in the TL text. In other words, where this panel is concerned, the US portrayed in the ST is blatantly racist and lawless. In the TT, however, the US is simply lawless.<sup>217</sup> This panel in the TT constitutes an unmistakable appraisal of American life, but a much less severe one especially considering the political climate surrounding the SL album's publication prior to the Civil Rights Movements in the United States.

These changes that deliver a softer blow to the American public in the TL than in the ST represent conscious decisions that indicate a high degree of contextual consideration in various dimensions (readership, author intent, etc.) on the part of the translators. As previously discussed, both Hergé and the translators mobilize the cultural currency of American popular culture, stereotypes, and prejudices in their work. In numerous cases, the translators amplify what already exists in Hergé's work with the help of language verisimilitude, a result of reader expectation that comes from a well-established and recognizable set of cultural stereotypes. In other places, the translators choose to eliminate an entire set of critiques to which an Anglo-American readership might object. The admonishing finger is replaced by humor. There is certainly more at stake than the popular utilitarian conception of translation work would acknowledge; indeed, the translation of *Tintin en Amérique* proves that translation can have high stakes.

### The Stake of Translation in Hergé

*Tintin in America* in its English TL edition is definitive proof of the translator's far-reaching influence in the socio-politics of media consumption, brought about as a

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<sup>217</sup> Or at least the "West" is.

result of the various transpositions and translations in language. The translators of *Tintin in America* accomplish two major tasks in their work: they (problematically) lighten the general tone of the work by enhancing and amplifying the various caricatures offered by Hergé while managing to attenuate the most severe of criticisms of the United States in Hergé's SL text. They do this by largely eliminating the most "objectionable" elements, such as black Americans. This results in a product that, in its most modern English editions, is markedly less critical of some of the most shameful facets of American history, in spite of Hergé's initial motivations for bringing Tintin to the United States.

Such a change in language register from the SL text to the TL text indicates that the translator's role in translating Hergé cannot be confined to a banal mechanical perception of what constitutes translation work. Indeed, the translators take advantage of well-established stereotypes and mobilize them to dialogue more directly with the TL readership. In the process, the translators double down on some of Hergé's racist portrayals of various ethnic groups, and indeed this indicates that the prejudice of the *translators*—not just Hergé's—is coming through in the TL text. This is a symbiotic relationship in the sense that these stereotypes rely upon established cultural currencies that can be reproduced for ready consumption by a readership who recognizes them. In this sense, the translator is constantly engaged not only with the author and his or her text, but with the reader as well.

It is easy (and not untrue) to say that the most problematic and questionable changes effected in *Tintin in America* are a product of their time. Standards for how minority groups are portrayed, particularly the most maligned racial and ethnic groups of the United States, have certainly undergone a major evolution. However, what is most

striking is that nearly four decades after *Tintin en Amérique*'s creation, the English translators have indeed taken it upon themselves to increase the most stereotypical, and indeed racist portrayals of various minority groups and ethnicities in American life for their American anglophone readers. As suggested above, this has the effect of creating an even stronger caricature of these groups, one based in well-established Anglo-American prejudices and mythologies. However, while the caricatures are often even more ridiculous than their TL counterparts, they also (perhaps inappropriately) add a tone of levity to the very serious questions of American race and socio-politics. Coupled with the very notable efforts to lighten harsh criticisms, this renders the text more palatable to American audiences who indeed may harbor some of these biases themselves.<sup>218</sup>

Mobilizing this cultural currency permits the translators to engage in a translation practice that does not simply regurgitate language (as in machine translation) but one that puts the reader in dialogue with the text in new ways that were not necessarily possible for a French readership at the time of *Amérique*'s publication. In this way, the translator is in possession of a multitude of tools that may or may not have been at the author's disposal but are nevertheless employed in reworking a text for a new readership.

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<sup>218</sup> One has to wonder to what degree things might be different today had the translation been done under different circumstances. The British translators of *Tintin in America*, though obviously fluent in English, are perhaps somewhat removed from some of the most sensitive elements of the problems addressed in Hergé's text. An American translator might approach some of these with more frankness (as does Hergé) may opt for more sensitivity or may choose to reproduce the same strategies used by Lonsdale-Cooper and Turner. A re-translation of this album employing different strategies would be a fascinating challenge rife with its own set of essential questions.

## CONCLUSION

In my analyses of *Persepolis*, *Tintin en Amérique*, and their respective English translations, it is clear that the roles of reader and author are consistently negotiated and even flouted in such a manner that a Barthesian dichotomy, while useful in its conceptualization of such roles, is not best equipped to characterize these roles with regard to translation. Indeed, Foucault lends a more helpful model to our ends in the form of the author-function, which is described as a coalescence of influence among others; inherently multiple and decentralized in rhizomatic fashion, this function asserts its influence on a text. Indeed, the theoretical question with Foucault is descriptive rather than prescriptive. In other words, Foucault problematizes the author by asking not whether the author *should* exert influence on a text, but rather how or to what degree he or she *does* exert such influence as an initiator of a discursive practice.

