



STUDIES IN GLOBAL SCIENCE FICTION

Science Fiction in Translation

Perspectives on the Global Theory and Practice of Translation

Edited by Ian Campbell



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Studies in Global Science Fiction

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Ian Campbell
Editor

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Her publications are as follows:

“Comment vivre sans lui? Anthropocentrisme et Posthumanisme dans Sans l’Orang-outan d’Éric Chevillard.” In “La Science-fiction en langue française,” edited by Paul Scott and Antje Ziethen. Special issue, *Œuvres et Critiques*, vol. 44, no. 2 (2019).

“Le Transperceneige et Snowpiercer: figuration, sas et espaces de transit(ion).” *ReS Futuræ* [Online], no. 14, 2019, doi:10.4000/resf.3902. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/resf/3902>

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“Transparence Utopique et Scientifique: La Nuit des Temps de René Barjavel.” *Chimères – A Journal of French and Francophone Literatures and Cultures*, vol. 32 (New Series), Fall 2015.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Science Fiction and Translation

Ian Campbell

In the last decade, readers and scholars of science fiction (SF) in the Anglophone world have been privileged to enjoy an explosion of SF from other languages and cultures translated into English and brought to market. An increasing number of volumes addressing SF from outside the Anglophone world, written by scholars fluent in those languages, have also appeared on the shelves of university libraries. The major SF conferences and journals have turned much more of their focus to works and scholarship from other languages, just as they have with SF written in English by people from historically marginalized demographics. English-speaking readers and scholars alike have and will continue to benefit from this near-exponential growth of and access to works and scholarship. Readers in other languages can also now benefit from both Anglophone SF and SF from other non-Anglophone traditions, translated into their languages, as well as SF originally written in their own languages, mostly by native speakers who grew up in their cultures.

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SF is a powerful means of communication, not only because it can serve to explore and explain the effect of technological developments, whether native or important, but also and more importantly because it can be a powerful means of social criticism. Anyone familiar enough with SF scholarship and theory to be reading this introduction will be well aware of the theory of cognitive estrangement initially formulated by Darko Suvin more than four decades ago: SF, when it portrays our world changed by a scientifically plausible development or an entirely other but still scientifically plausible world, holds a distorting mirror up to our actual world, defamiliarizing accepted conditions and practices (Suvin 1979, 10). In doing so, it often critiques dehumanizing or unfair conditions or practices in our world and can model a better alternative, often by means of portraying a worse one. The advent of, and increase in, SF from Asia, Africa and Latin America adds dimension to the distorting mirror: it can be held up to Western cultures' regrettable tendency to view other cultures not as possessing agency or subjectivity of their own but rather as an Orientalist repository for the opposites of the virtues Western cultures wish to claim (Said 1979, 40). The distorting mirror can also be held up to the writers' own cultures, which has the salutary effect of problematizing the very notion of "our world" and also provides a means of critiquing their own cultures and implicitly suggesting alternatives. This last function can be most valuable under regimes that do not provide legal protections for freedom of speech, especially with respect to critiques of those very regimes: consider, for example, the use of "Aesopian language" parables in Soviet SF (Satkaukyte 2018, 19). As I have argued about the early decades of SF in Arabic, the vividly different worlds of SF create plausible deniability for critiques that, if made directly, might land the writer in prison or worse (Campbell 2018, 114). The mirror itself can be distorted, providing an estrangement that might seem fantastical in the real world or in the West but is more plausible within the source culture or within the framework of the text (Freedman 2000, 18).

Yet translation is not a transparent process: to render a text into another language is inevitably to introduce distortions. The debate over what constitutes the ideal translation goes back in the Western tradition all the way to antiquity: in the first-century BCE, the Roman orator Cicero said: "If I render word for word, the result will sound uncouth, and if compelled by necessity I alter anything in the order or wording, I shall seem to have departed from the function of a translator" (Cicero 1959). The poet Horace, a few decades later, stressed the aesthetic quality of the translated

text over a rigid notion of fidelity: “nor should you try to render your original word for word like a slavish translator” (Horace 1965, 85). Of course, most of us can only read their work in English. Susan Bassnett argues that in the Roman context, translation from Greek “could be perceived as an exercise in comparative stylistics” (Bassnett 2002, 50), because most educated Romans were able to read the text in the original as well as in translation. Another effect of this sort of translation was to reinforce the notion that Roman culture was a continuation of rather than a replacement for Greek culture. The early Abbasid caliphs in the eighth-century CE began a program of translating Greek, Coptic and Syriac texts into Arabic; this also reinforced the same sort of continuity, especially in those parts of their empire that had for centuries and until very recently been under Greek control (Rababah 2015, 125). The Abbasids’ purpose was practical: not only did they wish to spread proto-scientific knowledge throughout their empire (Mehawesh 2014, 689), but they used this dissemination as a means of legitimizing themselves as benevolent rulers rather than usurpers (Gutas 1998, 28).

“Word for word” and “sense for sense” have served ever since as two ends of a continuum of opinions on or theories of translation. In the West, much of the debate from antiquity to the eighteenth century concerned the translation of the Bible, from Hebrew and Greek into Latin and thence (or directly) to vernacular languages (Bassnett 2002, 54). Perspectives on translation were mostly formulated by the translators themselves, often as a means of justifying one practice or another (Munday 2009, 1). Only after the First World War did systematic theories of and approaches to translation begin to appear. Notable among these is Walter Benjamin’s perspective, that a translation creates an “afterlife” for a foreign text, thereby lending power to the values of the culture and time that produced the original text. Benjamin also argues that translation can bring us closer to what he calls “pure language”: the goal of translation is “undeniably a final, conclusive, decisive stage of all linguistic creation. In translation the original rises into a higher and purer linguistic air, as it were” (Benjamin 2000, 19). This concept of a universal language might fit well in a Golden Age SF novel, but by the 1950s, Translation Studies as a rigorous academic discipline had begun to develop within the Western academy. While the field is too broad and deep to truly summarize without being reductive, for our purposes it is worth drawing attention to the well-established concept within translation studies that an integral part of moving a text from a source language to a target language are the “cognitive, linguistic,

visual, cultural and ideological phenomena” (Hatim and Munday 2004, 6) that are integral parts of this process. Translating an SF novel, or any text, from one language to another cannot be merely a matter of replacing words in the source language with their equivalents in the target language; these phenomena must be taken into account. Modern theories of translation are for the very most part descriptive rather than prescriptive, given the vast variety of languages, cultures and texts involved.

When it comes to fiction, representative of attention to descriptivism and cultural issues in translation is the work of Gideon Toury, who argues that both source and target culture have norms, which tend to change over time: “whereas adherence to source norms determines a translation’s adequacy as compared to the source text, subscription to norms originating in the target culture determines its acceptability” (Toury 2000, 201). Another important perspective is that formulated by André Lefevere, that the existence of a translation is determined by patronage, whether individual patrons such as the aristocrats who in bygone days for reasons of social or symbolic capital commissioned translations of the classics—and thereby had a great influence on determining the canon—or in modern times, the corporate publishing houses that for reasons of finance capital commission translations of works deemed to be marketable in the target culture(s) (Bassnett and Lefevere 1998, 41). The idea that the translated text is comparatively autonomous—a separate text, not a lesser version of the source text—takes on greater importance beginning in the 1980s. With the advent of poststructuralism, fundamental differences are seen as existing within, and not merely between, languages and cultures: consider how difficult it is to translate Derrida or Lacan into English while retaining the linguistic play in their French (Lewis 1985, 39). Derrida himself comments on the impossibility of “translation without remnants” of his own French into English (Derrida 1979, 131).

As issues of cultural, racial and ethnic studies, feminist and gender studies and postcolonial studies began to influence literary theory and studies, so too did they impact translation studies. Because translation is coded as feminine, whether grammatically or through metaphor, translators and translation are systemically undervalued, which in fact translation is an act of writing (Chamberlain 1988, 456). For Gayatri Spivak, the dominance of English and the translation of women’s texts from the languages of formerly colonized nations into English is fraught: while it does bring those women’s thoughts to the attention of the vast Anglosphere, it at the same time tends to render texts from different languages into a “translate” that she considers both “with-it” and tedious (Spivak 1992, 180)

and that erases the cultural differences that make the text relevant in the first place. Feminism and postcolonial studies are intimately concerned with power and its distribution; hence, their impact upon translation studies has been significant. This is primarily expressed in a shift in translation studies toward a consideration of ethics: the translator is not simply a mirror—not even a distorting one—but rather an agent, making choices (Hermans 2009, 97). Agency brings both Lefevre’s patronage and Toury’s norms into play in the current century dominated by capitalist publishing houses whose primary, if not sole, concern is profit. The norm that is seen as profitable by corporate patrons is a smooth translation, one far closer to sense for sense than word for word, without annotation, likely in something close to the translatese that Spivak disdains. A translator, therefore, must make ethical choices: adhere to the norms, which are themselves expressions of power, or intervene/annotate and risk losing patronage? Not everything is subject to corporate profit, of course, especially within SF in comparison to other genres. Fan translation for love rather than money (e.g., of Japanese manga into English) is common, as are translations published by university presses—see Chap. 3 of this volume for an example thereof.

Of particular interest to the contributors to this volume are the theories of Lawrence Venuti, who among many other observations has noted the dominance of English in terms of translation flows. Venuti describes the problem of *fluency*: the tendency of translators to render texts into an English that makes them appear as if they had been originally written in English. Fluent texts file down the sharp edges of foreign structure, or narrative, or characterization, or syntax, diction, idiom or vocabulary, “domesticating” the text by replacing these elements with equivalents less likely to disturb readers unfamiliar with the source language or cultures. Venuti uses the term “remainder”, which he borrows from Jean-Jacques Lecercle (1990), to denote these sharp edges: the features difficult to place within the standard literary language of the target culture (Venuti 1995). In Venuti’s words:

Translation never communicates in an untroubled fashion because the translator negotiates the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text by reducing them and supplying another set of differences, basically domestic... The foreign text is rewritten in domestic dialects and discourses, registers and styles, and this results in the production of textual effects that signify only in the history of the domestic culture. (Venuti 2000, 468 and 471)

For Venuti, this leads to the translator's "invisibility"; that is, that a domesticated translation shows no intervention by or presence of the translator. Furthermore, the dominant norm of domestication makes translators as a group invisible: underpaid and underappreciated. While someone with Venuti's prestige can engage in what he calls "foreignizing" and Hermans "defamiliarizing" (Hermans 2009, 99) translation without jeopardizing his position, someone trying to make a living as (e.g.) a translator of midlist SF will quickly find themselves considering alternatives.

This issue of domestication can be and has been especially problematic when it comes to SF and its precursors, due to the inventiveness of fictive worlds within SF and the reliance of its estrangement function upon specific language. Reed Edwin Peggram considers the early translations of Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) from Latin into English and French, and finds that while the French translation hews closely to the original, the English version takes many liberties with the text: a person literate only in English would have a very different idea of More's fictive society than one literate only in French (Peggram 1940, 335). The earliest translation of the *Arabian Nights* into a European language by Antoine Galland between 1704 and 1717 became the source for translations into English and other European languages, but Galland's translations took enormous liberties with the Arabic text from which he was working; these include the wholesale addition of stories: his "understanding of the conventions of prose narrative in Europe led him to numerous significant changes to his source text" (Ballaster 2013, 35). Notably, these changes entirely bowdlerized the erotic content that pervades the *Nights* and is in many ways their purpose. The first translation of *Frankenstein* (1818) into French was notable because, contrary to the fashion at the time that texts be rendered according to neo-classical standards, it conforms to Shelley's desire for a more literal translation—though it does add "adverbs, adjectives and tropes which aim at making the text more dramatic" (Rouhette 2020, 122). The tremendous changes and errors that Anglo-American publishers made with Jules Verne's texts are well-documented (Evans 2005, 80). Capek's *R. U. R.* has many additions and deletions in its first rendering into English, though the full story is rather more complicated (Philmus 2001, 14). To fully explore any one of these would take a full chapter, or indeed more: suffice it to say that domestication of translations of SF has been an issue since the inception of SF and even before.

It has long been observed that English plays a lopsided role in SF. For Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, among others, this is a real problem:

English has become a sort of Grand Central Bottleneck for achieving worldly success—which is increasingly defined as reaching a global audience.

For sf artists, the situation is compounded. Despite the many rich non-Anglo traditions of sf writing, a vast number of tropes, motifs, icons, and historical models in the sf megatext originated or were decisively elaborated in the Anglo-US sf archive. (Csicsery-Ronay, Jr., 2012, 483)

Moreover, and as noted above, we generally consider SF to have an estrangement *function*: while some of what is marketed as SF is of course simply storytelling for fun or profit, SF as a subject of study defamiliarizes familiar aspects of its own society. SF, then, needs the remainder in order to perform its estrangement effectively: when domestication removes the odd, jarring or just plain foreign elements of a text in order to render it more palatable to Anglophone readers, it disrupts this estrangement function, thereby altering, weakening or removing key elements of the text's meaning to readers in its source language or culture. The estrangement may not be evident, or even *present*, in the translated text; this diminution or removal of a crucial aspect of that text will almost inevitably make the translation less impactful. The Anglophone readers for whom the text has been domesticated may well wonder why the work was chosen for translation, or may find it less interesting than hoped for, and thus turn back to SF originally published in the Anglophone world, thereby exacerbating the very problem Venuti raises.

SF in many other cultures, and its translation to and from English, poses a further problem, in that as Csicsery-Ronay observes, SF as a genre evolved largely—though by no means exclusively—in English and in Anglophone cultures. In these cultures, even readers who don't care for SF will likely have a clear understanding of the characteristics of the genre; they will be accustomed to the tropes and discourse of SF to an extent that readers in other cultures may not. There are many languages and cultures where SF has a firm presence: Russian and French at first, then Japanese, Spanish and Korean, and Chinese and some of the languages of the Indian subcontinent. There are still other cultures (notably, in sub-Saharan Africa) where literature is often written and read in English but where SF is a comparatively new phenomenon. This is in no way to say that people from such cultures cannot or do not understand SF: of course they can, and among other things, the expansion and distribution of SF film and television have gone a long way toward bridging that gap. Rather, it is likelier that aspects of SF may seem a bit foreign to readers of the source text, and

when translated into English, that foreignness will essentially always be domesticated to a certain extent, if for no other reason than that the sort of Anglophone readers eager to experience SF in translation from other languages and cultures are likely—again, in general—to find a given trope or subject more familiar than does the average reader in the source culture. I very much want to be clear here that I’m not making some Orientalist argument that might be caricatured as “people from non-Anglophone societies will find SF foreign”, but rather a very general statement (with many caveats) that it’s challenging to reflect in English translation the extent to which certain aspects of SF might seem comparatively new or different or foreign in other cultures and languages where SF has a relatively newer presence or smaller footprint. Domestication is not only about ease of reading or corporate priorities.

Another key aspect of SF in translation is when the translation goes the other way, from English to a target language or culture. How do translators choose to domesticate tropes or language so as to create a fluent text in the target language—or to avoid fluency/domestication? How do translators choose terms in the target language, ones that may be unfamiliar to target-language readers, to represent SF vocabulary commonly used in English? What is lost in translation; what is gained? As time passes, how do retranslations of a text differ from the first efforts? Are they less domesticated because of developments in translation theory? How do *writers* of SF in target languages express the language of SF in a way consistent with their language’s and culture’s literary expression? How do writers formulate SF in such a way as to ground it in their language and culture? The modes and tropes of SF, as well as its language, will of necessity adapt to the languages of cultures outside (at least for the present moment) the traditional strongholds of SF production. Yet the precise manners in which this will happen are localized and dependent upon many factors.

The essays in this volume are intended to address these questions as well as the issues of translating individual works of SF. They are the result of a call for papers that were distributed as 2019 became 2020, and in this manner are thus representative of the science fictional world we’ve all had to live in as the COVID-19 pandemic escalated and continues. The intent was to encourage a broad variety of responses, perhaps at the expense of more granular thematic unity. I was also particularly interested in bringing in new and emerging scholars: as such, a broad and diverse range of perspectives is represented here. There are also lacunae: notably, the contributors who were to have delivered articles on Japanese, Korean and

Turkish SF were compelled to withdraw due to issues relating to the pandemic. It is to be hoped that, should this volume prove successful, a subsequent collection can include these discourses as well as more focus on the SF of Latin America.

Chapter 2, “Speculative Fiction, Translation, and Transformation” by Rachel Cordasco, the founder of the website SFinTranslation.com and a translator in her own right, explores how speculative fiction and the act of translation both attempt to render the impossible possible by moving among languages and cultures in order to find the important similarities and fascinating differences among humans. This chapter brings Cordasco’s intimate knowledge of the broad trends in SF translation to bear upon recent developments in the field. Its central metaphor is to take various SF tropes such as zombies, androids and clones and liken them to the status of translation, showing how a text can gain what Benjamin would have called an “afterlife” (Benjamin 2000, 16) in another language. Translations can be perceived as time machines or stasis chambers, while retranlations can be framed as snapshots: notably, the works of Jules Verne were originally badly translated and censored (Evans 2005, 80) and are only now being retranlated in concordance with developments in translation studies. This chapter also discusses speculative fiction *about* translation, where the universal translator has gradually disappeared in favor of more complex and nuanced approaches to the subject, before ending with a note on the financial roadblocks to the growth of translation of SF into English.

Chapter 3, “An Insufficient Process of Internationalization: Militant Translation and the Experience of Translating into English the Best-selling Catalan (Sf) Novel Ever” by Sara Martín, Senior Lecturer in English Literature and Cultural Studies at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, tells a story of the process of translation of SF into English. Martín’s critique of the process is not one of the Anglophone SF establishment, but rather of the Spanish academy that devalues translation as much as does its American counterpart, and of her own native Catalan culture’s failure to disseminate its literature. She describes how her efforts to translate into English a Catalan SF classic, Manuel de Pedrolo’s *Mecanoscrit del segon origen* (1974) led her to become a “militant translator”: that is, a translator who not only translates a text but is also actively involved in the process of publication, from the selection of the original text to publicizing the published translation and even beyond. The story of Martín’s militancy in bringing to market in English a novel nearly everyone in Catalonia was

surprised to find out hadn't already been translated, and the herculean efforts it took for her to do so, can serve to SF scholars as a very clear example of just how challenging it can be to make a text well-known to nearly everyone in one culture available in another language. It can also serve as a model for how we might imagine a process that requires less militancy.

The next three chapters will focus on the translation of works of SF into English. Chapter 4, "Ungendering the English Translation of the Strugatskys' *Snail on the Slope*", by R. B. Lemberg of the University of Kansas, focuses on the translation of gender from Russian to English in two different translations of *Snail on the Slope*, a novel that deals centrally with gender. Lemberg argues that the 1980 English translation *ungenders* the novel through a variety of means, by smoothing out, erasing and replacing most of its gendered expressions, titles, names and grammar. This downplays and even erases the original's messaging, obfuscating the novel's gendered meanings and its preoccupation with gender roles under the Soviet regime, in order to emphasize the anti-Soviet critique which Western audiences expected from the authors. The chapter compares the 1980 translation to the 2018 translation, in order to ask questions about the roles and aims of science fictional translation. This comparison focuses on how both translators address gendered grammatical issues in Russian: the second translation does a better but still incomplete job of expressing issues difficult to translate directly into English. Lemberg ends with a discussion of the potential of a feminist approach to translating *Snail on the Slope*.

Chapter 5, "(Not) Translating the Incomprehensible: Defamiliarizing Science, Technology, and Science Fiction in Harry Martinson's *Aniara*", is written by Daniel Helsing of California Polytechnic State University. Helsing, a native of Sweden, also works as a critic, poet and translator. His chapter here takes up the subject of SF poetry, specifically that of Martinson, whose *Aniara* portrays life aboard a starship drifting helplessly into the void. Using Lawrence Venuti's distinction between domesticating and foreignizing translations, this chapter argues that the 1999 translation foreignizes space and nuclear violence, similar to how Martinson suggests the irrepresentability of modern astrophysics and nuclear violence in the original Swedish, while the 1963 translation tends to domesticate the poem. Helsing goes on to argue that Martinson's style of narration, and his defamiliarization of science and technology, diverge from common

characteristics of Anglo-American SF at the time, making the poem not only a defamiliarization of science and technology but of SF as well.

Tessa Sermet of Lake Forest College gives us Chap. 6, “Imperfect Words for an Imperfect World: Language and Translation in *Chroniques du Pays des Mères* by Elisabeth Vonarburg”. The novel depicts a separatist matriarchy, where the male birth rate is below three percent, lesbianism is the norm, and society is organized around procreation. Vonarburg’s feminist utopia subjects French—a marked language where the masculine can be both specific and generic—to its own defamiliarization process, overruling grammar rules to favor the feminine. The English translation does the French text a disservice by not fully reproducing the linguistic play: an Anglophone reader won’t be fully able to appreciate what Vonarburg is doing. Sermet explores how Vonarburg relies, uses and challenges the *mundus inversus* tropes of feminist utopias and science fiction, before examining Vonarburg’s subversion of language and how it delivers her critique of phallogocentrism. The final section of the chapter draws on a connection established between translation and *female* reproductive work, examining how the novel’s subversion of gender tropes ultimately critiques capitalism and patriarchy by transferring some of its structures into a feminist utopia.

Chapter 7 serves as something of a bridge, here, in that it addresses both how a Francophone novel is translated into English and how that novel uses an invented “Eastern” language in a manner that renders it susceptible to critique. Erin Twohig, of Georgetown University, gives us “Speculative Orientalism? On ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’ Referents in Boualem Sansal’s *2084*”. The article demonstrates how Algerian Francophone novelist Sansal adapts many of the themes of George Orwell’s *1984*, transposing them into a time a hundred years in the future, and into a fictional “Islamist” dictatorship. Twohig explores both the “translation” of Orwell’s novel into a different cultural context and Sansal’s use of an invented “Eastern” language, Abilang, through the lens of Edward Said’s *Orientalism*. Sansal’s invented language and cultural referents mobilize elements from Afghanistan and Pakistan, Algeria and the broader Middle East to critique religious extremism, while suggesting the inherent centrality of Western literary and cultural referents. Ultimately, this chapter argues that *2084* and its English translation raise an important question about non-Anglophone, and particularly postcolonial, SF: at what point might the indiscriminate mixing of “Eastern” sounding place

names and cultural referents cross over from creative speculative critique to speculative Orientalism?

Chapter 8 continues our series of considering Francophone SF and begins a series of three chapters that address the translation of SF *from* English into other languages. In “Philip K. Dick in French: A Mutating Voice”, Amélie Lespilette, a PhD candidate at the University of Paris Nanterre, uses the work of Dick, whose works are very popular in France, to the extent that they were translated into French very early, often with significant defects. As a result, numerous approximate translations or even rewritings of the original texts were released, damaging the source texts to various degrees, and thus calling for later retranlations or revisions to restore the author’s genuine works. Lespilette undertakes close readings of passages in multiple retranlations of several of Dick’s stories. Based on Antoine Berman’s postulate in the *Retranlation Hypothesis* that translated texts tend to meliorate with every retranlation, and his ethics of translation developed in *Translation and the Trials of the Foreign* which denounces ethnocentric and hypertextual translations, this chapter’s aim is threefold: first to present to what extent Philip K. Dick’s first French translations can be viewed as defective, then to study how retranlations—which bring the writer’s voice to the foreground—can be seen as rectifications of the previous ones, and finally to discuss the limits of their corrective effect as the latest retranlations could still be perfected.

Chapter 9, “*Ponying the Slovos: A Parallel Linguistic Analysis of A Clockwork Orange* in English, French, and Spanish”, by Niall Curry and Benet Vincent of Coventry University and Jim Clarke, uses an applied linguistics approach to examine Burgess’ work in translation. Nadsat, the “anti-language” (i.e., one designed to be opaque outside a narrow group) that Alex and his droogs speak, poses stylistic and creative challenges for translators, being composed of different categories that draw on different word-formation principles. Building on their own work in the area, in this chapter they unpack such challenges through a contrastive analysis of the English original and two of its more popular translations, the French *L’Orange Mécanique*, translated by Georges Belmont and Hortense Chabrier, and the Spanish *La Naranja Mecánica*, translated by Anibal Leal and Ana Quijada Vargas (who translated the final chapter). Specifically, this chapter presents an investigation of Nadsat in each translation, offering a description of the construction of Nadsat across languages, an exploration of how the French and Spanish translators handle the multiplicity of words for ‘women’ in English-Nadsat, and a critical, comparative

evaluation of Leal's and Quijada Vargas's idiosyncratic approaches to translating Nadsat and the impact their varied approaches have on the novella. Overall, their findings show that corpus approaches can offer data-driven insights into the translation of science fiction texts.

Bogi Takács, a writer, editor and critic of speculative fiction who also publishes on SF studies, considers in Chapter 10 the translation of aspects of Isaac Asimov's work into Hungarian. "Censorship or Cultural Adjustment? Sexualized Violence in Hungarian Translations of Asimov's *Second Foundation*" examines how the portrayal of telepathic invasion between two men is repeatedly described using the vocabulary of sexual violence in the English-language text, which comparison is tied to the main antagonist's characterization as a sterile mutant. In the Hungarian translations, telepathy is presented instead by analogy to a knife assault or an animal attack. Takács uses close readings of passages in different translations of *Second Foundation* to interrogate the extent to which the differences in presentation are related to censorship practices prevalent in the Communist era related to queer sexuality and/or rape, or a cultural adjustment to make the text more palatable to Hungarian audiences, or both. This chapter also considers how the far-reaching influence of *Second Foundation* led to different developments in the portrayal of telepathy in Hungarian and American science fiction; this is contextualized via commentary in feminist translation studies on the ambiguities involved in translating rape and cross-cultural comparisons involving the gendered context of telepathy.

The final six chapters address the translation of tropes of SF into other languages and cultures. Chapter 11, by Virginia Conn, a recent PhD graduate from Rutgers University and the managing editor of the *Science Fiction Research Association Review*, examines Chinese SF. "Translating the Pathologized Body as a Tool of Nationalism in Chinese Science Fiction" maps how the trope of the "sick man of Asia" underwent a cultural transformation that reoriented its object over the course of the twentieth century. The concept originally pathologized Chinese bodies through Western representations of them as inherently sickly, weak and craven and remained at the forefront of many Chinese cultural policies from the late 1800s up to the present day. While it has been instrumental in shaping the country's literature, Conn argues that as a thematic device it remains largely unrecognized in Western scholarship of Chinese science fiction, where it has functioned to thematically translate shifting geopolitical hierarchies of national power over time. In their depiction of contemporary

technologies for battling infirmity and prolonging life, both Lu Xun's "Medicine" (1919) and Wang Jinkang's "The Reincarnated Giant" (2005) explore the relationship of physical illness to the individual body and the state as a whole. While "Medicine" takes seriously the trope of state illness as embodied in the individual, condemning China's national character in the process, "The Reincarnated Giant" takes as its baseline the assumption of China as a strong national body. This chapter maps the changing signification of the "sick man" trope from its initial introduction, its early translations and internal appropriation, and finally the ways in which it has been retranslated as a tool of contemporary Chinese science fiction.

Chapter 12, "Translating the Chinese Monster in *Waste Tide*", is written by Yen Ooi, a PhD candidate at Royal Holloway, University of London, and also an author and the narrative director of a video game, *Road to Guangdong*. The chapter examines the monster in Chen Qiufan's 2014 *Waste Tide*: an impoverished young woman who works sorting e-waste and who merges with discarded technology to become Other. The considerations of cultural translation between China and the West reflect on the interpretation of the monster as a product of China's progress in the world and how SF provides for a platform to evaluate and criticize the response to this economic growth today. Ooi applies the concept of techno-Orientalism (Roh et al. 2015) to argue that *Waste Tide* highlights the price of modernization while illustrating the perils of stereotyping in the techno-Orientalist mindset that ignores any meaningful understanding of progress. Through considering the monster(s) in *Waste Tide*, this chapter argues that one value of Chinese science fiction lies in understanding the response or action applied in Chinese science fiction to compensate for these techno-Orientalist tropes; this response is what separates Chinese science fiction from problematic techno-Orientalist productions. Ooi terms this the techno-Occidental strategy—Asia's response to the techno-Orientalist anxieties of the West.

Chapter 13, by Suparno Banerjee of Texas State University, San Marcos, discusses SF tropes in short stories by a Bengali SF writer. "Ghosts, Aliens, and Machines: Epistemic Continuity and Assemblage in Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay's Science Fiction" argues that Mukhopadhyay's seamless blending of the scientific and the supernatural realms in his stories represents a larger trend in Bengali science fiction in particular, and Indian science fiction in general, that repeatedly works as a device of subversion of hegemonic Western notions of science and reality. Mukhopadhyay

deliberately places the ideas of modernity and progress as a contrast to the fast vanishing traditions and narratives of rural and small-town values of the country. These contrasts are apparent in the settings for most of his stories: except a few, most of his science fictions are situated in present-day villages and unknown towns of eastern India, rather than in futuristic high-tech cities. Banerjee argues that Mukhopadhyay's blending of the natural and the supernatural simultaneously represents the flux resulting from modernization of traditional Bengali society and the hybrid identities it creates: the stories highlight alternative and subaltern concepts of knowledge, which in Spivak's terms (Spivak 2001, 2197) were subjected to "epistemic violence" not only by Western ideas of knowledge but also by indigenous elitist epistemology.

In Chap. 14, Alexis Brooks de Vita of Texas Southern University delivers "The Clockwork Chrysalis: Enslavement Poetry of Juan Francisco Manzano". Building on other work that shows how some early tropes of SF such as alien invasion and abduction and the encounter with the technologically advanced Other were derived from African/Diaspora tropes of capture, enslavement and liberation, de Vita takes up similar tropes in the work of Manzano, an enslaved man in Cuba. Manzano's life circumstances were quite singular: he was pampered and raised in privilege as the quasi-son of an elderly aristocrat, but abused and humiliated by the woman's heirs after her death. His poetry, in which he depicts the contradictory circumstances of his life, contains elements of what de Vita sees as precursors of certain subgenres of SF, notably steampunk. The translations of Manzano's poetry, by Irish abolitionist physician Richard Madden, though clearly done in good faith, strip away most of the searing critique of a society based on chattel slavery, as well as the proto-SF elements, replacing them with banal, singsong rhyme about simple feelings. Close readings of the poems show that what we read in English is nothing like the complex, astute and vivid criticism in Manzano's poems.

Chapter 15 is my own work. "The Estrangement of Political Trauma in Two SF Novels by Basma Abdelaziz" examines the use of SF tropes to address and critique the Egyptian dictatorship. *al-Tábbúr* (2013), translated into English as *The Quene* (2018), takes as its subject the bullet wound in the belly of Yehya, an ordinary Egyptian man, after he is shot in a protest against the regime. *Huná Badan* ["Here is a Body"] (2018), which has not been translated into English, has two parallel storylines: in one, a teenaged street urchin is abducted by the regime and indoctrinated as a fascist cadre, while in the other, a group of reactionary Islamists tries

to live in the desert, away from the regime. The storylines merge when the cadres are sent to kill the Islamists; a long *dénouement* details the traumatic effects of this on both groups. This chapter argues that certain choices made in the English translation of *The Queue* domesticate the text, making the disjunction of the trauma inflicted upon Yehya—and by extension, the Egyptian people—less severe, thereby lessening the effect of the novel and its estrangement function for Anglophone readers. The translation in *Huná Badan* is not a linguistic one, but rather one of tropes: like *The Queue* and many other works of twenty-first-century Arabic SF, *Huná Badan* has adopted the trope of the encounter with the technologically advanced Other into the context of Arabic language, literature and cultures.

We conclude with an exploration of another Arabic SF novel. Ikram Masmoudi, of the University of Delaware, gives us “The Translation of SF Tropes in *Dog War IP*”, a reflection upon the use of SF tropes by Palestinian novelist Ibrahim Nasrallah to estrange the fractious climate of the contemporary Middle East. *Dog War II* (2016), which won the International Prize for Arab Fiction in 2018 and is thus slated to be translated into English, depicts a dystopian near-future society in a nameless Middle Eastern country where daylight has shrunk to five hours in every cycle: for Masmoudi, this is an inventive means of depicting the loss of freedom and its replacement by authoritarianism. The novel’s other novum is the invention of a machine that can transform one person into another’s doppelgänger. The protagonist of *Dog War II* mostly uses this to cheat on his wife, but Masmoudi explains how this process, once it spreads among the general public, serves to estrange the endemic conflict in the region: people are constantly at one another’s throats not because they’re so different, but rather because they are essentially the same. In a world depleted of freedom, one’s identity is the last thing one can cling to—or so it would seem.

