

2012

# Translation and Interpretation: In Search of a Certain Je Ne Sais Quoi

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## Recommended Citation

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Translation and Interpretation: In Search of a Certain

Je ne Sais Quoi

Katherine Marie Parker

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Prerequisite for Honors in  
Comparative Literature

April 2012

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Translator, traitor. —Italian proverb

Translation presents not only a paradigm but the upmost case of engaged literary interpretation.

—John Felstiner

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor Thomas Nolden and the Comparative Literature department for their support, encouragement, and general helpfulness this year. I would also like to thank Professor Elizabeth Young and the Classics department for introducing me to translation studies as well as Professor Lawrence Rosenwald and the English department for helping me to explore my ideas. Their support, encouragement, advice, and flexibility throughout this process, as well as for their help in finding secondary sources, which has undoubtedly made my work and this collection of essays richer. I would also like to thank Professor Catherine Masson and Professor James Noggle for advising me throughout my time at Wellesley.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for supporting and encouraging me this year, and my friends the small potatoes, Adeline, Anisha, Darcy, Esther, Kerry, Laura, Mika, Patrick, and Susan, for serving as tireless sounding boards, careful proofreaders, curious listeners and sound critics.

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## Introduction

Translation has proved a divisive subject since before the first translations of the Catholic Bible were produced. In his “Letter to Pammachius,” written in 395, St. Jerome complains that he is called a false translator because he did not translate the bible “word for word,” (Jerome, 22), but instead “sense for sense” (Jerome, 23). The argument between word for word, or literal translations, and sense for sense, or free translations continues to persist. Proponents of literal translation argue that a translation ought to be as rooted in the source culture as possible, since this is the culture that produced it and gives it significance. Proponents of free translation argue that the point of any translation is to affect a new reader, therefore any references that either do not make sense within the context of the target culture or language ought to be changed to an expression that does. Although this dichotomy allows students of translation theory to sort translations and theories into one camp or the other, it suggests an extreme that does not exist and encourages the production of extreme, unreadable translations. Rather than becoming stranded within or between these points of view, translations should attempt to strike a balance between upholding and honoring the author’s work, choices and culture, and creating something that can be read, understood and embraced by those who will be reading it.

I chose to study translations of the first chapter of Marcel Proust’s novel *À la recherche du temps perdu*, “Combray” as a lens through which to study and compare translation for several reasons. First, there are several translations of “Combray” each of which comes from a different period. This means that each translation uses different mechanisms, offering more mechanisms to study. Second, despite its being only a chapter of the first volume of *À la recherche du temps perdu*, “Combray” has a complete narrative arc, with plot points that each of the conventional translators hit upon, making the translations easy to compare. Third, in addition to the “standard”

translations, there are two unorthodox translations of “Combray,” creating a spectrum of translations. Finally, “Combray”’s translators tend to aim either to reproduce the original text or to greatly alter it. However, this results in incomplete translations; translations that do not represent the original text in the first case and translations that do not connect well to a wide audience in the latter. By looking at translations of “Combray” into English, we can see the shortcomings of standard translation methods. Rather than attempting to achieve either one or the other of these goals, translators must work in between the two, balancing both the needs of the readers and the integrity of the original work.

I chose to work with five translations of “Combray” to explore the idea of interpretation and adaptation as translation. Although there are other translations available, these represent the greatest diversity of texts. The first is Lydia Davis’ 2003 adaptation, *The Way by Swann’s*, which is the most faithful to the original text. Interestingly, thanks one of Christopher Pendergast’s executive decisions, Davis is the only translator I studied who translated all of *Du côté de chez Swann* but no more of *À la recherche du temps perdu*. I then turned to the first translation of *À la recherche du temps perdu*, Charles Kenneth Scott-Moncrieff’s *Remembrance of Things Past* and DJ Enright’s revision of this text, *In Search of Lost Time*. I then turned my attention to less typical translations: Harold Pinter’s *The Proust Screenplay* and Georges Perec’s *35 Variations sur un theme de Proust*.

Along with these translations, I worked with discussions of translation theory in order to focus my essays on translations around theory. Because of the abundance of theory surrounding translation, only a few are considered in this portfolio—Kwame Anthony Appiah’s “Thick Translation,” Itamar Even-Zohar’s “Polysystem Theory”, Eugene Nida’s “Equivalence Theory” and Roman Jakobson’s expansion of traditional conceptions of translation to include what might

otherwise be termed adaptation. Although there are many theories that deserve study, I selected these because they highlight certain aspects and mechanisms of the translations I studied. In my presentation of theories, I aimed to be as global as possible, touching on the positive and negative aspects of its prescriptions. On the whole, I find theoretical discussions of translation interesting, but most seem to miss the mark, suggesting means of translation, that, when taken to the extreme, would produce unreadable texts, doing credit neither to the author nor to the translator. Instead, translations should balance faithfully adapting the original's words and sense, bearing in mind that any reading of a text, and any translation, therefore, is based not in formulas but in interpretation.

### Thick Translation

Questions of translation's role and methodology have been approached in many ways. In his essay "Thick Translation," Kwame Anthony Appiah considers translation as a tool for teaching and for intercultural interactions. Appiah begins his essay by presenting proverbs in Akan, a dialect spoken in Ghana, along with literal translations of these proverbs into English. Using these proverbs and this type of translation as a starting point, Appiah argues that literal, or "gloss" (Appiah, 389), translations are insufficient in that they do not provide the reader with enough context to be able to engage with the text and the source culture. This argument is an expansion of the argument that a translation should move the reader towards the source text and culture: Appiah argues that the reader needs to move out of his or her culture to appreciate the text and the culture it came out of.

Appiah begins his discussion by musing on what literature's role is. He quotes Roland Barthes: "l'enseignement de la littérature' est pour moi presque tautologique. La littérature, c'est ce qui enseigne, un point c'est tout" (Appiah, 398)—for Barthes, "the teaching of literature" is almost a tautology because literature teaches on its own. Appiah concludes that, "what counts as a fine translation of a literary text—which is to say a taught text—is that it should preserve for us the features that make it worth teaching" (Appiah, 398). Moving a text towards the source culture may make a text more accessible to an audience, but it also risks losing the qualities that make the original text important, innovating, or simply interesting.

Appiah proposes that, "the text exists as linguistic, as historical, as commercial, as political event and while each of these ways of conceiving the very same object provides opportunities for pedagogy...opportunities between which we must choose" (Appiah, 398). The characteristics of a text that need to be preserved in a translation are not determined a priori, but

need to be selected by the translator. That being said, the translator must decide which of these possibilities to highlight in the translation and then translate the faithfully and situate the target audience in the linguistic, historical, commercial, or political context to highlight these events and draw the reader towards the source culture, imparting the same meaning on the target audience as the original did on the source audience.

Appiah further pushes his readers to think critically about the value of translation when he notes that, “translation aims to be of use in literary teaching...translation that seeks with its annotations and its accompanying glosses to locate the text in a rich cultural context and linguistic context, is eminently worth doing” (Appiah, 399). Appiah makes two points: first, he underlines that the primary point of translation ought to be pedagogic. Second, he makes the aspects and mechanisms of thick translation explicit: it is a mode of translation in which the translator annotates the text to situate the reader in a context and explain phrases that do not make sense.

Although Appiah’s proposal that all translations should move the reader towards the source culture in order that the reader may have a complete understanding of the text, this mode of translation poses several problems that Appiah does not account for. Most obviously, it is difficult for anyone to read a word for word translation and to comb through footnotes in order to understand what the author wants to say; this is especially true for students of any age. Appiah’s argument also pre-supposes two linguistic systems in which there is no way to produce in the target audience a meaning or effect equal to that produced by the original in the source audience except through the extensive use of footnotes. This pre-supposition, dangerous in and of itself, also ignores the possibility that a phrase may have an important meaning to a target audience outside of the meaning for the source audience that may have prompted the translator to

translate; this argument invalidates any independent meaning in the target audience and imposes the typical hierarchy between original text and translated text. Finally, Appiah assumes that any author or translator can control his or her audience, that the meaning and value that one reader sees in a text will be identical to the meaning and value all other readers see in it, and that this homogeneity should be preserved.

## Slow Boat to Normandy

Lydia Davis' translation of *Du Côté de chez Swann*, *The Way by Swann's* is both the most recent translation and is updated from earlier translations. Although CK Scott Moncrieff's version is considered "the standard translation" (Singer, 211), this translation is "plainer and more direct than Moncrieff's, in part because his individual word choices are so often 'dressier'" (Davis, xxxiii). Davis attempts to "reproduce the French without adding or subtracting material, or substituting an interpretation for what was on the original page" (Davis, xxii). Davis does not wish to bring the text to the reader, but the reader to the text exactly as it is portrayed in the original<sup>1</sup>. She accomplishes this in two ways: first, she creates a formal equivalence—which attempts to move the reader towards the source text by upholding form and style—by mirroring the form, word choice, and length of the original in her translation; second, Davis creates a thick translation—a type of translation which suggests that certain phrases are only possible within the context and constructs of the source culture—by footnoting specific aspects of French culture and discourse and retaining French language in certain areas in order to explain and move the text to the reader rather than the reader to the text.

Davis establishes a formal equivalence with the original in many ways, indicating to the reader that the source text and culture is foreign through her word and spelling choice. This choice repeatedly reminds the reader that the text is of French origin, and pushes the reader towards the source culture. Davis' translation of the title, *The Way by Swann's*, is an alternate to the more recognizable *Swann's Way*. Davis' version may be slightly closer to the meaning of the original—the reference is not to a path that Swann owns, after all, but to a path that passes

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<sup>1</sup> This does not mean that it is what Davis calls in a Paris Review article "halfway there", a translation that is no longer French but not contemporary English (Paris Review, 68). Rather, by using English a certain way, Davis emphasizes that she is translating, while maintaining readability.

Swann's home. Despite its close approximation of the original meaning, this alternate interpretation also sounds slightly off; perhaps because the 'standard' translation is so well known, perhaps because this seems an odd use of the genitive. This unexpected title performs a function: it immediately signals to the reader that this text is not grounded in the English language or literary tradition. Davis continues on this theme of moving the reader towards an acknowledgement of the foreign throughout the novel. The narrator describes his aunt's relationship with her maid, Françoise, as that of "quarry and hunted" (Davis, 119), rather than the more common and natural sounding expression "predator and prey". This decision is jarring, and reminds the reader of the text's inherent foreignness<sup>2</sup>. Davis also uses words with French language roots. The narrator says that he and his family often walk "in the environs of Combray" (Davis, 135); this marks the text as French, without making the text incomprehensible. This kind of subtle choice reveals Davis' desire to move the target audience as much toward the source text and culture as possible.

Davis urges the reader to recall that source text and culture are specifically French (not generally foreign) by rigidly translating, almost transliterating, into English. Early in "Combray," Davis' narrator describes Swann's wife as a "cocotte" (Davis, 24), just as Proust's narrator does (Proust, 20). This adherence to form sacrifices meaning: in French, *cocotte* refers to "a loose woman", the English definition, "a fashionable prostitute" is much more explicit and drives the reader away from the range of meanings connoted in the original in the name of strict formal equivalence. Similarly, Davis chooses to directly translate Proust's use of "protozoaires" (Proust, 49) as "protozoa" (Davis, 52). By rigidly translating, Davis emphasizes the source text over her own writing and moves the reader towards Proust's text and the source culture.

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<sup>2</sup> It should be noted, however, that Davis' fidelity to the source text comes at the expense of easy reading. Given the density and difficulty of the original, however, perhaps this was Davis' goal.