It is on this foundation that I have begun the development of the translator-function. Assigned its own agentive identity, it nevertheless overlaps in function with both author (or indeed author-function) and reader roles while also connecting and overlapping in rhizomatic fashion with language (naturally) and the text. Yet external factors matter to the translator-function as well. As Derrida tells us, translators do not perform linguistic equivalences in isolation. Indeed, historical translations help the translator understand not just etymology but the genealogy of translations, better informing him or her of the direction in which a text has gone and could potentially go in translation. For literary scholars like Derrida and translation scholars like Lefevere, Popovič and Even-Zohar, modern translation is an exercise of negotiation between cultures upon which potential limits of text and form are certainly a factor of



consideration but not a hard-and-fast barrier to innovation. Instead, it is incumbent upon the translator, or indeed the translator-function, to reconcile this factor among many others.

In my examination of *Persepolis*, the lines between the Barthesian reader and author are blurred. Instead of relying on such dichotomies and arborescent hierarchies of language and agency, the divergences of language between the SL and TL texts of *Persepolis* demonstrate that the translator is always on the threshold of the two roles. Indeed, the translator's main function is the negotiation of these roles via a consideration of a number of influences, including that of the author, the text, the artwork of the *bande dessinée*, the TL community, and historical translation among others. Indeed, the changes effected by Mattias Ripa in translating Satrapi indicate the first crucial element of the translator-function (modelled after Foucault's author-function): that it does not work in isolation or a vacuum. There is a constant shift not only in the agentive roles of the translator, but also in the many considerations, both internal and external, conscious and unconscious, that he or she reconciles in translation work.

In my analysis of the SL and TL editions of *Tintin en Amérique*, I further develop the translator-function as a decentralized and multiple agent of influence. In discussing historical translation studies' development of the concept of equivalence, and in turn mobilizing the relatively recent concept of a "cultural turn" in translation studies, I have demonstrated to what degree Leslie Lonsdale-Cooper and Michael Turner eschew one form of equivalence in favor of another; namely, abandoning formal and dynamic equivalence for equivalence in register, with a primary focus on the TL culture. Indeed, the translators of *Tintin in America* transform the text for the express purpose of

assimilating the work to the expectations of the target culture; namely, Anglo-Americans. The translators perform this work via three types of cultural turns: 1) a stereotypical enhanced caricature of criminal characters that relies on preestablished Anglo- American cultural currency, 2) a similar amplification of stereotypes based on racial prejudices, particularly those that can be enhanced linguistically, and 3) a notable and systematic reduction of criticisms levied against the United States in moments of the text where race relations and societal values are most questionable. Each one of these cultural turns represents a pivot away from the long-established habit in translation of seeking some kind of linguistic or effect equivalence. Instead, the translator elects to adapt the language patterns of various characters to the expectations and cultural values of the target culture by mobilizing a dialogue whose cultural currency is well-established by the time *Tintin en Amérique* is translated into English.

In this thesis, I have demonstrated two main things where the translator-function is concerned: first, that the translator-function's influence is not limited to the page of the SL text, the TL text, nor even the author. Indeed, as Lefevere tells us, the translator is both a unifier of influences and is himself or herself a coalescence and result of circumstantial influences such as time, place, and other cultural elements that act upon one's identity. The picture is even larger when the international network of publishing industries is considered, for there is hardly a viable market for literary translation work without a demand for work originally published for another language community. In this arena, agents that are completely outside of the strictly logistic process of translation exert authority, either consciously in the form of editors and publishers, or unconsciously in the form of normative social influences in the target community. Some translators,

such as Lonsdale-Cooper and Turner orient their work toward the latter and transform their texts for function in a particular way for the target culture.

This latter phenomenon leads to the second major development where the translator-function is concerned: that translators are creative socio-political agents whose work is not simply a rote reproduction of text, nor is it merely a linguistic exercise. Translators, and indeed the translator-function, are essentially the gatekeepers of trans-linguistically transmitted literature. Their function incorporates not only an interpretive act, but also a productive and creative one in which the translator determines the function of a text in one language community, and decides how the text ought to function, particularly to what degree that function ought to remain the same or diverge depending on the expectations or cultural values of the target readers. This has the effect of adapting and transforming texts across languages. The sooner we acknowledge this fact of translation, the sooner we can speak to the question of cultural address in translation studies more effectively. In essence, it must be acknowledged that the translator-function is just as much of a creative and artistic socio-political agent as the author-function.

In some translated works, even in many translated *bande dessinée* such as *Persepolis*,<sup>219</sup> translation is an exercise in finding innovative equivalences whereas in *Tintin*, translation is a demonstration of the sociopolitical ramifications of cross-linguistic and trans-cultural transmission. Both demonstrate the dynamic and multifaceted role of the translator-function in scope of its creative agencies and its social and political influence.

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<sup>219</sup> Such as the case of *Astérix chez les Bretons* as discussed in the footnotes of chapter two.

As has been stated in the body of this thesis, the phenomena outlined in this study are not completely novel to the practice and products of translation. Translators have enacted these roles and influenced the dissemination of media for centuries. However, it is certain that past translation scholarship has not moved quickly enough toward a more descriptive approach to the characterization of the translator figure within literary studies. It is even possible that modern translation studies have not yet properly grasped these phenomena and effectively theorized them. This is the goal of the translator-function, and it is one that merits further development, not only in *bande dessinée* but in other realms of literature as well.

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