I hope that this volume provides scholars of SF with a greater understanding of issues in translation studies and the impetus and knowledge to take issues of translation into account when critiquing works from other languages and cultures translated into English. There are many cultures and languages with robust traditions of SF production, and others who have just begun to produce SF tailored to their cultures, languages and social or political preoccupations. With good fortune, we will have further opportunities to consider their works and how the process of translation affects their reception to Anglophone readers, as well as how SF from

English and other languages translated into their languages affects the tone, content and estrangement function of these texts.

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Speculative Fiction, Translation, and Transformation

Rachel Cordasco

The phrase “speculative fiction in English translation” (SFT) seems straightforward, at first. After all, speculative fiction is written around the world, influenced by local traditions, ideas, and languages. Translation is the act of bringing a text from one language into another so that people who read a different language can also enjoy it. Setting aside the issues of what gets translated into English and for what reasons, why speculative fiction is translated less often than “literary” fiction, and the fact that more English speculative fiction is translated into other languages than vice versa, we can notice in the phrase “speculative fiction in English translation” a curious redundancy, given that speculative fiction and translation are both striving toward an ever-receding goal.

This essay discusses speculative fiction and, in, and about translation in order to argue that the practice of translation and the speculative fiction genre are joined both in their similar attempts to render the impossible possible and in the terms of transformation that they share. Speculative fiction invokes creatures, experiences, and technologies that don’t (yet)

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exist; translation makes us believe, if only for a moment, that we all really do speak the same language. Both consistently gesture toward a universality that we may never achieve but will never stop pursuing.

Questions about the evolution of human language continue to drive linguistics studies in the new millennium. One recent paper on this topic suggests that humans' ability to produce certain sounds is connected to whether they live in dry or humid air conditions (Everett et al. 2015). Geography, too, has played a role in keeping certain languages circulating in isolated areas (mountainous places, for instance) while others have spread around the globe through trade and travel. Whether one believes that this (and not the Tower of Babel story) explains why we have so many different languages around the world and why they sound so different, it is nevertheless true that, over the centuries, people have had to find ways to communicate with those who speak a different language. Translation, by definition, is the act of finding equivalent words in different languages. On its face, then, translation seems achievable, but just dip into contemporary discussions of translation theory, read reviews of translated texts and talk to lay readers in order to understand just how impossible a task it truly is.¹

“Impossibility” or “improbability” is a central feature of both translation and speculative fiction: Rod Serling famously said “Fantasy is the impossible made probable. Science Fiction is the improbable made possible.” Science fiction scholar Gary Wolfe puts it this way:

[T]he Ground Rules of science fiction are essentially those of the physical universe, although they may include rules as yet undiscovered, whereas the ground rules of fantasy are generally said to be limited only by internal consistency and not necessarily related to experience. (Wolfe 1986, 108)

People around the world generally agree that: (1) we don't yet have spaceships or teleporters or cloning devices or time machines; and (2) ghosts, fairies, trolls, elves, vampires, and other magical creatures don't exist. And yet, if one read only science fiction, fantasy, or horror, however, one would think that these creatures do indeed exist and have a rich life interacting with or avoiding humans and their “real world.” Speculative fiction, in a sense, makes the impossible at least seem possible.

The act of translation does this, too, though the burdens placed on it are themselves impossible. Generally, a translation of a literary text is expected to be the “equivalent” of the original text, just in a different

language. Thus, *Der Zauberberg* and *The Magic Mountain* are supposed to be the same novel. And yet, German and English are, of course, *different*, and a one-to-one substitution of words cannot be done, nor should it, if the person reading it in English wants a coherent narrative. Translators have to make choices, substituting idioms and finding equivalent puns in order to “capture” what some call the “spirit” of the text as it was first written (Borges 1999, 93).²

Translation is often described by scholars and translators in terms of the human body—specifically, one that has been transformed: a common theme, we must note, in speculative fiction. After all, multiple texts by one author are often called a “body of work” or “corpus.” Common words associated with translated literary texts include copy, zombie, invisible, monster, soulless, spirit, after/life, embodiment, reproduction, and inanimate. Walter Benjamin likened translation to an original text’s “afterlife,” in the sense that the text continues to circulate long after its original publication because it is available to many more readers (Benjamin 2000, 16). Translation theorist and professor Steven J. Stewart has argued that “in order for a translation to live, to be more than a type of literary zombie, it must be imbued with a spark or essence or living breath of its translator” (Stewart 2015, 28). One might think, in reading Stewart’s words, that a translation is a bizarre cross between Frankenstein’s monster and a hungry zombie—both, of course, science fiction staples. Translator and critic Heather Cleary has offered insightful readings of translation theory and various Spanish-language stories to reveal how translation has been connected to corporeality, copulation, and the monstrous (Cleary 2015).³

SPECULATIVE FICTION AND TRANSLATION

To take an example from a different medium, the frequent tension around whether Commander Data in *Star Trek: The Next Generation* is more machine or human is strikingly similar to the centuries-old debate over whether or not a translation is as worthy of respect as its original. We learn that Data was created to replace his “brother” Lore because the latter acted too “human” and became resentful of his creator (whom he calls “Father”) and destructive toward the humans with which he lived. Lore, one could say, came too close to the “original” (i.e. a human), and thus Data was created in order to interact with humans but with an absence of emotion, so as to avoid the same issues Lore developed and also perhaps to pull back from what Japanese professor Masahiro Mori in 1970 called

the “uncanny valley” (Mori 2012).⁴ According to Mori, as the field of robotics becomes more sophisticated, humans are coming face to face with more “realistic” robots, whose slight errors reveal that they are indeed robots and make their human interlocutors feel a kind of fear or dread. Speculative fiction texts are filled with questions about who or what gets to call itself “human” and where the “non-human” or “not-quite-human” falls on a hierarchy of rights and freedoms. Philip K. Dick’s *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), Rodolfo Martinez’s *Cat’s Whirl* (1995; tr 2015), Isaac Asimov’s *I, Robot* (1950), Francesco Verso’s *Nexhuman* (2013; tr 2014), Xia Jia’s “Tongtong’s Summer” (2014; tr 2014), and many other texts take up these questions. In Verso’s novel, for example, a boy falls in love with a discarded android whose body parts he finds in a trash pile. The love and care that he gives the non-functioning android imbues it with a humanity that’s difficult to find in the physiologically human but brutal bullies that try to steal the android. Like Verso, Xia Jia suggests that the human-android/robot interaction may be more real and meaningful than between two human beings. Her story about an old man bonding with a robot that’s controlled remotely by another human dissolves somewhat the strict separation of human and machine.

This human/non-human dichotomy tracks with the original/translation dichotomy in relation to literary texts. Is a translation just a pale imitation, a copy, a *clone* if you will, of an original text, or is it a text in its own right that should be respected and analyzed on its own merits? Translators, including those who work with speculative fiction, often use the language of life/death, spirit, preservation, and embodiment when discussing how they approach their texts. In an interview about “Translating Strange Science Fiction,” Spanish-to-English translator and author Marian Womack explains that the work “implies embodying an author’s voice, appropriating it for a short period of time,” which she feels has “an almost mediumistic quality to it” (VanderMeer 2016). Michael Kandel, who brilliantly translated much of Stanislaw Lem’s work into English, has said that “the hard thing, for a translator, is the cultural gap between literatures. Things that might be alive and interesting in one culture...even if you work really hard on the language, in another culture they’re just uninteresting” (Restless Books 2014). Coming from a slightly different angle, John Curran Davis, who translates Polish fantasist Bruno Schulz into English, explains that he “ha[s] attempted a translation that preserves the narrative impetus of Schulz’s stories, so that they do not merely consist in assemblages of striking, isolated images” but become “a unified piece of

writing” (Uncredited Author 2012). For veteran translator and writer Tim Parks, “a literary text comes alive when a reader can bring to it the kind of competence and cultural reference that gives sense to the words” (Braden 2019). “Mediumistic,” “alive,” “preserve”: these and similar words come up repeatedly when translators explain their craft. Thus are we led back to Benjamin and his argument about translations having an afterlife.

This language of embodiment, preservation, and even spiritual resurrection is central to certain kinds of horror and dark fantasy from around the world. Ahmed Saadawi’s *Frankenstein in Baghdad* (2013; tr 2018) takes the now-familiar story of a creature pieced together from various body parts and imbued with a spirit not its own and explores it in terms of the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. Asamatsu Ken and Suzuki Koji in Japan write speculative fiction that channels Lovecraftian cosmic horror and occult beliefs in words conjuring evil spirits, respectively. Jacek Dukaj’s *The Old Axolotl* (2015; tr 2015) explores what it means to be human via a story about the last surviving people on Earth uploading their consciousnesses into machines but still trying to hold on to their human identities.

Transformation, too, is a source of dread and horror in speculative fiction, just as in translation it invites suspicion as to whether or not the translation is “as good as” or “close to” the original text. As Russian scholar Sibelan Forrester has written,

translators and theorists who refer to the body in order to understand translation... equate body with the words or linguistic fabric of the original, with its style, while privileging the ‘soul’... which they equate with meaning. Hence the emphasis on reincarnation, the transmigration of souls, not bodies. (Forrester 2012, 17)

We see this in Silvina Ocampo’s “House Made Out of Sugar” (1959; tr 1991), in which a woman moves into a house and is transformed by the spirit of the woman who lived there before; and in Samanta Schweblin’s *Fever Dream* (2014; tr 2017), where an environmental toxin seems to transform people from the inside, such that they look the same but their spirit or soul is no longer theirs. In works like Ocampo and Schweblin’s, the replacement of one spirit/soul with another is a source of horror. When critics claim that a translation lacks the spirit or spark of an original text, they’re also channeling this kind of dread-tinged dismissal. Borges, one of magical realism’s earliest practitioners, said that “to translate the

spirit is so enormous and phantasmal an intent that it may well be innocuous; to translate the letter, a requirement so extravagant that there is no risk of its ever being attempted” (Borges 1999, 93).

When translations are published long after the original text, Benjamin says, they offer the original a kind of “afterlife” or “survival.” And yet, he continues, this doesn’t mean that one should view the translation as a horrific soulless monster but as a new kind of creation, since “even in the ages of the most prejudiced thinking, it has been presumed that life must not be attributed to organic corporeality alone” (Benjamin 2000, 16). Indeed, the new translations of Arkady and Boris Strugatsky’s science fiction have been praised as “more fluent” (Wilson 2012), while Bill Johnston’s translation of Lem’s *Solaris* (until 2011, it was only translated from Polish-French-English) is more accurate and, as Johnston claims “restores Lem’s original meaning to his seminal work” (Flood 2011). Lem’s wife and son have said that Johnston’s translation even “capture[s] the spirit of the original.”

Discussions of “soulless”⁵ translations assume that there is indeed a “soul” to speak of that inhabits literary texts, despite the fact that no one, as far as we know, has ever seen or touched a soul. Not surprisingly, soulless revived bodies, also known as “zombies,”⁶ are everywhere in international speculative fiction, from the traditional corpses animated by witchcraft in the Caribbean to the brain-eating, shuffling zombies of the West. In speculative fiction texts, zombies represent apocalyptic collapse, decay, and evil.⁷ Pedro Cabiya’s *Wicked Weeds* (2011; tr 2016) depicts a zombie who, for most of the novel, tries to hide the fact that he’s a decaying corpse who’s using his position at a pharmaceutical company to find a cure for his “ailment.” Manel Loureiro and Carlos Sisi of Spain have both capitalized on the zombie-mania of late-twentieth-century pop culture: both Loureiro’s *Apocalypse Z* trilogy (2008–11; tr 2012–14) and Sisi’s *The Wanderers* (2009; tr 2011) focus on the aftermath of a pandemic that has created living dead creatures. Haiti’s Frankétienne and René Depestre have also brought us zombie novels—*Dézafi* (1975; tr 2018) and *Hadriana in All My Dreams* (1988; tr 2017)—that explore Haitian Vodou culture in its historical and geographic contexts.

Zombies, androids, and clones: these creatures offer readers a special thrill of horror and dread because they mimic human life but aren’t alive. Again, we can look to Mori’s “uncanny valley.” Clones, in fact, offer a particularly interesting example of this conundrum, and, of course, are everywhere in science fiction. Clones occupy an uneasy space both in real

life and in fiction, since they are copies of original organic material but often described as creatures worthy of respect in their own right. An unexpected cloning occurs in Greek author Michalis Manolios's novella *The Quantum Mommy* (2005; tr 2014) during a teleportation accident; Marie Darrieussecq's *Our Life in the Forest* (2017; tr 2018) and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005) feature clones that have been bred for spare organs to be used by non-clone humans; while French author Michel Houellebecq's *The Elementary Particles* (1999; tr 2000) and *The Possibility of an Island* (2005; tr 2005) focus on the inevitable decay that humans must face despite desperately trying to lengthen their lives through biotechnology.

Cloning as a way of discussing translation is, as in science fiction, an exploration of that which is perceived as somehow lesser or less deserving of respect. As translator Emily Apter argues, the development of new gene technologies in the real world has altered how we think about "original" versus "copy" in terms of literary texts: "The idea of textual cloning, emphasizing, in a metaphorical way, literary analogues to genic coding, copying, and blueprinting, problematizes 'the work of art in the age of genetic reproduction' in a way that brings Benjamin's famous essay on 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (1936) into colloquy with controversies over the status of 'original' identity in the age of the genome project" (Apter 2006, 213). In "Work of Art," Benjamin argues that artistic objects that can be duplicated ad infinitum cannot possess the "aura" that such objects once had when they were used as part of religious practices. Copies, Benjamin believes, are the proof that art has been diluted and cheapened by capitalism and mass production. And yet, just 13 years earlier, Benjamin had defended translations—not really copies, but also not "originals"—because they extended a text's life and helped it circulate among more readers. This seeming contradiction suggests that Benjamin, like scholars writing almost a century later, struggled with the ethical complexities of recognizing an object or person that isn't "original."

Translations can also be seen as time-travel devices, or even stasis chambers, both hallmark tropes of science fiction. Ironically, one of the oldest examples of a text describing a time machine—Enrique Gaspar's *The Time Ship: A Chrononautical Journey* (1887; tr 2012)—was itself not translated into English until 125 years after its first publication. One could certainly argue that Bill Johnston's new translation of *Solaris* or Olena Bormashenko's new translations of the Strugatsky brothers' most famous science fiction

are improvements upon the earlier translations, because of either objective error or a lack of clarity. As Johnston explains in an interview, one of the problems with the original translation was not necessarily that words were badly translated but that chunks of text were omitted or moved elsewhere (Flood 2011).⁸ However, one could also argue that retranslations offer readers snapshots in time—what is accepted or assumed in one century may not be in the next. Jules Verne’s work offers a perfect example: as Verne scholar Arthur Evans explains, the first translations of Verne into English were riddled with errors and plagued by politics: “in a rush to bring his most popular (and profitable) stories to market, British and American translators repeatedly watered them down and abridged them by chopping out most of the science and the longer descriptive passages... committed thousands of basic translating errors...[and] censored Verne’s texts by either removing or diluting references that might be construed as anti-British or anti-American” (Evans 2005, 80). Ongoing efforts to retranslate Verne,⁹ though, cannot simply be seen as attempts to “correctly” translate these early works of French science fiction, but also must be recognized as part of a modern project intent on moving as close to “word-for-word” translation as possible.

SPECULATIVE FICTION ABOUT TRANSLATION

Science fiction, fantasy, magical realism, and horror do not just explore the tropes they share with the act of translation, but also interrogate translation itself, prompting us to think in new ways about the role of the translator both now and in the future. When bringing a text from one language into another, a translator is ultimately connecting people who otherwise couldn’t communicate with words. Whether or not the translation is “good” or “readable,” the act itself is one of generosity, offering a text to someone who would otherwise not know of its existence or not be able to read it. Speculative fiction as a genre, as I’ve argued, is uniquely suited to exploring the act of translation, which is likely why universal translators, mind-melds, seances, and the like appear throughout the genre and across a variety of media. Texts like Lem’s *Solaris* (1961; tr 1970, 2011), *His Master’s Voice* (1968; tr 1983), and *The Invincible* (1964; tr 1973); Lola Robles’s *Monteverde: Memoirs of an Interstellar Linguist* (2005; tr 2016); China Miéville’s *Embassytown* (2011), Ted Chiang’s “Story of Your Life” (1998), and Gustav Meyrink’s occult tales (early twentieth century)

demonstrate not only the sometimes insurmountable difficulties of translation but also the rewards that open our minds to new possibilities.

The most successful kind of speculative fiction depicts translators who struggle not just with forming bridges between human languages but between completely (and literally) alien languages. One of the most popular stories about this encounter is Chiang's "Story of Your Life," which was adapted into a popular film (*Arrival*) in the US. At its heart is the realization that any attempt by humans to communicate with a species whose very laws of physics, for example, don't correspond with our own, is doomed to lead to misunderstanding—at least, at first. Lem wrote about this frequently, especially in *His Master's Voice*, *Solaris*, and *The Invincible*, exploring why human beings think we can communicate with a completely alien life form when we can't even see past our individual consciousness, especially as it informs how we perceive the world around us. In *Solaris*, Lem argues that

we don't want to conquer the cosmos, we simply want to extend the boundaries of Earth to the frontiers of the cosmos...We think of ourselves as the Knights of the Holy Contact. This is another lie. We are only seeking Man... We are searching for an ideal image of our own world...At the same time, there is something inside us which we don't like to face up to, from which we try to protect ourselves. (Lem 1970, 72)

In *The Invincible*, human explorers encounter a species of insect-like nanobots that have undergone artificial evolution and drain any human they come across of their personality and higher mental functions. No attempts at cross-species communication succeed, perhaps because the differences in evolution, history, and consciousness make the gap too great.

China Miéville, too, explores human-alien communication in *Embassytown*, though in this case, communication is achieved only through genetic engineering and years of living together on the same planet. Here, Miéville introduces us to an alien culture for whom language IS the world. The Hosts/Ariekei communicate with two distinct mouths, and for them, lies are impossible. Indeed, the Ariekei make certain humans perform tasks and then use those events as similes to expand their Language. Miéville makes us *work* to keep straight how Ariekei and humans communicate, because this is all that holds them together. Eventually, a new Ambassador begins to speak to the Ariekei and achieves a breakthrough in Ariekei language that brings them and humans even closer. Lola Robles, in *Monteverde*,

expertly mixes notes that Terran linguist Rachel Monteverde took for her report to the Society for the Study of Interstellar Languages with Rachel's reminiscences about life on Aanuk and the ways in which language acts as the common denominator among otherwise wildly distinct cultures. At its heart, this work of speculative fiction in translation is a story about translation's importance in breaking down barriers between species.

The fact that we create and enjoy TV and movies like those in the Star Trek franchise, Dr. Who franchise, and *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, all of which feature a kind of universal translator that (usually) makes cross-species communication relatively simple, suggests that humans wish not just to encounter and communicate with other species but also with one another. Esperanto was one attempt, and though it failed to gain a large following, encouraged people to believe in the possibility of a world that respects individual languages while creating one that brings us together. Communication, then, is a moving target, a goal that recedes even as we try to reach it, and speculative fiction in particular offers us many different ideas about how that can be achieved.

SPECULATIVE FICTION IN TRANSLATION (SFT)

Speculative fiction in its many forms and subgenres is and always has been an international mode of literary expression. The fact that only a small fraction of non-Anglophone speculative fiction makes its way into English each year tells us that more needs to be done to balance out the dominance of Anglo-American science fiction and fantasy (especially) around the world, which mostly happened in the twentieth century. Unfortunately, many financial roadblocks remain (paying translators, selling enough SFT to make it worthwhile to publish) as well as the perception on the part of many Anglophone publishers that people aren't interested in reading translations. Nonetheless, non-Anglophone speculative fiction is thus speaking back, though of course these speculative fiction traditions, especially in the realm of the fantastic, have developed independently from the Anglophone tradition over the course of centuries.

What we do have in translation, however, is a testament to the rich diversity of ideas and talent that exists around the world. Supported and promoted by mostly small and independent publishers, Japanese and Russian science fiction, French surrealism, Polish fantasy, Hebrew magical realism, and so much more is available to Anglophone readers, especially since the turn of the twenty-first century. Thanks to the translators who

bring these books into English, we can get a window onto another culture and linguistic tradition, which enriches our own.

The amount of available speculative fiction in translation from certain source languages changes over time, depending on geopolitical circumstances: for instance, Russian-language SFT dominated the American genre market during the Cold War; Japanese-language SFT increased following the post-world-war US occupation and during its economic expansion in the last few decades of the twentieth century; and Arabic-language SFT (specifically dystopias) arrived on the scene in the early 2000s, following the invasion of Iraq and two-decades-long war in Afghanistan. Such peaks in particular source-language SFTs will tell a story to future generations about how political, economic, and social shifts around the world influenced which speculative fiction was translated and why.

Despite these geopolitical differences and influences, both the act of translation and the writing of speculative fiction will continue to share the attempt to render the impossible possible and will use the terminology of transformation to do it. Indeed, translation and speculative fiction highlight the ongoing uncertainty we humans have about originals and copies—a tension that will likely continue to produce compelling literary and scientific scholarship.

NOTES

1. For SFT takes on translation, see Borges (*Ficciones*, 1968), Tidbeck (*Amatka*, 2017), Landolfi (*Words in Commotion*, 1986) and Dyachenko (*Vita Nostra*, 2018).
2. See also Forrester 2012, 17.
3. See also François 2017.
4. See, for example, Doudai 2001.
5. See also Italiano 2020.
6. OED: “zombie”: In the West Indies and southern states of America, a soulless corpse said to have been revived by witchcraft; formerly, the name of a snake-deity in voodoo cults of or deriving from West Africa and Haiti.
7. See Yeates 2015 and Luckhurst 2015.
8. On a personal note, I recently read the 1970 *Solaris* translation, having purchased a copy at a used bookstore. Without knowing anything about the Johnston translation, other than that it existed, I read the 1970 edition without knowing what the specific problems were, and thus, even if/when I read the Johnston translation, I’ll likely compare it against the 1970 text, as if the latter were a kind of “original.”
9. Wesleyan University Press has published several new Verne translations since 2007.

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An Insufficient Process
of Internationalization: Militant Translation
and the Experience of Translating into
English the Best-Selling Catalan (Sf)
Novel Ever

Sara Martín

THE MILITANT TRANSLATOR: A DEFINITION¹

The study of translation mostly focuses on textual matters and on the cultural tensions generated by the very process of translating texts, particularly when the receiving language is English. Lawrence Venuti has criticized how “The translator’s invisibility is symptomatic of a complacency in British and American relations with cultural others, a complacency that can be described—without too much exaggeration—as imperialistic abroad and xenophobic at home” (Venuti 2002, 13). Venuti writes as an American theorist of translation expressing a deep dissatisfaction with the limited cultural receptivity of the Anglophone nations, but it must be

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noted that outside this area the complaints are often louder. The late Joan Fontcuberta, one of the most respected Catalan translators, complained that Anglophone speakers hardly ever know other languages than English, but “talk plenty about translation from the point of view of theoretical research” (Fontcuberta i Gel 2008, 113),² eschewing practice. Multilingual translator Mariano Martín-Rodríguez has noted that “A monolingual multiculturalism, with supporters unable to read anything but English, as is unfortunately the case in all too many instances, is a contradiction in terms, a mockery of true diversity” (Martín-Rodríguez 2020).

It is my aim here to call attention to the actual practice of translating *sf* into English from a point of view that is critical not so much of the Anglophone receiving culture as that of my own native Catalan culture, particularly in its failure to disseminate its legacy outside its borders. I wish also to criticize other aspects such as the little value attached to translation in academia and the often-absurd strategies of major publishing houses. “Every step in the translation process”, Venuti observes, “from selecting a foreign text to implementing a translation strategy to editing, reviewing, and reading the translation—is mediated by the diverse values, beliefs, and representations that circulate in the translating language, always in some hierarchical order” (Venuti 2002, 266). He is considering the task of the translator who imports a foreign text, but the elements which Venuti enumerates must also be negotiated by the translator who exports a major native text to a foreign culture by means of an inverse translation, as I have done. Whereas importing translators seek to enrich their culture, exporting translators seek to make their culture visible elsewhere. In that case, securing the rights for foreign translation and finding an interested publisher are part of the process of translation in ways that translators working on commissions from local publishers need not address. I am not suggesting that importing translators are passive participants in the process, since this is often far from being the case, but that the cultural militancy of the exporting translator is necessarily more intense. This militancy is, nonetheless, an aspect of translation so far unexamined.

I was not aware of the figure that Italian translator and scholar Francesco Ardolino has called “militant translator” (Hevia 2007) until I became myself the militant translator for the English language of the best-selling Catalan novel ever: Manuel de Pedrolo’s science-fiction classic *Mecanoscrit del Segon Origen* (1974). A militant translator, to clarify the concept, is an importing or exporting translator who not only translates a text but is also actively involved in the process of publication, from the selection of the original text to publicizing the published translation and even beyond,

particularly when the original work is written in a language with limited international projection. Remarkably, Ardolino first used the label in a meeting with other professional translators to demand that the militancy of translators (both importing and exporting) become *less* onerous, finding it himself quite a burden, no matter how satisfactory (in personal conversation, 2020). In an article reporting on the unusual experience of being contacted by a Catalan writer to have one of his books translated into Italian, Ardolino shows himself happy that, unusually, he will not find himself “begging a publisher for the charity of publication” (Ardolino 2011), as the author himself has assumed that task and Ardolino needn’t be this writer’s militant translator. In a more recent formal discussion of the label, Ardolino demands that militant translators should cease being the unacknowledged lovers of the less well-known minor languages to become fully acknowledged professional cultural ambassadors, though he misses “an external impulse” (Ardolino 2021) to manage this change. Since Catalonia is not an independent nation but a stateless nation within Spain that aspires to independence, and since the Spanish state has no specific official policies to promote Catalan culture, as I see it this impulse should come from the Catalan regional political institutions protecting and promoting Catalan language and culture.

I have learned firsthand that one can become a stalwart militant translator by pure accident, as I am not a professional translator but a college professor of English Studies, at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, with a very limited experience in translation. This is the very personal chronicle, then, of how sheer serendipity led me to publish *Typescript of the Second Origin* (Wesleyan UP, 2018) despite not being a native speaker of English but a native bilingual speaker of Catalan and Spanish. I offer this chronicle as a reflection on how unless Catalan cultural institutions take a more active approach to the internationalization of Catalan science fiction in particular and Catalan literature and culture more generally, few translators will feel inclined to play the complex, demanding role of militant translator. My happy experience of translating Pedrolo’s *Mecanoscrit del Segon Origen* is, paradoxically, an example of what should not happen: namely, that mere luck decides the existence of translations which are indispensable to the process of exporting a specific literary tradition. I refer here to Catalan literature and, within it, to science fiction, but the issues I raise are generally valid for all fiction written in a minor language little known outside its geographical area, and that also lacks the support of national state institutions.

MANUEL DE PEDROLO'S *MECANOSCRIT DEL SEGON ORIGEN*:
AN UNACKNOWLEDGED CLASSIC

Dictator Generalísimo Francisco Franco died of natural causes in 1975. He had dominated Spain since 1939, when his troops, which had rebelled against the legitimate, democratic Republican Government established in 1931, won the Spanish Civil War. The brutal repression he employed afterward against the “reds” on the losing side, and against any Spaniard who disagreed with his regime’s bigoted, right-wing values, included harsh attacks against Basque, Galician, and Catalan, the minor languages spoken, in addition to Spanish, in areas of Spain regarding themselves as nations. Apart from the fact that Catalonia stood loyal to the Republic during the war, the very existence of the Catalan language and its culture threatened the false image that Franco’s regime established of a homogeneous Spanish nation, with Castilian Spanish as its only native language. This was tied to chauvinistic notions of Spain as a unified motherland with a supposedly glorious historical past, allegedly consolidated by the discovery of the Americas and the end of Muslim occupation in the same year of 1492, during the reign of Queen Isabella of Castille and her husband King Ferdinand of Aragon.

A cadre of eager, intolerant censors helped Franco to carry out a severe repression of all Catalan culture: Manuel de Pedrolo (1918–1990), a popular author known for his constant opposition to the regime and for his unwavering Catalan nationalism, eventually became the most often censored author in any language in Spain, including Castilian Spanish.³ Pedrolo, who simply wanted Catalan literature to be a normally functioning literature expressed in all the genres (Coca 1991, 13), developed a series of clever strategies to confuse his literary tormentors, such as re-submitting his previously censored works using different titles. On the whole, though, the persecution wreaked havoc on his long career. Often, many years would pass before he was allowed to publish previously censored work. Even today, specialists in his extensive oeuvre, which runs to 128 volumes in practically all genres, from the highbrow to the popular,⁴ have not managed to establish a reliable chronology of Pedrolo’s works.

Another strategy which Pedrolo used was exploiting to his advantage the lower visibility of fantasy and science fiction in a Francoist Spain obsessed with realism (Casas et al. 2017). His aim as a writer, as I have noted, was to provide Catalan literature with all the genre variety enjoyed by a ‘normal’ literature in a ‘normal’ nation, and for Pedrolo, this meant

practicing genres so far little known in Catalan such as detective fiction,⁵ fantasy in the style of Jorge Luis Borges, and science fiction, including dystopia. Pedrolo genuinely enjoyed those genres as a reader and as a writer (Munné-Jordà 2006), and it should not be assumed that he only used them hypocritically to fool the censors. He did fool them, however, for neither his sinister 1967 dystopia *Totes les Bèsties de Càrrega* [All the Beasts of Burden] nor *Mecanoscrit del Segon Origen*, a hybrid dystopia/utopia, was censored.

Mecanoscrit, published in 1974, one year before the dictator's death, tells a story of survival that begins with a devastating alien invasion which kills all humans and most animals on Earth, except for some isolated survivors scattered along the Western Mediterranean shores, including those of Catalonia. Among the few survivors are two Catalan children from an inland village: white fourteen-year-old Alba and her nine-year-old mixed-race neighbor Dídac, the son of a black African man.⁶ Pedrolo narrates mainly from Alba's point of view their efforts to build a new life in the solitude of a land suddenly deprived of all the benefits of civilization, as they move from their ruined village to the outskirts of an equally ruined Barcelona. "The city," Alba feels, "was an orgy of torn metal, stones, corpses surprised in all kinds of positions, broken glass... Everything they saw seemed to scream, 'You won't live!'" (Pedrolo 2018, 70, ellipsis in original). The epilogue, written thousands of years later by the anonymous Editor that has rescued from the past the text we know as *Typescript of the Second Origin* concludes that the Volvians, as the aliens are called, intended to settle on Earth but failed for reasons unknown, "open to speculation": either the pandemic decimating their home planet "progressed faster than they had expected; or, all things taken into account, they chose to migrate to another of the pre-selected planets. If this is the case, we'll know one day, for inevitably, our galaxonauts will find them sooner or later" (Pedrolo 2018, 160). Although *Mecanoscrit* can indeed be read as a thrilling tale of survival against all odds with tragic overtones without taking into account the political background, most of Pedrolo's original Catalan mid-1970s adult readers would have understood that Alba and Dídac's strength stood for that of all the Catalan people against the Francoist forces of political, social and cultural occupation. There is no explicit comment on the situation in this novel, in which no trace of the Spanish language or of Spain can be found, but their very erasure and the implicit supposition that Alba's native Catalan becomes the language of Earth's future civilization as the other survivors gradually perish sent a strong political message at a

time of deep linguistic, cultural, and political repression. The Editor celebrates Alba accordingly:

She, together with her companion, thought instantly of saving the archives of human knowledge—the books—and of securing the continuity of our species. It is about time, we think, to ask in all seriousness whether Alba is the mother of humankind today. We believe this is indeed the case. Only somebody with Alba’s mettle *could* be. (Pedrolo 2018, 160, emphasis in original)

Through her odyssey, *Mecanoscrit* provided readers, using Darko Suvin’s theorization, with a fruitful cognitive estrangement (Suvin 2016, 18) of the political situation in 1970s Catalonia—and thus, with hope.