Davis continues to maintain formal equivalence by mimicking Proust's punctuation. The narrator's family discovers that Swann's social life is more than he led them to believe when they see that he "is 'front page news' in the *Figaro*" (Davis, 25). Unable to coherently transliterate the French phrase, "Swann a 'les honneurs' du *Figaro*" (Proust, 22), Davis retains the quotation marks around "front page news" despite the unorthodoxy of this stylistic choice in English as a reminder that the source of the text and its grammatical style is foreign, rather than specifically French. Although this decision does move the reader away from the target culture, it serves to remind the reader that the text is foreign and in translation rather than French. Davis also retains punctuation errors found in the original, rather than adapt the description to English language norms in an attempt to remind the reader that the text is foreign. When describing the town of Combray, Proust's narrator says, "l'église...dominait sur la Place...(qui) serait une entrée en contact avec l'Au-delà" (Proust, 48); Davis translates this as "the church rose above...on the Square...to enter into contact with the Beyond" (Davis, 51). More than the precise word for word translation, Davis pulls the reader towards the source text by copying Proust's stylistic decisions. These choices, made in order to comply with the goal of being as faithful to the text as possible, do not move the reader away from the target culture to the source culture. Instead, given grammar's universal use, it moves the reader away from the target culture to an abstract foreign source<sup>3</sup>.

In the same vein, Davis mimics the grammatical rules of French in her translation. The narrator recalls his sense of guilt and loss after his uncle stops inviting him. The narrator says, "I was filled with all the pain, the gratitude, the remorse that I would have liked to express" (Davis,

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<sup>3</sup> It would be fair to argue that this extreme faithfulness to the original not only doesn't move the reader towards the source culture, it also might detract readers from continuing, or encourage the belief that French literature is incomprehensible or untranslatable

82). In English, it is commonplace to list nouns without an article; in French, however, it is considered incorrect for a noun to appear without an article. The retention of the articles jars the reader, as it is uncommon in English, and serves as a reminder that the text is, at its root, not English. Similarly, Davis translates “il y a une jolie qualité de silence, n’est-ce pas?” (Proust, 125) as “This silence has a nice quality, does it not?” (Davis, 128). Although most of the sentence is translated to sound natural in English, Davis uses the phrase “does it not?” rather than the more natural sounding “don’t you think?” or “do you agree?” to copy the style of Proust’s question. Davis sacrifices naturalness in order to maintain a formal equivalence with the source text and to indicate to the reader that the characters are foreign. This sacrifice is perhaps unnecessary. Davis is committed to retaining so much of the original in her translation that it approaches a highly manipulated form of unreadable English.

Davis takes her dedication to discord in the name or reminding the reader of the text’s foreignness to an extreme when the narrator recalls his morning routine in Combray: “I had not been with my aunt for five minutes before she would send me away” (Davis, 55). Whereas Proust conjugated both verbal phrases to the imperfect (Proust, 51)—which indicates an incompleting past action, Davis conjugates the first to past perfect—which indicates a less recent action that has bearing on a more recent past action—and the second to imperfect. Although Davis deviates from the form of the original, her choice to alter the modes in this phrase makes the text sound foreign and forces the reader to remember that the novel is foreign.

The most obvious mechanism Davis employs to move the reader to the source culture is her decision to abstain from translating parts of the text. At first, it seems as though Davis has

left only titles and names in French<sup>4</sup> (Davis, 18, 23, 51); all else seems to be in English. However, most idioms, songs, and quotations happen in French, an anomaly in an otherwise completely translated text. When Davis' narrator quotes Racine, he says, "Le bonheur des méchants comme un torrent s'écoule" (Davis, 110), copying the original word for word (Proust, 107). Again, when a family friend quotes Paul Desjardins, "Les bois sont déjà noirs, le ciel est encore bleu" (Davis, 121), Davis does not translate the entire text into English; instead, she leaves reminders that the text comes from a French source. Although Davis provides footnotes to explain each of the phrases (Davis, 434, 435), she forces the reader to turn away from the narrative in order to glean all the necessary information, aggressively reminding the reader that the culture and family in question are French, and so is the text. Similarly, when the narrator's grandfather sings in Davis' version, he sings in French: "Archers, faites bonne garde/Veuillez sans trêve et sans bruit.... De ce timide Israélite/Quoi, vous guidez ici les pas" (Davis, 93). Once again, Davis refrains from interpretation by translation; she simply rewrites the original phrase as it appears in the original (Proust, 90). The effect of this choice is that the reader is reminded that the family sings in, and presumably speaks in French, and that we are merely fortunate observers of a foreign land.

Davis' decision to refrain from translating certain phrases could also be understood as a thick translation. By refusing to translate, Davis valorizes the source text and moves the reader towards the source culture, suggesting that a complete translation is impossible because the text is a product of French language and culture. However, she also attempts to explain certain aspects of this culture to the reader through footnotes.

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<sup>4</sup> This is one place where all three translators translate in the same way because they are all following a convention. Nevertheless, the way Davis builds on this convention illustrates her desire to align as closely as possible with the original.

Davis' footnotes function in two ways: either they provide information about references made in the text or they provide the reader with information that is lost in translation. While both types give the reader a cultural background with which to understand the text, those in the first group are meant to help the reader identify people and quotations. One such example occurs as the narrator attempts to describe Françoise as a cunning and merciless creature, "like the hymenopteron observed by Fabre" (Davis, 125). Accompanying this categorization is a footnote that leads the reader to an explanation of who Fabre is (Davis, 435). This footnote is instructive; its inclusion indicates that it is too obscure for a contemporary non-French reader to understand; it provides the reader a cultural, social context without bearing on the process of translation<sup>5</sup>.

However, other footnotes clarify information lost in translation by providing information unique to the text and reminding the reader what the text's source is. When Françoise chastises the narrator for not grieving for his aunt, she says, "there's a proper respect we owe to our kith and kindred" (Davis, 155); to compare, the original reads "il reste toujours le respect qu'on doit à la parentèse" (Proust, 152). On its own, this phrase demonstrates to the reader Françoise's lack of education, but does not have the same humor that the French phrase carries, because English does not permit the same word play that French does. To remedy this lack, Davis explains in a footnote, "The humor of Françoise's mistake is more evident in the original. Instead of *parenté*, 'family,' 'relations,' she says *parentèse*, 'parenthesis' (Davis, 436). This note moves the reader towards the source text by supplying enough information for a reader of the translation to understand and appreciate the pun the way a reader of the original could.

Similarly, when Legrandin daydreams about "Ar-mor" (Davis, 132), Davis provides a footnote to explain what seems to be gibberish: "Ar-mor is the Celtic name for Brittany, meaning

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<sup>5</sup> The process of going to look at a footnote, however, can be disagreeable or tedious, especially for a reader who is interested in what happens, rather than how it is expressed.

‘on the sea’” (Davis, 435). This explanation gives the reader a sophisticated understanding of France and insight into Legrandin that would otherwise have been lost in the translation. Davis also makes use of footnotes to draw the reader’s attention to phrases that seem meaningless. A woman exclaims of the narrator “‘He’ll be a perfect *gentleman*...Couldn’t he come have a *cup of tea* with me sometime?’” (Davis, 80) (emphasis Davis’). Davis’ use of italics signals to the reader that there is something innocuous about the use of “gentleman” here; Davis explains in the footnotes “‘gentleman’ is in English in the original, as is ‘cup of tea’” (Davis, 433). Davis uses footnotes to explain an aspect of the original that is lost in the English. Her use of footnotes in this way draws the reader to the source culture by helping the reader to understand the minutiae of Proust’s bourgeois French culture while simultaneously drawing the reader away from the text and into a series of socio-cultural commentaries and explanations.

Lydia Davis makes singular decisions in *The Way by Swann’s*. Unlike other translators who have engaged in a cultural tug-of-war, Davis drives the reader towards the source culture in by engaging in a theoretical tug-of-war. Rather than choose one method of translation, Davis creates both a formal equivalence with the text and a thick translation, providing the foreign reader with information when necessary and allowing the original text to speak through her version when it needs no explanation. Davis uses these mechanisms effectively together and separately to send her readers across the Atlantic and back in time to Proust’s France. By refraining from almost all non-necessary translations and interpretations into English, however, Davis promotes French over English, reiterates the hierarchy of source and translated texts and ultimately risks losing readers. Although her translation is beautifully crafted, it one begins to wonder for whom she is translating.

### A Part of Something

Although many theorists consider what translation should be or should do, Itamar Even-Zohar is interested in looking at translation through another lens. In his essay, “The Position of Translated Literature within the Literary Polysystem,” Even-Zohar looks at literature as a collection of systems and suggests that translated literature is both one of these systems and is affected by them. By polysystem, Even-Zohar means a “heterogeneous, hierarchized conglomerate...of systems which interact which interact to bring about an ongoing, dynamic process of evolution within the polysystem as a whole” (Munday, 108). This view of literary translation as a part of a larger social framework represents a break from other theories in that it attempts to describe rather than condone modes of translation, which makes it particularly useful in explaining and studying translations.

Even-Zohar suggests that “not only is the socio-literary status of translation dependant upon its position within the polysystem, but the very practice of translation is also strongly subordinated to that position” (204). To understand the way translated literatures function, it is useful to look at what is happening in other literary systems. Even-Zohar argues that the system of translated literature may have a peripheral role in the polysystem or a central one; regardless, they are always influenced by the systems that make up the polysystem, and may in turn influence the polysystem after they have been translated.

Translated works are influenced by a larger system “in the way their source texts are selected by the target literature...and...in the way they adopt specific norms, behaviors, and policies” (Even-Zohar, 199). Translation does not operate in a bubble; rather, texts are chosen to be translated because they work well with the established norms of the culture and systems into which they are being translated, as well as for their success in other systems. However, translated

works may also influence the systems into which they are adopted: “translated literature maintains a central position in the literary polysystem...it participates actively in shaping the center of the polysystem” (Even-Zohar, 200). Once a translation has been absorbed into a system, it exerts an influence on other texts by cementing norms and expectations of literature. Once established within the target system, there is “no clear-cut distinction...maintained between ‘original’ and ‘translated’ writings” (Even-Zohar, 200). Contrary to what many theorists posit, Even-Zohar suggests either that in many instances of translation, the hierarchy between source material and translated version—that the source material deserves more praise by virtue of its being an original creation, whereas the translated text is an unfaithful reproduction—does not exist. This circumstance, however, can only arise when translated literature is the not in competition with other systems for a central role in the polysystem.

Even-Zohar continues to outline three circumstances that allow translated literature to take up a central role in the polysystem. First, he suggests, “when a polysystem has not yet been crystallized...when a literature is ‘young,’ in the process of being established” (Even-Zohar, 200), that is, when a literary system does not have literature by virtue of the fact that it is a new system, it will adopt literature in translation to establish itself as a literary system. Second, Even-Zohar suggests translated literature may play an important role within a polysystem “when a literature is either ‘peripheral’...or ‘weak,’ or both” (Even-Zohar, 200). As in the first circumstance, when a literary system senses a lack—either in the production of literary texts or in the innovations of existing texts—it will attempt to fill the void with translated texts and preserve its status as a system. Finally, Even-Zohar suggests that translated literature may play an important role in the polysystem “when there are turning points, crises or literary vacuums in a literature” (Even-Zohar, 201); when “established modes are no longer tenable for a younger

generation” (ibid), the literary system cannot produce literature that will engender sales or the continuation of the literary system, translated literature may infiltrate and “assume a central position” (ibid) in the polysystem and influence change within the system.

In most cases, however, translation “constitutes a peripheral system within the polysystem” (Even-Zohar, 202). In this case, translated literature does not greatly influence other systems in the polysystem:

In such a situation it...has no influence on major processes is modeled according to norms already conventionally established by an already dominant type of literature. Translated literature becomes in this case a major factor of conservatism. While the contemporary literature might go on developing new norms and models, translated literature adheres to norms which have been rejected...by the...center...A highly interesting paradox manifests itself here: translation, by which new ideas, items, characteristics can be introduced into a literature, becomes a means to preserve traditional taste (Even-Zohar, 202)

When a literary system is established and is not experiencing a void or lack of literature,

translated literature does not take a central role in the polysystem because it is not needed—the literary system produces enough literature that is acceptable enough to other systems, younger readers and the avant-garde in particular, that the system is able to ensure its own longevity.

When this is the case, translated literature does not adopt either the innovations of the literary system from which it originates (as it would if the target system is young, weak, or experiencing a void) or the innovations of the system into which it is adopted. However, even when translated literature constitutes a peripheral system, it still exerts an influence on the polysystem. Rather than bringing innovation to the polysystem, translated literature may help maintain the status quo by conforming to traditional tastes and expectations. This is certainly the case of CK Scott-Moncrieff’s translation of *À la recherche du temps perdu*.

Polysystem theory is unique in its refusal to suggest a mode of translation. Although this might suggest that the theory is lacking, it is a useful tool in understanding why a translation has

certain characteristics and places translation in the context of other movements rather than isolating it.

### And That is Good English<sup>6</sup>

Marcel Proust and his mammoth novel, *À la recherche du temps perdu* have achieved just as much fame in the English-speaking world as in francophone countries, a status no doubt due to Charles Kenneth Scott-Moncrieff's contemporary translation of the first six volumes of Proust's colossal tome. In fact, many of Scott-Moncrieff's readers "thought that the translated *Remembrance of Things Past* surpassed the original" (Lubow). This belief, however, does not account for the fact that Scott-Moncrieff's rendition has many "inaccuracies" (Lubow), from "misreadings, grammatical mistakes, superfluous embellishments...Anglicisms...[and] polite Edwardian euphemisms" (Singer) to a purposeful mistranslation of the title *À la recherché du temps perdu* to *Remembrance of Things Past* rather than *In Search of Lost Time* in the hope that this title, a reference to Shakespeare's Sonnet 30, would be more appealing to British audiences. In many ways, Scott-Moncrieff's translation might more accurately be called an adaptation: on the macro level of paragraph structure, it does not follow Proust's famous long sentences; on the micro-level, the words Scott-Moncrieff chose do not have the same meaning or connotations as Proust's French. Nevertheless, it was hailed as a success in Britain (Lubow), and the effect it produced mirrored that of the original. Scott-Moncrieff sacrifices strict fidelity to Proust's original in his translation in order to move the characters across the Channel and affect his English readers.

A macro-level comparison of Proust's "Combray" and Scott-Moncrieff's rendition of the chapter betrays significant changes to the original. These changes superimpose ideas of how the text functions or ought to function and detract from the form's support of the plot. On the most basic level, Proust's paragraphs are crammed together, each following the next, leaving as little

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<sup>6</sup> Shakespeare, 5.2.3270

space as possible on the page. By contrast, Scott-Moncrieff's version is significantly wider spaced, with an entire line free between the paragraphs. This could well be the decision of an editor or a publisher, but it reveals different expectations of each language and in each society. The chapter is also constructed differently in the translation than it is in the original. Proust splits "Combray" into two sections, whereas Scott-Moncrieff separates the first thirty-six pages of his translation from the rest of the chapter, calling his two sections "Overture" and "Combray", respectively, creating an unfounded hierarchy. Most tangibly, Proust's sentences and paragraphs are generally long: although his first and second sentences are of normal length, even bordering on short, his second sentence has four commas, three semi-colons and a colon, and takes up eight lines on the page (Proust, 3). Scott-Moncrieff's third sentence has nine commas, one semi-colon and one colon, and takes up a little more than five lines (Scott-Moncrieff, 1). Although he is using more punctuation, Scott-Moncrieff uses the extra commas to create an appositive and to create pauses in the sentence. Proust uses commas to separate clauses and uses semi-colons to separate thoughts, which makes the original sentence feel like a series of fragmented, passing thoughts, whereas Scott-Moncrieff's version feels more standardized, sterilized even, and less plausible as the musings of an insomniac. By strictly adhering to conventional English grammar and punctuation rules instead of mimicking the original, Scott-Moncrieff cannot recapture Proust's innovations. Although this indicates a degree of creativity not found in other English translations, Scott-Moncrieff's changes force the text to conform to standards and norms that obscure Proust's innovations<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> This is reminiscent of Even-Zohar's comment that when literary translation operates with a well established literary system, translated texts often promote antiquated norms rather than the innovations found in the original text or in the literary system itself.

Scott-Moncrieff's changes are also quite apparent at a micro-level comparison. Even in his introductions of the characters in "Combray"—the narrator, his family, and their friends—Scott-Moncrieff describes altered roles, relationships, and personas through seemingly insignificant changes in word choice. Both narrators describe the evening routine in Combray and the changes to the routine when a visitor comes. Proust's narrator comments, "Le monde se bornait habituellement à M. Swann" (Proust, 13), whereas Scott-Moncrieff's informs the reader, "Our 'guests' were practically limited to M. Swann" (Scott-Moncrieff, 8). Scott-Moncrieff's phrase is correct, but relies on a correct use of language and lacks Proust's word play: "se borner" is usually translated as "to limit, to confine," and is used exclusively in the form "se borner à quelque chose," to content (someone) with something. Proust shifts the standard structure to "se borner à quelqu'un," to content (someone) with somebody. Furthermore, Proust's sentence makes the world ("le monde"), the outside, extraneous forces, an active participant in the process of bringing a guest, whereas Scott-Moncrieff confines the action to the guests, M. Swann in particular, and the family. While Proust's original sentence suggests both passivity and fulfillment (a different translation to get at this notion might be "the world contented us regularly with M. Swann"), Scott-Moncrieff's version makes human beings more active but also portrays limitation suggesting that the family was used to or expected to receive more visitors after dinner.

Scott-Moncrieff continues to alter interpersonal relationships as his narrator describes how M. Swann comes to dinner. Proust says that the neighbor would come "à l'improviste" (Proust, 13), that is, unexpectedly or without warning (improvisationally, perhaps). Scott-Moncrieff chooses "uninvited" (Scott-Moncrieff, 8), which conveys the same surprise that Proust's original sentence does, but it lacks the familiar energy of the original, and makes the

family and M. Swann less involved in the action, and suggests that M. Swann's visit is not welcome.

The narrators explain the family's connection to M. Swann in similar terms and make their way to the family's discovery of Swann's social status, which is much higher than they previously believed. According to Proust's original narrator, the family's understanding of society is that nothing, except "une carrière exceptionnelle ou un mariage inespéré" (Proust, 16) could result in upward movement. Scott-Moncrieff translates this sentiment as "a brilliant career or a 'good' marriage" (Scott-Moncrieff, 10). Although his translation of "une carrière exceptionnelle" as "a brilliant career" is spot on, Scott-Moncrieff loses the sense of a marriage that is heaven sent that "inespéré" (un-hoped for) connotes when he translates it as merely a "'good' marriage". This choice suggests that such a marriage is more possible than in Proust's original sentence, indicating either that English society was more mobile than contemporary French society or that Scott-Moncrieff and his English readers believed that French society was more mobile than Proust intones.

Proust's wordplay continues as he reveals to the readers Swann's true social status. The narrator explains that unbeknownst to his family Swann, whom they suppose is incapable of having any acquaintances outside of their own sphere, is "un des membres les plus élégants du Jockey-Club" (Proust, 15). Scott-Moncrieff translates this as "one of the smartest members of the Jockey Club" (Scott-Moncrieff, 10). Scott-Moncrieff's word for word translation in this case does a disservice to Proust's original. To a French reader, "Jockey Club" would instantly register as foreign and as a slang word, used by a particular type of man in society. By using the same words instead of finding a slang phrase, Scott-Moncrieff resists playing with language, resists acknowledging an "other," and only valorizes English upper-middle class society.

Eventually, the family learns what Swann's true station is. In translating the story, Scott-Moncrieff remains faithful in word choice and in feeling to the original, though he does alter the dialogue's format. In reworking the result of this revelation, however, Scott-Moncrieff again shifts the reader towards English norms. His word choices, which at first seem insignificant, alter the family's dynamics and individual personalities just enough to make them seem more English and less French. Proust's narrator shows his mother trying to bond with Swann by talking about his daughter. When her husband interrupts, she says in a low tone, "Nous reparlerons d'elle quand nous serons tous les deux.... Il n'y a qu'une maman qui soit digne de vous comprendre" (Proust, 24). Scott-Moncrieff renders this exchange as "'We can talk about her again when we are by ourselves,' she said, or rather whispered to Swann. 'It is only a mother who can understand'" (Scott-Moncrieff, 17). There are several important differences in the two phrases. In the original, the narrator's mother promises to bring the subject up again—reparler is conjugated to the future tense, so the mother is saying "we will talk about her again", whereas Scott-Moncrieff takes the pressure off Swann and makes the sentence politer by inserting another verb into the phrase. Second, Proust's narrator says his mother speaks "à mi-voix," at a middle volume, presumably lower than her earlier volume, but without the shyness and discretion that Scott-Moncrieff's "said, or rather whispered" connotes. Finally, Scott-Moncrieff chooses to translate "maman" as "mother," whose French equivalent is "mère" instead of as the more common translation, "mom". This makes the scene more serious, more polite, and less familiar than Proust's original.

Despite the changes that Scott-Moncrieff made in translating *A la recherche du temps perdu* into English, the novel was captivating to his British audience. The translation received "rave British reviews" and "was acclaimed as a triumph of the translator's art" (Lubow). Scott-

Moncrieff's success lies in his sensitivity to the British esthetic of the time (Brée, 366); although present-day readers might disagree with Scott-Moncrieff's changes. His translation therefore appealed not only to average readers of the time, but also to contemporary literary figures, like Virginia Woolf who did not speak French and therefore would have read Scott-Moncrieff's translation "resisted reading—and finishing—Proust because he made it hard for [her] to write" (Kopelson, 120). In letters to E.M. Forster, Woolf wrote in 1922, "Everyone is reading Proust. I sit silent and hear their reports. It seems to be a tremendous experience, but I'm shivering on the brink, and waiting to be submerged with a horrid sort of notion that I shall go down and down and down and perhaps never come up again" (Kopelson, 123), to Roger Fry later that year, "Proust so titillates my own desire for expression that I can hardly set out the sentence. Oh if I could write like that!" (Kopelson, 121), and finally in 1937 to Ethel Smyth, "everyone seems chirping at me to read their...works for them. And I want to sink into Proust" (Kopelson, 123). Woolf's letters clearly show Scott-Moncrieff's translation resonated as an overwhelming, unique work for British readers, despite, or perhaps because of his decisions to alter the tone and impose a more typically British, less modern format on the novel. Woolf is at first hesitant to read Proust, already aware that this novel has substance to it, that it will somehow change her. Once she starts reading, she is captivated by the novel's scope and manipulation of language. Finally, several years later, she finds that still nothing has surpassed or even compares to this novel.

Despite the many differences between Proust's original and his own translation, Scott-Moncrieff succeeded in creating a translation that mirrors the effect of the original on its French readers. Instead of searching for *le mot juste*, Scott-Moncrieff works within the traditions of British literature to cover the same themes and stories as the original, in a way that is more accessible to his audience.

### Finding a Middle Ground

One way to think of issues of moving the reader toward the source text or moving the source text towards the target reader is to acknowledge that it is impossible to establish a one-to-one correspondence between languages, and instead to create equivalences between texts. This means that rather than saying that ‘a dog’ is the same as ‘un chien’, the translator instead understands ‘a dog’ and ‘un chien’ to function in the same way in English and French, respectively. In his essay “Principles of Correspondence,” Eugene Nida outlines different possibilities of equivalence: formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. Nida’s essay was intended to instruct and guide translators of the bible; in his essay Nida contrasts these modes of translation, advising that dynamic equivalence is more useful to translators. However, dynamic and formal equivalence represent a spectrum of possibilities in translation and it is useful to study them and use them together<sup>8</sup>.

Formal equivalence, as its name suggests, is concerned with reproducing the form of the original text. Formal equivalence strives to maintain form and terminology of the source text, rather than to create a document that is idiomatically correct in the target language; this translation method moves the reader towards the source text and culture. Nida warns that “such a principle may...be pushed to an absurd extent...[but] a certain degree of concordance may be highly desirable in certain types of translation” (Nida, 161). If a strictly formal translation makes no sense in the target language, the translator might “use...brackets, parenthesis, or even italics...to make sense” (Nida, 162) of the translation. Formal equivalence is more obviously

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<sup>8</sup> In *Pour la poétique II*, Henri Meschonnic makes a similar argument against Nida, pointing out that Nida sees a fundamental opposition between form of and response to a text, a position which is neither particularly useful nor as insurmountable as Nida would have his readers believe.

suited to certain genres, like poetry, than to others, but (regardless of Nida's preference for dynamic equivalence), is important in all translation<sup>9</sup>.