I belong to the first generation of Catalan children who read *Mecanoscrit del Segon Origen* as a set text⁷ in the new post-Franco secondary school, which included for the first time compulsory courses in Catalan language and literature. Noted Pedrolo scholar Anna Maria Moreno-Bedmar clarified (in personal conversation, 2017) that discussion among enthusiastic young teachers of Catalan resulted in their programming *Mecanoscrit* in syllabi all over Catalonia; this was not, then, a decision made by the Catalan regional government re-established in 1980. Pedrolo, it must be noted, did not write *Mecanoscrit* as what we call today young adult fiction, but Josep Maria Castellet, chief editor of the key Catalan publishing house Edicions 62, included this novel in two collections aimed at teenagers: first *El Trapezi* [The trapeze] and, later, *El Cangur* [The kangaroo]. The basis of my own translation has been the copy of this extremely popular edition which I purchased for my junior year in secondary school, when I became a new 14-year-old reader of Catalan.

Like many other Catalan adolescents, especially girls, I fell in love with Pedrolo’s novel. In the post-Franco 1980s, teen girls sorely lacked any examples of strong, young female characters—Lt. Ellen Ripley of *Alien* (1979) had already appeared but in a horror film for audiences over 18—and Pedrolo’s Alba became an extraordinary discovery, and a role model for many of us in Catalonia. She still is very much admired, though her status as a feminist symbol has been questioned recently. As Nilsson-Fernández warns, given Pedrolo’s “tendency to politicize the female body as a landscape, the violence exerted against Catalonia, as represented in his oeuvre, becomes analogous to a subsequent and highly problematic depiction of violence against the female characters who feature in it”

(Nilsson-Fernàndez 2017, 1). Even so, Alba's maturity despite her young age allows her and Dídac to survive the devastation, the occasional clashes with less well-adjusted survivors, and even a dangerous encounter with a stranded alien. Her resilience is what makes her such a positive role model.

Ironically, Pedrolo had little esteem for *Mecanoscrit*, to the point that he declared that if he could have predicted its immense popularity (the novel is rumored to have sold 1,500,000 copies),⁸ he never would have written it. Critics are not impressed, either. Jordi Arbonès only devotes two paragraphs to *Mecanoscrit* in his indispensable study *Pedrolo Contra els Limits* [Pedrolo Against the Limits]. He refuses to label this novel science fiction because “it has few points of contact with the most typical works in this genre” (Arbonès 1980, 68), wrongly assuming that all sf is space opera—a classic confusion among highbrow Catalan literary critics. The problem most often highlighted, however, is, as Xavier Aliaga notes, that *Mecanoscrit* is “a gem” but also a major problem for the author because “it contributes in the same measure to increasing the number of his readers and to burying the virtues of the rest of his oeuvre” (Aliaga 2015). Completely missing the novel's inherent utopian nationalism, Jordi Castañeda laments in his article “Pedrolo, Més Autor i Menys *Mecanoscrit*” [“Pedrolo, More Author, and Less *Mecanoscrit*”] that this very accessible text has caused readers to ignore other far more accomplished (and more difficult) works by the author “with a far clearer sense of the struggle for national emancipation of the Catalan people” (Castañeda 2005, 34).⁹ Against these criticisms and the author's own negative view—as well as his later, demanding, sf novels, which seem designed to discourage his young fans—I maintain that *Mecanoscrit* interested so many Catalan readers because of its well-drawn characters and attractive storytelling. If it were better known in translation, then it could be a popular international classic at the same level, for instance, of other stories of survival in extreme circumstances such as William Golding's *The Lord of the Flies* (1954),¹⁰ or, within sf, Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969). It is hard to say, however, how that miracle could happen, in view of the scant attention paid worldwide to the science fiction written in minor languages, especially given the limited availability of translations into major languages such as English.

TRANSLATING *MECANOSCRIT DEL SEGON ORIGEN*:
SERENDIPITY AND EUROCON 2016

I had always hoped to translate *Mecanoscrit* into English, perhaps once I got the tenured position I currently enjoy. Translation, however, is not considered an academic merit by ANECA, the agency of the Spanish Ministry of Education that measures research impact; consequently, I did not prioritize this long-cherished project. However, the chance to translate *Mecanoscrit* only materialized because I am one of the very few specialists in science fiction within Spanish academia. I credit *Mecanoscrit* (and the pulpish novelettes by Spanish authors using English pen names, which my father read and I devoured as a little girl) with my love of science fiction. Yet, since I always teach and research English-language texts, I could not see a way to help transform Pedroló's moving novel into the internationally known classic it should be, until the opportunity arose, quite by chance, to join the organizing team of Eurocon 2016, celebrated in Barcelona.

In 2015, I emailed British science-fiction author Richard K. Morgan in relation to his excellent novel *Black Man* (2007), known in the USA as *Thirteen*, about which I eventually published an article (Martín 2017d). Morgan, who is known for his post-cyberpunk trilogy about post-human ex-soldier Takeshi Kovacs composed by the novels *Altered Carbon* (2002), *Broken Angels* (2003), and *Woken Furies* (2005), replied very generously to my messages, and, when I found out that he was to be a guest of honor at Eurocon 2016, I begged the organizers for the chance to interview him in the festival (see Martín, November 2016a, for the link to the YouTube video). The organizers invited me then to join the Eurocon team, mainly as the organizer of the academic track. To my surprise, one of the team leaders, Cristina Macías—the translator into Spanish, among other authors, of Terry Pratchett and of George R.R. Martin and a key figure in fandom—decided to present all 1000 Eurocon attendees with a free souvenir copy of a trilingual volume of *Mecanoscrit del Segon Origen* with the original Catalan text, the Spanish translation (1975) by Domingo Santos (himself a major name in Spanish sf), and the first-ever English translation. Macías had no editor/translator for this volume and I volunteered on the spot.

Producing the volume was much harder work than I anticipated, because even though *Mecanoscrit* is a short novel at only 45,000 words, inverse translation (i.e., from native to non-native language) is much

trickier than direct translation from non-native to native language. In inverse translation, the translator cannot count on the intimate knowledge of the language that being a native speaker provides; the receiving language is an acquired second language and, thus, the potential number of errors is always greater. Until relatively recently, it was generally assumed by most international theoreticians of translation that translating into a second language could only give poor results, though this is an axiom no longer accepted. Nike K. Pokorn, one of the specialists in translation who has most vocally defended inverse translation, observes that in fact inverse translation has “been known in Western history from Antiquity onwards” and is “especially common in languages with restricted distribution” (Pokorn 2005, 67). She attributes the “predominantly Romantic” supposition that “translators should work only into their own language” (Pokorn 2005, 67) to the ethnocentric bias of major-language communities. Nonetheless, any inverse translation must pass the filter of the target language’s native speakers to minimize the number of errors a non-native translator may make. My translation, therefore, was revised by three native English speakers: British sf author Ian Watson (another Eurocon team leader), and two of my departmental colleagues, Felicity Hand and David Owen. Even though the translation was entirely my own, I could not have accomplished my task without their generous help.

As regards the complications I faced in the process of producing the translation, I found Pedrolo’s deceptively simple prose somewhat difficult to translate into English because of the differences in syntax between Romance and Germanic languages. Although Laurence Venuti has recommended, with much controversy, foreignizing translation as “a form of resistance against ethnocentrism and racism, cultural narcissism and imperialism, in the interests of democratic geopolitical relations” (Venuti 2002, 16), I saw no point in following this path, because I personally believe that a translation should always obey the rules of the receiving language and not advertise its origins in a foreign language. I did not hesitate, then, to split Pedrolo’s rather long sentences into shorter sentences that an English-language reader would feel more comfortable with. I was, however, most concerned by two matters. On the one hand, I feared that the dialogue would not sound natural in translation, though a major virtue of Pedrolo’s dialogue is precisely that it does sound natural, no matter how fantastic the situation. On the other hand, I worried about Anglophone readers’ impressions regarding the sensuality of *Typescript*, for this is the story of two children who must learn about sex and reproduction in order to save

civilization from total obliteration. The text is erotic rather than overtly sexual, but it does present a boy first engaging in sex as an 11-year-old (Alba is 16 at the time) and, although Pedrolo handles the matter elegantly, I did not know what reactions his frank approach may elicit in other cultural contexts.

Since the Eurocon team had decided to give the book away as a gift, they had to find a publisher who was willing to fund the edition for free. Of course, this is open to criticism since Eurocon relied, like other conventions, on the goodwill of members willing to work for free, like myself. Funding was certainly limited, and although I was offered some payment, I declined it, preferring to cover other expenses with the money. Thanks to the efforts of two other team members, the Institut d'Estudis Ilerdencs [Institute of Lleida Studies] of the *Diputació* (County Council) of Lleida agreed to publish the volume through their own publishing services. Pedrolo was born in the tiny village of L'Aranyó near Tàrrrega, in the province of Lleida; the IEI saw the volume as a tool to publicize the author's connection with his native land. The thick, elegant trilingual volume was eventually presented at Eurocon to the general satisfaction of all involved. However, this did not end my task as a militant translator—far from it.

BECOMING A MILITANT TRANSLATOR: THE HARD WORK OF PROMOTING CATALAN SF

This chronicle has narrated so far how serendipity placed in my hands the chance to translate *Mecanoscrit* into English. This section will show that the main difficulties in translation are not necessarily linguistic but contextual, connected with how the publishing business is run. There is a generalized assumption among common readers that all-important literary works in a specific language eventually find their way into other languages, but this is simply not true. Every time I mentioned that I had translated *Mecanoscrit* into English I got the same surprised reply: “Really? I thought it would have been translated by now.” New fiction may be promoted internationally by authors' agents, but older fiction often falls into a limbo from which it is quite difficult to rescue. If this older fiction is in a less prestigious genre such as sf, then it takes all the energy of a militant translator to work miracles.

The Eurocon trilingual volume required the legal permits to print the original text, to reproduce Domingo Santos's Spanish translation, and to

start my translation. The pre-1980s Spanish legislation allowed publishers to buy all the rights to a literary work, or a literary translation, which means that Pedrolo's main publisher, Edicions 62, owns *Mecanoscrit*. The author's only daughter and universal heir, Ms. Adelais de Pedrolo, only controls those texts in her father's vast production that he did not sell straightaway, or that have been removed from the catalogue by his publishers. Extant Spanish legislation, however, grants Ms. Pedrolo the right to grant or withdraw her permission to all projects concerning the books by her father owned by his publishers; she was at all times a major supporter of my translation.

Although Edicions 62 is the main publisher of fiction in Catalan, it is just a cog in the vast machinery of the most important publishing house in the whole Spanish-speaking territory, including Latin America: Planeta. Once I finished my first draft, the Eurocon team contacted Planeta to request permission from their international rights section to issue the trilingual volume. Eurocon is a non-profit organization, and I was myself working for free as I have noted—with a Plan B in mind, of which more later—but, despite this, Planeta initially demanded a steep fee that we could not afford. Planeta argued that our non-commercial edition would negatively impact sales of the novel both in Catalan and in its Spanish translation, whereas we argued that the trilingual volume was national and international advertising for a novel which Planeta was doing nothing to promote, relying as it did on its habitual high sales in Catalan. The most complex part of my personal militancy as a translator began at this point. I offered Planeta a deal: if they cut their fee down to a minimum, then I would try to have my English translation published commercially so that it would generate money from the rights' sale that would compensate for their alleged losses. I had no clear notion then about who might publish *Typescript of the Second Origin*, but Planeta accepted the deal.

Once Eurocon was over and the trilingual volume (Martín 2016c) in the hands of its international public, my militancy took me next to search for an English-language publisher for *Typescript*. I first contacted Scottish publishers Canongate, because they had issued *Cold Skin* (2017), the translation by Cheryl Leah Morgan of the other best-selling (fantasy) novel in Catalan: Albert Sánchez Piñol's atmospheric *La Pell Freda* (2002). I naively assumed that the amazing sales figures for *Mecanoscrit* would impress Canongate, but this was not the case. I found out to my chagrin that my academic credentials are no use in commercial publishing; I also realized that, no matter how popular an sf classic is in its own territory, this

does not mean that it will interest international publishers. Selling the translation for an sf novel published in the 1970s in a minor language like Catalan is next to impossible, since it is unlikely publishers will see a market for it. To hire an agent was out of the question, as I had no resources to pay for professional help.

I tried next contacting an American publisher, assuming that a smaller, independent publishing house, such as Small Beer Press, might be interested. Yet I received no reply from any of the publishers I emailed. Following the wise advice of Ian Watson, I next contacted Wesleyan University Press, as they had previously shown an interest in foreign sf, publishing among other volumes the pioneering anthology *Cosmos Latinos* (2003) translated and edited by Yolanda Molina-Gavilán and Andrea L. Bell. Acquisition manager Marla Zobel received my proposal with great warmth: the slightly revised translation adapted to US English was published on March 06, 2018, two and a half years after the beginning of the whole process.

Wesleyan UP treated my translation wonderfully, even convincing top sf author Kim Stanley Robinson to write its beautiful prologue, a text which shows that he appreciates not only Pedrolo's masterpiece but also the nuances of the complex political situation in Catalonia. To my delight, Wesleyan UP invited me to choose the cover for the book. I wanted this to be very different from the iconic images of the child protagonists Alba and Dídac used in the diverse Catalan editions, so I chose an image of a devastated Barcelona—borrowed from a book-trailer for a zombie novel that was never written—hoping that US readers would recognize the familiar tourist destination. The day I saw the handsome volume with my name on the cover next to those of giants Manuel de Pedrolo and Kim Stanley Robinson was the most beautiful day of my life as a reader.

That day was not, however, the end of my militancy as translator, but rather the beginning of yet another new period, focused on academic work on Pedrolo's novel. Ian Watson offered Arthur Evans, editor of *Science Fiction Studies*, a monographic issue on Spanish sf for the journal, which I was to edit. I recruited Fernando-Ángel Moreno, of the Universidad Complutense in Madrid, as my co-editor; our jointly edited volume was published in June 2017. As I worked on it, though, I grew concerned that Juan Carlos Toledano and Miguel Ángel Fernández Delgado, editors of the online journal *Alambique*, which specializes in the Iberian fantastic, might feel bypassed. They had accepted back in 2016 my article on the reasons why sf has such a limited presence in the Spanish

university (Martín 2016b) and I felt indebted to them. I offered, therefore, to Prof. Toledano, a Spanish-born scholar based at the University of South Florida, a monographic issue in English on *Typescript of the Second Origin*; this would be the first ever, as there was nothing similar in Catalan and indeed very little academic work in any language on this novel.¹¹ He accepted, despite knowing nothing about Pedrolo, for which I remain extremely grateful.

This monographic issue was also published in June 2017 (Martín 2017a), coinciding with the Spanish sf monographic for *SFS*.¹² *Alambique* is an open-access online publication not limited by the cost of printing; thus, I initially proposed that it should offer the articles in a bilingual English-Catalan version, with each author self-translating (for free, another instance of militancy). *Alambique*, however, preferred the English-only version, giving me freedom to recycle the Catalan translation as I wished. I chose, then, to publish the Catalan version as a book, *Explorant Mecanoscrit del Segon Origen: Noves Lectures* [Exploring Typescript of the Second Origin: New Readings] (Martín 2018), addressed to a general readership. Eurocon teammate Hugo Camacho, owner of independent Orciny Press, had re-issued two quirky fantasy novels by Pedrolo from the list of works owned by the author's daughter, *Procés de Contradicció Suficient* ["Process of Sufficient Contradiction"] (1976, 2016) and *Crucifeminació* ["Crucifemination"] (1986, 2017); Camacho also agreed to publish the collective volume. Pedrolo's enigmatic title for the former novel has provided me with the inspiration to call this article 'insufficient process of internationalization' for reasons that I examine in the next section.

To sum up this phase of my militancy as a translator, I will indicate that, although the Ministry of Education does not consider my translation of Pedrolo's novel proper academic work, it has paradoxically valued positively the monographic journal issue and the collected volume—work that I would not have done had I not published the translation.

MAKING LOCAL SF TRADITIONS VISIBLE: THE ROLE OF OFFICIAL INSTITUTIONS AND OF ACADEMIA

Wesleyan UP accepted my translation on condition that I would seek funding for my fees. I applied to Institut Ramon Llull, one of the main Catalan cultural institutions, for a translation grant. The IRL gave me its

unconditional support and awarded me the grant, without which the translation might not have been published. Being paid for a job that I had done for free felt peculiar, but the translation market must not be undermined by amateur translators like me; hence, I accepted the money, a decision which is not really in contradiction with militancy, since militant translators are usually professional translators. What most surprised me in relation to the subsidy is that neither IRL nor any other official Catalan organism is monitoring the translation into other languages of all Catalan literary works, sf included: there is, simply, no program of systematic internationalization for Catalan literature beyond the aid offered to specific projects like mine. I do not know of any language that receives this kind of official support, but I expected Catalan to be an exception because of how thoroughly Catalan literature is mapped, including Catalan sf.¹³

When I started work on my translation, *Mecanoscrit* had already been translated into 14 major and minor languages, according to Institut Ramon Llull's own database TRAC, Traduccions del català a altres llengües ["Translation from Catalan into Other Languages"]. Nobody could tell me, though, why English was not among them. Shortly after I published *Typescript*, a polite British young man emailed me to lament that I had destroyed his plans to translate a section of *Mecanoscrit* for his MA dissertation; he planned to translate next the whole novel. I recommended that he translated instead Pedrolo's own favorite sf novel among his abundant production, *Successsimultani* [Simultaneous event] (1979) or other two striking works: *Totes les Bèsties de Càrrega*, which I have already mentioned, and *Aquesta Matinada i Potser per Sempre* [At Dawn Today and Maybe for Ever] (1980). Sooner or later, then, a native speaker of English would have translated *Mecanoscrit* out of their personal initiative and become its militant translator. I still marvel that the task fell to me, thanks not to a Catalan cultural institution, or to Pedrolo's publishers, but to Cristina Macías, a translator into Spanish with no Catalan nationalist connections.

All translations depend, I must infer, on a series of accidents (with the militancy described by Ardolino often appearing as a side-effect). *Typescript of the Second Origin* is now available because Richard Morgan kindly replied to my email message about one of his novels. Without the generous use of his time, I would not have known about the trilingual Eurocon volume and thus might never have translated Pedrolo's novel. I would have felt much frustration, and envy, had someone else published this translation. One thing I am sure of is that no one else would have worked

so hard to transform *Typescript* into a subject for academic research both in English and in Catalan, because there is simply no one else willing to do the necessary work. There are other specialists in English and Spanish sf working in Spain, but no specialists fully devoted to Catalan sf. Although the edition of the monographic issue for *Alambique* is a valid academic merit, this was a contribution to Catalan Studies, which is not really my field. From the Ministry of Education's point of view, my incursion into Catalan sf might be dismissed as irrelevant to my trajectory in English Studies, even though the work I have done around *Typescript* has given me enormous professional and personal satisfaction. If I risked the Ministry's displeasure, then this is only because I had already done the research required for my personal assessment in English Studies and could use my spare academic time for Catalan sf.

In any case, the role I am playing in bridging the gap between Catalan and Anglophone cultures depends to a great extent, as I have learned, on linguistic reasons. I chose to pursue an academic career in English Literature because I could not choose between Spanish and Catalan Literature, which are completely separate academic areas. I have, however, always felt indebted to my two native cultures, and I must thank the Eurocon team for helping me to start paying my debt. The double experience of co-editing the Spanish sf monographic for *SFS* and of translating *Mecanoscrit* has taught me valuable lessons about how cultures make themselves visible internationally and how for this purpose a command of English is indispensable. Although he refers to fiction and not to academic work, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay is right to note that "English has become a sort of Grand Central Bottleneck for achieving worldly success—which is increasingly defined as reaching a global audience" (Csicsery-Ronay 2012, 483). My knowledge of Catalan and Spanish sf is far more limited than my knowledge of Anglophone sf, but I can help my colleagues in these fields to transmit their research because I can write acceptable academic English. The contributors to the *Science Fiction Studies* monographic issue were a group of specialists in Spanish Literature and Theory of Literature who had been working on the fantastic for years, but who do not habitually publish in English. Some chose to write directly in this language, under my editorial supervision. Others accepted my proposal of welcoming as co-author a specialist in English Studies that would translate their Spanish texts: as it turns out, using professional translators is expensive and does not always result in the right academic register. In the case of the *Alambique* issue on *Typescript*, the main problem was not so much the command of

English as finding Catalan Studies specialists willing to collaborate, partly out of my ignorance of the field but also because working on Catalan sf texts is not common. For these reasons, four out of the six authors were Catalan specialists in English Studies: we are familiar with the Anglo-American methodologies used to analyze sf and could apply them with ease to Pedroló's novel. Hopefully, this situation will soon change,¹⁴ though it must be borne in mind that the field of Catalan Studies is tiny in comparison to English Studies, even in Catalonia. The demand for degrees in Catalan is limited for reasons that have to do with the limited availability of related jobs, which means that the size of Catalan Studies departments also remains limited, with few chances to teach courses on areas that are considered of little academic interest, such as popular fiction. There are, in short, too few specialists to cover the whole area of Catalan Literature, and Catalan sf is not really a priority, particularly given Catalan scholars' generalized preference for realist fiction.

Another problem which needs to be addressed, but that is right now extremely difficult to face, is the political question. The coincidence of the publication of *Typescript* with the centennial celebrations of the Pedroló Year (2018) no doubt helped me to sell my translation, but also revealed the existence of important self-imposed obstacles in the internationalization of Catalan sf. Pedroló was himself an ardent independentist at a time when Catalan independentism was not welcome at all, either by Franco or by the Catalan nationalists after his death. In fact, Pedroló was ostracized by the Catalan political authorities throughout the 1980s, at a time when what was at stake was the devolution of regional self-government in the new democratic post-Franco era. Much has changed since then, especially since the early 2010s when the current Catalan independence movement started, and Pedroló is now a significant icon of independence. An immediate consequence of this novelty, though, is the lack of interest from his publishers and from the Pedroló Foundation in making his oeuvre known in Spanish, on pro-independentist, anti-Spanish nationalist grounds. Pedroló himself never granted interviews to Spanish-language media for nationalist reasons, thus limiting his impact outside Catalonia. The main major language to transmit his science fiction to an international language should be Spanish, but Spain is seen by the nationalist Catalan cultural establishment as the enemy to beat, and the Latin American publishing market, which is beset by rampant piracy, is not attractive enough. Pedroló's prestige remains, then, bounded by political concerns that ultimately may damage the survival of his work.

Ideally, there should be a committee of authors, publishers, readers, and academic specialists that would act as consultants for Institut Ramon Llull to promote Catalan sf worldwide. Obviously, this is very unlikely to happen, though given the small size of the Catalan sf field, I believe it could be done, as well as for all genres of Catalan literature. It would be quite useful to study how other cultures beyond the Anglophone area have managed to place their authors on the lists of popular international sf classics: the main name that comes to mind is, of course, Polish author Stanisław Lem. It would also be necessary to encourage foreign translators to team up with Catalan translators, so as to reinforce the chances of having sf translated into English and other languages. And since too much depends on chance and the vagaries of commercial book publishing, it might be necessary to extend the work of official regional publishers, such as the ones that funded the Eurocon edition of *Typescript*, to the sale of translated Catalan sf texts online.

CONCLUSIONS: THE NECESSARY RESILIENCE

My aim in writing this chronicle has not been simply to record a remarkable personal experience but to stress that, too often, translation depends on the goodwill of militant translators—and science fiction is no exception. Polish author Stanisław Lem, whom I have mentioned as an extremely positive case of internationalization, owes much of his prestige in Anglophone countries to his American militant translator, Michael Kandel, who got in touch with him through a fan letter when Kandel was still a young student of Slavic languages (Khodorkovsky 2015). That the translation of sf depends on the sheer luck of finding a committed militant translator is not, however, desirable, for not all quality foreign authors are fortunate enough to have a champion. It is, then, in the interests of the authors writing sf in languages little known outside their geographical area, like Catalan, that the local regional authorities promote their work by implementing systematic translation programs which interest foreign publishers and do not depend on personal initiative.

Pleased though I am with having contributed to introducing Pedroló to the Anglophone world, I have few illusions that the publication of *Typescript* will mark a major turning point. One of the two Amazon.com readers that comments on it writes, “I am not sure how I have missed this one over the years...” (ellipsis in original) and that is the effect I aimed at. However, there is very little chance that many Anglophone sf readers will

react in the same way, and I do not see how the work of making Catalan *sf* internationally known can continue, unless matters change at official and unofficial levels. After all, this is an insufficient process also here, in Catalonia, where the most popular *sf* are works translated from English and few readers can name any Catalan *sf* writers or works beyond *Mecanoscrit*, though there are quite a few. Hopefully, the younger generations of readers and scholars will see that what is needed is just a bit more self-confidence and the belief that Pedrolo so forcefully expresses in *Typescript of the Second Origin*: that we, Catalans, have the necessary resilience to keep our culture—and even the world!—alive, even in the worst circumstances.

NOTES

1. This article is an adapted self-translation, with permission from the editors, of the chapter “Procés d’Internalització Insuficient: La Traducció Militant i l’Experiència d’Apropar *Mecanoscrit del Segon Origen* al Món Anglòfon” (Martín 2019).
2. All translations from sources in Spanish or Catalan are mine.
3. See Moreno-Bedmar 2007 and Pedrolo’s own testimonial ironically titled, “El Meu Gra de Sorra a la Història de la Censura” (Pedrolo 1978) [“My Grain of Sand in the History of Censorship”].
4. For an overview of Pedrolo’s work see Martín 2017b.
5. Pedrolo not only wrote notable detective fiction; he was also a translator into Catalan of the main authors in this genre and the founder of the popular collection *La Cua de Palla* [“The Weak Spot”] of Edicions 62, which he directed (1963–1970). See Canal i Artigas and Martín Escribà 2011.
6. For an analysis of this unique character in Catalan *sf*, see Martín 2017c.
7. *Mecanoscrit* is no longer compulsory reading but it is still recommended. See Moreno-Bedmar 2017.
8. The high figure is surprising because Catalan is spoken by just about ten million people in the Països Catalans [Catalan Countries], an area which includes not only Catalonia (7.5 million inhabitants) but also València, the Balearic Islands, the south-east of France, and even the town of L’Alguer in Sardinia. Catalan is the official language of Andorra, the small independent nation in the Pyrenees.
9. There are no unbiased accounts of Catalan independentism. See (in English) Minder 2017.
10. A novel which Pedrolo translated (in 1966, in a version still available) as part of his ceaseless task as translator into Catalan of a long series of literary works, also including poetry and drama. As his daughter clarified (in per-

sonal conversation, 2017), Pedrolo did not speak any foreign language; his approach was similar to how most scholars translate from the classical languages.

11. The main exception was Mathilde Bensoussan's article (Bensoussan 1988).
12. I also published, thinking of Anglophone readers, an article on Pedrolo in the *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (http://www.sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/de_pedrolo_manuel), and translated into English Antoni Munné-Jordà's introduction to Catalan sf for the same website (http://www.sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/catalan_sf)
13. The Associació d'Escriptors en Llengua Catalana (AELC) offers a complete list of almost all writers in this language: <https://www.escriptors.cat/autors>. TRACES is the main database for bibliography on Catalan language and Literature (<https://traces.uab.cat/>)
14. I'm currently at work editing with Catalan Studies specialist Víctor Martínez-Gil a monographic issue on Catalan sf for the journal *Catalan Review*, to be published in 2022, with a team of Catalan Studies specialists recruited by invitation.

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Ungendering the English Translation of the Strugatskys' *The Snail on the Slope*

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The brothers Arkady and Boris Strugatsky are widely acknowledged as the most influential and popular science fiction authors in the Soviet Union from 1960 through the 1980s (Suvín 1988; Khagi 2013; Tamaro 2017). Most of their novels were translated into English, though their work was never especially popular in the West. The bulk of translation activity in English happened in the late 1970s to early 1980s, a period when the Cold War hostilities between the Soviet Union and the West were sharply escalating (Major 2003; on the political context of the Strugatskys' work, see Simon 2004).

Sixteen novels were translated overall during this time period. Potts (1991) remarks that the political tensions contributed to the interest in translations: "The allegation that the Strugatskys are dissidents, officially disapproved of and even persecuted by the Soviet bureaucracy, undoubtedly had something to do with the sudden interest taken in their fiction by

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Western publishers” (Potts 1991, 15). While Western publishers and scholars often positioned the Strugatskys as dissidents, the brothers Strugatsky did not view themselves that way (Potts 1991; Bondarenko and Kuril’skii 2009, 2013).

Among the novels translated during this period was *Ulitka na Sklone*, or *The Snail on the Slope*. This work deals centrally with gender, and it is the only work by the brothers Strugatsky to do so to this extent. In Boris Strugatsky’s memoir, *The Snail on the Slope* is described as a work beloved by its authors, who “respected this novel and considered it as their most perfect and most significant work” (Strugatsky 2003, 59).

In this chapter, I argue that the 1980 translation of *The Snail on the Slope* by the notable translator Alan Myers (Wainwright 2010) *ungenders* the novel through a variety of means, by smoothing out, erasing, and replacing most of its gendered expressions, titles, names, and grammar. There are significant problems translating from a source language which is gendered differently than a target language: for example, translating from French to English or from Russian to English. As Eshelman notes, “The linguistic choices made by translators reveal a lot about attitudes regarding the cultural meanings of gender” (Eshelman 2007, 20). In *The Snail on the Slope*, where gender plays a central role, linguistic means that mark gender were deliberately chosen by the authors to convey gendered meanings specific to the worldbuilding, which includes the mysterious, biotechnologically advanced civilization of the Forest, a women-only society presented as an inevitable future which the hero chooses to resist.

I use close readings to show that the 1980 English-language translation took a significant departure from the gendered issues presented in the novel, removing or remaking gendered elements conveyed through language. This downplays or erases the original’s messaging, and obfuscates the work’s preoccupation with gendered speech, and with gender roles under the Soviet regime. I will discuss the work’s gendered meanings and their relationship to political critique. I will examine both the 1980 translation by Myers and the recent 2018 translation by Olga Bormashenko, to ask questions about the roles and aims of science fictional translation; finally, I will discuss the potential of a feminist approach to translate a Soviet science fiction novel that deals centrally with gender.

Throughout the article, Russian is transliterated using the Library of Congress transliteration system, and, where necessary, basic linguistic glosses were supplied in translation to indicate morphology (such as .MASC, .FEM for masculine and feminine grammatical endings).

THE ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF *THE SNAIL ON THE SLOPE*

The Strugatskys' work, with its deep philosophical themes, centering of the role of the intelligentsia in society, and examinations of technological progress, has shaped generations of Soviet readers. "[T]he Strugatskys' work has been at the heart of Soviet SF" (Suvin 1988, 162). Their novels, published between 1959 and 1989, run the gamut from celebrating Soviet ideals to interrogating and critiquing many aspects of the Soviet project. Despite the trouble with censorship and roadblocks on the way to publication of many of their books, the Strugatskys were well-respected by the Soviet literary establishment (Kuznetsova 2006; cf. Potts 1991). Novels by the Strugatsky brothers continue to be widely reprinted in the post-Soviet countries. There exists a significant English-language body of scholarship examining the Strugatsky brothers' importance in understanding the Soviet experience. While many, if not most, scholars working on the Strugatsky texts have knowledge of Russian, some seem to rely on translations. Little research focuses specifically on gender (though see Greene 1986). Yet, one of their key novels, *The Snail on the Slope*, deals centrally with gender.

Gender in *The Snail on the Slope* is introduced as a major theme through the enigmatic, technologically advanced society of the Forest. The Forest, a mysterious site of transformation, biotechnology, and dangerous nature, is inhabited on the one hand by the villagers, who live in traditional communities evocative of Russian villages; and on the other hand, by *podrug*i, women who are later revealed as the true masters of the forest, the creators, and commanders of its biotechnological ecosystem. *Podrug*i reproduce by parthenogenesis and exclude men from their society. The Forest is full of other unusual life forms: *mertviaki* (deadlings), amoeba-like slugs, and jumping trees. The Forest is studied and ostensibly overseen by the humans of the Forest Authority, a Kafkaesque bureaucracy that does not seem to accomplish much: it seems mired in its own internal, mazelike activity.