Nida contrasts formal equivalence with dynamic equivalence. In such texts, "the focus of attention is directed...toward the receptor response" (Nida, 162). Dynamic equivalence attempts to move the text towards the target culture such that "a bilingual and bicultural person can justifiably say, 'That is just the way we would say it'" (Nida, 162). Unlike formal equivalence, which, Nida suggests, can reach an unreadable, incomprehensible extreme, Nida's dynamic equivalence unites the message of the source text with the linguistic aspect of the target culture to achieve "the closest natural equivalent to the source-language message" (Nida, 163). In order to successfully balance the source-language material with the target language idiom, translators alter grammar and lexicon. Grammar changes, such as changing the French feminine direct object pronoun 'elle' to the neutral English 'it' are "dictated by the obligatory structure of the receptor language" (Nida, 163); the changes are made for linguistic, rather than aesthetic reasons. Lexical changes, however, can be more complicated, as words have different functions in different languages. Nida outlines three possibilities for lexical adaptation: "terms for which there are readily available parallels...terms which identify culturally different objects, but with somewhat similar functions.... and...terms which identify cultural specialties" (Nida, 163). Nida also suggests that translators should be mindful of expression: although a dynamic translation should be idiomatic, it should be appropriate to the context. Unless it is convention or

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<sup>9</sup> I have already made an argument for the retention of "Combray"'s surface morphology, as part of the effect that Proust creates of being overwhelmed is due to the small font and single-spaced lines in his own version. Another example of the importance of retaining form in translation of any literary genre is any one of Ernest Hemingway's stories or novels, in which the blank spaces left on the page are as charged with meaning as the words.

specifically called for by the source text, slang should be avoided, as should archaic and religious phrases (Nida, 165).

Nida's understanding of equivalence sparked a much larger discussion of equivalence, correspondence, and the science of translation. One spin-off of Nida's theory is Peter Newmark's theory of semantic and communicative translation. Newmark suggests that, like dynamic equivalence, communicative translation attempts to mirror the "effect of the target text reader, while semantic translation has similarities to Nida's formal equivalence" (Munday, 44). Newmark points out, however, that any equivalence becomes increasingly difficult to achieve "if the text is out of [target language] space and time" (Munday, 44): a translator working on a 1970s sci-fi novel published in New York might not be able to create equivalence if he is translating for 2050 Johannesburg.

Another theory based on Nida's is Werner Koller's discussion of the relationship between equivalence and correspondence. Koller sees correspondence as a facet of linguistics which "compares two language systems and describes differences and similarities contrastively" (Munday, 46), whereas equivalence "relates equivalent items in specific source text-target text pairs and contexts" (Munday, 46). Koller posits that correspondence is "indicative of competence in a foreign language" (Munday, 47), whereas equivalence is "indicative of competence in translation" (Munday, 47). Koller also expands Nida's understanding of equivalence, suggesting five, rather than two, types, based on research and decision focus.

Although there has been a great deal of study and discussion based on and surrounding equivalence theory, this theory is prescriptive, rather than descriptive at its root. Nida does not suggest that translation is generally based on formal or dynamic relationships between texts; he suggests that any translation should be based on establishing one type of equivalence or another.

Moreover, he attempts to make translation theory an applied version of linguistics, rather than recognizing that it is a field concerned with literature as well (Meschonnic, 330). While this discourse was extraordinarily important for the 1960s and 1970s, especially in that it is the first theory to posit the receptor as an important factor, it is short sighted: as Newmark observes, equivalence is practically impossible to achieve when the texts do not occupy a similar temporal and geographical realm. Nida's guidelines for achieving formal equivalence not only assume a necessary different treatment between genres (Meschonnic, 332) but also do not take into account genres in which form is less important than other aspects of the text. Furthermore, his assumption that anything can be said in any language refuses to acknowledge phrases that have a particular cultural importance or symbolism (Meschonnic, 342). Despite Nida's important insights for the field of translation studies, his theories of language and of privileging and divorcing meaning from form should not be followed blindly. Rather, both formal and dynamic translation should be employed in translation.

### The Push-me-pull-you

“Combray,” the first chapter of Marcel Proust’s novel *A la recherche du temps perdu* introduces the reader to a narrator, his family, and the society in which they all live. It is important, therefore, that anyone translating the novel pay close attention to how he or she translates this episode, as it will set the tone for the rest of the translation. In the early 1981, D. J. Enright revised *In Search of Lost Time*, C. K. Scott-Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin’s translation of *A la recherche du temps perdu*. This revision was past due—not only was Scott-Moncrieff’s version seen as inaccurate, the world had drastically changed between 1922 and 1981: both world wars had taken place, and the perception of France had also changed. Like Scott-Moncrieff, Enright was a well-educated English thinker, writer, and man of letters. Unlike Scott-Moncrieff, Enright steers the novel away from pure anglicisms, instead establishing both formal and dynamic equivalences with the original, types of translation first outlined by Eugene Nida in 1964. Enright et al’s translation strikes a balance between the two types of equivalences by engaging in a push and pull and establishing both equivalences in the translated text. At times, Enright et al preserve the form of the original, and translate certain phrases word for word, pulling the reader to a sense of French culture. At other times, however, Enright et al abandon word for word translation in favor of English phrases and idioms, pushing the text to the reader.

The Enright et al translation establishes formal equivalence—that is, “the translator attempts to reproduce...literally and meaningfully...the form and content of the original” (Nida, 156)<sup>10</sup>. On a removed level, the translation mimics the original text’s format: the pages are full of text, with relatively few breaks; quoted text is italicized and indented as in the original (Enright

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<sup>10</sup> Although Nida does not see much value in this mode of translation, this mode of translation is not reserved for the translation of one genre; it should be employed in any translation because the form affects the reader and the content.

et al, 126, 150, 167, 172 and Proust, 91, 107, 118, 122); the chapter is not separated into an overture and a chapter, as in Scott-Moncrieff's translation, but remains, as in the original, divided into two parts marked by numbers. Finally, this translation retains the footnotes found in the original (Enright et al, 17 and Proust, 14). Although not all of the footnotes are included in the translation, those that are point to specifically French, not English, culture. The decision to present the chapter in this manner does two things for the translation. First, it makes this version distinct from others, namely Scott-Moncrieff's earlier translation. Second, it moves the reader towards the source text by subtly inducing the reader to feel the same effect that the French original has on a French reader. Although Enright et al do not reproduce the original word for word, they do mirror Proust's formatting decisions, thus establishing a formal equivalence between the two texts.

Enright et al maintain this formal equivalence throughout the text by refraining from translating titles, both of people and literature. While it would be conceivable for an English language text to refer to people as 'Mr. Swann,' 'Mrs. Guermantes,' and 'Miss Swann,' the translators retain "M. Swann" (Enright et al, 16), "Mme de Guermantes" (Enright et al, 243), and "Mlle Swann" (Enright et al, 138). This furthers a formal equivalence by forcing the reader to remember that the specific individuals in question are French, regardless of the fact that they seem to be speaking English. The translators also keep the more formal titles "Princesse" (Enright et al, 34), "Duc" (Enright et al, 241), "Comtesse" (Enright et al, 241) and "Duchesse" (Enright et al, 234, 243, 246), as well as "noms de guerre" (Enright et al) instead of translating them into the more recognizable 'Princess,' 'Duke,' 'Countess,' 'Duchess,' and 'war title'. Repetition of these titles reproduces the form of the original text and reminds the reader that the culture in question is also French. Even the village priest is not referred to in the translation as

'Father' or 'the Priest,' he is called "Curé," (Enright et al, 74) as he is in the original. The emphasis on French titles is an extension of the emphasis on form and maintains a formal equivalence with the original text. The translation also preserves titles of books and plays under discussion (Enright et al 33, 38, 52, 124, 125, 128, 131, 135). Once again, Enright et al do not translate the titles into what might be more easily recognized English forms, but chose to leave them in French. This concern with reproducing the form of the original sustains a formal equivalence and forces the reader to identify the text's subject as French people and their culture.

Enright et al reinforce this equivalence by translating certain phrases word of word, rather than attempting to force a phrase to work within a foreign standard. This is most noticeable when comparing Proust's original, Scott-Moncrieff's translation, and Enright et al's translation. When describing his link to Combray, Proust's narrator says that they arrived "la dernière semaine avant Pâques" (Proust, 47). Scott-Moncrieff translates this as "Holy Week" (Scott-Moncrieff, 36) and Enright et al choose "the week before Easter" (Enright et al, 65). This final version more accurate than Scott-Moncrieff's translation, both in terms of word choice and in terms of word connotation. The original sentence reads 'the last week before Easter'; Scott-Moncrieff's decision to translate this phrase as "Holy Week" explicitly identifies the family as Catholic (and, for an English reader of the 1920s, French), whereas the original makes no mention of this week as more important than any other except that they are aware of Easter, thereby marking the family as nominally Catholic, but not much more. Scott-Moncrieff's decision does not bring the reader towards French culture; instead, along with his decision to retain snippets of French throughout his translation, it allows the reader to identify characters based on stereotypes. Enright et al's decision to translate the phrase word for word forces the reader away from stereotypes and toward the meaning and connotations created by Proust in the original. The

choice to refrain from using English expectations, instead relying on original meaning, brings Enright et al's reader to the source culture and prompts them to "understand...the customs, manner of thought, and means of expression" (Nida, 156) of that culture.

Enright et al also establish dynamic equivalences with the original text, aiming "for complete naturalness of expression, and...to relate...modes of behavior relevant within the context" (Nida, 156) of the reader's own culture. Unlike formal equivalence, this type of equivalence moves the source culture towards the reader. Enright et al establish and maintain this equivalence by using English slang as French slang is used in the original, although it is not always used in the same sections of text. Proust's version is full of non-standard French that rejects certain long-held mores about writing and makes the text more modern. However, in his original translation, Scott-Moncrieff avoids most of these expressions in order to root his version firmly within English culture. Enright et al, on the other hand, do not shy away from playing with language the way Proust does.

This decision is obvious when comparing Proust's Françoise upon the death of her mistress, Léonie, with Enright's. In the original, Françoise cries, "Je ne sais pas m'exprimer.... Elle était tout de même de la parentèse, il reste toujours le respect qu'on doit à la parentèse" (Proust, 152). The narrator makes fun of Françoise and her mispronunciation of "exprimer" (to express) as "esprimer" and "parenté" (a family relation, kinship) as "parentèse". Similarly, Enright et al translate, "I don't know how to *espress* myself.... All the same she was kith and kindle; there's always respect due to kindle" (Enright et al, 217). As in the original text, Françoise is unable to pronounce the 'x' in express. Since there is no way to translate "parentèse" that retains the sound, Enright et al resort to a colloquial English language phrase with the same meaning and similarly mutate it in Françoise's mouth, altering pronunciation or

perhaps mistakenly using another word entirely. By translating Françoise's lamentations this way, Enright et al convey the same humor as Proust, but in distinctly English terms. Instead of reinforcing the family's French-ness, Enright et al move the family outside of their own culture to the target culture and the reader's sense of humor.

Enright et al maintain this equivalence throughout the chapter by using English colloquialisms in the place of French speech. This process begins early in the chapter: just after Swann goes home, the family relaxes. In the original, this is manifested by less polite speech and simpler subject matter. Enright et al translate the everyday subjects of discussion and go a step further, using idiomatic phrases to convey this relaxation. Discussing the ice cream they have consumed, the narrator's mother says, "Je l'ai trouvée bien quelconque" (Proust, 33) ("I found it truly second-rate"), which Enright et al translate as "I thought it was rather so-so" (Enright et al, 45). There is a slight difference between "second-rate" and "so-so": "so-so" is much less formal than "second-rate" and is a phrase that could not be used in this context in French. By using an expression in an exclusively English manner, the translators shift the text towards the target culture, rather than shifting the readers towards the source culture, and subtly create a dynamic equivalence. Similarly, the narrator's grandfather and great aunts adopt a relaxed, familiar demeanor once they are alone. In the original, the grandfather rebukes his sisters in law, saying "Hé bien!... vous ne l'avez pas remercié pour l'asti" (Proust, 34). Enright et al translate this as "Hullo! You two; you never thanked him for the Asti" (Enright et al, 45). By choosing another explicitly English kind of expression—it is not possible in French to express a realization with a salutation—the translators maintain dynamic equivalence with the source text, drawing the text and its characters towards the reader and the target culture.