The narrative is subdivided into two parts: the Forest/Kandid part, and the Authority/Perets part. Kandid is the protagonist of the Forest part of the narrative; he is a member of the Forest Authority who has crashed his helicopter in the Forest. In his attempt to escape the village where he is stranded and return to the Forest Authority, he discovers many of the Forest's secrets. Perets is a linguist who comes to the Forest Authority after dreaming of visiting the Forest for years. However, he soon discovers

that he is unable to either visit the Forest or leave the Forest Authority. His initial attempts to resist the system are unsuccessful. He finally becomes the Director of the Forest Authority.

In order to discuss the translation, it is important to consider it in its historical context. The book was translated into English from Russian in 1980 by Alan Myers, a prominent British translator of Russian fiction and poetry. Myers had a deep interest in Russian SFF (*Guardian*). The 1980 edition of *The Snail on the Slope* was published in 1980 by Gollancz in the UK, and in the US by Bantam; however, that translation was withdrawn from circulation. The March 1980 issue of *Locus Magazine* reports that within a week of distribution, Bantam issued a statement that the book was being withdrawn “because of an inaccuracy in the cover copy of the Bantam edition of SNAIL ON THE SLOPE ...” The cover blurb stated that authors “are now in disfavor with the Soviet government for the bold, outspoken ideas expressed in this novel.” The Strugatsky brothers were aware of the controversy. In a letter to Boris from July 6, 1980, Arkady mentions “the scandal with Bantam Books” related to the blurb on the cover of the American edition of *The Snail on the Slope*. In a letter to Arkady from February 9, 1983, Boris mentions “that idiotic cover of the edition of *Snail on the Slope*” which he describes as an “attempt to portray the Strugatskys as dissidents.” Potts (1991) discussed the controversy as a marketing decision: “In 1980, Bantam attempted to bring the Strugatskys’ work to the broader science fiction market with its paperback publication of *Snail on the Slope*; their original marketing strategy—playing on the alleged dissidence of the authors—backfired, however, when the Strugatskys themselves protested and insisted that the book be withdrawn” (Potts 1991, 15). The translation was later reissued without the problematic blurb, but the context of the Brothers Strugatsky’s market-driven positioning as dissidents is important for understanding the translation.

A new translation by Olga Bormashenko came out in 2018 from Chicago Review Press. The translator, who emigrated from Russia to Canada in 1991 at age 11, began translating the brothers Strugatsky for a friend, out of a dissatisfaction with existing translations. She has provided new translations for a few key Strugatsky novels, including *Roadside Picnic* and *Hard to be a God*.

Translating Gender in The Snail on the Slope

One of the challenges of translating *The Snail on the Slope* is the novel's deeply meaningful gendered language. Russian is a language which encodes grammatical gender for all inanimate and animate referents. Thus, a noun such as *stol* 'table' is grammatically coded masculine, *kastril'ia* 'pot' is grammatically coded feminine, *okno* 'window' is grammatically coded neuter. For people (and agents in general), neuter is usually unacceptable, and masculine or feminine encodings are used: thus, *uchitel'* 'male teacher' and *uchitel'nitsa* 'female teacher'; *drug* 'male, sometimes gender-neutral friend' and *podruga* 'female friend'.

In a language such as English, in which the scope of grammatical gender is narrower, and the domain of gender-neutrality wider, a translator faces tough decisions as to how to convey these meanings. Jakobson (1959/2000) notes that in Russian, grammatical gender is not only a formal category: it conveys a wide range of attitudes within a speech community. Discussing linguistic aspects of translation work and specifically the difficulties with translating the Russian category of gender, Jakobson notes that if "a grammatical category is absent in a given language, its meaning may be translated into this language by lexical means" (Jakobson 1959/2000, 116). Thus, Jakobson translated an Old Russian dual form *brata* 'brother.DUAL' by adding a word signifying the numeral: "two brothers." In a language where gender is not grammatically codified, lexical items (words) can be added to express a gendered meaning. However, it is not an easy task, since languages differ greatly in what they must express versus what they can express. In English, a sentence 'I hired a worker' does not carry any information as to the worker's gender. When translating into Russian, the translator would need to choose a masculine or a feminine form for the worker (*rabotnik* vs. *rabotnitsa*): "If I ask the utterer of the English sentence whether the worker was male or female, my question may be judged irrelevant or indiscreet, whereas in the Russian version of this sentence an answer to this question is obligatory" (Jakobson 1959/2000, 116). These translation dilemmas also highlight societal differences in approaching gender.

Nicknames

The authors make highly visible gendered decisions when selecting nicknames and special terms for groups of people: for example, *Molchun* 'a

man who is silent’, *starec* ‘old man’, *podrugy* ‘female friends’, and more forms in which gender is marked through inflectional and derivational morphology. In Russian, the suffix *-un* is masculine. When Myers chooses to translate Molchun ‘silent-one.MASC; a man who is silent’ as Dummy, Gorbun ‘hump.one.MASC; a man who has a hump’ as Humpty, and Vospitatel’ nicy ‘[early childhood] educators.FEM’ as Teachers, the Russian category of gender is not conveyed through lexical means. It is erased.

Let us take a detailed look at how some of these key gendered terms were translated into English:

<i>Russian (Cyrillic)</i>	<i>Russian (transliterated)</i>	<i>Translation and linguistic glosses</i>	<i>Myers translation 1980</i>	<i>Bormashenko translation 2018</i>
Молчун	Molchun	silent.MASC	Dummy	Silent Man
подруга	Podruga	friend.FEM	Maiden	helpmate
козел, козлик	kozol, kozlik	goat.MASC, goat. MASC-DIM	sheep, lambkin	goat (for both <i>kozol</i> and <i>kozlik</i>)
Воспитательница	Vospitatel’ nitsa	educator.FEM	Teacher	Instructress
Слухач	Slukhach	Listener.MASC	Ears	Hearer
Горбун	Gorbun	Hump-one. MASC	Humpty	Humpty
Кулак	Kulak	Fist.MASC	Buster	Big Fist
братья Плешаки	bratia Pleshaki	brothers Bald-ones. MASC	The Baldy brothers	The Baldy brothers
Хвост	Khvost	Tail.MASC	Barnacle	Tagalong
Болтун	Boltun	Chatterer.MASC	Loudmouth	Loudmouth
Колченог	Kolchenog	Crookedleg. MASC	Hopalong	Crookleg
Обида-Мученик	Obida-Muchenik	Offence-Martyr. MASC	Anger- Martyr	Tortured Questioner

The Forest part of the novel is full of named characters. Nava, Kandid’s would-be wife and companion, is the only named woman. She is the only named woman in the village; all other named villagers are men, and their names are grammatically coded masculine. Unlike Nava, who has a proper name, the names of the villagers are more nicknames than names. These folksy-sounding names reflect the male villagers’ distinctive qualities and occupations—Kolchenog has a problem with his leg, Slukhach listens to the transmissions of *podrugy*, Boltun chatters, Molchun (Kandid) does not talk enough. Myers solves the problem of translating

these via nickname-sounding words such as Dummy, Ears, the Baldy brothers, Loudmouth, Hopalong. This does a good job to convey the folksy feel of the original, but loses sight of the fact that all of these names/nicknames are grammatically coded masculine, often with similar suffixes that give these names a feeling of uniformity. For example, the derivational suffix *-un* ‘-er.MASC’ gives us Boltun ‘a man who chatters,’ Molchun ‘a man who keeps silent,’ Gorbun ‘the man who has a hunchback’. In Russian, these nicknames reinforce the impression of the villagers as men, and folksy ones.

Bormashenko generally makes an effort to translate gendered names and terms with gendered English words. However, the solutions she comes up with are not consistent, and do not adequately contextualize the novel. For example, Molchun ‘silent.one.MASC’, Kandid’s name in the village, is translated by Bormashenko as Silent Man, but she does not make similar decisions regarding other characters with nicknames that encode masculinity. For example, villager names created using the same suffix *-un*, such as Boltun and Gorbun, are not translated as Chattering Man and Humpback Man. In fact, many of the villagers’ names seem copied from Myers: Boltun is Loudmouth, Gorbun becomes Humpy, the Pleshaki brothers become Baldy. Khvost ‘Tail’ is translated by Bormashenko as Tagalong, which resembles Myers’s Hopalong (a translation of another character’s name, Kolchenog). These nicknames may convey the folksy character, but erase the masculinity of these names, with the exception of Silent Man, whom this translation choice sets apart in his masculinity. Bormashenko seems to have relied on the Myers translation for some of her gendered decisions, sometimes copying them outright.

A name which shows differences between Myers’ and Bormashenko’s approach to translation is Perets, the hero of the Authority part of the novel. Two possibilities for translation exist: first, Perets is a common Russian Jewish last name. The Russian word *perets* also means Pepper. Myers translates his name as “Pepper,” in line with the nicknames of the villagers discussed above (Perets does not interact with the villagers; he appears in a completely different context, that of the Forest Authority). Bormashenko translates his name as Peretz. The translation of “Pepper” is not supported grammatically: the genitive singular form of *perets* ‘pepper’ is *peretsa*, while the text has multiple instances of genitive singular *Peretsa*, consistent with the family name, not the vegetable. The exploration of Jewish themes in the works of the Strugatsky brothers is outside of the scope of the argument (see Sobolev 2014; Grinberg 2016 for more

information about Jewishness in these works), but it provides another example of an important subtext erased by Myers in translation.

Lexical Choices

Greene's (1986) feminist critique of *The Snail on the Slope* describes the central conflict of the novel as "a literal war of the sexes between the patriarchal Forest Authority and the matriarchal forest" (Greene 1986, 99). While engaging with Greene's core argument is beyond the scope of the chapter, this key feminist essay is intriguing from the point of view of translation studies. Greene, who cites the Myers translation throughout, nevertheless uses Russian nouns (rather than Myers's lexical choices) to talk about *podrugi* 'female friends', Perets, *shchenit'* 'to whelp' and others. Using Russian nouns instead of their translated versions hints at Greene's mistrust in the translation's ability to accurately convey what Greene sees as one of the central premises of the work: the novel's gendered aspects. In the following sections, I will examine two lexical choices which showcase important gendered elements and are problematic in the Myers translation: *podrugi* 'female friends' and *kozel*, *kozlik* 'goat, little goat'.

Podruga, Podrugi ('friend.FEM', friends.FEM')

Podrugi (singular *podruga*) are members of a women-only, biotechnologically advanced society in the Forest. Myers translates *podrugi* as 'Maidens,' while Bormashenko opts for 'helpmate.' It is important to examine the novel's history to understand these choices.

From the earliest stages of composition, the Strugatsky brothers envisioned *podrugi* as representatives of an advanced technological future, a future which might even be inevitable. This future is framed with Sovietspeak and Communist slogans. The working diary, which the authors began keeping in while at a writing retreat at Gagry, has the following notes and phrases:

Swamping of cold parcels of ground is giving good results, and soon we will have new positions for future advances. 3. Local authorities are reporting decisive victories. Grand beginnings of ideological reeducation of everybody, successful decisive ranks of our new squads of female friends (*podrugi*). (Bondarenko p. 317, my translation)

The style of these announcements is familiar to an average Soviet citizen: an official newspaper or radio-style report about advances of Soviet agricultural projects, in which agricultural labor is framed as battles and victories over nature—*bitva za wozhai*, “battle for the harvest,” for example, is one such stock phrase. In fact, the phrase “battle for the harvest” does appear in a draft of the announcement in the same working diary, even earlier than the quotation above: “Radio: ‘Front of the battles against robots.’ ‘Battle for the harvest.’ ‘The battle is going well’” (Bondarenko, 306). Other familiar lexical choices include *otriady* ‘squads, divisions’ also used to describe groups of Soviet youth organizations. Local authorities (*vlasti na mestakh*) predictably report victories over nature. While the exact wording of these announcements changes somewhat in the novel, they are transmitted by *podrugy*, and their Soviet style remains the same.

Podrugy are female friends, and I would argue that *podrugy* are a feminized variation of *tovarishchi*, or comrades. The word *tovarishch* is used for both men and women, but it is grammatically masculine in its form. The feminine variant, *tovarka* (comrade, friend), is possible but not widely used—and it is not used to signify the political meaning of “comrade.” The Soviet *tovarishch* encompasses all people regardless of gender. The noun *podrugya*, however, is gendered feminine. *Tovarishch* is a word that implies both friendship and a membership in a group which is working toward a common goal. *Podrugy* are mastering nature and building a bright, technologically advanced future. To successfully translate *podrugya*, one should evoke both its feminine form and its Communist, future-oriented, group-membership connotations. Myers translates *podrugy* as Maidens, and I believe this to be the only time he chooses a gendered English noun to translate a gendered Russian noun. However, a Maiden is quite different from *podrugya*. ‘Maiden’ has no connotation of friendship, camaraderie, or belonging to a group; it does not evoke the word ‘comrade’ with its Communist implications. A maiden is a young woman, perhaps an unmarried woman, or even a virgin. In the novel, *podrugy* are often mothers. The word ‘Maiden’ does not automatically evoke a woman who has given birth.

In a pivotal Forest scene in Chap. 8, Kandid encounters three *podrugy* of different ages. Of them, two are mothers: one is heavily pregnant, and the other is Nava’s mother. The novel shows us that *podrugy* produce people. New *podrugy* are produced both through the familiar process of relations with men followed by pregnancy and childbirth, and also through parthenogenesis, “in the lake,” which is presented by the three *podrugy* as

the superior method. While Greene remarks that unlike the mythological White Goddess of Robert Graves, these three most powerful women of the novel “bring only suffering and death, never joy and fertility” (Greene 1986, 102), I argue that fertility and reproduction are crucial to understanding the society of *podrugy*. The ideal of gender equality positioned all Soviet citizens as equals regardless of gender, with equal expectations of attaining literacy and employment outside of the home (Ashwin 2000). Childbirth and motherhood were presented as the single truly gendered experience, and thus the sole difference between women and men in terms of expectations. Women were expected to produce through childbirth—they become *proizvoditel'nitsy*, or female producers, of new Soviet citizens. Motherhood is productive labor, an obligation, and a service to the Soviet state, which in turn exerts control over women’s bodies (Hyer 1996, 113; Olson and Adonyeva 2013, 197; Perelmutter 2014). When the three *podrugy* Kandid encounters in the Forest remind each other that they have been planning to work, they refer specifically to the production of new bodies. Reading *podrugy* through the lens of Soviet cultural history emphasizes how much the translation of *podrugy* as Maidens misses these layers of meaning. Since the ability to produce new citizens—or, more precisely, new working bodies—is the sole distinguishing quality between female and male Soviet citizens, the functions of *podrugy* are much more aligned with labor, with Socialist production, and motherhood as production, than with maidenhood.

In Bormashenko’s translation, the choice to translate *podrugy* as *helpmate* is somewhat unexpected. *Helpmate* is an English word that means helper, but it has strong Biblical connotations. *Helpmate* is often used synonymously with *helpmeet* or *help meet*, this word translates the Hebrew *ezer* in Genesis 2:18 and refers to Adam’s wife Eve. A helpmate is a helper and a companion, especially as a wife, a female companion and helper of a man. While Eve is indeed a mother, she is more of a second (helpmate) to Adam, while *podrugy* are in charge and exclude men entirely. In addition, lexical choices evoking religion are questionable in the Soviet context, as religious practices were forbidden under the Soviet regime, and the Strugatsky brothers did not seek to rehabilitate religion. The word *podrugy* in the original text is paired with the adjective *slavnaia* ‘glorious.FEM’, again evoking Soviet-era ‘glorious comrades.’ Bormashenko’s translation replaces the adjective ‘glorious’ with ‘fine’, so that *slavnaia podrugy* becomes a fine helpmate. This strips the political subtext from the novel, and introduces new meanings which are not present in the original and do not help interpret its meanings.

Kozel, Kozlik ('goat.MASC, goat.MASC-DIM')

In the important scene mentioned above, Kandid and Nava encounter three *podrugi* in the forest. Greene summarizes it as follows:

Against all odds Kandid and Nava reach the source of power in the forest. Here they find three women: one just a few years older than Nava, one pregnant, and an older woman who turns out to be Nava's lost mother. These, Kandid learns, are the masters of the forest, the creators of all its life forms. They reproduce by parthenogenesis, considering men not just repulsive but a mistake to be corrected.... Subsequently they lead Nava away to join their number. (Greene 1986, 101–102)

During the encounter, the three *podrugi* are very interested in Nava—but treat Kandid with disdain. The three women use the words *kozel* 'he-goat' and its diminutive form *kozlik* 'little he-goat' repeatedly to refer to Kandid.

The word 'goat' in Russian exists in both a feminine and a masculine form. The feminine form, *koza*, 'female goat,' usually describes an animal, but can sometimes serve as an insult toward a woman or girl who is stubborn and mean. The masculine form, *kozel*, 'male goat,' is in frequent use as a negative descriptor of men. *Kozel* is a popular way for women to express a negative opinion about a man who is lecherous, a man who behaved badly toward a woman (especially the speaker) in any way, or simply a man who possesses undesirable qualities. The word *kozel* is frequently used for gender stereotyping. Thus, an extremely popular Russian saying, which exists in many variants, suggests that *baby—dury, a muzhiki kozly* or *vse muzhiki kozly, a baby—dury* 'women.COLLOQ are idiots. FEM and men are goats.MASC'; 'all men are goats.MASC, and [all] women are idiots.FEM'. This saying is incorporated into everyday discourse, jokes, movies, and other media. There are further popular sayings on this theme, such as *krugom odni kozly* 'there are only he-goats around' and *liubov' zla, poliubish i kozla* 'love is mean, you'll fall in love even with a he-goat', position the he-goat as a romantically undesirable person. English has an expression 'an old goat', which is similar to the Russian *staryi kozel*, but no close English equivalent exists for male goats of any age. A possible parallel in English would be the insult 'bastard', although it lacks the animal imagery.

The stereotype of *kozel* as an undesirable man who is often described as smelly, lecherous, stupid, and not worthy of a woman is extremely strong in Russian. When Strugatsky's Kandid is described by Nava's mother and

other women of the Forest as *kozel*, *kozlik* (a young he-goat), the gendered implications of this word, as well as its insulting nature, are front and center for the Russian-language reader. Myers's decision to translate *kozel* as 'sheep' and *kozlik* as 'lambkin' completely neutralizes the gendered aspect of the insult, and I also feel that it neutralizes the insult itself. While *sheep* can imply a negative opinion about a person who mindlessly follows, *lambkin* sounds almost endearing, evoking Mary's little lamb with its white fleece rather than a lecher. Any insulting meanings of sheep and lambkin are definitely not as strong or clear as *kozel* is in Russian (compare 'bastard' and 'sheep, lamb, lambkin'). The Bormashenko translation chooses a more literal option. Bormashenko translates both *kozlik* 'little goat' and *kozel* 'he-goat' as 'goat'. This obscures the genderlect usage conveyed via the diminutive and downplays the infantilization.

At one point in the novel, one of the three *podrugy* tells Kandid to try not to be a *kozel*. She says, "*Popytaisia predstavit' sebe mir bez kozlov...*" The translations give us "try to imagine the world without sheep" (Myers) and "try to imagine a world without goats" (Bormashenko). Neither conveys the meaning of the original, which is close to 'try to imagine a world without [terrible] men,' with the implication of 'try to imagine a world without men,' which is exactly what the *podrugy* project is about: they reproduce through parthenogenesis, although some do have relations with men, such as, by implication, Nava's mother; they view parthenogenesis as the better way to reproduce. It is implied that *podrugy* kidnap women from the villages. They are also responsible for drowning whole villages—a process whereby the men perish and the women are taken away to join the *podrugy*. Myers's 'Try to imagine a world without sheep' gives a different metaphorical connotation akin to "try to imagine a world in which people don't unquestioningly obey authority," which is definitely quite different from "try to imagine a world without [terrible] men." Bormashenko's "Try to imagine a world without goats" does not evoke an additional level of metaphorical meaning with respect to a human society. However, since the character is repeatedly called a goat in Bormashenko's translation, the meaning may be extrapolated from context.

The contrast between male and female stereotypes is set up earlier in the chapter, when Kandid sees some *mertviaki*—appropriately translated by both Myers and Bormashenko as "deadlings"—approach the three women, who, as far as Kandid can see, are endangered. He tries to warn and stop the women. Kandid does not yet know that *podrugy* control and create the deadlings, and does not understand why they do not heed his

warnings. Frustrated and concerned, he thinks of them as *baby* 'women.COLLOQ' and *dury* 'stupid.FEM'. We might recall the saying *baby dury, a muzhiki kozly*, 'women.COLLOQ are idiots.FEM and men are goats.MASC'. *Baba* is a colloquial word for woman. In the context of a traditional agrarian Russian society, *baba* is a neutral word for a married woman, while *muzhik* is a neutral word for a married man. Ozhegov's dictionary states that *baba* is (1) 'a married peasant woman, and also in general a woman of the common people' and (2) 'said about a woman, pejoratively or jokingly.' *Muzhik* does not seem to have similar negative connotations, and may be used colloquially to mean 'guys, dudes.' In Modern Russian urban society, *baba* is used pejoratively to mean a woman who is making unwise decisions, who is provincial and uneducated, and/or who behaves in a manner consistent with negative gender stereotypes. In a moment of frustration and danger, Kandid thinks about *podrugi* as *baby* and *dury*, which primes the reader to expect *baby dury, muzhiki kozly*—an expectation which comes to fruition when *podrugi* call Kandid *kozlik*, a little he-goat, by implication a smelly and ridiculous man, and invite him to imagine a world without he-goats. The two attitudes mirror each other as gender stereotypes—Kandid is a positive character, not the stereotypical he-goat, nor do *podrugi* fit into the mold of *baby-dury*—stupid women. These are conflicting yet complementary stereotypes.

The gendered misunderstandings between the three *podrugi* and Kandid are shaken, but not entirely resolved, when the women and Kandid have a conversation about science, in which the women are trying to determine whether or not Kandid is capable of commanding the dead-lings, while Kandid tries to convey some of his own knowledge of science—biology, in particular. While their attempts at communication are ultimately unsuccessful, the *podrugi* seem to decide that Kandid is not a regular *kozol*-type man and decide to send him to *Vospitatel'nitsy*, for night shift labor.

Readers growing up under the Soviet regime would associate the word *vospitatel'nitsa* '[early childhood] educator.FEM' with the Soviet early childhood institutions—*yasli* and *sadik*—that allow Soviet women to gain childcare-free access to the workforce. While Soviet women are at work, their children's care and education are overseen by the Soviet *vospitatel'nitsy*. This word and its context are evoked in *The Snail on the Slope*. Kandid has gained some respect from *podrugi* by conversing with them about science. They do not give up on him entirely, but they do infantilize him by planning to send him to *Vospitatel'nitsy*. This might also convey a sense of

terror a small child might feel about these early Soviet educators, who often imposed harsh discipline on the children in their care. *Vospitatel'nitsy* would take care of Kandid, while *podrugy* themselves intend to work—they repeatedly discuss their plans to do labor; just like the adult Soviet women would work while their children would be educated in Soviet early childhood institutions. The role of *Vospitatel'nitsy* in the novel is never fully revealed, since Kandid almost immediately escapes the situation, and so the readers are left only with the familiar word.

This reading is reinforced by the repetitive appearance of *kozlik* 'goat. MASC-DIM' 'little he-goat'—a word which *podrugy* use through most of the encounter to refer to Kandid. Diminutives are often discussed as a feature of the Russian female genderlect (Yokoyama 1999)—a speech style associated with women. Diminutives are especially prominent in speech directed at children. When *podrugy* call Kandid *kozlik*, he is reduced to the status of a child who is entrusted to early childhood educators while *podrugy* labor on their biotechnological production. Myers's translation of *Vospitatel'nitsy* as Teachers erases the grammatical and cultural gendered context of this word. It is humiliating for a grown man to be essentially sent to a kindergarten, while 'Teacher' is a much more neutral word. Bormashenko's 'Instructress' conveys the gender, but does not help the reader understand the Soviet context of early childhood education and its relation to labor production by women.

The anonymous *Publisher's Weekly* reviewer of Bormashenko's translation does not mention gender at all, but like many other reviewers is confused by the work:

The journey is intentionally confusing and disorienting, throwing standard narrative techniques and conventions out the window in favor of wild experimentation. This is both one of the book's greatest strengths and an amazing source of frustration. [...] Approached as a meditation on the human inability to comprehend more than a very small part of the universe, this is a surprisingly satisfying, if often perplexing, work.

In the *Foreword* review of Bormashenko's translation, the reviewer mentions "a group of women who are able to conceive children without men" only as a part of the list of strange things Kandid encounters in the Forest, the only nod to gender in this review. Yet, the Forest is controlled and created by Masters of the Forest—*podrugy*. The Forest Authority's failed mission is to study and manage the Forest. The Forest is at the center of the

novel, and *podrugji*, with their biotechnological projects, are the masters of the Forest. This is a novel about humanity's reproductive futures, and about a women-separatist society that creates one such future. Both translations obfuscated—one willfully and systematically, the other perhaps through inattention—the work's major theme: gender.

GENDER UNDER THE SOVIET REGIME AND *THE SNAIL* ON THE SLOPE

Under the Soviet regime, the ideal of gender equality was never truly achieved. While women could attain an education and enter the workforce alongside men, women were also expected to tend to children and perform domestic labor, frequently under the stressful conditions of scarcity. The Russian feminist movement, which had an active and complicated history before the October Revolution, all but disappeared as an independent political and intellectual movement. Instead, the so-called Zhenotdel, the Women's Unit in the Communist Party, was established in 1919 to oversee women's issues. Zhenotdel reinforced the image of the new Soviet woman as a stoic and heroic mother and laborer who is in tune with Soviet morals, responsible, strong, and capable in the workplace (Engel 1987, 787). While women were expected to excel in both the domestic and the professional spheres, men were not similarly encouraged to pitch in in the domestic sphere (Gal and Kligman 2000; Ashwin 2000).

Since the Soviet regime positioned the genders as equal, the double burden of Soviet women was rendered unspeakable (Gal and Kligman 2000: 46–47). Men also experienced inequalities and unique pressures as a result of this imbalance. No longer the sole providers, men were not expected to participate actively in the life of the family (Wanner 1998, 112; Bilaniuk 2003; Ashwin 2000, 11; Gal and Kligman 2000). An even larger gendered imbalance developed in the post-WWII period, when the demographic crisis after the losses in WWII resulted in a discrepancy between the numbers of men and women (Petrov 1959). The first post-WWII Soviet census, in 1959, reported the total population of the Soviet Union at 208,826,000. At the time of the census, there were approximately 94 million men to 114 million women living in the USSR, or 20 million more women than men due to losses of life in WWII, as well as in the Stalinist concentration camps, where most people who perished were men (Petrov 1959). These demographic discrepancies were discussed by

post-WWII Soviet news outlets and scholarship (Uralnis 1969; Zdravomyslova and Temkina 2013, 44).

In a society ravaged by the war and by Stalinism, many women struggled with trauma, the double burden of responsibility at work and at home, and the uncertainty and stress of raising children in the post-war period. Men, on the other hand, often struggled with trauma while feeling disconnected from family life, and without much emotional support. Many men battled depression and alcoholism. By the sixties, when the Brothers Strugatsky publish many of their key works, Soviet men were often stereotyped by Soviet women as useless, lazy, and unneeded (for a detailed discussion of Soviet discourses around the perceived crisis of masculinity, see Zdravomyslova and Temkina 2013). Boris Strugatsky reminisces about the key idea behind *The Snail on the Slope*:

I think it was in a samizdat article by the well-known, then disgraced, Soviet geneticist Efrogimson, that we read a striking phrase: that humanity could perfectly exist and develop solely through parthenogenesis. Take a female egg, and under the influence of a weakly induced current it begins to divide – in due time producing a girl, exclusively a girl, who is, moreover, the exact copy of her mother. Men are not necessary. At all. (Strugatsky 2003)

The urgency and terror of imagining a Communist future in which “men are not necessary. At all” is rooted in the Soviet ideals of gender equality that end up oppressing men and women in different ways, and in the post-War demographic crisis (Zdravomyslova and Temkina 2013; Engel 1987). This female-only future represents a particular anxiety of post-WWII Soviet men who are traumatized by wars and repressions, who are demographically disadvantaged, who may feel sidelined in family life, and who have limited ways to express and address their anxieties and traumas. This is the cultural context that is lost in translation when Myers makes a decision to ungender the gendered language of the novel.

Greene’s feminist critique positions the Authority as patriarchal (“a literal war of the sexes between the patriarchal Forest Authority and the matriarchal forest,” Greene 1986, 99). Suvin, in his introduction, also makes a distinction between the “matriarchal or Amazon civilization of the Maidens ...” and “the patriarchal Exploitation Authority” (Suvin 1988, 165). However, I argue (Lemberg, in progress) that the Authority is not necessarily patriarchal. While sexism is definitely present, the Authority represents “business as usual” in a Soviet institution, in which

men and women are a part of a Kafkaesque bureaucratic system; men and women alike are both powerful and disempowered within this system. Nor is the world of the Forest “matriarchal.” In a matriarchal society, women—usually older women—hold positions of power and authority, but the society itself does not exclude men. The society of *podrugi* excludes men entirely. The text indicates that the original plan of the *podrugi* apparently included men—all villagers in general—but in the now of the novel, it no longer includes them. That is not matriarchal—that is separatist. *Podrugi* still retain and glorify Communist principles of labor, production, and the creation of a technologically advanced future. They use Sovietspeak, they are producers, they labor to create and control new biological forms. They demonstrate both the mystery of nature and mastery over nature. In the last chapter of the novel, Kandid reviews what he has learned about the society of *podrugi*. “If only I were learning the language from the women, everything would have sounded differently: enemies of progress, overfed stupid idlers... Ideals... Lofty goals... Natural laws of nature... And for all this, to destroy half of the population? No, this is not for me.” He refuses this futuristic vision of the forest—with its technological progress and its Soviet-style slogans—because he sees this future as genocidal toward men: *podrugi* wish to destroy “half of the population.” Interestingly, Myers translates this as “annihilate half of the inhabitants,” which makes the gender connotation not as clear. This novel, which the Bantam blurb of the Myers translation presented as anti-Soviet, does not critique the Soviet regime as much as it engages with Soviet societal issues, including gender.

In 1980, however, the English-speaking audience had access to, or at least might have been aware of, the wave of feminist science fiction of the 1960s and 1970s—the science fictions of Ursula K. Le Guin’s *Left Hand of Darkness* (1969), Marge Piercy’s *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976), and *The Female Man* by Joanna Russ (1970)—situating the matriarchal forest with its parthenogenesis for the Western reader within the paradigm of feminist literature (on parthenogenesis in feminist English-language science fiction, see Ingram-Waters 2008). Perhaps Myers made the decision to erase gendered language in the novel because it did not fit neatly, or at all, into this paradigm. While many definitions of feminism exist, *The Snail on the Slope* does not appear to be a feminist text. The novel portrays women’s lives and experiences only through their relations with men in the narrative (whether familial, sexualized, or both) and often does so in a stereotyped way (cf. the critique in Greene 1986). Women are portrayed as frightening, elusive, sometimes stiflingly maternal; Nava, the child

spouse whom Kandid regards as his daughter, is a positive character whom the hero protects, but ultimately fails to save from becoming a *podrug*a. Finally, unlike in Western feminist science fiction novels featuring parthenogenesis (Ingram-Waters 2008), a women-only society is portrayed negatively—Kandid, in the summarizing last chapter of the novel, relates how the society built by *podrug*i inspires only his disgust and hatred.

Whether the novel is anti-feminist is debatable. Greene's feminist critique of the novel suggests that the work showcases the authors' anti-woman sentiment: "Nonetheless, a careful examination of the connection between women and the forest makes clear that the Strugatskys drew on some of their darkest, perhaps unconscious fears of the former in describing the latter" (Greene 1986, 102). However, the issue of the relevancy of Western-style feminist approaches to gender in the context of the Soviet Union in 1960s deserves a separate treatment.

ENVISIONING A FEMINIST TRANSLATION

Describing the dual mission of the translator, scholars of translation traditionally emphasized the values of fidelity and stylistic felicity. Lewis (2000, 224) summarizes this traditional view as follows:

...the conventional view of translation puts the translator under pressure not simply to produce a version of the original that reads well or sounds right in the target language but also to understand and interpret the original masterfully so as to reproduce its messages faithfully. The very translation that imposes the interpretation attendant to its language should also offer an accurate interpretation, a re-presentation of the original.

It is difficult to translate a work in which the authors experiment with the language's available grammatical resources to construct complex meanings. Jakobson's (1959/2000) solution—to use lexical means to compensate for the lack of appropriate grammatical means—is neither sufficient nor easy. The solution I see lies not in simply looking for more faithful or better lexical choices: it lies in adopting a feminist approach to translation.

Flotow writes: "There are two translators available for the job: one with more or less traditional views on the importance of 'fidelity' and equivalence in translation, who believes that a translator's work should be seen through, and not heard about. The other is a feminist translator" (Flotow 1997, 69; see also the discussion in Simon 1996). A solution I

want to envision for *The Snail on the Slope* is feminist translation. The theory of feminist translation is much debated, but at its core it “recognizes that gender matters: whether of an author, translator, character, or pronoun, gender is a legitimate concern” (Eshelman 2007, 16). In such a translation, the translator’s work cannot be transparent to the reader. Stylistic felicity or flow are superseded by the need for transparency in the process of translation, the visibility of translator, and the principles and approaches the translator might choose to engage with gender in the source text.

Flotow suggests three possible avenues for a feminist translator: supplementing, for example adding words and even explanations to the translated text to compensate for unavailable grammatical choices (for an in-depth discussion of the necessity of supplementing, see Simon 1996); prefacing and footnoting; and hijacking. Hijacking might involve the translator being an intrusive, visible presence: “The translator [...] is so intrusive at times that she all but hijacks the author’s work. In the introduction she tells us she intends to make her presence felt [...] to this end she frequently breaks into [the author’s] work explaining what [the author] really meant and sometimes offering the French equivalent for the English on the page” (Homel 1990, cited in Flotow 1997). In such a translation, the translator would be a visible and active presence. Eshelman acknowledges that hijacking, the most radical and oft-critiqued aspect of feminist translation, is in fact rarely used, even by the most outspoken proponents of feminist translation (Eshelman 2007, 17). He proposes three feminist translator techniques which differ somewhat from Flotow’s: supplementing (which is similar to Flotow’s prefacing and footnoting), looking at gender on a word-by-word basis, and close collaboration between a translator and the author of the source text.

Before considering some of these strategies, however, we need to take a step back to consider whether principles of feminist translation can be applied to a work which is not feminist, a work which is not even written by a woman or a gender-marginalized person. *The Snail on the Slope* deals with gender, true, but it deals with gender from a perspective of two cisgender, heterosexual¹ men who are writers, and two cisgender, heterosexual men who are protagonists, centering their internalities, desires, perspectives while not affording the same level of nuance to female characters (cf., also Greene’s 1986 feminist critique of the novel). And yet, must feminist translation be solely be reserved for feminist works, and or for works written by women and gender-marginalized people? Is the

Western feminist lens even applicable to a work coming from a society with institutionalized, and often oppressive, ideals of gender equality that never resulted in true equality?

I contend that by dealing so deeply with gender, this work is of interest to an audience concerned with issues of gender and culture, including, but not limited to a Western feminist audience. As Eshelman writes, feminist translation is not an “invasion” of a source literary work, but rather a conscious decision by a translator to pay attention to the gendered aspects of the text, and to ensure that these gendered aspects are not lost in translation (Eshelman 2007, 17). Since *The Snail on the Slope* is so focused on gender, the principles of feminist translation are applicable to it—but we must be careful in indiscriminately applying Anglo-Western approaches to a work coming from a very different cultural paradigm. Gayathri Spivak speaks of the discomfort she feels with feminist approaches coming from a hegemonic monolingual culture in which meanings and values are similarly produced and then may be presented as universal (Spivak 1993/2010, 322). Yet, Spivak notes, importantly:

I want to consider the role played by language for the agent, the person who acts, even though intention is not fully present to itself. The task of the feminist translator is to consider language as a clue to the workings of gendered agency. (Spivak 1993/2000, 312)

Myers’s translation, which erases most of the workings of gendered agency from the language of the text, does an injustice not only to the text—it obscures the whole swath of cultural meanings the text creates, which are crucial in understanding gender under the Soviet Regime. Obfuscating the many ways in which *The Snail on the Slope* deals with gender through both language and considerations of gendered agency is, if anything, anti-feminist. Whatever his intent, the translation twists the original to serve some outsider, Western perception of what a government-censored text from the Soviet Union *should* mean and do.

Modern, cutting-edge translation work which makes the work of translation visible to the reader (without necessarily declaring itself to be feminist) can help us discover new techniques that can be useful in translating gender. George Henson’s translation of Alberto Chimal’s *Los Esclavos*, translated as *The Most Fragile Objects*, a contemporary short novel by a Mexican author, illustrates this. Here, the translator makes a decision to

retain key words and concepts in the original Spanish. Twenty-seven words are listed and explained in the translator's glossary that precedes the text, including many gendered terms such as *pinche ruca*, *pinche ruco*, *puta*, *puto*, and more. Among the words in the glossary is *cabrón*, explained as "literally a large male goat," used to refer to anything from "a cuckold husband" to "guy," "dude," "badass," "asshole," or "son-of-a-bitch" (Chimal 2020, 9). Later in the novel, when *cabrón* is used without a translation, including in a pivotal scene where a revelation that the character is going to be a father is accompanied by an untranslated *cabrón*. By the time we get to "you're going to be a dad, *cabrón*" (Chimal 2020, 78), we are able to interpret it without difficulty. "You're going to be a dad, goat," or worse yet, "you're going to be a dad, sheep," would not have the same effect. Yet the English reader of *The Snail on the Slope* must continue to be mystified and perplexed by a suggestion to imagine a world without sheep or goats. Arguably, hijacking—one of the most contested techniques of feminist translation—is already present in Myers's non-feminist translation of *The Snail on the Slope* in the major decision to ungender the language of the novel. The effect is not feminist—on the contrary, its effect is essentially to remove much of the subtext that is of interest to feminist readers and/or readers interested in issues of gender, aiming to position it instead as anti-Soviet critique—a political and marketing stance which is not supported by the authors (Potts 1991).

Making the translator's role visible by describing and discussing the process of translation in supplementary materials (Flotow's prefacing and footnoting) and/or exploring potential bilingual elements such as leaving some of the Russian words intact and supplying a glossary, and perhaps even engaging critically with the authors in the commentary to the translated text, would result in a translation that highlights rather than obfuscates the workings of gendered agency. Spivak writes that the task of the translator is to "facilitate this love between the original and its shadow, a love that permits fraying, holds the agency of the translator and the demands of her imagined or actual audience at bay" (Spivak 1993/2000, 313). Such a translation would bravely imagine the possible—a world that pushes against monolingual heteronormativity and monolingual feminism, a world where the boundaries of language and the limitations of culture are pushed to translate, interpret, and convey a work of the fantastic that deserves a wide audience and spirited discussion.

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NOTE

1. To the best of my knowledge, there does not seem to be any evidence for a different argument.

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(Not) Translating the Incomprehensible:
Defamiliarizing Science, Technology,
and Science Fiction in Harry Martinson's
Aniara

Daniel Helsing

When thinking about science fiction (SF), poetry is not likely to be the first literary form to come to mind. As Christopher Cokinos puts it in a recent anthology devoted to space poetry and SF poetry: “For many readers, there is science fiction and there is poetry—separate genres doing different things” (Cokinos 2020, 171). Cokinos’s point, of course, is that these readers are mistaken: SF poetry is in fact an established subgenre of SF literature. Furthermore, Cokinos and Julie Swarstad Johnson, the editors of the anthology, argue that poetry is particularly well-suited to explore and expand our conceptions of space: “Through science, we comprehend the universe and can begin to venture out into it; through translations of science into journalism, essays, and especially poetry, we venture

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out into imagination as well, plumbing the depths of meaning” (Johnson and Cokinos 2020, ix). But the often-overlooked connection between SF and poetry does raise an interesting question: Does poetry sit uneasily with space and science?

The composition of the epic poem *Aniara* (1956), written by the Swedish author, poet, and Nobel Laureate Harry Martinson (1904–1978), seems to suggest that at least for Martinson, the answer to this question is a cautious yes. *Aniara: En revy om människan i tid och rum*—translated into English as “Aniara: A Review of Man in Time and Space” (1963, 1991, and 1999)—tells the story of a spaceship that gets thrown off course during an evacuation from toxic radiation on Earth. The ship, carrying 8000 refugees and originally headed for Mars, begins to drift helplessly toward the constellation Lyra. The narrator of the poem is the nameless *mimaroben* (“the Mimarobe”), and he is in charge of Mima, a kind of artificial intelligence who is able to pick up images from various parts of the universe and display them on a screen, to the comfort and amusement of the passengers. The poem consists of 103 songs: it chronicles life aboard the ship until, twenty-four years after leaving Earth, everyone has died. As evidenced by the essay “Stjärnsången,” written already in 1938 (translated into English in 2020 as “The Star Song”), Martinson wrestled with the challenges that modern science poses for poetry, such as how to represent poetically the vastness of space and the nature of stars. In the years between “The Star Song” and *Aniara*, Martinson also became increasingly preoccupied with technological developments—not least the nuclear bombs deployed in Hiroshima and Nagasaki—and wrestled with the related challenges of depicting through poetry the destructive potential of advanced technology.

If we, following Cokinos and Johnson’s suggestion, construe poetic representations of science as translations, then the key question becomes: What kind of translation is *Aniara*? As I will argue, we can use Lawrence Venuti’s (1995/2008) distinction between “domesticating” and “foreignizing” translation practices to illuminate Martinson’s poetics in “The Star Song” and *Aniara*. Using this distinction, I will argue that Martinson uses foreignizing translation practices when approaching space and nuclear violence; he develops original imagery to evoke some degree of comprehension of these phenomena, only to recede again before attempting domesticating descriptions, instead leaving the reader in a state of awe, wonder, and terror. By comparing Hugh MacDiarmid and Elspeth Harley Schubert’s translation of *Aniara* from 1963 with Stephen Klass and Leif

Sjöberg's translation from 1999, I will furthermore argue that the 1999 translation retains more of Martinson's foreignizing translations of science by staying closer to the Swedish original and, in addition, deploying some foreignizing translation practices of its own. The 1963 translation, by contrast, does use foreignization practices occasionally, but overall, it departs more from the original and tends to domesticate the poem.

If Martinson struggled with representing by means of poetry the extreme scales of science and technology, it is fair to say that critics and scholars have struggled with *Aniara*'s relation to SF. Despite the poem's obvious SF themes, and despite Martinson being open about reading and appreciating SF, the reception of *Aniara* has wavered on whether to actually classify it as SF. This is partly due to SF's relatively low status as a literary genre in Sweden for most of the twentieth century, in contrast to Martinson's reputation as one of the century's most highly regarded authors. But there are other aspects, as well: for example, some scholars have seen Mima as embodying Romantic views of the poet rather than scientific ideas of the computer. Using Simon Spiegel's (2008) distinction between "diegetic estrangement" and "defamiliarization" in SF, I will argue that some plot elements in *Aniara*, Martinson's style of narration, and his foreignizing translations of science and technology diverge from common characteristics of Anglo-American SF at the time, making the poem not only a defamiliarization of science and technology, but of SF as well.

TRANSLATIONS INTO ENGLISH OF *ANIARA*

While *Aniara* has been translated into English three times, it has only been published in the United Kingdom or the United States twice. The 1963 version, translated by Scottish poet Hugh MacDiarmid and Scottish-Swedish translator Elspeth Harley Schubert, was published by Hutchinson in the United Kingdom and by Alfred A. Knopf in the United States. The 1999 version, translated by the two literary scholars Stephen Klass and Leif Sjöberg, both based in the northeastern United States, was published in the United States by Story Line Press, a small (now-defunct) publishing house in Ashland, Oregon. The 1999 translation is a slightly revised version of Klass and Sjöberg's previous translation, which was published in 1991 by the small Swedish publishing house Vekerum förlag in collaboration with Harry Martinson-sällskapet ("The Harry Martinson Society"). All three version translate the title as *Aniara: A Review of Man in Time*

and Space. The 1999 version stands out though: while the title page of the 1999 translation states *Aniara: A Review of Man in Time and Space*, the book cover reads: *Aniara: An Epic Science Fiction Poem*. Currently, all editions have gone out of print and are difficult to find even in used bookstores.

The 1963 translation by MacDiarmid and Schubert initially received poor reviews in both the United Kingdom and the United States. Writing in the *New York Times*, John Berryman calls the translation “lucid but wooden” but feels unable to judge the poem’s merit: “The poet’s capriciousness seems better conveyed than what must be, to account for its popularity [in Sweden], ecstatic and chilling qualities in the original.” He concludes by stating that in “English [*Aniara*] is not moving” (Berryman 1963). While Berryman primarily criticizes the translation, Keith Sagar, in the *Sunday Times*, finds Martinson’s imagination lacking: “The treatment will strike even a reader wholly unfamiliar with science-fiction as deficient in imaginative force and originality” (Sagar 1963). Kingsley Amis, writing in the *Spectator*, is similarly unimpressed, charging Martinson with a “disastrous unfamiliarity with both science fiction and science fact” (Amis 1963). A decade later, however, following the announcement that Martinson would be receiving the Nobel Prize in literature in 1974, Bruce Lockerbie, writing in the *New York Times*, is quite impressed with *Aniara*; he compares it to T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* and suggests that it “may well be a work of equal power and prophecy” (Lockerbie 1974). That same year, Martinson himself made it clear that he did not like MacDiarmid and Schubert’s translation, calling it “a scandal” in an interview in the *New York Times* (Uncredited Reporter 1974). Much more recently, Geoffrey O’Brien instead praises the 1963 translation in a long essay about *Aniara* in *The New York Review of Books*, following the release of the internationally screened feature film *Aniara*, directed by Hugo Lilja and Pella Kågerman (2018). O’Brien explains that when he first came across MacDiarmid and Schubert’s translation, “its propulsive urgency carried me along in an uninterrupted reading.” Though O’Brien reports that the 1999 translation “is said to be more accurate and somewhat more complete,” he finds the 1963 translation to be “more persuasive as English poetry” (O’Brien 2019).

While the 1991 and 1999 translations by Klass and Sjöberg did not receive the same amount of attention in the Anglo-American press as the 1963 translation, they did receive a few reviews in academic journals. Steven P. Sondrup calls Klass and Sjöberg’s 1999 translation “excellent” and argues that it is “the most accomplished and compelling” (Sondrup

2000, 479). Sondrup contrasts it with the 1963 translation, which “preserves the general contours of the poem and is credible as the adaptation it claims to be but never was a viable means of glimpsing the depths of Martinson’s poetic vision or the overarching power of the poem” (Sondrup 2000, 479). Sondrup goes on to suggest that the 1963 translation may have had a detrimental effect in “militat[ing] against a more accomplished English version being published sooner” (Sondrup 2000, 479). For Sondrup, the 1999 translation succeeds where the 1963 translation fails, namely in offering a “resounding recreation of Martinson’s voice” (Sondrup 2000, 479). But he is not convinced by the title printed on the book cover of the new translation—*Aniara: An Epic Science Fiction Poem*—which, he speculates, may be the publisher’s attempt to reach SF readers.

In a review of the 1991 translation, Alan Swanson is less impressed by Klass and Sjöberg’s work, though he finds that “there is nothing incorrect in this version” (Swanson 1994, 422). Swanson does, however, argue that the 1963 translation is better in some regards. Lawrence Venuti’s distinction between domesticating and foreignizing translations (a distinction which Swanson does not use) is useful for clarifying Swanson’s argument. Venuti points to the peculiarity of foreignizing translations: “The ‘foreign’ in a foreignizing translation is not a transparent representation of an essence that resides in the foreign text and is valuable in itself, but a strategic construction whose value is contingent on the current situation in the receiving culture” (Venuti 2008, 15). A foreignizing translation can only utilize resources from the target language and culture to create a foreignizing *effect*; truly foreign elements of the source language and culture will remain unrepresentable. Venuti, of course, still argues that foreignizing translations, at least into English, are sorely needed in today’s world. By using “materials that are not currently dominant” in the target culture (Venuti 2008, 20), a foreignizing translation can disrupt the prevalent Anglo-American ideal of “fluency,” according to which a translation is deemed “acceptable by most publishers, reviewers and readers” when it does not seem like translation at all, but rather like “the original” (Venuti 2008, 1). Disrupting the illusion of the transparency of translations is crucial, suggests Venuti, for preventing a culture from lapsing “into an exclusionary or narcissistic complacency” (Venuti 2008, 20). Swanson illustrates the foreignizing character of the 1963 version with the translation of a key name in *Aniara*: “Doris,” with the related names and constructions “Dorisburg” and “Doris dalar” (“dalar” can be translated as “valleys” or

“vales”). In *Aniara*, “Doris” is both the name of the hostess who greets the passengers onboard *Aniara* and an affectionate name for the Earth; “Dorisburg” is a major city on Earth, and “Doris dalar” refers to the Earth and earthly environments. Klass and Sjöberg translate these as “Doris,” “Dorisburg” and “Dorisvale,” respectively, while MacDiarmid and Schubert translate them as “Douris,” “Dourisburg,” and “Douris’ plains”/“Douris’ valleys.” Swanson argues that simply retaining “Doris” makes the poem too fluent and gives American readers the wrong associations—for Americans, Doris “is a very popular, even prosaic, name, often associated with the 1940s and 1950s” (Swanson 1994, 422). For Martinson, however, the name has connotations to ancient Greece, nature, and life (Wrede 1965, 81–82). Swanson finds MacDiarmid and Schubert’s foreignizing “Douris” better, because it “attempts to avoid the obvious English associations and retain a bit of the Swedish pronunciation” (Swanson 1994, 423).

However, when comparing the two translations further it becomes clear, as I will show, that Klass and Sjöberg’s 1999 translation is more foreignizing than MacDiarmid and Schubert’s translation in other, arguably more important, ways. Even though the 1963 version foreignizes the name “Doris,” it oftentimes domesticates *Aniara* on a grammatical and semantic level. In this regard, Klass and Sjöberg’s 1999 translation stays closer to the Swedish original, in which Martinson uses linguistically novel constructions to defamiliarize the reader. In the songs I will read, crucial foreignizing elements of Martinson’s translations of science are, to some extent, lost in the 1963 translation, and so a fundamental part of his poetics is weakened in that version.

THE SCIENTIFICALLY INCOMPREHENSIBLE: THE VASTNESS OF SPACE AND THE NATURE OF STARS

Martinson first had the idea of writing a space epic in 1938. He did not pursue this idea at the time, but his fascination with then-recent developments in physics and astronomy—relativity, quantum physics, astrophysics—led him to write the essay “Stjärnsången” (1938/1989) (“The Star Song”), in which he discusses the challenges of writing space poetry. When he returned to the idea of a space epic fifteen years later, he had become increasingly preoccupied with the destructive potential of advanced technology and the horrors of nuclear warfare. These two strands—his

fascination with space and his abhorrence of nuclear violence—came together in a sequence of poems he wrote in 1953 under the title “Sången om Doris och Mima” (“The Song about Doris and Mima”), included in the book of poems *Cikada* (1953) (“Cicadidae”). The poems in “Sången om Doris Mima,” which three years later would form the first 29 songs of *Aniara*’s 103 songs, chronicle the first few years of Aniara’s journey: the evacuation from Earth, the accident that causes the spaceship to veer off course and drift helplessly into outer space, and the initial struggles of the passengers as they come to terms with their predicament. In this section, I will look at Martinson’s space poetry and read “The Star Song” alongside a key song in *Aniara*. In the next section I will look at Martinson’s depictions of nuclear violence in two other songs.

“The Star Song” illuminates the space poetry of *Aniara* and can be viewed as Martinson’s attempt to formulate a poetics for the modern scientific age. The challenge of writing space poetry, according to Martinson, is that the universe has become so vast and so incomprehensible that traditional poetic devices, such as metaphors, are unable to capture that vastness and incomprehensibility:

There are no longer only stars out there but thousands of galaxies. Astronomers no longer speak of light-years, incomprehensible in and of themselves, but of millions of light-years. In addition, there is the development of the scientific views of the nature of light, quanta, and mass, and the theories of the astronomical schools, which are being crossed like quiet mathematical blades over the dizzying depths of the universe.

Using hyperboles and overtones was an ancient right of poetry, but where can poets find exaggerations with regard to the worldview of modern astrophysics? ... These gigantic suns, which one would like to conceive of as quivering titanic spheres of lightning in whose interiors musical storm scales interweave to create crescendos that surpass all comprehension. They could only be comprehensible through properties that lie beyond every possible form of human imagination. For us, they are only comprehensible via scientific methods, tempered by mathematical equations or cooled off on a blackboard. (Martinson 2020, 5)

The problem is not only intellectual: it is also existential. Astrophysics causes us to lose our footing: “now less than ever can astronomically illiterate human beings feel at home in the bottomless star garden of the universe. They know too much to be able to return to the old ways yet too little to be able to digest the astrophysical perspectives in their thoughts,

their views, their songs” (Martinson 2020, 4). We need star songs to orient ourselves in the universe, but the universe of our time seems to resist such songs.

How, then, should a poet approach the newly revealed dimensions of the universe? In formulating his views on the nature of human comprehension and the task of poetry, Martinson emphasizes the importance of delimitation. The universe, while unimaginable, becomes comprehensible through scientific methods and mathematical equations: “Only in this way can the unfathomable leave perfectly precise yet unreal traces because truly grasping something requires grasping it with your senses, your mind, your feelings. Reality, in this sense, requires delimitation. The unlimited cannot be experienced as real” (Martinson 2020, 5). Martinson then connects the sense of limitation to the sense of wonder, which he considers the source of poetry. Traditional poetic metaphors evoke images that are unspeakably insufficient to capture the universe, yet they may lead to a *sense* of comprehension. They are thus not only ineffective when trying to grasp the universe; they may also be misleading. In this sense, traditional metaphors can be said to use domesticizing strategies when translating the findings of science into any natural human language.

Martinson’s reflections on metaphors and human limitations in “The Star Song” form an important backdrop to song 85 in *Aniara*. To explicate Martinson’s “foreignizing translation” of science, I use Klass and Sjöberg’s 1999 translation, which is very close to the Swedish original:

The galaxy swings around
like a wheel of lighted smoke,
and the smoke is made of stars.
It is sunsmoke.
For lack of other words we call it sunsmoke,
do you see.
I don’t feel languages are equal
to what that vision comprehends.

The richest of the languages we know,
Xinombric, has three million words,
but then the galaxy you’re gazing into now
has more than ninety billion suns.
Has there ever been a brain that mastered all the words
in the Xinombric language?
Not a one.

Now you see.
And do not see. (Martinson 1999, song 85)

This song deploys an intricate use of metaphors and similes, only to retract those same metaphors and similes. In the first half of the first stanza, a galaxy is compared to “a wheel of lighted smoke,” and stars are described with the metaphor “sunsmoke.” The simile and metaphor are original, evoke vivid images, and make unexpected connections between cosmic and mundane phenomena, thus enabling the reader to comprehend galaxies and stars by explaining the unknown in terms of the known. But in the second half of the stanza, the validity of the simile and the metaphor is retracted; the narrator suggests that he uses these images for “lack of other words.” The second stanza deploys a similar strategy: first it compares the unknown (galaxies and stars) to the known (a natural language, in this case the fictional Xinombric), only to state that even this comparison, which emphasizes the unfathomability of the universe, fails to convey that same unfathomability. On a first glance, it may seem odd for Martinson to include the stanzas’ concluding lines: “I don’t feel languages are equal/to what that vision comprehends,” and “Now you see. /And do not see,” respectively. Even though the narrator has already stressed the limits of the images in the first stanza (lines 5–6) and the limits human comprehension in the second stanza (lines 1–7), these limitations are stressed yet again in the concluding two lines of each stanza. The concluding lines may seem overly explicit, but that is precisely the point. By retracting the images yet again, the narrator emphatically undermines the possibility of grasping the vastness of the universe through figurative language. But the similes and metaphors are necessary to bring the reader to that point: without first getting a *sense* of comprehension through the similes and metaphors—which are original and do convey a sense of comprehension—the effect of *incomprehension* would not be achieved. This is especially strongly brought out in the two lines which conclude the song and which create a paradox: whenever you think you have understood the vastness of space, it only means that you have not understood it. By resisting the fluency of his own similes and metaphors, the narrator’s retraction of his own poetic images can thus be regarded as a foreignizing translation strategy of the vastness of space as conceptualized by astrophysics.

Even though MacDiarmid and Schubert’s translation of the same song broadly conveys the same images, an analysis of the details makes it clear

that their version domesticates the Swedish original—and by extension, the universe. MacDiarmid and Schubert’s version reads:

The galaxy swings round
 like a wheel of shimmering smoke
 which is the light of stars,
 or sun haze.
 For lack of other words, you know,
 we call it sun haze.
 I mean just that languages do not suffice
 to express everything
 contained in that spectacle.

The richest of the languages we know,
 Xinombric, has some three million words,
 but the galaxy you are watching now
 contains far more than ninety billion suns.
 Has any human brain ever mastered all the words
 in the language of Xinombric?
 Not a single one!
 Now you understand?
 And yet—do you? (Martinson 1963, song 85)

As is readily apparent, the two translations are very different. In the Swedish original, the first stanza has eight lines, as does the 1999 translation. The 1963 translation, however, has nine lines. Among other changes, MacDiarmid and Schubert insert the extra line “or sun haze” after the third line. The Swedish original has “solrök,” which in literal translation would read “sun smoke.” In Swedish, the word “solrök” is linguistically novel and defamiliarizes both our sun and stars in general, since conceptualizing stars as consisting of “smoke” establishes an unexpected association between two apparently very different phenomena. Klass and Sjöberg’s word “sunsmoke” replicates the defamiliarizing effect of Martinson’s word, but it adds an additional foreignizing effect by fusing the two words “sun” and “smoke” into one word. In Swedish, fusing established words to create compound words is a regular part of how that language works, but in English compound words are rarer, and “sun smoke” would be the natural construction; “sunsmoke” thus foreignizes the text grammatically as well as semantically. Furthermore, MacDiarmid and Schubert add the explanatory “sun haze” after the expression

“shimmering smoke.” “Haze” is a much more established phenomenon in relation to the sun; the reader may come to think of sunsets and hazy skies, for example. Thus, “sun haze” domesticates the “sun smoke” metaphor not only by explaining it, but also by replacing it with a metaphor that connects the already commonly associated concepts of “sun” and “haze.”

The 1963 translation also domesticates the narrator’s retractions of his own similes and metaphors. At the end of the first stanza, MacDiarmid and Schubert insert a deflationary “just” in “I mean just that languages do not suffice,” suggesting that the stanza can be *reduced* to conveying the limits of figurative language and human comprehension. This deflationary attitude—trivializing the poet’s attempt at capturing the nature of stars—is further reinforced by the use of the word “spectacle” in the concluding line of the first stanza. Klass and Sjöberg’s “vision” is much closer to the Swedish “synen,” and like “synen,” “vision” has both a literal meaning (what you see) and a religious connotation. This religious connotation is important; in the preceding song, the narrator explains that the “chief astronomer” shows the passengers an image of a galaxy, in response to which members of “the galactave religion” “sink down to their knees / and start to pray” (Martinson 1999, song 84). “Galactave” is a made-up unit of measurement consisting of fifteen light-years (song 70). Choosing the word “spectacle” instead of “vision” thus not only trivializes the image of the galaxy—it also domesticates the idea of religion by implying that a religion based on cosmic vastness cannot be taken seriously.

The 1963 translation similarly domesticates the narrator’s retraction of his own images at the end of the second stanza. The paradox contained in both the original Swedish and the 1999 translation—“Now you see. / And do not see”—is replaced by a rhetorical question: “Now you understand? And yet—do you?” There is no way out of the paradox of the 1999 translation; it impedes reading and opens up a sense of wonder by confronting the reader with an absolute limitation of human comprehension. By contrast, while the rhetorical questions of the 1963 translation do suggest that the number of stars in the universe is incomprehensible, the concluding lines read more like a quiz question after learning a scientific fact: they do not force the reader into the unending circularity of paradox and hence do not open up to wonder in quite the same way.

THE TECHNOLOGICALLY INCOMPREHENSIBLE:
THE VIOLENCE OF NUCLEAR WAR

A central character in *Aniara* is Mima, the “artificial intelligence” who is able to pick up images from different parts of the universe and display them on a screen. Six years into the journey, Mima picks up disturbing images from Earth. We learn that the metropolis Dorisburg, and possibly the Earth itself, have been destroyed by nuclear weapons. After displaying images of unimaginable destruction, the narrator watches helplessly as Mima starts to deteriorate. A few days later, Mima self-destructs; she (Mima is gendered) cannot bear the suffering and cruelty of humankind and commits suicide.

Mima is one of the most explored characters in *Aniara*; she has been read as an AI, as an embodiment of Romantic views of the poet, as a symbolic representation of art, among other interpretations (see, e.g., Wrede 1965, 232; Tideström 1975, 75). Rather than focusing on Mima herself, however, I wish to focus on the representation of some of the images that Mima broadcasts before she dies.

In song 26, the first to depict the nuclear horror taking place on Earth, the narrator lets two anonymous characters—“the stone-dumb deaf man” and “the blind man” (Martinson 1999, song 26)—depict their own deaths. In both cases, Martinson suggests the incomprehensibility of nuclear war by presenting original imagery which he then retracts, similar to how he suggests the incomprehensibility of space. Here, however, the retraction is indirect, suggested both by the paradoxical nature of the descriptions and by the accounts given by the dead men.

The stone-dumb deaf man uses a contradictory description to characterize the sound of the nuclear blast: it was “the worst sound he had heard. It was past hearing” (Martinson 1999, song 26, line 2). Hearing a sound which is “past hearing” is clearly impossible, creating a paradox akin to the impossibility of grasping the number of stars in the universe. A few lines later, the impossibility is repeated: “It was past hearing, so the deaf man ended. / My ear could not keep up with it / when my soul burst and scattered / and body burst and shattered” (Martinson 1999, song 26, lines 6–9). The fact that the man is dead is then repeated and made very clear: “So he spoke, the deaf man, who was dead” (Martinson 1999, song 26, line 14). Similar to how the narrator repeats the incomprehensibility of space in song 85, the narrator here repeats something seemingly obvious (the loudness of the blast), while repeatedly relating something clearly

impossible (the dead man speaks) and presenting an original and paradoxical image (the sound was past hearing).

After the dead deaf man has spoken, the blind man speaks. The “horribly intense” light which blinded him is beyond description: “He was unable to describe it” (Martinson 1999, song 26, lines 21 and 23). Nevertheless, the man uses an original metaphor to describe it anyway: “He mentioned only one detail: he saw by neck. / His entire skull became an eye / blinded by a brightness beyond flashpoint” (Martinson 1999, song 26, lines 24–26). Here too, the man is already dead when giving his report, and here too, an original and paradoxical image—the man’s “entire skull became an eye”—suggests the inhuman scale of nuclear violence.

While MacDiarmid and Schubert’s translation differs from Klass and Sjöberg’s in choice of words and other details—for example, as opposed to both Martinson and Klass and Sjöberg, MacDiarmid and Schubert put quotation marks around the statements of the deaf man—overall, the discussed passages are not domesticized in any significant way. But if we turn to the concluding lines of song 29, which comprise the final images of Mima, the 1963 translation can again be said to domesticate the poem and, by extension, nuclear violence. In her death throes, Mima conveys a final image to the passengers:

The final word she broadcast was a message
from one who called himself the Detonee.
She had the Detonee himself bear witness
and, stammering and detoned, tell
how grim it always is, one’s detonation,
how time speeds up to win its prolongation.