More secluded characters also use this kind of familiar, relaxed lingo to the same end. The narrator's aunt Léonie chides Françoise for thinking some large asparagus could have come from the priest's garden, remarking "Vous savez bien qu'il ne fait pousser que de méchants petits asperges de rien" (Proust, 54), which Enright et al render as "You know quite well he never grows anything but wretched little twigs of asparagus" (Enright et al, 74). While Enright et al certainly capture the meaning of Proust's phrase, they use an English idiom to express the inferior size of the priest's asparagus rather than translating word for word. This once again brings the characters to the target culture, rather than pulling the readers towards the source culture and reaffirms a dynamic equivalence.

The translators even add descriptions and details in order to maintain this dynamic equivalence. Enright et al state that Dr Percepied has an "unassailable and quite unmerited reputation of being a kind-hearted old curmudgeon" (Enright et al, 207), who pokes fun at M Vinteuil's blind love for his daughter, starting, "What d'ye say to this, now?" before delving into details. The description of Dr Percepied's reputation as "*quite* unmerited," (my emphasis) while possible in French, sounds exceptionally English. Furthermore, the description of Dr Percepied as a "curmudgeon" is so English that there is no direct French translation. These additions bring the characters out of Northern France and into a more recognizable set of English tropes, thus maintaining a dynamic equivalence.

The D. J. Enright et al translation of "Combray" brings the reader to French pre-war culture in some ways, and moves the text towards its English-speaking, end of the twentieth century readers in others. By maintaining the form and the names of the original, Enright et al remind their readers that the text is about a French family. By altering idiomatic expressions and inserting exclusively English phrases, however, Enright et al pull the text towards a new

audience. This fluctuation between formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence reminds the reader that he or she is foreign to the text, while hinting that the difference between the author and the reader, or perhaps the original readers and the new readers are not insurmountable.

### Interpreting Proust

Marcel Proust has been translated many times into English: in the 1920s, Charles Kenneth Scott-Moncrieff catapulted Proust into the English literary world; in the 1980s, DJ Enright revised this version; in 2003 Lydia Davis completed a translation of *The Way by Swann's* that signaled Penguin's new translation of *In Search of Lost Time* by several authors. Many critics have commented that, although Scott-Moncrieff's translation is the best known and most-read of the three, much of this prestige is due to the translation's status as the first translation of Proust and to the fact that for more than half a century there was no other translation available; such critics, Terrence Kilmartin<sup>11</sup>, Marc Singer, and Germaine Brée among them, have commented on Scott-Moncrieff's infidelity to the source text and have hailed subsequent translations of *In Search of Lost Time* as less free, closer to the original, and therefore, better. Such critiques fail to understand translation as anything other than a search for equivalences, be it word for word or sense for sense. However, reading and translating are reliant on interpretation; Scott-Moncrieff's translation deserves credit for recognizing this fact<sup>12</sup>. Instead of merely translating what is written on the page translators must translate Proust's chapter "Combray" by interpreting it, and translations are often more vibrant because of this choice. Despite claims that Davis' "The Way by Swann's" is a faithful translation without addition, Davis also indulges in interpretation; Scott-Moncrieff is simply more regular and less covert about this aspect of translating. Both translators' use of interpretation clarifies and magnifies the text, and becomes a tool for the reader.

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<sup>11</sup> In a Paris Review article, Lydia Davis observes that Terrence Kilmartin and D.J. Enright's translation that attempted to correct many of these errors "introduced new ones" (Davis, "Notes", 74)

<sup>12</sup> The fact that this version went unchallenged for as long as it did suggests at the very least that perhaps a translation "may deserve to endure...even if it is not all it should be in style and faithfulness" (Davis, "Notes", 67)

Scott-Moncrieff interprets and clarifies “Combray,” even in the opening sentences to give the reader a fuller sense of the characters and the narrative. To start, Scott-Moncrieff titles the opening pages “Overture” (Scott-Moncrieff, 1) instead of “Part One: Combray. Chapter 1,” (Proust, 3) as Proust does. This change is the result of a close understanding of the novel. Rather than simply mimicking Proust’s formatting, Scott-Moncrieff interprets the first part of “Combray” as an overture to the entire novel, and passes this information on to the reader. Scott-Moncrieff’s interpretation becomes a tool, rather than an example of infidelity.

Interpretation remains important as the chapter opens. Although Scott-Moncrieff and Davis translate the opening of “Combray” using similar words, each version has a different effect on the reader. Proust writes, “Longtemps, je me suis couché de bonne heure. Parfois, à peine ma bougie éteinte, mes yeux se fermaient si vite que je n’avais pas le temps de me dire : « Je m’endors. »” (Proust, 3). Scott-Moncrieff writes, “For a long time, I used to go to bed early. Sometimes, when I had put out my candle, my eyes would close so quickly that I had not even time to say “I’m going to sleep”” (sic) (Scott-Moncrieff, 1) in his overture to “Combray”, whereas Davis translates, “For a long time I went to bed early. Sometimes, my candle scarcely out, my eyes would close so quickly that I did not have time to say to myself: ‘I’m falling asleep”” (Davis, “Swann”, 7). Scott-Moncrieff uses the “used to” form of the past tense to indicate a habitual past action that is no longer true; Davis retains Proust’s sense and style by translating “je me suis couché” directly into the English simple past “I went to bed”. Although Davis’ translation is much closer to the original, she loses the insistence on repetition that Scott-Moncrieff brings by using an alternative form<sup>13</sup>. This decision also makes societal norms more

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<sup>13</sup> This is a prime example of a “literal” translation falling short simply because linguistic systems are not identical; Scott-Moncrieff circumvents this problem by attempting another mode of interpretation, adaptation, and translation.

explicit. By indicating that going to bed early was a habit but is no longer practiced, Scott-Moncrieff suggests that only children go to bed early on a regular basis. This suggestion is not in the original, it is based on Scott-Moncrieff's interpretation. However, it gives the reader a better sense of the narrator and his surroundings.

Scott-Moncrieff continues to interpret and make his version more explicit in the following sentence, when he translates "à peine ma bougie éteinte" as "sometimes, when I had put out my candle". Scott-Moncrieff adds a subject rather than leaving the sentence in the passive voice. This adds depth and clarity to the sentence that is lacking in Davis' word for word translation, "my candle scarcely out". Finally, unlike Davis, Scott-Moncrieff uses double quotations around the narrator's thoughts rather than single quotations. Although single quotations may be more accurate, the original sentence, "je n'avais pas le temps de me dire: « Je m'endors. »" is ambiguous: it is possible that the narrator says out loud "I'm falling asleep", but it's also possible that this is a thought barely expressed before the narrator does fall asleep. Scott-Moncrieff interprets the original sentence such that the phrase is an utterance, and marks it as such. Davis also interprets this ambiguous phrase in her translation by using single quotation marks around the phrase to suggest to the reader that the narrator has not spoken out loud, but is thinking. Although most of the original sentence seems to support this interpretation, Davis deviates from Proust's double quotations and her pattern of keeping her text as close to the original as possible. Had Davis attempted to retain Proust's form, her version of "Combray" would have been less clear; by interpreting, Davis allows her reader a degree of clarity.

Both Scott-Moncrieff and Davis interpret and expand many of the chapter's idioms in order to make the translated text fuller. Both translators rely on interpretation when translating Françoise's comments. In the original, Françoise, the senior-most servant, sees the pregnant

kitchen maid and snidely comments to the narrator, “qui du cul d’un chien tombe s’amoureuse, /il lui paraît une rose” (Proust, 122), to suggest that the maid is ugly and the man who got her pregnant was too blinded by lust to notice. Davis faithfully reiterates this expression in her translation as “qui du cul d’un chien tombe s’amoureuse, /il lui paraît une rose” (Davis, “Swann”, 124). Instead of translating the phrase in the text, Davis provides a footnoted translation, “he who falls in love with a dog’s bottom/ will think it’s a rose” (Davis, “Swann”, 435). Although Davis does provide the reader with the meaning of Françoise’s phrase, her decision to leave it in French in the body of the text only reminds the reader that the people in question are French, a fact hard to forget given both the stature of the novel and the retention of French names and titles in both translations. Furthermore, this insistence on reminding the reader of the source culture is not in the original. By refraining from translating, Davis adds to and makes a statement about Proust’s novel; Davis interprets parts of the novel as untranslatable.

Scott-Moncrieff’s version of this idiom is much more obviously an interpretation. Rather than translating the expression word for word, as Davis does in her footnote, Scott-Moncrieff alters the phrase; in his version, Françoise quips, “Snaps and snails and puppy-dogs’ tails/ And dirty sluts in plenty/ Smell sweeter than roses in young men’s noses/ When the heart is one-and twenty” (Scott-Moncrieff, 95). Scott-Moncrieff keeps certain aspects of the original—there are still roses and dogs in his version—but shifts the meaning to make Françoise more comical and to heighten Françoise’s criticism of the kitchen maid. Now, the kitchen maid is not compared to “a dog’s bottom” but to vegetables, animals and sluts. This change is the result of an interpretation; Scott-Moncrieff determines that Françoise’s French insult is akin to this English insult. Scott-Moncrieff also attempts to reclaim the *amoureuse/rose* rhyme—*amoureuse*, to be in love, is altered in the original to rhyme with *rose*—by creating a quatrain. Scott-Moncrieff

interprets Françoise's form as a basic, simplistic phrase, and changes her expression from a two-line idiom in French to a four-line basic rhyme in English. These alterations, though deviations from the original, are very clear; Scott-Moncrieff does not attempt to hide his understanding of the characters in a word for word translation, but recognizes that he began to interpret when he began to read, and shares with his readers his own understanding of the novel<sup>14</sup>.

Both Scott-Moncrieff and Davis interpret Françoise's phrases as the novel continues in order to convey depth and comedy to the reader. After the narrator's Aunt Leonie dies, the narrator mocks her in front of Françoise. Françoise defends her deceased mistress and chides the narrator, saying "Je ne sais pas m'exprimer.... Elle était tout de même la parentèse, il reste toujours le respect qu'on doit la parentèse" (Proust, 152); Françoise means to tell the narrator that she doesn't know how to express herself, but cannot pronounce the letter 'x', so 'exprimer' (to express) becomes 'esprimer'; similarly, she means that respect is owed to one's family, la parenté, but she confuses it with 'parentèse,' parenthesis. This brief comment is difficult to translate; a word for word translation is impossible, because the humor would be lost. Both Scott-Moncrieff and Davis retain the express/espress confusion, as the French and English words sound the same; both resort to interpretation to convey the remainder of the exchange. Scott-Moncrieff translates Françoise's remark as "All the same, there is a *geological* relation; there is always the respect due to your *geology*" (Scott-Moncrieff, 119). Scott-Moncrieff interprets Françoise as the type of woman who would attempt to use "genealogy"; his Françoise therefore confuses genealogical and genealogy with geological and geology. Furthermore, Scott-Moncrieff

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<sup>14</sup> Unexpectedly, Scott-Moncrieff's manner of translation, which often seems conservative and closed to literary innovation, suggests that the translator's ideas are just as valid as the authors, thus refuting the original/translation hierarchy and creating an equality. Although it would be hard to argue that Scott-Moncrieff's translation is open to literary innovation, it might be useful to consider that he is more open to innovation in translation than he has been given credit for.

understands Françoise as someone who would put emphasis on this word to suggest to the narrator that she is more knowledgeable than he gives her credit for. Davis, too, interprets the characters in her rendition of the exchange. Her Françoise is less eager to prove herself to the narrator. She chides him, “All the same, she was your own kith and kindred, and there’s a proper respect we owe to our kith and kindred, you know” (Davis, “Swann”, 155). Davis’ Françoise attempts to use the phrase “kith and kin,” but mangles it. This version of Françoise and her manner of speech suggest a country bumpkin, a woman who uses idiomatic expressions and coined phrases in everyday speech because she has no other language to use. Davis’ Françoise is also concerned with the community; rather than simple rebuking the narrator, Françoise reminds him of the debt society owes its elders and family relations by shifting from singular pronouns to plural pronouns. While these changes are not unfounded, both Scott-Moncrieff and Davis are forced to interpret Françoise in order to bring her to life in their translations.

Davis and Scott-Moncrieff demonstrate their use of interpretation again as each describes the narrator’s encounter with Madame de Guermantes. Proust’s narrator explains that Dr Percepied had often shown him a portrait of Mme de Guermantes and then sees her for the first time at the Doctor’s daughter’s wedding. The narrator describes her:

Une dame blonde avec un grand nez, des yeux bleus et perçants, une cravate bouffante en soie mauve, lisse, neuve, et brillante, et un petit bouton au coin du nez. Et...je distinguais, diluées et à peine perceptibles, des parcelles d’analogie avec le portrait...les traits particuliers que je relevais en elle, si j’essayais de les énoncer, se formulaient précisément dans les mêmes termes...dont s’était servi le docteur Percepied...c’était elle ! Ma déception était grande (Proust, 172)

The narrator is greatly disappointed to find that the woman he had idolized looks no different from anyone else. Scott-Moncrieff interprets the passage and adds flair to his translation:

A lady with fair hair and a large nose, piercing blue eyes, a billowy scarf of mauve silk, glossy and new and brilliant, and a little spot at the corner of her nose. And...I could make out, diluted and barely perceptible, details which resembled the portrait that had been shewn to me...particular features which I remarked in this

lady, if I attempted to catalogue them, formulated themselves in precisely the same terms...as Doctor Percepied had used...it was she! My disappointment was immense (Scott-Moncrieff, 134)

Scott-Moncrieff's rendition of the encounter is based on his own interpretation of the scene, the narrator, and Mme de Guermantes. Scott-Moncrieff interprets Proust's Mme de Guermantes as fair-haired rather than blonde, and makes the narrator's surprise at her quotidian features more understandable. He also lists the qualities of the scarf using 'and' to separate each adjective rather than commas, reminding the reader that the observer is a child, and calls it a scarf, not a tie, as in the original. Finally, Scott-Moncrieff's narrator experiences immense disappointment, rather than great disappointment. This interpretation makes the narrator's type of disappointment clearer and conveys the enormity of it better than "great" does. Davis instead translates:

A blonde lady with a large nose, piercing blue eyes, a full tie of shiny, new mauve silk, and a little pimple at the corner of her nose. And...I could distinguish bits of resemblance, diluted and barely perceptible, to the picture I had been shown...particular features that I observed in her, if I tried to enunciate them, were formulated in exactly the same words...which Doctor Percepied had used...it was she! I was very disappointed (Davis, "Swann", 175)

Davis retains Proust's "blonde," opting for the explicit, rather than providing range. Davis translates "bouton" as pimple; while this is one of "bouton"'s meanings, it is not the only one, and Davis interprets the description of Mme de Guermantes to fit this image, making Mme de Guermantes more off-putting and more comedic. Furthermore, Davis drops the reflexive verb "se formuler," to formulate oneself, and instead puts the sentence into the passive voice with "were formulated". Like Scott-Moncrieff, Davis also alters the depth of disappointment that the narrator feels upon discovering that Mme de Guermantes is merely an everyday woman. Here, Davis reminds the reader that the narrator is a child, and is only able to emphasize feelings through simple mechanisms; rather than greatly or immensely, a child would undoubtedly describe himself as very disappointed. All of these changes are the result of the translator's interpretations of the text and its meanings.

Interpretation is considered extraneous to good translation, but it is key to reading, writing, and translating any text. Both Scott-Moncrieff and Davis rely on interpretation in their translations of “Combray” in order to clarify, expand, and highlight aspects of Proust’s text. Although these interpretations vary from translation to translation, each interpretation and adaptation in the translated text valorizes the source text by suggesting that there is something in which to take interest and with which to engage. In comparing these two translations—one, the classic, the other, an up and comer—it is possible to compare methods of translation and see their shortcomings or strong points more clearly than by addressing a translation alone, which reveals innovations in translation rather than in literature.

### A Reinterpretation of Translation

Translation, at its root, is an interpretation of a text. Often translation implies a rewriting of the text in a target language, which necessitates abandoning the source language's linguistic and grammatical code in favor of compliance with that of the target language. This definition, however, is too narrow, as it excludes many interpretations from being studied as translations. In his 1959 essay "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation," Roman Jakobson addresses this issue and proposes that there are three types of translation: interlingual, intersemiotic, and intralingual. Jakobson suggests that by considering these types of translation as valid, more methods of communication between source culture and target culture present themselves. This argument has been extended by Monika Seidl, among others, who further suggests that we should consider a multiplicity of adaptations as "each adaptation has a singular, independent status" (Seidl, 163) from other adaptations as well as from the source text, a "repetition with a difference" (Seidl, 156). Therefore, any and all adaptations should be understood as a translation that "renews the meaning potential of a source text by stressing...preconceptions in the source texts invisible to its contemporaries" (Seidl, 159). Translation is not simply the reiteration of words and form in another language, it is a process of adaptation that allows an audience to understand an aspect of another era or another culture.

Jakobson describes interlingual translation as "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language" (Jakobson, 139). This mode of translation is the most orthodox, most thought of, and most used of the three modes, and is the mode used by Scott-Moncrieff, Enright, and Davis in each of their translations of "Combray". Jakobson explains that "translation from one language into another substitutes messages in one language...for entire messages in some other language.... Thus, translation involves two equivalent messages in two different codes"

(Jakobson, 139). Jakobson does not imagine that this mode either moves the target audience to the source culture or moves the source culture to the target audience; any translation between languages is included in this definition, and these differences are relegated to the realm of style. This type of translation is not, however, always appropriate or even feasible. Because it depends on finding equivalent messages or means of expressing messages in two languages, “mutual translatability” (Jakobson, 139) is required. If the source language uses grammatical constructs not found in the target language, specificity is lost. Moreover, while certain notions need only be translated as many words instead of one, some aspects of the language, such as gendered personification of a noun, may be lost in a language without grammatical gender or with a different gender assigned to the noun in question. More importantly, if a concept does not exist in an equivalent form in the target culture, the reader may make incorrect assumptions about the subject. Jakobson chooses cheese as an example of this problem: “The English word ‘cheese’ cannot be completely identified with its standard Russian heteronym ‘сыр’ because cottage cheese is a cheese but not a сыр.... In standard Russian, the food made of pressed curds is called сыр only if ferment is used” (Jakobson, 139). A translator attempting to connote the variety of cheese commonly understood in English into Russian would find himself unable to do so concisely because the English and Russian definitions of cheese differ, making the concept of cheese untranslatable between Russian and English, although specific cheeses—parmesan, cottage, gouda, brie, and the rest—may have equivalents. This suggests that although interlingual translation is the most conventional, it is not the most exact form for translation.

Jakobson suggests that intersemiotic translation is able to better combat issues of mutual un-translatability. Intersemiotic translation is “an interpretation of verbal signs by means of nonverbal sign systems” (Jakobson, 139). This mode of translation is applicable to discourse

between multiple languages as well as interpretation within one linguistic system. Although grammatical specificity may be lost, using images to convey meaning can be as specific—and more in some cases—than interlingual translation allows, as the viewer can see an image of an untranslatable concept and both understand more or less what the image portrays and understand the intricacies of the concept that make it linguistically difficult to translate. Thus, instead of trying to find a way to translate the entire English concept of cheese into Russian, an intersemiotic translator could simply show a multiplicity of cheeses to convey the variety.

Jakobson suggests a third type of translation, intralingual translation, which opens the definition of translation to include all interpretation. Intralingual translation is “an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs in of the same language” (Jakobson, 139). Intralingual translation depends on use of synonyms or circumlocution rather than equivalence, and may be used either to define a word or to explain it within a social or historical context; “the term ‘bachelor’ may be converted into a more explicit designation, ‘unmarried man’” (Jakobson, 139). If further explanation is required, however, equivalence is not as simple, as “every celibate is a bachelor, but not every bachelor is celibate” (Jakobson, 139). This mode of translation also encompasses translation of a text into another written genre—Baudelaire’s adaptation of his *Les Fleurs du mal* into *Petits poèmes en prose* is a prime example of this type of adaptation within one language and between genres.

Seidl pushes Jakobson’s argument further, stressing the importance of adaptation as a tool for cultural studies and exploring the importance of having a multiplicity of adaptations to compare. Seidl argues that it is only through being adapted—be it through standard translation or by another means—that a source text becomes a source text (Seidl, 161), and that the existence of multiple versions of a text or narrative allows ideas to spread and change. As concepts acquire

new meanings, they “serve as analytical tools for specific cultural questions posed” (Seidl, 158). By interpreting and adapting, readers question, discover and learn. Adaptations, then, are not the *belles infidels* that they are often called, but a necessary and integral part of translation and of intercultural interaction.

Jakobson and Seidl’s broad definitions of all interpretation as translation and of the roles they play not only create new possibilities for discussion of translation, these conceptions also broaden the range of translations of “Combray”. Rather than simply including the interlingual translations that remain mono-genred, intralingual translations are also relevant to understand both the changing understandings of Proust and the changing understandings of translation.

## Action!

Harold Pinter's 1977 translation and adaptation of Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, *The Proust Screenplay* is anything but typical. Where Proust writes page-long sentences, Pinter suggests a blurred image; what Proust describes over seven volumes of novel and memoir, Pinter jams and juxtaposes to create a 455-shot screenplay, omitting entire passages. Pinter states that he and his co-translators "knew we could in no way *rival* the work. But could we be true to it?" (Pinter, xiv) [sic]. He then determined he would "distill the whole work, to incorporate the major themes of the book into an integrated whole" (Pinter, xiii), relying heavily on *Du côté de chez Swann* and *Le temps retrouvé* as "the relationship between the first volume and the last seemed...the crucial one" (Pinter, xiii). In order to achieve this parallelism, Pinter's screenplay contains all three modes of translation outlined by Roman Jakobson: intralingual, interlingual, and intersemiotic. The combination of these three modes of translation in one text makes allows Pinter to move "toward disillusion and...toward revelation" (Pinter, x). *The Proust Screenplay* is a more accessible version of *In Search of Lost Time* both because the dialogue is in colloquial English, rather than French or flowery turn of the century prose, so more people can understand the speech, and because much of Proust's labor is distilled to its essential qualities in this two-directional movement through the use of many modes of adaption and translation.

Intralingual translation, the translation of a text from one type of writing to another, is the basis for this translation. Rather than working within the realm of novel, Pinter alters the mode of communication to screenplay. This change gives Pinter more leeway in manipulating the text; it creates a possibility for a wider audience—as watching a movie is a significantly smaller time commitment than reading all seven volumes of *À la recherche du temps perdu*—and allows

Pinter to feel less bound to the original structure of Proust's text, which allows information to be delivered in a way that underlines the major themes and concepts of the novel without the immense contortions Proust employs. Pinter uses this strategy to convey the family's obsession with food via dialogue. In *The Proust Screenplay*, a family friend comment to his hostess, "You have a chef of the first order, madame. That was a positive banquet. How rarely does one eat a bœuf en daube in which the jelly does not taste like glue and the beef has caught the flavor of the carrots. Admirable!" (Pinter, 33), to which the mother replies, "I am so pleased" (Pinter, 33). Proust gives the reader the same information throughout "Combray", by portraying scenes of eating and of groups gathered at meal times (Proust, 13, 44, 70, 119) by creating dialogue of which food is the topic (Proust, 34), and by using words associated with food in another context (Proust, 49, 86) Both Pinter's and Proust's constructions show a bourgeois family for who food and meals are important. Proust's subtle repetition of a food-obsessed family allows the reader to understand more slowly, if more fully, this obsession. Pinter's simple exchange, however, suggests that it is not simple the narrator and his family who desire to eat well; their social group has the same desire. Pinter translates many episodes into one intralingually to point out an essential facet of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century French family Proust portrays.

Pinter also uses intralingual translation to clarify or simplify certain aspects of the original text for his audience. The most important change Pinter makes is his decision to alter the narration. In the original, Proust uses a narrator who speaks in the first person as he recalls his childhood. This narrator is very careful to give his readers information to contextualize the events he remembers, but never reveals his name. Most critics believe that while Proust draws on his personal experience in *À la recherche du temps perdu*, the nameless narrator is not Proust himself. Pinter, however, actively ignores this understanding and calls the main character

“Marcel”. This decision is not a reflection of Pinter’s misunderstanding of the original text; rather, it is a mechanism to simplify the author/narrator relationship for his audience, since the novel is not about the role of a narrator in relation to an author<sup>15</sup>.