Upon life’s outcry time does increase speed,
prolongs the very second when you burst.
How terror blasts inward,
how terror blasts outward.
How grim it always is, one’s detonation. (Martinson 1999, song 29,
lines 13–23)

MacDiarmid and Schubert’s translation of the same passage is very different (and one notices immediately that they also omit the blank line between lines 18 and 19):

The final words she uttered was a message
 sent by the Victim of Disintegration.
 She let this witness testify for himself
 and stammering, incoherent, tell
 how ghastly fission is in mind and body,
 how time comes surging in, and surges on,
 how time comes surging at the wail of life,
 prolonging the grim second of one's dissolution,
 how terror whirls about,
 how terror blows away,
 how ghastly fission is in mind and body. (Martinson 1963, song 29,
 lines 13–23)

Again, Klass and Sjöberg's translation is very close to the Swedish original, and again, they foreignize the translation to defamiliarize the reader even further. For Martinson's words "Den söndersprängde" and "sönder-sprängt," Klass and Sjöberg use "the Detonee" and "detoned," respectively. In Swedish, both words are (in the context of someone speaking) semantically novel but not ungrammatical; in English, neither of the words exist. The reader can surmise their meaning, but the words defamiliarize the reader on a grammatical level as well as on a semantic level. MacDiarmid and Schubert, by contrast, have "Victim of Disintegration"—a clumsier and less striking term—and they disregard the paradoxical and suggestive "detoned" all together in favor of the somewhat vague and bland "incoherent."

But MacDiarmid and Schubert's translation falls especially short in the Detonee's account of being blown up. Instead of the rather unnatural, and therefore foreignizing, "how grim it always is, one's detonation," MacDiarmid and Schubert have the relatively fluent "how ghastly fission is in mind and body." By using "fission," furthermore, they appeal to the nuclear vocabulary of the 1940s and 1950s, rather than, as both Martinson and Klass and Sjöberg, speak in more foreignizing terms about nuclear blasts. And the absence of historical markers is important. Martinson never uses words like "nuclear bomb" or "atom bomb"; instead, he uses the made-up word "fototurb" ("phototurb" in both translations) to defamiliarize nuclear weapons even further. Finally, both Martinson's and Klass and Sjöberg's descriptions are paradoxical and suggestive in yet another way: the Detonee describes how his own detonation is *always* grim, suggesting that it is happening over and over. The image of the Detonee as

always being detoned—mirrored too in the repetition of that line at the end of the second stanza—disappears in MacDiarmid and Schubert’s translation. Instead of retaining Martinson’s foreignizing translation of nuclear violence, MacDiarmid and Schubert thus domesticate Mima’s final image by removing the paradoxes and by using relatively fluent, historically anchored descriptions.

SCIENCE FICTION IN SWEDEN AND THE RECEPTION OF *ANIARA*

When Martinson wrote *Aniara*, SF was a recently established genre in the Swedish book market. As literary scholar Jerry Määttä details in a comprehensive study of SF in Sweden in the 1950s and 1960s, SF-themed literature emerged during the latter third of the nineteenth century and maintained a steady, though low-profile, presence throughout the first half of the twentieth century. This changed in the 1950s. The term “science fiction” was introduced in 1951, and in 1953 the prominent publishing house Natur och kultur published the first major anthology of Anglo-American SF short stories in translation, *Morgondagens äventyr* (1953) (“The Adventures of Tomorrow”). Other publishing houses followed suit, and SF quickly became an established and identifiable genre, gaining the attention of both the public and the critics (Määttä 2006, 72).

While SF counted many enthusiasts among the reading public in the 1950s, the literary critics and scholars were, in general, not so enthusiastic. There were promoters of SF among the critics, but most were outright hostile or at the very least skeptical. Some critics dismissed SF as aesthetically inferior, while others rejected SF as immoral and saw it as a form of American imperialism; some critics were skeptical of the perceived excesses of SF but could appreciate individual authors, such as Ray Bradbury, while others saw SF as an entertaining but not serious form of literature. This common dismissal of the genre was in line with a general dismissal of popular literature among critics and scholars at the time (Määttä 2006, 102).

The year 1953 not only saw the launch of SF in Sweden; the same year, Martinson—by then a well-known poet, author, and member of the prestigious royal academy Svenska Akademien—published *Cikada*, which, as detailed above, includes the first twenty-nine songs of *Aniara* in the guise of “Sången om Doris och Mima.” As literary scholar Johan Wrede shows

in the first comprehensive study of *Aniara*, while *Cikada* overall was very well received by the critics, “Sången om Doris och Mima” received a more mixed reception. Some critics were enthusiastic and praised “the collection’s importance as an idea poem [idéedikt]”; others viewed it as “long-winded” and “poetically dry” (Wrede 1965, 19–32; my translations). “Sången om Doris och Mima” was also associated with SF. In an appreciative review, Per Erik Wahlund, without revealing his own view of SF, called it “a kind of science fiction in lyrical form” (Wahlund 1953; my translation). Axel Lifner, on the other hand, concluded that Martinson ought to have omitted “Sången om Doris och Mima” from *Cikada* and said that the poems were scarcely more than “a science fiction story in verse” (quoted in Wrede 1965, 31; my translation).

In other words, when Martinson published *Aniara* in 1956, SF was an established genre in Sweden, albeit considered “low-status” by many critics. In spite of the mixed reception of “Sången om Doris och Mima,” the publication of *Aniara* was a major, national literary event. On the day of publication, October 13, 1956, all major newspapers ran long reviews by respected critics. Martinson was interviewed on national radio and the newly instituted medium of television. *Aniara* became an immediate best-seller: in the remaining months of 1956 alone, more than 10,000 copies were sold, and by the end of 1963, 44,831 copies had been sold (Wrede 1965, 45). Most critics, though not all, praised *Aniara*, and Martinson had become “folkär” (Määttä 2006, 137)—a Swedish word for someone who is well known and beloved by the people.

The early critical reception of *Aniara* did not disregard the poem’s closeness to SF, even though the critics did regard the poem as surpassing SF aesthetically and philosophically. As Määttä explains: “Most people who commented on [*Cikada* and *Aniara*] seem to have agreed that both ‘Sången om Doris och Mima’ and ... *Aniara*, in one way or other, were related to, or even belonged to, the popular Anglo-American genre, even if several critics simultaneously stressed that Martinson had added something new to science fiction” (Määttä 2006, 134; my translation). In interviews, Martinson himself, furthermore, was open about his interest in SF literature, and he considered Bradbury’s *The Martian Chronicles* (1950), which had appeared in Swedish translation in 1953, as one of the most important novels of the 1950s (Määttä 2006, 139; Määttä 2012). However, as the 1950s progressed, the Swedish critics increasingly tended to identify SF with “commercial literature of inferior quality” (Määttä

2006, 336; my translation). In particular, they tended to avoid using SF as a genre label for literature that was not marketed as SF.

This tendency is apparent in the first book published about *Aniara*: mathematician and critic Tord Hall's *Vår tids stjärnsång* ("The Star Song of Our Time"), published only two years after the poem itself. Hall does not mention SF; instead, he places *Aniara* in a much longer and more prestigious literary tradition spanning all the way back to the Pre-Socratic philosophers, Lucretius's *On the Nature of Things*, Dante's *Divina Commedia*, and the canonized, late nineteenth-century Swedish poet Viktor Rydberg (Hall 1961, 7). Johan Wrede, in his monumental *Sången om Aniara: Studier i Harry Martinsons tankevärld* (1965) ("The Song about Aniara: Studies in Harry Martinson's World of Thought"), mentions SF in passing and acknowledges that Martinson may have been inspired by the genre, but in his wide-ranging discussion of the poem's themes, Wrede too focuses on prestigious traditions, such as philosophy, science, mysticism, and "high-brow" literature. As Määttä argues (2008), the tendency to disregard the importance of SF as an influence has been a staple of the voluminous literature on *Aniara* ever since: while the influence of SF has not necessarily been denied, it has often been downplayed. This, of course, is not to say that these other, more "prestigious" traditions are not central in *Aniara*—clearly, they are. But as Määttä points out, "for someone versed in [the] literature [of the time], very little of the content of *Aniara* was original; themes like nuclear war, mass evacuations of Earth, generation starships, colonies on Mars, collisions with asteroids, advanced computers, artificial intelligence, and so on, were commonplace in science fiction already in the 1940s" (Määttä 2008, 457).

Part of the explanation of why critics and scholars have been hesitant to call *Aniara* SF is thus that SF has been held in low regard by most dominant literary scholars and critics in Sweden, at least from the late 1950s to the early 2000s. But is this the only explanation?

ANIARA AS SCIENCE FICTION?

My aim in this final section is of course not to argue that *Aniara* "really" is or "really" is not SF; given the inherent malleability and open-endedness of genres, attempting to make either of these cases would not be very productive. That said, there is a case to be made for saying that typical works of SF literature, at least of the kind relevant here (mid-twentieth-century Swedish and Anglo-American SF), tend to have some traits in

common. On a thematic level, themes such as the ones enumerated toward the end of the previous section—nuclear war, colonies on Mars, and so on—comprise one such set of traits, and in this regard, *Aniara*'s closeness to SF is apparent. On a formal level, however, things get a little more complicated. To explore the ways in which *Aniara* differs from what we may think of as “prototypical” SF, I will use Simon Spiegel's (2008) concept of *diegetic estrangement*.

Spiegel develops the concept of diegetic estrangement in a discussion of Darko Suvin's influential definition of SF as cognitive estrangement. Suvin, in turn, develops his concept with reference to Viktor Shklovsky's concept of *ostranenie* and Bertolt Brecht's concept of *Verfremdungseffekt* (Suvin 2016, 18–19). Spiegel argues that even though Suvin refers to Shklovsky and Brecht when defining cognitive estrangement, there is an important difference between Shklovsky's and Brecht's concepts, on the one hand, and Suvin's concept on the other. Different though Shklovsky's and Brecht's concepts may be in other regards, one thing they have in common is that they are both meant to describe “a stylistic device that describes *how* fiction is being communicated” (Spiegel 2008, 370; italics in the original). Spiegel argues that for Suvin, by contrast, it is not the *how* that is of main interest in SF, but the *what*. When an SF text makes us see the world in a new light, it is not because *our familiar world* is described in an unusual way, but rather because *an unfamiliar world* is presented. In other words, Spiegel argues, the defamiliarizing effect of an SF text is primarily located on the *diegetic* level, not on the formal level (as for Shklovsky and Brecht). To clarify the terms involved, Spiegel reserves *defamiliarization* for “the formal-rhetorical act of making the familiar strange (in Shklovsky's sense)”; and he introduces the term *diegetic estrangement* to refer to “estrangement on the level of the story” (Spiegel 2008, 376). Crucially, the cognitive component of Suvin's concept requires that the unfamiliar world is made scientifically or rationally credible. Achieving this, Spiegel argues, involves the opposite of defamiliarization, namely *naturalization*: “the novum must have been naturalized before diegetic estrangement can take place” (Spiegel 2008, 376). In other words, SF is not characterized by defamiliarization, but rather by naturalization followed by diegetic estrangement.

This also means that there is a tension between defamiliarization and diegetic estrangement, because defamiliarization makes the naturalized novum seem less natural; defamiliarization “contradicts the genre in certain ways. If the novum is not naturalized, but made strange, sf's central

device—rendering the marvelous possible—is made obsolete” (Spiegel 2008, 378). But even though there is a tension here, Spiegel does not suggest that defamiliarization and diegetic estrangement are necessarily mutually exclusive; a text may defamiliarize the reader on a formal level while also estranging the reader on a story level. However, he argues that at least in Golden Age SF—typically identified with the 1930s and 1940s, sometimes extending into the 1950s (Määttä 2006, 425, n79)—the narration tends to be “classical” (Spiegel 2008, 378; 384, n12).

It is clear that the narration in *Aniara* is anything but “classical”; Martinson uses poetry, of course, on top of which the individual songs are composed using a variety of styles (from solemn to parodic), as well as different types of verse (from rhyming stanzas to blank verse and free verse). This fact alone contributes to explaining why critics and scholars were hesitant to categorize *Aniara* as SF—especially since, as we saw, in the late 1950s they started to tend to reserve the genre label for works marketed as SF. But the formal features of *Aniara* also raise a more principal question: Does Martinson’s use of poetic form conflict with SF’s naturalization and concomitant diegetic estrangement, as characterized by Spiegel?

On the one hand, Martinson does use some strategies of naturalization. The cognitive component of SF enters both through the basic premise of the story and through Martinson’s use of a highly developed scientific-sounding vocabulary. As the narrator explains in the first two songs, the Earth has “become unclean / with toxic radiation,” and people are being evacuated to colonies on Venus and Mars (Martinson 1999, song 1). In the third song, the ship is forced to “swerve to clear the Hondo asteroid,” but during the ensuing course corrections, the ship’s “Saba Unit” is damaged by “space-stones” and “space-pebbles,” and the people onboard realize that there is no hope of reaching Mars (Martinson 1999, song 3). To describe the technological aspects of the ship and its flight, Martinson uses made-up scientific-sounding words such as “field-egression” and “magnettrinos” (Martinson 1999, song 2). The take-off from Earth is described as a commonplace occurrence: “A purely routine start, no misadventures, / a normal gyromatic field-release” (Martinson 1999, song 2). When describing Mima, the narrator similarly uses made-up technical-sounding words such as “the third webe’s action” and “the ninth protator’s kinematic read-out” (Martinson 1999, song 9). The history of the invention of Mima is furthermore related as common knowledge: the narrator explains that after the inventor had realized that Mima had started self-evolving beyond human comprehension, “then, as everybody knows,

he changed / his title, had the modesty / to realize that once she took full form / she was the superior and he himself / a secondary power, a mimator” (Martinson 1999, song 9). By using technical and futuristic vocabulary in a self-evident way, as though the terms and concepts are commonplace in the diegesis, Martinson thus naturalizes the story and achieves diegetic estrangement. The familiar world of the 1950s is made strange through a collision with the unfamiliar but naturalized world of *Aniara*.

But on the other hand, as the story progresses, Martinson occasionally undermines the cognitive component of SF on the level of plot. For example, in song 13 the chief astronomer gives a lecture in which he explains that they now realize that their understanding of the universe had been wrong all along; they understand now that “knowledge is a blue naiveté,” that they are “lost in spiritual seas,” that the ship is “a little bubble in the glass of Godhead” (Martinson 1999, song 13). In song 53, a spear mysteriously flies past the ship, only to disappear without a trace, prompting some people to go mad and one person to commit suicide. No explanation or resolution is given, and the spear is never mentioned again. In these ways, Martinson puts the cognitive component of SF into question by undermining the scientific understanding of the universe in the diegesis (as expressed by the chief astronomer) and by introducing unexplained events on the level of the plot.

Furthermore, while Martinson does naturalize the story in some ways, the highly original poetry used throughout the poem defamiliarizes life onboard the ship. Instead of using a realist aesthetic and naturalistic dialogues, Martinson uses, in the words of Geoffrey O’Brien, an “archaic-futuristic mode of expression” (O’Brien 2019). The narration is fragmentary and versified, with echoes of ancient myths and oral epics, mixing archaic language with futuristic terminology. And though there are people speaking and acting in the story, O’Brien points out that they are not really characters, but rather “figures of dream or allegory, ideogrammatic embodiments that can change their form or aspect as the poem evolves” (O’Brien 2019). In other words, the high degree of defamiliarization used to characterize the diegesis contrasts with the realist aesthetic typical of much SF. Martinson never grants the reader the illusion of realism, but rather constantly impedes the reading through his style of narration. This weakens, if not outright contradicts, the cognitive component of SF.

Finally, the ordinary world of the 1950s is made strange not only through diegetic estrangement and defamiliarization of the diegesis itself, but also through highly defamiliarized descriptions of space and nuclear violence that have no substantial relation to the diegesis of *Aniara*. As we saw in the readings of songs 85, 26, and 29, Martinson defamiliarizes the vastness of space and the horror of nuclear war through original figurative language, paradoxes, and an emphasis on the limits of human language and understanding. Even though the images are conveyed by the narrator of the poem, they defamiliarize phenomena familiar to people in the 1950s. And in these cases, Martinson does not naturalize space and technology; rather, by using poetic techniques that convey a sense of absolute incomprehension, he *denaturalizes* what we think we know—that space is vast, that nuclear war is horrible. This too has the effect of undermining the cognitive component of SF: even though future technology is naturalized, Martinson makes it clear that we do not even understand the intellectual and experiential consequences of twentieth-century science and technology.

In other words, while there are clear SF themes and an initial naturalization of the plot in *Aniara*, the narration and poetics of the poem also contradict what we may think of as “prototypical SF,” as theorized by Darko Suvin or as typified by Golden Age SF. While there can be no definitive answer to the question of whether *Aniara* “really” is SF, one can at the very least say that the poem is an unusual kind of SF. Or put differently: *Aniara* defamiliarizes the genre of SF, making critics unsure of its classification and showing readers that there is an unknown universe of SF out there.

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Imperfect Words for an Imperfect World: Language and Translation in *Chroniques du Pays des Mères* by Élisabeth Vonarburg

Tessa Sermet

Élisabeth Vonarburg is a French author who has been living in Québec (CA) since 1973 and is now considered a Science Fiction from Québec (SFQ) author; she has also written several fantasy novels. An academic now dedicating her time to writing fiction, she focuses largely on questions of gender identity and feminism. In her opinion, feminism, science fiction, and utopia are intrinsically connected, and female writers yearning for utopia have to look at the future (Vonarburg 1999b, 293). Described as “an exciting, demanding, satisfying thought-experiment—serious science fiction doing what only science fiction can do” by Ursula K. Le Guin (Vonarburg 1992, back jacket copy), Vonarburg’s novel *Chroniques du Pays des Mères* (1992) explores the interaction between utopia, feminism,

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identity, and tradition. The story takes place a thousand years in the future: during the ‘Decline,’ nuclear war has left most of Earth irradiated and civilization as we know it has collapsed. Because mutations have appeared, and the male birth rate has fallen below 3%, men have very little presence within society: hence, lesbianism has become the norm, and the “Mothers’ Land” depends on assisted reproduction technologies to ensure its survival. The Mothers’ Land succeeds two extremist regimes, the “Harems” and the “Hives.” As their names indicate, these regimes were based on the dominance of one sex and the submission of the other. Contrary to the Hives, the Mothers’ Land matriarchy defines itself as a more lenient regime, more accepting of its male population. The socioeconomic system of the Mothers’ Land relies on the reversal of a sexual division of labor according to which women are physically and/or emotionally unfit for certain types of labor. This inversion aims to destroy any remnants of the patriarchal hegemonic system in place before what they call the Decline.

Chroniques includes letters and journal entries from several characters; however, the narration focuses on Lisbeï from her childhood to her late twenties. Through her eyes, the reader discovers the evolution of a society slowly recovering from hetero-patriarchy’s domination, but still profoundly marked by gender issues. This *Bildungsroman* is separated into five parts. Starting in Lisbeï’s childhood, the reader learns that she is meant to become the Capta, the matriarch of the family of Bethely. One of the conditions to become the matriarch is the ability to bear children; however, Lisbeï has amenorrhea and is presumed sterile. The first part ends when her younger half-sister Tula menstruates for the first time, therefore replacing Lisbeï as forthcoming Capta. Part two, Lisbeï’s teenage years, also takes place in Bethely, and centers on her serendipitous discovery of human remains and a diary in hidden tunnels under the city—a finding that shakes religious tradition within the whole Mothers’ Land. The next section follows Lisbeï away from Bethely to the city of Wardenberg, where she studies history and archaeology. There, she starts to become more aware of the inherent contradictions of the Mothers’ Land, especially regarding how different languages treat linguistic gender-marking. Once she becomes an explorer, she makes other crucial historical and archeological discoveries and starts questioning traditions regarding religion and men’s place in society. In the fourth part, her travels within the Mothers’ Land bring Lisbeï back home to Bethely. There, she discovers how to translate the notebook she had previously uncovered from the tunnels, a translation that could change the whole Mothers’ Land if it

became public. More surprisingly, she becomes pregnant. Lisbeï and her family decide to hide the pregnancy from the public, and Tula, now Bethely's Capta, passes off the child as her own. The fifth and last part divulges in a few pages what will become of Lisbeï, her family, and the Mothers' Land in the future.

Vonarburg explores power relationships between genders using the *mundus inversus* trope: "world upside down" in Latin. This literary trope has been used by authors such as Swift and Voltaire, but is also favored in feminist utopias and science fiction: in *The Mothers' Land*, women are in power, men are ostracized from society, and lesbianism replaces heterosexuality as the norm. The *mundus inversus* trope of feminist utopias within science fiction has a long literary tradition, from *Herland* (1915) by Charlotte Perkins Gilman to *The Female Man* (1975) by Joanna Russ, as well as many other authors from the 60s and 70s.¹ One of the most prominent examples in Francophone literature emerged from the Second Wave Feminism of the 1960s: Monique Wittig's *Les Guérillères* (1969), in which an Amazonian society is fighting against men, conclusively asserting the Female State's superiority, is a landmark for French feminism and for radical lesbianism. All of the above paid special attention to issues of gender and sexuality, through tropes such as parthenogenesis, Amazon-type societies, or lesbian communities. They offer a quite radical counter-example to our society and, while pointing out the inherent issues within patriarchy, misogyny, and homophobia, draw on the hope for a better society for women. Conversely, Louky Bersianik's *L'Enguèlione* (1976), a Rabelaisian text considered one of the first feminist Québécois novels, has perhaps the clearest influence on Vonarburg. Bersianik mixes science fiction with other literary genres to comment on the feminine condition and situation. Moreover, around the time Vonarburg immigrated to Canada, feminist Québec writers—of both science fiction and other genres—such as Bersianik were producing experimental literary work in an effort to deconstruct French's misogynist and phallogocentric linguistic traits.² Following this tradition, Vonarburg's feminist utopia subjects French, a marked language where the masculine can be both specific and generic, to its own defamiliarization process, overruling grammar rules to favor the feminine. This is a practice difficult to translate into English.

The following analysis is concerned with both linguistic and conceptual (feminist, sociopolitical) levels of discourse in *Chroniques du Pays des Mères*. The first section explores how Vonarburg relies on, uses, and challenges the *mundus inversus* tropes of feminist utopias and science fiction.

Second, I examine Vonarburg's subversion of language and how it delivers her critique of phallogocentrism. In the final section, I draw on a connection established between translation and *female* reproductive work, examining how the novel's subversion of gender tropes ultimately critiques capitalism and patriarchy by transferring some of its structures into a feminist utopia, questioning society's progression toward patriarchy. *Chroniques* evaluates and undermines the tropes of feminist utopias by both explicitly and implicitly saying that feminist utopias reproduce power relations by inverting them, rather than dissolving/reducing them; this is reflected in the society depicted in the text as well as its language. In this context, I also point out how the English translation does the French text a disservice by not fully reproducing the linguistic play, and that therefore an Anglophone reader won't fully be able to appreciate what Vonarburg is doing.

A FEMINIST UTOPIA

At the core of any utopian project is a critique of the "author's empirical environment," to use Darko Suvin's terminology (Suvin 1972, 373). This is very much the case with feminist utopias and science fiction, where the criticism is directed at patriarchal and systemic devaluation, or even suppression, of women within society. A feminist utopia should therefore be the depiction of a "good place" (*eutopos*) for women, and a critique of patriarchal values and structures. One of the ways to convey this critique is to use the *mundus inversus* trope described above: for example, the equivalence between patriarchal and political unit, as well as the patriarchal intrinsic superiority of men over women, already found in Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), is replaced in *Chroniques* with the matriarchal family as the political unit (the Captas and their Families) and the intrinsic superiority of women over men. *Chroniques* also incorporates utopian characteristics found in Plato, More, and classical narrative utopias, such as the marginalization of those judged unfit by society (the men), reproductive control by the State, and the sacrifice of individual liberties to the greater good (of the State; i.e., the Mothers' Land). Here, it takes the form of reproductive labor, called "Service," and of biopolitical practices imposed by the State to ensure the species' survival: tattoos to track lineage, records of families' genetic compatibilities, eugenic praxes to avoid mutations and "abominations," color-coded clothing to identify who is prepubescent (Green), fertile (Red), or sterile, genetically impure, or past

their fertile period (Blue).³ Another utopian aspect found in the novel is the destruction of the conventional nuclear family: with the exception of some progressive and liberal families living in big cities, a woman is forbidden from caring for her own children. Indeed, in most of the Mothers' Land states, newborns are separated from their mothers immediately, a practice originally justified by a high infant death rate, and raised in what are called "Garderies" (Vornarburg 1992, 10).

To borrow Sarah Lefanu's words in her book *Feminism and Science Fiction*, women's sexual autonomy and reproductive rights are usually at the core of the feminist utopia, while a women's dystopia would be built on the "denial of women's sexual autonomy" (Lefanu 1989, 17). The Mothers' Land is ruled by women, yet childbearing is a service and imposed labor: "Women make 'children' because if they didn't the human race would disappear" (Vornarburg 1992, 130). Reproductive labor and state biopolitics are therefore not implemented to improve humanity's genes or to control women, but as a necessity brought upon humanity by the alteration of reproductive abilities and the consequent impoverishment of the gene pool. Still, the novel discusses the emotional labor of pregnancy and separation, as well as the status of the Red males who will never know their offspring, even though a fertile Red man will produce hundreds of children during his Service. Plus, while lesbianism is normalized and encouraged, taboos around heterosexual relations and male homosexuality lead to depression and suicides; additionally, men don't have access to any leading position or fatherly role, their main role being to provide 'Farms' with sperm: "'Cattle,' Dougall repeated. 'Males, wards, they're cattle'" (Vornarburg 1992, 266).

One ought to ask: is the Mothers' Land society a utopia or a dystopia? The motto of The Mothers' Land, "imperfect choices in an imperfect world" (Vornarburg 1992, 191), takes a stand against both definitions of utopia and dystopia, and sets it neither as a perfect place, nor as a place that doesn't exist, nor a bad one, but as a pragmatic space, where people only try to do their best. It also implies that it is susceptible to adaptation and change, however slowly this might occur. That being said, all the characteristics described above also fit the dystopian impulse to reign by constraint and suppress individual freedom.

Furthermore, both the religion and the sociopolitical structure of the Mothers' Land are essentialist: the Mothers' Land worships the goddess Elli, who, to punish men's greediness, decided that there would be fewer men than women:

In the beginning, Elli had created a big garden where an apple tree grew. There were as many boys as girls in the beginning. But the boys ate the apples before they were ripe, seeds and all, and Elli was very angry (...) because then the apples couldn't make other apples or apple trees (...) As punishment (...) and also to give the other trees a chance, Elli decided to create far fewer boys than girls. (Vornarburg 1992, 40)

Consequently, men are ostracized and denied access to certain functions because of their (perceived) violent essence (Vornarburg 1992, 39). This is partially due to the *mundus inversus* trope, which in a very simplistic way replaces heterosexuality with lesbianism, God with Elli, patriarchy with matriarchy, and also fits into the binary construction developed throughout the novel (same/other; female/male; Elli and her masculine side, Ilshe; History/stories; etc.). Another example of “essentialist binarism” is found in a verse of the Word of Elli, which also divides the world into a list of opposite, yet complementary, notions: “like the dance/and the silence. The word/and the repose... The night/and the day, the earth/And the sky, The woman/and the man” (Vornarburg 1992, 41).⁴ Lisbei is obsessed with what I would define as pan-factualism, in which supposed opposites merely contribute to a unified whole: she first develops this concept as a young child discovering how to use a magnifying glass—both sides have a different effect on how one sees the world, and yet are part of the same object (Vornarburg 1992, 48). She uses this object to explain to her sister Tula the complexities of the Word of Elli:

It was like Elli, like Elli's first dance. After inventing it, Elli dances so ardently that she becomes two—but in reality, Elli dances with Elli's reflection in space (...) Of course Elli can't touch Ilshe without making Ilshe disappear, since this is an image of Elli, not a real person, a person who exists. That's why Elli decided to make real people, the first woman and the first man, who would in turn dance and populate the world. (Vornarburg 1992, 48)

This impacts how Lisbei approaches everything: throughout the novel, she interprets abstract concepts such as *Female* and *Male*, but also *History* and *Stories*,⁵ and *Religion* and *Legends*, as opposite yet balancing parts of a shared notion. But to the utopia's detriment, this obsession with binarism also reeks of patriarchy.

LINGUISTIC SUBVERSION AND CRITIQUE OF PHALLOGOCENTRISM

“*The other side of the sun*. That’s what Lisbeï used to call the moon when she was little” (Vornarburg 1992, 10). From the first line of the novel, Vornarburg establishes the Feminine and the Masculine principles as both complimentary and equivalent. While using the moon and the sun as symbols of respectively Womanhood and Manhood is not particularly original, the fact that in the little girl’s imagination they are the *same* and nevertheless *other* is at the core of the whole novel. It is also the first instance of the *mundus inversus* trope that Vornarburg develops here by depicting a matriarchal, lesbian, society where men have little if no power at all. Not to mention that, in French, “la lune” (the moon) is feminine, and “le soleil” (the sun) is masculine.

The moon is also referred to as “Elli’s eyes” (Vornarburg 1992, 10). This metaphor is not purely poetic: in the Mothers’ Land, people worship the goddess Elli. It is not surprising that a matriarchal society would replace a masculine god with a female figure. This reversal belongs to the *mundus inversus* trope, but is also anchored in feminist tradition, and particularly Second Wave feminism: in 1971, Harvard women students protested against the use of the masculine “he” for God; and in 1978, the French feminist Benoîte Groult published an article about sexism within the Catholic church entitled *Priez Dieu, Elle vous exaucera*⁶ (Livia 2000, 4). Likewise, Vornarburg plays on pronouns and gender to name her goddess. There are multiple ways to deconstruct the name “Elli”: first of all, it sounds like the French pronoun subject “elle” (she), but it also comprises the pronoun “il” (he) in a centered symmetry—ell(e)/li. Further reversion to the Latin etymology of the French masculine subject pronoun “il,” *ille*, makes clear that Vornarburg takes satisfaction in playing with the masculine/feminine reversal idea. Evidently, she does as well in creating Ilshe, Elli’s counterpart: this time an inclusion of both the French “il” and “she,” in English in the original French text. Finally, one last layer of language game around the name “Elli” is its resemblance with the author’s name, Élisabeth, who reifies herself as the real goddess in charge of this whole literary universe.⁷

Language is not neutral: according to the lesbian-feminist and linguist author Anna Livia, “the masculinist tendency sees the origin of language as parallel to the origin of the sexes, resulting in descriptions of male and female language in which the female is subordinate to the male in all

things” (Livia 2000, 6). This linguistic structure biased toward the masculine is what Derrida, reading Freud and Lacan, described as *phallogocentrisme*.⁸ For Livia, whose book *Pronoun Envy* (2000) analyzes the use of gendered pronouns in both French and English writing, it is clear that “we cannot examine power relations, and the creation of individual, gendered subjects, without knowing what positions are constructed by a language and what other roles the same linguistic devices may fill” (Livia 2000, 12). Considering feminist texts and translations, she coins the concept of “pronoun envy,” in opposition to Derrida’s neologism, and states that feminist writers have a long tradition of neutering French’s phallogocentrism, from Québec’s *Louky Bersinani* (*L’Eugéline* 1976) to France’s Monique Wittig (*L’Opoanax* 1964; *Les Guérillères* 1969). Moreover, post-structuralist theorists and intellectuals such as Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva have written about the necessity to find new, more adequate ways to write of the female body and the female experience. This reflection is embodied in the concept of *écriture féminine*, a feminine literary style characterized by playful linguistic innovation and subversion—the interconnection of feminine bodily experiences, feminine psychology and subjectivity, and language.