Pinter’s use of interlingual translation, the translation of a text from one language to another, is tied to his use of intralingual translation: the changes Pinter makes on both these levels is intended to make the plot more accessible to a broad audience. When working between languages, Pinter makes dialogue less stuffy than Proust’s language, while maintaining a certain degree of decorum. Once again this reworking allows Pinter to convey not only the conversation that Proust’s narrator overhears, it also conveys a description of the culture in which the family lives. After a dinner early in the novel, the narrator’s parent’s talk about the evening and how it might have gone better. In the original, the narrator’s mother tries, unsuccessfully, to discuss Swann’s daughter with him. When he arrives, she says to him, “parlez-moi un peu de votre fille; je suis sûre qu’elle a déjà le gout des belles œuvres comme son papa” (Proust, 23) before her father-in-law interrupts her. In Pinter’s version, the mother complains to her husband, “You might at least let me ask after his daughter. He’s so proud of her.” (11), to which the narrator’s father retorts, “Once you start asking after the daughter, you’ll end up asking after the wife. And then you’ll find that she’ll be paying you calls. And there can be no question of that” (11). Mme Swann’s social undesirability is also hinted at in the original, when the narrator explains that he and his family see less of Swann “depuis qu’il avait fait ce mauvais mariage, parce que mes

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<sup>15</sup> While this mechanism does ensure that all the characters have names, it detracts from the sense that Proust conveys (primarily by using the imperfect tense) of operating on or between the bounds of conscious and unconscious, waking and dreaming, participating and remembering. By making the action more explicit, Pinter detracts from what might be considered an essential characteristic of the novel.

parents ne voulaient pas recevoir sa femme” (Proust, 13). Without going into a discussion of Swann’s wife’s unsuitability, Pinter conveys it succinctly in this brief exchange<sup>16</sup>.

Pinter also alters the conversation the narrator and his mother have early in “Combray,” when the narrator stays up several hours past his bedtime to properly say goodnight to his mother, and eventually is overcome with emotion and fatigue and begins to cry. In Proust’s version, the narrator’s mother has an extra bed made up in her son’s room and spends the night with him (Proust, 38) after wondering if this decision will have a negative psychological impact on her young son. Pinter suggests a mother who is less preoccupied with making a man out of her son and focuses quickly on comforting him, begging, “You must stop it. You’ll make me cry in a minute, if you don’t.... There. There” (12). Although Pinter does not include much of the scene—where are the books, the extra bed?—he succinctly conveys the mother’s feelings towards and concern for her son, whereas Proust requires several paragraphs to show the mother’s concern for her son. Although Proust’s version conveys a greater range of emotion and of parenting techniques, the change allows Pinter to convey many of the themes of *À la recherche du temps perdu* in a clear and efficient manner.

Pinter’s use of intersemiotic translation, the translation from verbal signs to non-verbal signs, is the most interesting and most problematic mode of translation in *The Proust Screenplay*. Interesting because this mode of translation allows Pinter to escape from issues that plague other translators, namely, word choice. Rather than needing to choose whether to move the reader towards the text or vice versa, and selecting words appropriately, Pinter only needs to understand Proust’s original and convey the essence of that meaning using objects to his audience.

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<sup>16</sup> This does mean that Swann’s wife’s lower social status is not allowed to develop as a serious problem. In making the action and description more succinct, Pinter regrettably glosses over issues that are deeply plumbed and explored in the original.

Problematic because “the film has not been made” (Pinter, xiv); Pinter’s adaptation is a hypothetical intersemiotic translation that relies on linguistic signs as much as any other. Pinter’s is an attempt, not an actuality. This attempt, however, is both such a departure from other translations and is put to such a variety of uses that it merits discussion as an intersemiotic translation, as it was intended to be.

Pinter’s intersemiotic translation is tied to the decisions he makes in terms of interlingual and intralingual translation: all three modes are employed to convey multiple aspects of Proust’s narrative to the film audience with facility and efficiency. Thus, what Proust describes in great detail, Pinter shows with a series of shots. When Proust describes the narrator’s fit upon being sent to bed without having the opportunity to say goodnight to his mother, Pinter substitutes with a scene without speech: “46. INT. MARCEL’S BEDROOM. Marcel in bed, sobbing, clutching his Mother’s hand. She sits on the bed.... 47. MOTHER’S EYES. 48. INT. MARCEL’S BEDROOM. LATER. Mother asleep in the other bed. Marcel turns in his bed, looks across at her” (Pinter, 12). By translating the episode into a series of images, Pinter quickly illustrates both the action and the subtext of the original without detracting from it<sup>17</sup>.

Pinter also reverts to intersemiotic translation to give the audience insight to the narrator’s creative instinct. In the original, the narrator recalls being struck by the view of the three steeples of Martinville, “sur lesquelles donnait le soleil couchant et que le mouvement de notre voiture et les lacets du chemin avaient l’air de faire changer de place” (Proust, 177) and being moved to write a description of the scene (Proust, 180). Pinter simply gives the audience

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<sup>17</sup> This mode of adaptation—from novel to images—is particularly suited to Proust; it allows Pinter to play with issues of perspective and show scenes in a way to which Proust’s descriptions seem to aspire.

the scene of the steeples and invites his viewers to be influenced by the image as the original narrator is.

93. MARCEL'S P.O.V. FROM MOVING CARRIAGE. The twin steeples of Martinville church and in the distance, a third steeple from another village. At first the distance between the Martinville steeples and the other is clear, definite. But as the road winds and in the sun's reflection they seem to change position. The third, although rising from higher ground in the distance, suddenly appears to be standing by their side to be one of them. Further views of them, as the carriage progresses. Only the Martinville steeples seen; the third not in sight. The third very dim, quivering. The Martinville steeples almost blotted out; the third startlingly clear, luminous. The three steeples apparently side by side, dancing together in the last rays of sun (Pinter, 29).

Although Pinter's language in the screenplay closely mimics Proust's language, he defines an image that prompts the narrator's creative career; rather than allowing a character to simply describe the scene, Pinter underscores the importance of this moment by showing, rather than telling. This mechanism allows the audience to see "what it's all about".

Pinter also relies on intersemiotic translation to portray instances of the narrator's involuntary memory, uncalled, spontaneous memory of a past essential, often triggered, according to Proust, by an innocuous event. Pinter envisages the film opening with a *mélange* of scenes that prompt involuntary memory for the narrator.

12. The sea from the window. Silent. 13. Spoon hitting a plate. 14. Continue Marcel's progress into the drawing room. Voices. Faces. The wigs and makeup, combined with the extreme age of those who with difficulty stand, sit, gesture, laugh, give the impression of grotesque fancy dress. 15. In the library, MARCEL, with a glass by his side, wipes his lips with a stiff napkin, which crackles. 16. Venice. Window in a palazzo. Silent. 17. In the drawing room, a group of very old women, talking. 18. Water pipes in the library. The shrill noise of water running through the pipes. 19. Silent countryside from a railway carriage. 20. EXT. THE HOUSE OF THE PRINCE DE GUERMANTES. 1921. A car swerves to avoid Marcel. He steps back, trips on the cobbles. Chauffeur shouts. 21. The dining room at Balbec. Silent. 22. Yellow screen. (Pinter, 4)

Pinter accomplishes several feats at once in this succession of images. First, he foreshadows the moments of memory that are to come. Second, Pinter conveys the randomness that characterizes

the instances of involuntary memory. Finally, Pinter shows the story's many settings, which implies the type of people the audience will encounter.

Pinter's *The Proust Screenplay* is a translation of Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, although at times it may seem closer to an interpretation. Pinter attempts to distill the essential qualities and themes of Proust's novel by leaving the realm of traditional translation. His use of interlingual translation coupled with intralingual translation and intersemiotic translation creates a unique and dynamic version of Proust's original without sacrificing either fidelity to the text or readership. While the intralingual translations that Pinter proposes often fall short of the original—largely because of the time constraints of a movie and the desire to make *À la recherche du temps perdu* more accessible and concise—Pinter suggests an employment of intersemiotic translation that, if the screenplay were made into a film, would beautifully and fully convey aspects of Proust's, particularly issues surrounding bourgeois social expectations, growing up, and writing.

## Adaption

Georges Perec's adaptation of *À la recherche du temps perdu*, *35 Variations sur un thème de Proust* represents a departure from other translations in two major ways. First, it is in French. Second, it is much more methodical and rigid than any other. Rather than working between languages or genres, Perec manipulates the structure of Proust's first sentence, "Longtemps je me suis couché de bonne heure" (Perec, 15) by using strict formulas. He then uses precise and logical formulas to underline the arbitrary nature of language, manipulating form and word meaning to push the limits of language. In order to show language as a construction, Perec presents great departures from the original sentences meaning by reorganizing the language, uses similar words to create different meanings, and uses different words to mirror the meaning of the original sentence<sup>18</sup>. By manipulating language in this way, Perec probes the delicate<sup>19</sup> nature of language and explores perceptions of self and society.

In order to show language's arbitrary nature, Perec manipulates details of the sentence. His first variation, "réorganisation alphabétique" (Perec, 16), involves grouping the letters of the sentence alphabetically, so that the variation reads "B CC D EEEEEEEEE G HH I J L MM NN OOO P R SSS T UUU" (Perec, 16). This list does not show much on its own, except what letters might be good guesses when playing Hangman in French. Through this list, however, Perec suggests that words—and language, by proxy—are constructed from signs, letters, which can be organized according to a hierarchy created by humans. Moreover, he shows how new organizations can be created in the destruction of an older organization.

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<sup>18</sup> To study Perec's collection, it makes more sense to group the variations by effect they produce rather than leaving them in chronological order.

<sup>19</sup> Delicate in the sense that it is precise and that it is fragile and easily altered.

Perec's next move is to drastically alter the sentence's meaning by adding and removing letters. This shows that each letter is a part of something else; as with any structure, its removal or addition forces the entire entity to change. In his ninth variation, "Bourdon" (Perec, 24), Perec subtracts a letter from the original sentence, creating "Longtemps je me suis coché de bonne heure" (Perec, 24), "for a long time I used to check myself off early"; this phrase forces the reader to ask exactly what Perec checks himself off of. The slight change in language both suggests the impermanence of literature and obligates the reader to take an active role in the text. In the tenth variation<sup>20</sup>, Perec subtracts another letter, which yields "Longtemps je me suis coché de bonne hure" (Perec, 25), "for a long time I used to check myself off of a good head". Another way to put this might be "for a long time I did not use the good sense that I have". Perec suggests the disorder of language as well as of individuals who feel forced to a part of themselves in order to cope with their surroundings. Finally, in the eleventh variation, Perec adds a letter and creates "Longtemps je me suis coluché de bonne heure" (Perec, 26), which has no "proper" meaning. However, it is possible that Perec is referring to contemporary comedian, Colouche, making the sentence, "for a long time I was irreverent and pushed for social change. If this is the case, then Perec is aligning himself with a discourse of social change. These variations via simple alterations change the phrase's meaning, and call attention to the facility with which people can manipulate language and themselves. By losing or adding one letter, Perec drastically alters the sentence.

Perec also uses formal criteria to rearrange the letters to create new sentences. In his second variation, Perec supplies an anagram, "Hé, Jules, ce même chenu de Proust songe bien"

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<sup>20</sup> In both of these versions, the subtraction of a letter does not mean that the letters 'u' and 'e' cannot appear elsewhere in the sentence. Rather, one space where a letter might be is eliminated, almost randomly, to illustrate language's easy malleability.