Critic, translator, and editor Barbara Godard, a prominent figure in Canadian literature and feminist translation theories, describes feminist translation as “the repossession of the word by women, and the naming of the life of the body as experienced by women” (Godard 1984, 14). *Chroniques* shows a repossession—dare I say a translation?—of both the *world* and the *words* by women: in doing so, Vonarburg follows not only a long tradition of feminist science fiction and utopias, but also the specific circumstance of the literary Québécois milieu of the 70s and 80s. Luise Von Flotow, Canadian researcher and specialist in feminist translation theories, explains that

These writers’ texts were (...) concerned with research into the etymology of conventional vocabulary and its deconstruction. They explored women’s experiences that had not been put into words before, and tried to write ‘*Pinédit*’. They sought to create a new idiom with which to express these experiences of the body, and write a women’s utopia. The silent ‘e’ that marks the female gender in French became an important element in the critique of the masculine as a generic term; it was exploited as a mutant element with which neologisms and puns could be developed to parody and attack conventional language. Other strategies included the fragmentation

of language, the disregard for grammatical or syntactical structures and the dismantling of individual words in order to examine their concealed meanings. (von Flotow 1991, 72)

Science fiction and utopia are perfect genres for ideological and linguistic experimentation, as they allow for visions of new worlds and new possibilities: following this tradition, Vonarburg's project to criticize patriarchal constraints is in part linguistic. In the Indo-European system of markedness, the masculine has both specific and generic uses:⁹ however, this grammar rule is rendered obsolete in a society populated by 97% women, and in which men are ostracized as a result. Within the first few pages the reader notices that in "Litale," the language spoken in Bethely by Lisbeï, words that would usually use the masculine as both specific and generic are now conventionally used at the feminine form: by example, instead of saying "les enfants" (the children), they say "les enfantses." Throughout the novel Vonarburg uses this addition of an "e" to shift specific nouns to the feminine, in a process that seems instantly logical, since it is one of the traditional morphological ways to mark the feminine in French. She also uses other feminine morphological markers, such as "-ère" or "-le" in a similar way; and in a few occurrences entirely changes the words to make them sound feminine. For example, she uses "caprinas et oveines" (Vornarburg 1999a, 162)—in the English translation "caprinas and oveinas" (Vornarburg 1992, 156)—for goats and sheep, creating new words based on the Latin combining form *capri* and the word "ovin" (ovine), similarly derived from Latin; instead of keeping "la chèvre" (the goat), already feminine in French, and of transforming "le mouton" (the sheep) into "la moutone." The specific nomenclature Vonarburg chooses to subvert are those of the *animal kingdom*, the beings separated into gender categories female or male nouns (including the French words for "human," *humaines*, and "children," *enfantses*). She also transforms professions: in French, many professions are used in a masculine form, even if the person identifies as female; professions are feminized, and "le courrier" becomes "la courrière" (31) and "le bûcheron," "la bûcheronne" (Vornarburg 1999a, 295) (in the English translation, "courria" (Vornarburg 1992, 33) for 'messenger' or "woodcuttas" (Vornarburg 1992, 280) for woodcutter.). Additionally, this linguistic feminization process also impacts seasons and months, a few pronouns—"quelqu'une" instead of "quelqu'un" for 'someone'—as well as both adjectives and past participle agreement.¹⁰ By doing so, Vonarburg highlights the failures of a system that submits

both women and language to the masculine, reversing the usual hierarchy by according the feminine unmarked status. The examples below shed light onto Vonarburg's process, but also onto the inconsistencies of the English translation:

<i>Chroniques du Pays des Mères</i> (Vonarburg 1999a)	<i>Traditional French</i>	<i>The Maerlande Chronicles</i> (Vonarburg 1992— <i>English official translation</i>)
(7) “la poussine”	Le poussin	(13) “like a chick”
(21) “Elli pleurt”	Il pleut	(25) “Elli was raining”
(25) junie	Juin	(29) juna
(31) “la courrière du Nord”	Le courrier du Nord	(33) “the Nothern courria”
(32) “l’été”	L’été	(35) “sumra”
“La printane”	Le printemps	“ <i>sprinna</i> ”
(52) “la sourice”	La souris	(54) “the mouse”
(63) “quelqu’une”	Quelqu’un	(64) “someone”
(86) “les cheales”	Les chevaux	(86) “the cavalas”
(91) “toutes les deux”	Tous les deux	(91) “you must both”
“Paix à toutes en Elli”	Paix à tous en Elli	“Peace in Elli to all”
(108) “les animales”	Les animaux	(108) “the animals”
(115) “des agnelles”	Les agneaux	(115) “ovinas”
(116) “les humaines”	Les humains	(115) “human beings”
(121) “les hivernes”	Les hivers	(120) “winters”
(127) “septème”	Septembre	(126) “Septemra”
(131) “des agnelles,” “des poulines,” “des chatonnes”	Agneaux, poulins, chattons	(129) “ovinas” “chicks” and “kittens”
(295) “la bûcheronne”	Le bûcheron	(280) “woodcuttas”

One must look at how Vonarburg's subversion of phallogocentrism is translated into English, a language differing in its grammatical treatment of gender from French: the question thus posed is whether translation can accommodate the same subversion. Linguists differentiate two gender modes, formal and semantic gender. English uses semantic gender:

semantic gender systems classify nouns referring to male humans and animals under the masculine gender, while nouns referring to female humans and animals are classified under the female gender. Inanimate referents may be felt to have ‘metaphorical’ gender, or they may be assigned to a neuter gender category. (Livia 2000, 14)

While semantic gender is an extra-grammatical feature, formal gender depends on the morphology and phonology of nouns. French uses formal

gender¹¹; thus, Vornarburg's linguistic defamiliarization can't be translated as such in English: in that manner, "children" becomes "children," the translation adopting the same process as the original. As Sherry Simon states in her book, *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission*,

while grammarians have insisted on gender-marking in language as purely conventional, feminist theoreticians follow Jakobson in re-investing gender-markers with meaning. The meaning which they wish to make manifest is both poetic and, especially, ideological. They wish to show in what ways gender differences serve as the unquestioned foundations of our cultural life. (Simon 1996, 17)

Simon also points out that "naming strategies and grammatical gender-marking (...) involve dilemmas for translation, because they use language-specific devices to foreground these grammatical features of French language usage" (Simon 1996, 16). In the case of "children," the English translation doubles the letter "e," marker of the feminine in French, in a book about reproduction; however, this addition of an "e" in English merely modifies the morphology of the word; it doesn't refer to a linguistic feminization of language, as is the case in the original. Another example is the word "le poussin" (the chick), which will always be masculine in French, without taking into account the animal's sex. Following the defamiliarization process mentioned earlier, Vornarburg transforms "le poussin" into "la poussine" (Vornarburg 1999a, 7), adding the suffix -e and changing the article to render the noun feminine. Yet there, the translation does not respect the original, and simply translates "la poussine" with "the chick" (Vornarburg 1992, 13). Is the translation failing to convey an important feminist message by not writing, let's say, "chiick" instead of "chick"? Of course, "chick" is also slang for "young woman" in English—yet it does not match the French linguistic transformative process, and the actual figurative translation of "a chick" for "young woman" in French would be "une poule" (a hen). One could argue that there is more to the defamiliarization process in *Chroniques* than the cognitive estrangement resulting from linguistic modifications. Yet as pointed out previously, Vornarburg chose to alter very specific parts of the French language: the animal kingdom, and the living beings concerned by gender and reproduction, but also by production (i.e., the lexical field around labor).

The conjunction of a translation terminology and sexual lexicon dominates the field of translation theory, from the tradition that depicts translation as a *belle infidèle* or *tradittora traduttora*, the beautiful/unfaithful/translator/traitor, where translation is the (unfaithful) women, and the original, the authorial and fatherly figure (Chamberlain 2007); to the idea of translation as a sexist gesture, metaphorically described as penetration or rape (von Flotow 1991); and finally to the concept of “orgasmic” translation, when the translator, instead of violating the original, contributes as a collaborator to the author’s work (Arrojo 1995). According to Luise Von Flotow,

Reproduction has historically been women’s work; and the tropes used to describe translation, though stressing the need to maintain control of the reproduction of texts (offspring), reflect its lowliness. Indeed, the discourse on translation has consistently served to express the difference in value between the original and its ‘reproduction,’ and has routinely used metaphors of rape and violence against women and of paternalistic control to maintain this difference. In so doing, traditional tropes used for translation have reflected the power relations between the sexes, and revealed the fear of the maternal (or the mother tongue), the need to protect (control) it as well as the need to retain the ownership of offspring (texts). (von Flotow 1991, 81)

To Von Flotow’s eyes, feminist translation provides information about practices of domination and subversion. However, Rosemary Arrojo, who works on translation theory and comparative literature, claims that feminist theories of language end up resembling the very patriarchal praxes they condemn. According to her, postmodern feminist theories of language end up reproducing colonial and patriarchal ‘violence’ and conceptions:

In the defense of their authorial role in the production of meaning that constitutes their work of translation, such female translators seem to fall into another version of the same ‘infamous double standard’ that can be found in our traditional, ‘masculine’ theories and conceptions of translation. In such a context, which seems to repeat some of the basic contradictions that often haunt the contemporary reflection on gender inspired by postmodernism. (Arrojo 1994, 149)

Fundamentally speaking, the novel's translation doesn't seem to belong to any of the main methodologies of feminist translation as described by Von Flotow (1991) and Arrojo (1994 and 1995): there is no prefacing or footnoting, an approach that could at least have informed the reader of Vonarburg's linguistic subversion of French phallogocentrism; the translation doesn't supplement the original, in the sense that it doesn't highlight English's phallogocentrism by modifying its own linguistic patterns and grammatical rules. However, the translator is not hijacking the original, nor colluding with the author and writing her own version of the novel—a process interestingly described by Arrojo as 'castration' of the text. Indeed, the translation does try to follow Vonarburg's subversion of language, but does so in inconsistent ways: first, the alterations subjected to adjectives and past participle agreements are not translated; second, and most importantly, some animal nouns and professions are feminized, as shown above, but not systematically—and the ones that already 'look' feminine in French are not modified ("les animales" (Vonarburg 1999a, 108) in French, instead of "les animaux" is translated by "animals" (Vonarburg 1992, 108); and "les artistes" is translated as "artists," without taking into account the fact that the original already contains an *-e...*) Technically, months and seasons are adapted to imitate the original transformations, but then the translation modifies "l'été" into "sumra," instead of "summer," despite the fact that this very specific incoherence is discussed within the story itself: one character asks, "Pourquoi 'été' au masculin alors que les trois autres saisons sont au féminin?" (Vonarburg 1999a, 284). However, the translation avoids acknowledging this incoherence: "And why are some terms masculine instead of everything being feminine?" (Vonarburg 1992, 269) instead of "why is 'summer' masculine, when the other seasons are feminine?" (my translation) What is more, the translation further fails to convey Lisbei's hesitations between using feminine or masculine during crucial moments: for example, after the death of her colleague Dougall, Lisbei wonders why she had never considered him as "une amie," a friend: her using the feminine in this occurrence is significant, as it implies that she was finally considering Dougall as a person, and not just as "a man." Once more, the translation fails to convey the inherent subtlety of Lisbei's linguistic choice, and simply uses "a friend."

TRANSLATION AND REPRODUCTION OF PATRIARCHAL MODES

The importance of word choice and language is present not only in the construction of the novel, but also within the narrative thus created. While studying different languages, Lisbei comes across the word “a capital,” a concept that doesn’t exist anymore in the Mothers’ Land but belongs to what they call the “pre-Decline” world. When she uses it to describe the city where she is studying, her instructor objects:

- The word is inexact. It can be dangerous to use inexact words.
- It’s only a word, protested Lisbei.
- But by using inexact terms, our ideas will gradually be polluted and transformed. (Vornarburg 1992, 243)

Her instructor goes on to explain that there is a reason why what once were described as “colonies” were called “swarms” during the Hives period, but is designated as “Offshoot” in the Mothers’ Land (Vornarburg 1992, 243); it matters, she insists, because the intent is not the same. This conversation points out the essentialist belief of the Mothers’ Land, according to which language influences human thoughts and habits. Feminist experimentations with language are influenced by linguistic determinism, and more specifically the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis; that is, the idea the language one speaks influences how one thinks and comprehends reality. Despite having been mostly debunked, remnants of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis still linger on:

These literary experiments have focused on language at the syntactic, semantic, lexical, and discourse levels, but whatever technique is employed to expose, expel, or expatiate upon the gender bias in language, behind the experiment lurks a belief in a modified version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (...) It presumes that grammaticalized gender systems enforce a view of the world as inherently gendered and that the system naturalizes the categorization of human beings as either masculine or feminine. (Livia 2000, 19)

The issue, as Livia points out, is that linguistic determinism as espoused in the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis overstresses language’s role in gender identity, and relies on an essentialist view (Livia 2000, 14). The deeper concern with linguistic determinism is that it implies that individuals are influenced by language, rather than that linguistic usages are influenced by cultural and sociopolitical practices. Sex and gender are not the same: sex is defined

by biological features; while gender is—to go back to Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble*—a performance enforced upon individuals by societal and cultural norms. Of course, gender is also a formal and semantic linguistic system. Vonarburg unquestionably plays with the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis when she subverts French formal gender norms in her novel; yet her subversion of language relies on gender as a grammatical concept and on sex as a biological one. If the *novum* establishes lesbianism as the norm, and the main protagonist slowly starts imagining heterosexuality as a possibility, then male homosexuality, transsexuality, pansexuality, and so on remain conspicuously absent. Gender and sexual orientation don’t come into play: everything is decided by the sex attributed at birth. Vonarburg seems fully aware of the lack of intersectionality within the Mothers’ Land, as she comments in one of her essays that “lesbianism’s legitimization is, curiously, often followed by a devaluation of male homosexuality” (Vonarburg 1999b, 298; my translation). However, she has played with human gender and sexual identities in other works, including *Le Silence de la Cité* (Vonarburg 1981), the prequel to *Chroniques*: it seems that here, she is pointing out the issues with the idealization of all-female utopias and the implementation of lesbianism as the norm as seen in feminist utopias.

Interestingly, Vonarburg does incorporate a reflection on the limits of this linguistic subversion of phallogocentrism within the diegesis: approximately a third into the novel, she complicates the matter of grammatical gender-marking by introducing another language into the equation. Whether the readers experience this linguistic subversion in French or in translation, it is not the language spoken by the characters within the Mothers’ Land. Lisbeï and the people from Bethely speak *Litali*, a language which shifts some nouns (animals, seasons and months, professions) to their feminine forms and systematically grants the unmarked status to the feminine. Other regions speak *Frangleï*, a language not as formally distanced from what was spoken pre-Décline. This is the case in Wardenberg, the city where Lisbeï goes to study in her adolescence. There, she starts interacting with people and viewpoints less rigid than those of her native Bethely. These linguistic and conceptual differences in relation to gender are hard to grasp for the young Lisbeï; regarding a visit she paid to a friend, she writes in her diary: “*She came to meet me carrying a babie of barely two under one arm and holding another by the hand (They call it ‘a baby’ in Wardenberg. How odd. Frangleï is really an archaic language!)*” (Vonarburg 1992, 261). In French, as in Frangleï, “a baby” is masculine, independently of the child’s biological sex; but it is feminized in Litali, a

process translated here into the English by the usage of “*a babie*.” Once more, Vornarburg plays with words: Litali sounds like “*l’italien*,” Italian, and Franglei refers to the mixture of French and English, called *le fran-glais* in French. That said, Italian and French are both Romance languages and don’t treat grammatical gender in the same way that English does.

As a *Bildungsroman*, the novel mirrors the dual crises of youth and language: understanding the linguistic idiosyncrasies of the Mothers’ Land and their historical and ideological roots is part of Lisbei’s cognitive development. As a naïve 16-year-old girl, she can’t help but play devil’s advocate and defend the position stating that Franglei is archaic:

And as Lisbei was taking part in the discussion – still somewhat inarticulate in Franglei – some of the group noticed how she used the feminine forms for men where they would have distinguished between the genders; patrol-ler, explorer, or child, for example. Lisbei remarked to the others that Franglei contained more archaic forms than other Maerlande languages. Livine, half joking, retorted that the others that Franglei simply had less contradictory relics from the Hives and their fanatic determination to remake the world from scratch. “Why do we say, ‘Elli is raining,’ but elsewhere use the neuter ‘it’? And why are some terms masculine instead of everything being feminine?”

“Because after the Hives, people began taking the past into account again,” said Lisbei, sounding calmer than she felt. (Really, she thought, why do I persist in adopting positions that aren’t mine? She agreed wholeheartedly with Livine on the subject of Maerlande’s linguistic anomalies. She had merely started out to say the Wardenberg variety was different, nothing more!) “In the long run it’s usage, not decrees, that have shaped our languages. Perhaps these masculine terms will end up being feminine again. And I don’t see why you couldn’t say ‘Elli is’ instead of ‘there is’”. (Vornarburg 1992, 269)

This interaction between Lisbei and her friends underlines the Hives’ take on linguistic determinism. In their insistence in re-investing words with meaning as a subversion of phallogocentrism, the Hives decreed social, economic, and political policies, as well new cultural and linguistic norms, all as a reaction to the Harems and a time when women were enslaved. The Hives’ treatment of language and of gender marking falls within the Sapir-Wolf hypothesis: “their fanatic determination” to start over results in modifying the language according to the new (S)tate of affairs. Nonetheless, the idiosyncrasies pointed out in the excerpt above reveal that the

subversion is guided by misandry, not equity: and The Mothers' Land, while it considers itself more inclusive, fair, and ethical, has inherited both linguistic anomalies and socio-cultural praxes from the Hives.

One striking instance of paradoxical re-investment is the 'Celebration' taking place during the spring equinox. Lisbei never participates in it, and the contents of its ritual remain unclear for most of the novel. Slowly, the reader comes to understand that once a year, the Captas—the matriarchs of each city—engage in the 'Dance,' public heterosexual intercourse with their Males during which an ecstatic and drugged crowd shares their sensations, and experiences what it feels to "dance in Elli." The Mothers' Land elevates the "Dance" as the essential joining between Female and Male, Elli and Ilshe, the union of opposites: even in a society where lesbianism is the norm, heterosexual intercourse is mysticized. Just as Christmas celebrations are strategically reclaimed Pagan rites, the Celebration replaces the annual massacre of sterile men by the Hives: "it was an adaptation, a recuperation from the Hives, like so many other things; the calendar, the Litale garderies, the choice of the feminine as the dominant gender in all languages, the renaming of certain animals, certain plants... the list was a long one. And then the Hives themselves had recuperated plenty of things from the Harems, transforming or adapting them, as the Harems had in turn done" (Vornarburg 1992, 339). Many other themes go through a similar process: the story of Elli punishing Men for eating all the apples—with the seeds—before they were ripe, and her daughter Garde, dead and resurrected, who spread the Good Word through the Harems; both obviously referencing Genesis and the New Testament.

A further iteration of both linguistic and behavioral perpetuation of patriarchal modes of thinking takes place in the Garderies, where the "mostas,"¹² the children, are raised by the community, and is related to ostracism based on biological differences: "Everyone knew they were called 'boys,' and that you said 'he' instead of 'she' when talking about one of them, because they were mostas who had somehow gone wrong, with their little pipe sticking out" (Vornarburg 1992, 38). In a fascinating turn on Freudian psychoanalysis, penis envy is overthrown and recast as suspicion. The "mostas" don't know yet what gender and sexual identity mean: a separation occurs, the mostas unconsciously imitating the adults' habits (Vornarburg 1992, 38). This behavioral replication process is partly transmitted through linguistic differentiation between genders: to play on Livia's book title, penis envy is here replaced with pronoun envy.

CONCLUSION

Vonarburg problematizes issues related to gender, including phallogocentrism, and to question the whole utopian impulse. However, patriarchal values such as male freedom and female inferiority, male strengths, the female's inherent moral weakness, and so on are rendered into their opposites; meanwhile, the insistence on women's role as a childbearer/rearer and the exclusion of one sex from the work force and economy are still at the core of the Mothers' Land society. Additionally, the superposition of breeding techniques and compulsory artificial insemination reasserts life as, first and foremost, subject to capital. Moreover, the efforts to invert habits considered inherently misogynist and phallogocentric imply that History stands as the mere accumulation of progress: the Hives, and afterward the Mothers' Land, adapted, and following the utopian ideal, improved upon old habits and customs. Despite efforts to invert practices and "remake the world from scratch," a continuity persists between the Decline, the Harems, the Hives, and, ultimately, the Mothers' Land. All of these societies result from what came earlier, *à la* the limited imagination of the reactionary: the Hives were formed in revolt to the Harems; the Mothers' Land as an improvement upon the Hives—and in many ways, the Mothers' Land resembles the structures we currently live with. In English, the word "translation" refers to the process of both translating words or a text into another language and the moving of an element from one place to another. Of course, the *mundus inversus* allows feminist, sociopolitical, and conceptual revolutions to come into play; however, both the linguistic subversion of phallogocentrism by Vonarburg and the translation into English seem to be constrained by the binary relationship between production and reproduction, and fail to convey a real cognitive and linguistic estrangement. The Mothers' Land, constructed as a *mundus inversus*, in fact reproduces patriarchal values, instead of being freed of them: in other words, it relies on the "translation" of such principles into a feminist utopia.

Robin Roberts, in her study of gender and science fiction, establishes a differentiation between feminist utopias, and feminist science fiction relevant to our case:

Feminist science fiction (...) rejects the essentialism and simplicity of the feminist utopian strategy. (...) feminist science fiction incorporates the strategy of utopia but always includes the possibility of men and women success-

fully integrating in a non-sexist, nonracist, non-classist society. Rather than attempt to step outside the patriarchy, these books hold out the promise of an internal coup to the benefit of men and women. Feminist science fiction exists in a dialogue with female utopias. It rejects the underlying separatist premise of the female utopia and suggests alternatives to isolationism. (Roberts 1993, 87)

A feminist utopia which relies strictly on binarism is doomed to repeat gender tropes, be they inverted or otherwise.¹³ The *mundus inversus* trope, which is at the core of the Mothers' Land, annihilates the defamiliarization project by reproducing patriarchal patterns, 'translating' them into a matriarchal society. Neither utopian, nor dystopian, what we see portrayed in *Chroniques* is the transition to a society more self-aware of its past and more inclusive, in the form of a *Bildungsroman* that warns against both some masculinist and some feminist ideals. It succeeds in doing what Roberts describes here:

Feminist science fiction repeats what is implicit in the founding concepts of patriarchal society, the dichotomy between masculine and feminine that traditionally oppresses women but which feminist science fiction uses to empower itself. Feminist science fiction looks at the dualities of masculine and feminine, traditional science and feminist science, and shifts the terms of the pairing to privilege the marginal over what is usually central. And in the process, it deconstructs the binarisms of patriarchy. (Roberts 1993, 90)

At the diegetic level, the Mothers' Land *is* a feminist utopia, but one that is confronted throughout the novel with its limitations and incoherencies; meanwhile, Vonarburg's novel is feminist science fiction. And indeed, Vonarburg stresses in one of her essays the inherently equivocal character of utopias, and the impossibility to create and maintain a perfect, static, system (Vonarburg 1999, 294). According to her, the frontier between utopia, dystopia, and non-utopia is frail, and as the Mothers' Land motto reminds us: there are only "imperfect choices in an imperfect world."

NOTES

1. To name a few: Marge Piercy, Sally Miller Gearhart, James Tiptree Jr., and Ursula K. LeGuin, the latter of whose *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) is always quoted when it comes to questions of gender in science fiction.

2. For more on Bersianik and possible connections with Vonarburg, see Taylor 2002.
3. This is probably also a reference to Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, which was published only seven years before *The Maerlande Chronicles*.
4. The original French version emphasizes the feminine/masculine contrast with its word choice: "comme la danse/Et le silence, La Parole/Et le repos... La nuit/Et le jour, La terre/et le ciel. La femme/Et l'homme" (Vonarburg 1999, 39).
5. "Stories were perhaps just the other side of History" (Vonarburg 1992, 254).
6. Pray to God: She Will Want Your Prayers.
7. The main character, Lisbeï, is also named after the author. To read more on Vonarburg naming her characters with variations of her first name, see: Bérard 1999, 115–132.
8. Derrida describes "phallogocentrisme comme androcentrisme" (Livia 2000, 5).
9. In other words, if you have 99 women and 1 man in one place, you would still have to use the French masculine plural subject pronoun "ils" to say "they." By example: there were a hundred of them = *ils étaient cent*.
10. This is once more related to French grammar rules, when the masculine is used as both specific and generic. By example, in the sentence, "nous serions concernées" (Vonarburg 1999a, 291) ("it would matter to us" (Vonarburg 1992, 275), the subject pronoun "nous" (we) refers to both women and men, and therefore the past participle "concernés" should be masculine, and not the feminine as used by Vonarburg.
11. "Linguistic gender marking is far more widespread and systemic in French than in English, where it is semantic in motivation and may be observed mostly in the third person singular of the pronominal paradigm, as well as in some marked semantic pairs and lexical items" (Livia 2000, 23–24).
12. The word "mosta"—used in French as well—refers to children under the age of seven; it is derived from the English word 'almost,' and refers to the fact that they are not yet fully considered as a person due to the high rate of child mortality within the Mothers' Land.
13. "The dualistic structure of role-reversal stories excludes the possibility that they might be claimed for feminist ends. It allows only two options: that one group retains or regains power over the other; or some kind of balance is achieved" (Lefanu 1989, 45).

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Speculative Orientalism? On “Eastern” and “Western” Referents in Boualem Sansal’s *2084*

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Algerian author Boualem Sansal’s 2015 novel *2084: La fin du monde* (translated into English in 2017 as *2084: The End of the World*) extends the dystopia of George Orwell’s *1984* into a fictional Islamist dictatorship 100 years in the future. Set in Abistan’s capital city of Qodsabad, where women wear *burniqabs* and men pray to Yölah in their local *mockbas*, Sansal’s novel mobilizes linguistic and cultural elements from across the Middle East to critique religious extremism. The narrative follows Ati, a young man who seeks to satisfy his growing doubts about Abistan’s dictatorial regime and *Gkabul*, its religion. Along the way, he discovers a complicated plot to overthrow the government, and meets a man named Toz who has preserved artifacts from a land beyond Abistan. The discovery of a time and a world outside his own—one that knew of a concept called “democracy”—drives Ati to depart in search of the border: a dangerous quest which remains unresolved by the novel’s end.

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The narrative of Ati's journey is punctuated by words from *abilang*, a religiously inflected language that serves as Sansal's answer to Orwell's Newspeak. *Abilang*, we are told, was revealed by Yölah to the prophet Abi as "the sacred language he would use to gather the men scattered through the world and lead them, repentant and grateful, onto the path of the *Gkabul*" (Sansal 2017, 113).¹ Like many things in Abistan, it is named after Abi, and governed by a High Commissariat for *Abilang* [and *abilanguization* (Sansal 2017, 219). Despite being an invented tongue, *abilang* shows the linguistic influence of variety of other languages: from the *-istan* and *-abad* place suffixes used in South Asia and the Middle East, to Arabic grammatical structures and religious lexicon including *Chitan*, *chik*, and *burniqab*. The fact that *2084*'s invented language mixes elements from across the "East," yet remains opaque and resistant to translation, raises the question of whether the novel in general, and *abilang* in particular, could be characterized as Orientalist. In this article, a close reading of how *abilang* functions in both the French original and English translation of *2084* will shed light on how untranslated language introduces Orientalist elements into the novel's speculative world. I will also explore *2084*'s reception in the "real" world of international publishing. There is a tension particular to dystopian narratives like *2084*, which take place in invented lands, but whose reception is conditioned by the concrete realities of language and place of publication. Translation of *2084* out of French, a former colonial language in Algeria, effaces an important dimension of the text's anticolonial critique, while raising questions around the metaphorical translation of dystopian classics to an "Eastern" setting while marketing primarily to "Western" audiences. How might our approach to Orientalism adapt to speculative fiction, where novels are freed from demands of realistic representation, but not from the geographical pressures of readership and reception?

Edward Said defined Orientalism as "a system of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'" (Said 1979, 2). Orientalism is a discourse, a form of knowledge that purports to represent cultural reality, while instead serving as a form of domination reliant on stereotypes about the "Orient" as unknowable, backward, inscrutable, and exotic. Said elaborated his theory primarily through analysis of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature and scholarship emerging from Europeans' encounters with, and stereotypes about, the Middle East. However, the legacy of

Orientalism reverberates through a wide variety of cultural and historical contexts. Indeed, a common subsequent critique of Said’s theory is that its too-broad application resulted in a “profound ambiguity” (Hallaq 2018, 1), and that any scholarly discussion of the region comes under suspicion of Orientalist bigotry if portrayed negatively, and Orientalist exoticism if portrayed positively (Hallaq 2018, 3).

Applying Said’s theory to speculative fiction, as this chapter aims to do, presents its own set of complications. I use the term speculative fiction here with its broadest definition of “a super-category for all genres that deliberately depart from imitating ‘consensus reality’ of everyday experience” (Oziewicz 2017), while also drawing on theories specific to dystopian and science fiction. The primary context in which scholars of these genres have discussed Orientalism is the theory of “techno-Orientalism” in science fiction. This term was first used in David Morley and Kevin Robbins’ *Spaces of Identity*, describing the cultural shifts that allowed Japan to occupy the role of the West’s—and particularly America’s—Eastern Other (Morley and Robbins 1995). In subsequent studies, techno-Orientalism has come to describe the phenomenon of Western science fiction writers projecting “technological fantasies” along with “fears of being colonized, mechanized, and instrumentalized” onto imagined societies suffused with stereotypes of East Asian cultures (Roh et al. 2015, 4).²

The theoretical work done by these scholars introduces several key concerns for this chapter, particularly the idea that the “East” can remain a marked category even in works purporting to represent a world entirely different to our own. However, a focus on technological advancement in (fictionalized) East Asia does not quite suit novels like Sansal’s. A cornerstone of techno-Orientalism consists of the fear that East Asia will outstrip the West in technological advancement; Sansal’s novel, in contrast, sketches a future dominated by a society mired in an anti-technological religious dictatorship. The question remains how narratives like *2084*, which depict a dystopian, technologically ambivalent world, differ from techno-Orientalist narratives. What are the domains outside the technological and scientific through which Orientalist visions of the future might persist in speculative fiction?

A body of scholarship that helps to illuminate the case of *2084* is that of postcolonial speculative fiction. These works examine speculative fiction taken up by marginalized populations who, for a long time, existed only as alien “others” in canonical works. Western science fiction in particular has

“a long and deeply problematic history of depicting conquest and colonialism as glorious enterprises” (Burnett 2015, 133), particularly through the trope of the discovery and subsequent settlement of “alien” civilizations and planets. However, recent work by authors from postcolonial nations shows that this legacy can be—and frequently has been—contested from the margins. Postcolonial speculative fiction theory has focused on how writers *resist* Western hegemony, offering a “counterhegemonic discourse” (Burnett 2015, 134) that critiques “the simultaneous trauma and potential of postcolonial hybridity” (Langer 2013, 169). Thus far, however, few studies have looked at how speculative genres taken up by writers from the global south might recapitulate, rather than contest, colonialist or Orientalist tropes embedded in the structure of the genre.

The question of perpetuating Orientalism “from the margins” is a complicated one, given the difficulty of assigning a clear provenance to individual texts. *2084* is written by an Algerian author; however, it was published (and has earned most of its recognition) in France. This publishing situation is not uncommon for francophone North African authors, who often find a larger audience and greater financial gain with Parisian publishers.³ However, placing *2084* in the literary “margins” is further complicated by its use of fictionalized locations, setting it apart from many North African texts which are often—unjustly—read exclusively for their anthropological truth value.⁴ Questions of perspective, so critical to Said’s Orientalism, are complicated both within the novel, by its fictional setting, and outside of it, by its global circulation. For the purposes of the essay, I will begin with the question of the novel’s inner world: how it draws on preconceived notions of the “Middle East” and sets them in diametric opposition to “the West” through the use of untranslatable invented language. I will then move to a broader discussion of how an “Eastern” translation of a “Western” classic like *1984* further complicates our notions of location, Orientalism, and postcoloniality in speculative fiction.

A possible objection to the application of Said’s theory to a work like *2084* is that Orientalist writings tended to make a claim, however inaccurate, to representation of real locations and peoples. Said reminds readers that despite the constructed nature of Orientalist knowledge about the East “it would be wrong to conclude that the Orient was essentially an idea, or a creation with no *corresponding reality*... There were – and are – cultures and nations whose location is in the East, and their lives, histories, and customs have a brute reality obviously greater than anything that could be said about them in the West” (Said 1979, 5, my emphasis). This

“corresponding reality”—however distorted in its Orientalist appearance—was part of the reason Orientalism was able to serve not just as a rationalization of, but indeed a justification for, Europe’s colonization of Eastern nations (Said 1979, 39). Said cautioned readers that “the great likelihood that ideas about the Orient drawn from Orientalism can be put to political use, is an important yet extremely sensitive truth” (Said 1979, 96).