(Perec, 17); “Hey Jules, this dull brat of Proust’s is quite a dreamer”. This version illustrates language’s adaptability while also poking fun at Proust’s narrator as well at readers and the status that they give Proust whose narrative centers around a self-absorbed child. Perec’s seventh adaptation, transposition, drastically alters the meaning and sound of the original sentence: “Lugubrement je me suis couronné: honteusement” (Perec, 22), “dismally, I crowned myself: shamefully”. By rearranging certain letters, Perec creates a series of words that individually make sense, but whose combined meaning is less obvious. This mechanism underscores again language’s composed nature. Perec further illustrates this aspect of language in his eighth variation, a strict palindrome: “Eru, eh! En no bed! Eh cu oc si usé me j s.p. met gno!” (Perec, 23). This variation, like the first, points out the randomness of language. Although this sentence appears to be made up of words, and the letters used in it can be used to create a sentence, this rearrangement seems to result in nonsense. It is only upon remembering that the sentence is a palindrome that the meaning emerges. This suggests that it is necessary to have a guide to literature—like the one Perec provides—or that it is important to carefully observe one’s surroundings in order to approach a problem correctly, to avoid incorrect judgments and assumptions, and to find meaning. Meaning can be created as easily as disorder and can be found anywhere, as long as there is a guiding principle. Thus, Perec, who seems at first to simply be playing with language, uses formal constructions to critique his own surroundings.

Perec then alters the sentence using linguistic tools not found in the original sentence. The first example of this is variation twelve, negation: “Longtemps je ne me suis pas couché de bonne heure” (Perec, 27). Once again, Perec shows that there are a number of permutations of this sentence, including simply negating it, a mechanism that can be applied to any number of phrases and circumstances. Perec continues to alter the meaning of the original sentence through

negation. Variation seventeen, the triple contradiction, reads “Jadis, j’acceptai de perdre le match à l’aube” (Perec, 33), “formerly, I was agreeing to lose the match at dawn” (Perec, rather than “for a long time, I did go to bed early). Rather than going to bed early at night, the new narrator wakes up early to engage in physical activity. Finally, Perec employs anonyms in his twentieth variation, “Une fois, l’autre fit la grasse matinée” (Perec, 36), “once, the other slept in”. By using idiomatic expressions and tools of negation, Perec demonstrates that social constructs—language in particular but not exclusively—are malleable and that the tools to change sentences often exist within the construct itself.

Perec also illustrates the randomness of language by creating sentences that sound the same as the original with different meanings. This manipulation explicitly shows that ideas that sound similar can be drastically different from each other, cautioning the reader to avoid judgments based solely on a similarity of sound. First in this group is variation 29, homoconsonatism (Perec, the same consonants), “L’art toujours mou se cachait dans Ben Hur” (Perec, 47), “always fluid art was hiding itself in Ben Hur” followed by homovocalism (Perec, same vowel sounds), “Qu’on rende le fruit fourré cher aux veuves” (Perec, 48), “That we give the expensive wrapped fruit to widows” and finally homophony (Perec, the same sound), “L’honte en germe, est-ce huis? Coup chez deux bons heurts” (Perec, 49), “The shame in germs, this is the door? Blows at two good conflicts!”. These adaptations suggest that language is not simply a series of written words; sound is important too, and sound provides an avenue for misunderstanding and for reinterpretation.

Perec also demonstrates language’s manipulability by altering and substituting words and reproducing a similar meaning, showing that ideas that sound or seem different on the surface may have more in common than they first seem to. The lipograms are perfect examples of this

maneuver. Perec's first, the fourth variation "lipogram en a" (Perec, 19) is word for word and letter for letter the same as the original. The fifth variation, "lipogramme en i" (Perec, 20) is in the first person plural rather than the first person singular and is in the passé simple tense rather than the passé composé because "suis," the auxiliary verb needed to conjugate the reflexive verb "se coucher" to the passé composé, is off limits. Rather than "for a long time I went to bed early", the new version, "longtemps nous nous couchâmes de bonne heure" (Perec, 20) makes going to bed early a historical event, completely separate from Proust's modernist discourse and the narrator's relationship with the action. The last lipogram, lipogram in e forces Perec to make changes that are based not merely in grammar but also in word choice: "Durant un grand laps l'on m'alita tôt" (Perec, 21), "for a long time, I was confined to be bed early". This version has a very similar meaning to that of the original sentence; it hints at the narrator's displeasure at going to bed early, while hitting all the major points of the sentence. This type of alteration can be very powerful, as it can allow the translator to reveal themes earlier than in the original. In variation 14, curtailing, Perec drops "longtemps" to create "je me suis couché de bonne heure" (Perec, 30). Now, instead of reminding the reader of the habitualness of the action (Perec, which, in the original contradicts the past perfect verbal phrase), Perec emphasizes the action's completedness. In variation 15, a different curtailing, Perec produces, "Longtemps je me suis couché" (Perec, 31). Instead of focusing on the hour at which the narrator went to bed, Perec shifts attention to the verbal phrase itself. Variation 16, double curtailing, is simply "Je me suis couché" (Perec, 32). Now there is no sense of when or of how often going to bed occurred; the reader only know that the narrator did indeed go to bed. Variation 18 is perhaps the most amusing, as it hints at the narrator's relationships with the adults in his family: "Marcel, au lit!" (Perec, 34). Perec distills the phrase to the action Proust's narrator describes in the opening pages of "Combray". Although

these variations sound different from each other and from the original sentence, they all evoke a similar meaning. This strategy serves to caution against dismissing an idea or an argument because it sounds divergent<sup>21</sup>, and to suggest instead listening to the content rather than focusing on the form.

Perec also changes the sentence structure. In variation 22, Perec reduces the original sentence to “Parfois, je ne m’étendai pas trop tard” (Perec, 38), “sometimes I didn’t stay up too late”. By approaching the sentiment from the opposite point of view, Perec softens the phrase. Variation 23, permutation, reverses the orders of the clauses: “de bonne heure, je me suis couché longtemps” (Perec, 39). The emphasis is now on the time, rather than on the habitual action. These changes explore the idea of multiple points of view as well as the possibility of multiple approaches to a problem.

Perec also chooses synonyms to change the words. Variation 13, emphasis, is an extended version of the original: “Pendant longtemps, je me suis couché de bonne heure, pendant très très très longtemps, je me suis couché, je suis allé au lit, quoi, de très bonne heure, de très très très bonne heure, vraiment de très très très bonne heure” (Perec, 28). The insistence on the hour having been “very very very good” underlines the fact that the same word, when used slightly differently, can create a new meaning. Variation 26, “synonym” (Perec, 44) does simply restate the original sentence: “Pendant plusieurs années, j’aillai au lit tôt” (Perec, 44). This change shows that meaning isn’t the only factor in literature; although Perec gets the point across, this phrase is much less pleasant to hear than Proust’s original.

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<sup>21</sup> This is important to positive ideas that may be ignored because they are poorly articulated or seem to come out of left field as well as to dangerous ideas that are not recognized as such because they initially seem different.

Perec engages in a series of formal changes with variations 33, 34, and 35, heterosyntaxism, as an alexandrine, and as an interrogation, respectively. Variation 33 uses different words to create the same word order: “De nombreuses années me connurent couché-tôt” (Perec, 52), where “for many years” replaces “for a long time” and “I was known to” in the simple past replaces “I did go” in the past perfect. Variation 34 puts the line in verse, “Fort longtemps je me suis/ couché de très bonne heure” (Perec, 53). The addition of “fort” and “très” give the line 12 syllables, making it an alexandrine, and more formal. These words also emphasize both the long repetition of going to bed early and the early hour. Finally, variation 35, interrogation, poses a question and provides an answer: “Je me serais longtemps couché de bonne heure? *Nous laisserons le lecteur en proie à cette douloureuse question*” (Perec, 54). Now the action is in the future—“Will I go to bed early?”—and the reader is specified as a factor in literature. Through these variations, Perec explores the effect and importance of using formal constructions of language in disseminating thought.

Perec also uses similar words to create a different meaning. In variation 19, Perec alters one letter several times, creating a sting of permutations: “Longtemps je me suis bouché de bonne heure/ Longtemps je me suis douché de bonne heure/ Longtemps je me suis mouché de bonne heure/ Longtemps je me suis touché de bonne heure” (Perec, 35)—for a long time I blocked my self, showered, blew my nose and touched myself early. These minimal variations play with language and expectations of literature. The same can be said for variation 21, amplification: “Eternellement, je me suis couché de plus en plus tôt” (Perec, 37). Although this phrase seems, at first glance, to say more or less the same thing as the original, it actually suggests “eternally, I went to bed earlier and earlier”, creating an image of change and bizarre sleep patterns rather than the regularity implied in the original sentence. Variation 24, cross

contamination, also plays with language and expectations: “a) le 15 mai 1796, je me suis couché de bonne heure b) Longtemps le général Bonaparte fit son entrée dans Milan à la tête de cette jeune armée qui venait de passer le pont de Lodi, et d’apprendre au monde qu’après tant de siècles César et Alexandre avaient un successeur” (Perec, 40). Perec crosses Proust’s sentence with a description of the Napoleonic wars to suggest that history and literature are not as different from each other as some believe. Both use language to convey a scenario that may or may not be entirely true. In variation 28, Perec creates another “contamination” (Perec, 46): “Comme il faisait une chaleur de 33°, je me suis couché de bonne heure” (Perec, 46)—“as it was 33° (91.4° Fahrenheit), I went to bed early”. Although this retains most of the original sentence, Perec makes the action—going to bed early—dependent on it being very hot, rather than a habitual action.

By using the same words differently, different words in the same way, and different words and formats in the same way as Proust’s opening phrase of “Combray,” Georges Perec demonstrates that language is composed and relatively easy to manipulate, as are perceptions. Perec’s collection of variations on a line challenge typical ideas of translation, both in that Perec only works within one language and in that replication of meaning is not the only goal. This mechanism, however interesting and witty it may be, is not useful as a translation to anyone outside of linguistics and French word play. Although Perec does occasionally reveal themes of Proust’s novel, his interest lies in manipulating what exists for the sake of manipulation. Unlike the other translations, which have all posited subtle stances on translation theory and have indicated something about French-Anglo relations and the status of Proust’s work in various literary circles, *35 Variations sur un thème de Proust* shies away from this action, leaving the reader no more informed than when he began. Despite this, Perec also manages to comment on

French language and culture of the 1970s, making it simultaneously useless to anyone attempting to read and understand Proust or intercultural interactions and extremely illuminating to students of French culture.

## Conclusion

Comparing and contrasting varying translations of the first chapter of Marcel Proust's novel *À la recherche du temps perdu*, "Combray," one produced fairly recently, one produced contemporaneously with the original, and several produced in the years between the two, the possibilities of translation become apparent. Lydia Davis' "Combray" is beautifully and immaculately constructed, but offers little beyond replication of Proust's chapter. Although this is a feat, readers unacquainted with Proust might find her version challenging or off-putting. Charles Kenneth Scott-Moncrieff's translation, on the other hand, is more suited to an English-speaking and reading public that is not filled with Proust scholars. His looser translation challenged the original (Lubow) and emphasized his own interpretation over a strict and adherent translation. DJ Enright's updated version of this translation attempts to strike a balance between returning to a closer and more faithful reading of the original and upholding expressions that might appeal to an English reader (that is, someone who reads in English, rather than someone whose nationality is English and who reads). The atypical translations—Harold Pinter's *The Proust Screenplay* and Georges Perec's *35 Variations*—both bring new insights into the original and challenge the position of translation vis-à-vis other adaptations and other texts. These translations, however, also pose greater challenges than any of the orthodox translations: Pinter's translation has never been produced as a film, so any discussion of how well or poorly done is his translation is entirely theoretical. Perec, too, offers insights, but his translation focuses on a single line of the original text, and may appear to many as nothing more than sophisticated word play.

If nothing else, reading and studying these translations shows great variance not only of translation theories and applications, but also of perceptions of French bourgeois culture at the

turn of the twentieth century. Through comparing translations and theories, it is possible to construct an understanding of literature, literature in translation, and methods of translation. Moreover, this comparative analysis creates a sense of translation's "cultural significance" (Toury, 2005). As readers become more aware of mechanisms of translation, the role of translation and its significance will also change, and different standards and ideals will be set.

This analysis should not suggest that one translation ought to be considered better than others simply because it promotes and caters to the source and target cultures fairly, if not equally. Certainly each reader has his or her own favorite translation, just as each reader has his or her own favorite text, and that is as it should be. But in considering and comparing different translations of one text, opinions may shift.

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