How, then, might the terms of Orientalism shift when a text depicts an overtly invented location, one where theories cannot be applied as political practice? Despite multiple reviewers’ attempts to assign Qodsabad a space on a modern map of the world, Abistan is a hypothetical—and unlocatable—construct.⁵ Yet, as is often the case with speculative fiction, there are factors in the novel which lead readers to identify Abistan with the Middle East: or, more specifically, to identify it with preexisting stereotypes of the region. One of the clearest examples is *Gkabal*, Abistan’s religion, a speculative take on Islamist extremism. Readers are told that *Gkabal* came from “an inner malfunction in an ancient religion which once brought honor and happiness to many great tribes of the deserts and plains” (Sansal 2017, 232), and nearly every feature of *Gkabal* reads as a heightening or reimagining of Islamist fundamentalism. However, for the purposes of this chapter, I will focus on language—particularly *abilang*—to show that “created” languages in SF can work to index geographic spaces like “East” and “West,” and thus constitute a potential point of entry for Orientalism into a speculative text.

Abilang participates in a long history of using “alien” or “created” languages to mark otherness in speculative fiction. Created languages in the genre almost always “serve to give notice of *difference*”; they are, in the figurative and often the literal sense, alien (Cheyne 2008, 392). Even when they are not the exclusive purview of the extraterrestrial, invented languages “communicat[e] the difference of the beings that speak [them],” a difference often enshrined, as in Sansal’s text, by the use of italics or a differently sized font (Cheyne 2008, 392). Given the near-universal association between invented language and otherness in speculative fiction, one might ask whether there is any reason to consider the otherness of *abilang* as a marker of Orientalism. To answer this question, it is important to examine *how* created languages are used, and what preexisting knowledge bases they draw on. In particular, a comparison of Newspeak and *abilang* show how two created languages in related dystopian novels can function entirely differently.

If created languages are “a means by which the author communicates with the reader” (Cheyne 2008, 392), what Sansal and Orwell communicate to their reader about their invented worlds differs significantly in their construction of otherness. The appendix to *1984* explains that Newspeak, the invented language of Orwell’s dystopia, has three different vocabulary sets. The “A vocabulary” consists of words already used in English (“hit, run, dog, tree”), which are more “rigidly-defined” than their currently accepted uses (Orwell 1949, 374). The “B vocabulary” is made up of “compound words”: these were “deliberately constructed” and in some cases need to be “translated,” but are all based on parts of existing English words (as in “goodthink” or “bellyfeel”) (Orwell 1949, 376–8). The “C vocabulary” consists of “scientific and technical terms” “constructed from the same roots” as terms used in English, of which no examples are given (Orwell 1949, 382). While meanings have shifted and narrowed in the passage from English to Newspeak, Orwell’s created language takes root in an exclusively Anglophone lexicon.

Sansal offers the reader no appendix for *abilang*, and is not as explicit about its rules as Orwell. A short digression explains that *abilang* words all have “one syllable, or two at the most” (Orwell 1949, 97), however the words in the text frequently defy that rule. At least two different vocabulary sets exist in Sansal’s invented language, although unlike Newspeak, the different levels are never identified as such. One set of *abilang* words is italicized, and contains terms that apply to clothing, food, and religion. It includes words like *burni* which is glossed as an “ample manteau de laine” (Sansal 2015, 37)/“ample woolen coat” (Sansal 2017, 31); and words like *mockba* which is never given a direct gloss, but clearly refers to a mosque-like center of religious worship.

Most, though by no means all, of these words demonstrate lexical similarity with Arabic.⁶ This similarity is expressed in a variety of ways, all of which exhibit some degree of linguistic playfulness (virtually no *abilang* word functions exactly as its Arabic counterpart does). In some cases, Arabic words are used nearly verbatim with a slightly shifted meaning: the *abilang* word *moussim* designates a period of preparation for pilgrimage, whereas in Arabic it means “season.” Some words are slightly more altered, such as “*rihad*” in the place of “*jihad*”; or “*burni*” and “*burniqab*” which use the Arabic words “*burnous*” and “*niqab*.” The similarities are not just lexical, but grammatical. Many words for places or buildings in *abilang* start with the “m” sound (*mockba*, *midra*), echoing Arabic grammatical convention. *Abilang* also uses a device similar to Arabic’s *nisba*

adjective (the “i/ع” suffix to indicate provenance) so that “*mockba*” is a religious structure, and “*mockbi*” is the person who is of (or works in) that place. “*Med Abi*,” which is defined in the text as “the refuge of Abi” displays not only lexical similarity between *abilang*’s “*med*” and Arabic’s “*medina*” (city), but also grammatical similarity with the *idaafa* structure (the apposition of an apparently indefinite noun and a definite or proper noun to create a relationship of possession). Arabic “*medinat Abi*” means “the city of Abi” just as “*med Abi*” means “the refuge of Abi” in *abilang*. The “*didi*” unit of currency reads as a wink to those familiar with Algerian Arabic specifically, as it draws on an expression recognizable from Algerian *raï* singer Cheb Khaled’s hit song “*Didi*.”

A second register of *abilang* identifies administrative offices and state religious organizations, and follows the Newspeak convention of compounding words. These include acronyms like “CJB, les Croyants justiciers bénévoles” (Sansal 2015, 62)/“VLBs, the Volunteer Law-enforcing Believers” (Sansal 2017, 50), and initial syllable compounds, as in “Livret de la Valeur, le Liva” (Sansal 2015, 98)/“Booklet of Worth, the Bowo” (Sansal 2017, 79). These names are never directly identified by the narrator as *abilang* utterances, and the fact that they are not italicized could suggest that they belong to a different language. However, it is difficult to imagine a totalitarian society naming its administrative offices in a foreign language after “proclaim[ing] *abilang* to be the official universal language, and issue[ing] a decree that any other idiom to be found anywhere on the planet was primitive and sacrilegious” (Sansal 2017, 114). It seems safe to assume that the two communicative styles—italicized and unitalicized—represent different facets of a single invented language.

Both *abilang* and Newspeak have a similar relationship to the Whorfian linguistic model, which is “the idea that the language a person speaks influences his or her perception of reality” (Cheyne 2008, 388). Newspeak was constructed “not only to provide a medium of expression for the world-view and mental habits proper to the devotees of Ingsoc, but to make all other modes of thought impossible” (Orwell 1949, 373). In *Abistan*, the official language is described like a parasite, as it spreads religion “into the body and deep soul of the people” (Sansal 2017, 229). This phenomenon is common in science fiction, where “the use of language for thought-control” is a recurring theme (Meyers 1980, 3). However, particularly in comparing translations of 1984 and 2084, it becomes clear that Newspeak and *abilang* differ in one significant respect: their relationship to the primary, or vehicular language of the text. Even though we are told

that Newspeak “would be barely intelligible to an English-speaker of our own day” (Orwell 1949, 374) based on its grammar and semantics, readers are still able to parse the terms because “Newspeak was founded on the English language as we now know it” (Orwell 1949, 373). This internal legibility is evidenced by how Newspeak is treated in translation: “telescreen” becomes “télécran” in French and “telepantalla” in Spanish; “speakwrite” becomes “parlécrire” and “hablascribe,” respectively. While Newspeak is the constructed language of a fictional dystopia, it remains legible to readers of *1984* in the primary language of the text.

Why is the fact that Newspeak is translatable important to the question of Orientalism? The fact that Newspeak has evolved out of the language in which the text is written creates the impression that Newspeak comes from within the linguistic register of the reader. Even if English isn’t the reader’s first language, to the extent that texts create communities based on those who have the linguistic ability to read them, there is an “us” in Newspeak. It implicates the reader’s present in the dystopian future: Newspeak is what *we* will become, the linguistic call is coming from inside the house. The majority of *abilang*, conversely, is linguistically unrelated to the vehicular language of the text. This othering similarly comes through in the novel’s translation: *abilang*’s italicized register hardly varies from version to version.⁷ Of course, *abilang* is not equally opaque to all readers. Bilingual French and Arabic speakers, for example, can certainly read the original text while parsing the Arabic influence of many of the invented words. Yet even for Arabic-speaking readers, *abilang* words are still forcibly separated through the use of italics and treated as a similarly “marked” category in translation.

It is the difference between vehicular language and created language that marks an “us” and a “them” in *2084*. This sort of otherness was central to Said’s articulation of Orientalism, in which the “West” would “intensify its own sense of itself by dramatizing the distance and difference between what is close to it and what is far away” (Said 1979, 55). This dichotomy is particularly striking to find in dystopian fiction. Theories of the genre emphasize how it traditionally implicates its readers in dark visions of their own future, demanding that “*we* realize what the flaws of *our own* society may lead to for the next generations unless *we* try to eradicate these flaws today” (Gottlieb 2001, 4, emphasis added). This emphasis on collective responsibility for avoiding a dystopian future, and the concomitant demand for readers to recognize themselves in what they are reading, stands in contrast to Sansal’s linguistic separation between the

community reading the text (in French) and the community responsible for dystopia (in *abilang*). To borrow Margaret Atwood’s formulation, if dystopian fiction asks “what if we continue down the road we’re already on?” (Atwood 2005, 286), Sansal creates categories of otherness that twist the question into “what if *they* continue down the road they’re already on?” In so doing, the novel stokes audience fears of an inscrutable and dangerous “Oriental” other from which dystopia will arise. *2084* is, ultimately, a dystopia that happens to other people.

Of course, the mixing of cultural elements into an opaque, othering language does not, on its own, constitute a mark of speculative Orientalism. Mixing can be a sign of hybridity, of seeking a productive space “in between the designations of identity” (Bhabha 1994, 4); just as opacity can be a sign of resistance to domination. Indeed, by creating a not-immediately-legible hybrid space with elements of various traditions, texts can resist, rather than reinforce, Western Orientalist readings. According to Wail Hassan’s work on Arab immigrant writers publishing in English, untranslated lexical items can signal “a refusal to submit the untranslatable to the discursive conditions of Orientalism,” or a refusal to allow the translator to render the Orient comprehensible for the consumption and “discursive mastery” of the West (Hassan 2011, 177). However, hybridity and opacity generally acquire their force of cultural resistance when deployed on behalf of a specific marginalized community or communities. The quotes above refer to the work of Ahdaf Soueif, one of many “minority writers” defamiliarizing English through the “infusion” of words in her own Arabic language (Hassan 2011, 5). Hassan’s study of Soueif’s *The Map of Love* reveals how she uses Arabic in the text to gesture outward to the diversity of Arabic-speaking communities: from long discourses on Arabic grammar leaving many words unglossed to scenes dramatizing the English protagonist’s Arabic lessons, where she is constantly reminded of how the language escapes her knowledge. The fact that Soueif’s novel indexes the vast diversity of real-world communities, in a language that she and many others speak, separates it significantly from Sansal’s invented tongue. The opacity of *abilang* is not the sign of a community refusing to be consumed as a fully knowable subject. *Abilang*’s opacity is, largely, a sign of otherness and unknowability itself.⁸

Just as Orientalism does not exist in a conceptual vacuum, but is elaborated against the idea of the “West,” *abilang* cannot do the work of Orientalism without contrast to Western-coded languages. It is thus equally crucial to examine how *abilang* functions in comparison to other

languages in Sansal's novel: English and Newspeak, but especially French and an unidentified prelapsarian language recorded by Toz, an eccentric who keeps a museum of artifacts from a previous civilization. Through these contrasts, *2084* constructs the opacity, untranslatability, and fanaticism of the "East" compared to the clarity, legibility, and liberty of the "West," even without locating its narrative in either of these two geographical spaces.

The text of *2084* often hints at traces of languages other than *abilang* in Abistan, all of which have been in some way subsumed by the official language. There are various created languages still in use clandestinely in the world of the novel. Some exist primarily as vestiges of Abistan's past: Newspeak is evoked as a model for *abilang* (Sansal 2017, 240), and is present in several lexical items (both "Big Brother" and "Big Eye" appear verbatim in the French and English versions of the novel).⁹ Arabic is also a possible predecessor of *abilang*, evoked in indirect though largely positive tones, as "the language in which the holy book that came before the *Gkabal* was written... A very beautiful, rich, evocative language" (Sansal 2017, 240).

The most intriguing example of a language other than *abilang*, however, appears when Ati and Koa visit Toz and his collection of artifacts. These artifacts are described with words italicized in a manner similar to *abilang*'s quotidian vocabulary:

Ces choses n'existaient pas en Abistan, il les désignait par des mots qu'il avait inventés ou trouvés on ne savait où : le bas du corps depuis la taille était pris dans un *pantalon* et le haut jusqu'au cou dans une *chemise* et une *veste*... les bois peints accrochés aux murs étaient des *tableaux*. (Sansal 2015, 198)

As those things did not exist in Abistan, he referred to them using words he'd made up or found who knows where : the lower part for the body from the waist down was clothed in *trousers* and his torso up to his neck in a *shirt* and *jacket*... the pieces of wood hanging on the wall were *paintings*. (Sansal 2017, 153)

The linguistic status of these italicized utterances from the past is unclear. In the French original they appear in French; in the English translation they appear in English; but in both cases their italicization suggests they belong to a different language than the words surrounding them. As further proof of their difference, several of these words appear unitalicized

elsewhere in the narrative. When Ati leaves the sanatorium, he takes “a shirt, a metal cup, a bowl, his pills, his prayer book, and his talismans” (Sansal 2017, 55). A hundred pages later, when he encounters the words *shirt* and *book* as italicized and spoken by Toz, he reacts as if he has never heard these terms in his life. The physical items “shirt” and “book” are not entirely unfamiliar to Ati. Rather, what is unfamiliar when Toz speaks the words in italics is the language they’re named in: an ancient tongue unknown to the inhabitants of Abistan.

What language, then, are these italicized words uttered in? While the novel itself remains vague on the subject, I posit that the italicized items should be understood as being spoken in French, even in translations that render them in other languages. Several plot details in *2084* strongly hint that the democratic society that predated both Abistan and Angsoc (Orwell’s dictatorship, which forms a part of Abistan’s past) was specifically French, or at least heavily infused with French language and culture. The items that Toz has preserved in his “Museum of Nostalgia” from before the fall are so closely related to French culture that at least two of them are rendered in French even in the English translation, due to the lack of a separate Anglophone equivalent (*pâté* and *chaise longue*). Furthermore, along with his *cigarettes* and *buffets*, Toz has also preserved works of art and artifacts in a 1/5 scale replica of a museum called the “Louvre, or the Loufre” (Sansal 2017, 221). The items in his museum portray the progress of human civilization, and the most specific one (the only artifact to be given a title and an artist) is described as follows:

Un bristol collé au mur disait, en français dans le texte: ‘Bistrot français: loubars à l’ancienne taquinant des femmes légères.’ La gravure était signée: ‘Léo le Fol (1924)’. Une antiquité de la belle époque. (Sansal 2015, 296)

A visiting card glued to the wall said, the text in French: ‘French bistro: old-fashioned delinquents teasing loose women.’ The etching was signed: ‘Léo le Fol (1924).’ An antique from the belle époque. (Sansal 2017, 226)

When it comes to the “Museum of Nostalgia,” even the English translation cannot escape the Frenchness of what has been preserved. It is particularly notable that both the original and the translation remind us that the painting is labeled “in French,” as if the name Léo le Fol, the designation “French bistro,” and evocation of the Belle Époque were not enough to remind readers that it is France’s Louvre (or the scale model thereof)

that preserves culture and democracy. It is also striking to note the specificity with which French is evoked, compared to the vague assurances that a language likely—but not certain—to be Arabic was a “beautiful” part of the past. Toz’s museum, which so clearly preserves not just francophone but specifically *métropolitain* French language and culture, provides the necessary dichotomy to foster *2084*’s Orientalism, by suggesting an opposition between the democratic Francophone “West” and the fanatic Arabophone “East.”

There is a geographically linked linguistic tension in *2084* that in many ways transcends the language in which it is written. The novel consistently uses *abilang*’s Arabic-inspired components to describe a mundane and tech-poor daily life, as well as a fanatical and oppressive religious system. The details of the “Museum of Nostalgia” also strongly suggest French as the language of a glorious democratic past, even in translations of the original. While such elements transcend translation, it is also critical to point out elements of the text whose relationship to Orientalist and post-colonial discourses rely on *2084*’s original context as a French-published, Algerian-authored sequel to Orwell’s classic novel. The fact that these elements cannot travel evenly across translation demonstrates that Orientalism as a theoretical lens can be applied not only to the fictional worlds within novels, but also to how novels circulate and are received in the real world by Western reading publics.

The French empire of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that colonized large parts of the “East” is a spatial and temporal interlocutor of the original *2084* in a way that is far less available in the novel’s English translation. The diglossia of italicized and un-italicized *abilang* is one key that helps us to explore this difference. Un-italicized or “administrative” *abilang*, as discussed earlier, is the linguistic convention for naming Abistan’s administrative offices. Unlike its italicized counterpart, it consists of a set of composite words and acronyms taken from French, such as “le Samo, le comité de la santé morale” (Sansal 2015, 97). In the English edition of the text, these compound names are directly translated into English, as in “the Como, the Committee for Moral Health” (Sansal 2017, 78).

In *2084*’s original version, the italicized/unitalicized *abilang* dichotomy evokes an undemocratic Eastern regime that still names its administrative offices in French, a linguistic gesture that can be mapped on to a structural element of many former French colonies, including Algeria. By the time of Algeria’s independence from France in 1962, the nation had endured over a century of occupation imposing the French language in all

educational and administrative domains. The Arabization of Algeria, for many years, did little to loosen the administrative hold of French, the language in which many of Algeria’s first political leaders were educated. For an Algerian author to write a futuristic authoritarian regime that still names its administrative offices in French is, perhaps, a means of demonstrating the role France played in Algeria’s postcolonial history of political instability. Caution is warranted, of course, against drawing simplistic lines between Algeria’s difficult decolonization and mounting Islamism in the 1990s. Many factors—economic, demographic, and political—must be weighed alongside France’s colonial and neocolonial legacies in Algeria. However, many analysts have highlighted how the “heavy-handed statist approach” of the FLN (forged in opposition to the colonial past but still highly influenced by it), “set the stage for the catastrophic events of the 1990s” (Le Sueur 2010, 2). At the very least, there was certainly a tension, in postcolonial Algeria, between the use of French for administrative matters and the use of classical Arabic for religious matters, a linguistic division complicated by the legacy of French colonialism.¹⁰

There is, then, arguably an element of postcolonial critique in *2084*’s insistence on French as the language of oppressive administration as well as that of democracy. More than the hypothetical proximity to Algerian history, what is of interest here is how unavailable this postcolonial reading of “administrative *abilang*” is for readers of the English translation. While France comes to the fore as the “land of democracy” in both French and English editions of the text (with references like *chaise longue*, *pâté*, *the Belle Époque*, *Louis le Fol*, and the words “printed in French” transcending translation), French is the language of administration only in the original. *2084* in English offers a more straightforward filiation with Orwell. Readers are likely to find that Administrative *abilang* sounds like Newspeak, and appears unrelated to the same French nation whose cultural artifacts reside in the Museum of Nostalgia.

This change has implications beyond the effacing of the postcolonial dimension of the text. A novel that sounds more like Orwell’s also reads as more derivative—a common concern about “translations” of Western classics—whereas its French version is in intertextual dialogue not only with Orwell but also with a long tradition of Algerian authors “writing back” to a French audience. The difference between the original and the translation suggests that there is meaning to be extracted from a reading of *2084* in its original as an “Algerian” text. The converse unavailability of that reading in English suggests that postcolonial interpretation is a

feature of the novel's reception and circulation, rather than exclusively of its content.

This dichotomy raises the broader question of “translating” a Western dystopian classic to an Easternized setting, particularly for circulation among a Francophone audience already potentially primed to read *2084* as an Algerian text. The act of writing back to the Western canon from the margins receives a great deal of attention in postcolonial literary studies, and this issue would not be unfamiliar to Algerian writers like Sansal. Critics have suggested that many of these projects, while appearing to reclaim speech and agency in the service of postcolonial critique, also problematically reassert the centrality of the French, or more broadly Western, canon. One is reminded, for example, of the critiques levied against Algerian author Kamel Daoud's *Meursault, contre-enquête* as “Camus fan fiction” (Sariahmed 2015) pitched to reassure a French audience of the centrality of their literary greats. Not only does this sort of “postcolonial remake” (Brozgal 2016, 38) risk reasserting the importance of a narrow canon of literary classics, it also reinforces the misconception of North African literature as minor tributary of Western literature. Sansal himself has been “reproached for painting a negative portrait of Algeria that resonates strongly in France because it panders to colonial nostalgia” (Dobie 2017, 83), using this negative portrait to sell more books to Western readers. Those readers who suggest that Sansal writes to meet the Orientalist expectations of a Western audience could find, in *2084*, further proof in a narrative of stereotypical Eastern fanaticism, published in France, that reinscribes the centrality of a Western classic.

The perceived perpetuation of Western centrality is not the only issue at stake in rewriting a classic like *1984* from an “Eastern” perspective, however. Various critics have suggested that writing speculative fiction from the margins is particularly fraught because of the genre's structural investment in narratives of colonization and Orientalism. This question is explored directly in Nalo Hopkinson's preface to the anthology *So Long Been Dreaming*, where she wonders aloud whether, because “one of the most familiar memes of science fiction is that of going to foreign countries and colonizing the natives,” postcolonial authors who write in the genre risk being immediately suspected of including those elements in their work (Hopkinson 2004, 7). Hopkinson ultimately denies the inevitability of this interpretation, as have many other scholars of postcolonial speculative fiction, with explorations of how authors can disrupt rather than recapitulate the genre's colonialist fantasies. Against “the long tradition of

European writers using science fiction” in ways that either glorify or critique colonialism, postcolonial narratives have emerged with “a more recent and essential practice of the colonized speaking up in some unity, and speaking up for themselves” (Thrall 2009, 301). Sansal’s dystopian novel raises many similar questions about the position an author adopts when “translating” a classic into a setting at the margins of world literature.

Indeed, place, language, and perspective play an important role in postcolonial re-writings of Western speculative classics. Upinder Mehan’s afterword to *So Long Been Dreaming*, which forms a bookend with Hopkins’ piece, places a great deal of emphasis on language as a means of postcolonializing speculative fiction: “The narrators and characters of [postcolonial] stories make the language of the colonizer their own by reflecting it back but using it to speak unpleasant truths, by expanding its vocabulary and changing its syntax to better accommodate their different world-views, and by ironically appropriating its terms for themselves and their lives” (Mehan 2004, 270). What does this mean, though, for the (admittedly rare) postcolonial speculative fiction text that travels around the world translated out of the “language of the colonizer”? We see the answer clearly in the case of *2084*: once it has been translated, and “administrative *abilang*” no longer resembles French, an interpretative dimension is effaced from the text. And, in the same gesture, its translation into English renders that very same register much more reminiscent of Orwell’s original.

As Sansal “translates” dystopia from *1984* to *2084*, the linguistic change—inserting an opaque and untranslatable “Eastern” language—clearly raises the specter of speculative Orientalism. Yet the ways that other language registers in the novel, like “administrative *abilang*,” resist translation, demonstrate the role of publication and circulation in understanding Orientalism in speculative fiction. Work on postcolonial speculative fiction thus far has largely focused on how texts internally take advantage of their “unfettering from the limits of realistic representationalism” (Burnett 2015, 136) to imagine more equitable futures. However, if we are to celebrate a novel’s use of un-places to remove themselves from the realm of the perpetual postcolonial, we must also think critically about how we reinscribe the novel into those spaces in how we talk about place and language of publication. *2084*, with its complicated relationship to translation and language, ultimately reveals the need for speculative fiction to have not only its own theory of Orientalism, but also its own theory of place and circulation in World Literature.

NOTES

1. Throughout this piece, I have quoted the English translation of the novel, except where linguistic choices of the original are discussed, in which case I have provided the French and English side by side.
2. Popular examples explored in the comprehensive volume *Techno-orientalism: Imagining Asia in Speculative Fiction, History, and Media* include popular TV shows like *Battlestar Galactica* and *Firefly*, films like *Blade Runner* and *Star Wars*, as well as the media and cultural conversation that surround them (2015).
3. Conversations around this publishing dynamic have been present and evolving in the field of North African literary studies for many years. For a range of time periods and approaches, see Kaye and Zoubir 1990, MacDonald 2013, Dobie 2017, and Bentoumi 2020.
4. For further discussion of this tendency, see Dobie 2017 and Bensmaïa 2003.
5. Unlike other dystopian novels to which it has been compared—including London-set *1984* and Houellebecq’s Parisian *Soumission*—there is no geographic location named as any part of Abistan (although some readers have attempted to locate the capital city of Qodsabad on the ruins of Paris, somewhat unconvincingly, and Algiers, rather more persuasively, given its Casbah and location within walking distance of the sea).
6. As previously discussed, other words—particularly place names—have Persian roots. There are also a very small number of elements of *abilang*, like the *-lang* in its name, that come from French. It is important to acknowledge here the limits of my own linguistic analysis: as a speaker of English, French, and Arabic, I am likely to have missed other potential source languages. However, I hope to have demonstrated through these examples the preponderance of Arabic influence: I was able to trace an Arabic-language correspondence for well over two-thirds of the italicized *abilang* vocabulary in the book.
7. The English translation keeps all words and spelling identical to the French original, whereas the Spanish translations make some small phonetic edits for pronunciation (“*makoufs*” becoming “*makufs*” and “*moussim*” becoming “*musim*”). As of the time of publication of this piece, *2084* has not been translated into Arabic.
8. As Deepika Bahri discusses in her article “Hybridity, Redux,” one of the common critiques leveled at Bhabha’s theory of hybridity is its ahistoricism, though Bahri maintains that Bhabha’s anchoring of his theory in the “postcolonial space” (Bahri 2017, 143) saves it from such criticisms. I would argue that *abilang*, which largely seeks to erase any questions of coloniality or provenance—is—if not totally separate from Bhabha’s imagining of hybridity—at least an example of some of its less-historicized and thus more contested applications.

9. Sansal’s texts use the exact English words “Big Brother” rather than the French translation “Grand Frère,” following the convention of French translations of Orwell’s *1984*.
10. This division is not an entirely strict one: its boundaries have shifted over time with policies of Arabization in the public and administrative spheres, as well as the reduction in French’s presence in the education system. It is further complicated by the divisions between the “Classical” Arabic associated with religious matters, the Modern Standard Arabic used in modern media and literature, and the dialectal Arabic spoken in daily life, as well as the importance of Amazigh/Berber languages in the Algerian linguistic landscape. However, at the very least in the years both leading up to and following independence, the division between French for administrative matters and Arabic in the religious sphere exerted a great influence on the development of Algerian politics and history.

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Philip K. Dick in French: A Mutating Voice

Amélie Lespilette

During his seminar given at the Collège International de Philosophie in 1984, Antoine Berman noticed that most translators considered that “translating is finding equivalents” (Berman 1991, 14), to which he rightly objected that this translation concept refuses to introduce the foreignness of the original into the target language (Berman 1991, 15). This issue of transmission or deletion of the foreignness is even more central to science fiction (SF), as the genre projects the readers into foreign worlds filled with their own idiosyncrasies that ought to be preserved during the translation process. Because most of the first French translations of Philip K. Dick were made before the 1990s, they suffered from domestication—that is, adapting the source text to the target reader and culture—which was still a common practice at the time. This inevitably altered the source texts. Since then, Dick’s work has been almost entirely retranslated, allowing his French readership to discover more genuine translations with fewer deficiencies. Through a small sample of Dick’s novels and short stories as well as their multiple (re)translations and (re)translators, this chapter highlights the issues encountered in first translations and analyzes the

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retranslations' improvements as well as their limits. I will first present a brief overview of the history of science fiction in France. Then, I will discuss Berman's retranslation and ethics theories. And finally, I will compare and analyze Dick's (re)translations.

SCIENCE FICTION IN FRANCE

Philip K. Dick's introduction in France began in 1954 with the translation of two short stories *Colony* (*Défense passive*) and *The Short Happy Life of the Brown Oxford* (*le Soulier qui trouva chaussure à son pied*), released in *Galaxie* and *Fiction*, two French SF magazines created in 1953 and respectively based on a partnership with their American counterparts *Galaxy Science Fiction* and *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*. Today, the total number of his works translated into French¹ stands at 37 SF novels, 9 non-SF novels, and 119 short stories. With never-ending new publications and new translations, Dick still stands strong among acclaimed SF writers in France and “[m]ore than mere readers, [he] has found in France real admirers” (Bozzetto 1988, 131). But before going into greater depth on Dick's translations, it is essential to provide some elements of context about the reception of science fiction in France.

Jules Verne's and H.G. Wells' influential role in making the genre is indisputable. Their imprint in France was such that early French SF was largely influenced by one or the other (Baudou 2003, 22). Carried out by writers such as J.H. Rosny the Elder and Maurice Renard, French proto science fiction thrived from the late nineteenth century until the 1940s, but “this ‘golden age’ ... came to an abrupt halt ... with the advent of World War II” (Evans 1989, 260). Because of “the disappearance of an until-then booming ‘pulp’ industry of SF journals and magazines, [among other factors]” (Evans 1989, 260), French SF was not strong enough to pick up where it had left off before the war, but France was nonetheless ready to go on with the genre. Indeed, the 1950s witnessed “an invasion ... of translated ‘golden age’ Anglo-American SF novels from the ‘30s and the ‘40s” (Evans 1989, 261), as well as the creation of three specialized literary collections “where translations represented the main part” (Gattégno 1992, 32) of the releases: *Anticipation* by Fleuve Noir and *Le Rayon fantastique* by Hachette/Gallimard, both in 1951, and *Présence du future* by Denoël in 1954.

Yet it was not until the 1970s that science fiction won over a broader audience in France. Specialized collections flourished to the extent that almost 40 of them existed by the end of the decade. However, this publishing frenzy was only short-lived, and about half of these collections had vanished as soon as the early 1980s (Bréan 2012, 193). Today, science fiction still makes for a small part of the publishing market.² According to Stéphane Marsan—co-creator of Editions Bragelonne, a French publishing house specializing in speculative fiction—there are several explanations for this observation, but the major issue is that “France has a problem with speculative fiction”³ (Marsan 2017, interview). Popular opinion and the book industry still consider science fiction and other types of speculative fiction lesser forms of literature deemed childish and featuring poor-quality writing; they therefore cannot compare with more elitist literary fiction. Marsan evokes⁴ “a cultural and intellectual discrimination” (Marsan 2017, interview), leading to an underrepresentation of these genres in bookstores. Unfortunately, this contempt also persists in French academia, where science fiction—which has been slowly entering universities since the last 20 years—remains underrepresented (Langlet 2012). As a result, science fiction has been primarily studied by the fandom, which has developed its own critical apparatus through specialized magazines⁵ and websites,⁶ as well as a canonical corpus of works and authors through anthologies,⁷ encyclopedias,⁸ and SF literary awards.⁹

Even though the genre never regained the popularity it acquired during the 1970s, the editorial scene has remained lively. In the last decades, several new independent publishing houses like Mnemos (1996), Le Béliat (1996), Bragelonne (2000), or Les Moutons Électriques (2013)—a direct reference to Dick’s famous novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*—to name just a few, have been created by speculative fiction enthusiasts and connoisseurs who are strong advocates for science fiction. Together with larger publishing firms, they provide French audiences with a rich catalogue where (re)translations still prevail, with a predominance of American authors.

TRANSLATING, RETRANSLATING, AND REVISING SCIENCE FICTION

As we have seen above, science fiction and translation have been profoundly connected in France since the mid-twentieth century. Many influential writers like Philip K. Dick, whose short stories were translated between 1954 and 1991, and novels between 1959 and 1989, were first translated at a time when translation was not academically taught, nor was an ethics of translation properly defined. Even though “the translation of science fiction ... was not treated like *Les Belles Infidèles*¹⁰ and rarely taken lightly” (Gouanvic 1999, 73), it was nonetheless subject to “the system of textual deformation that operates in every translation” (Berman 1985, 286). In *La Traduction et la lettre ou l'auberge du lointain* (Berman 1991), Berman observes that most translations tend to be ethnocentric and hypertextual. Before going further, let us define these key concepts. The two main features of ethnocentric translations are first, invisibility—that is, the translated text should not display any sign of the original foreignness but read like an original text written in the target language—and second, primacy of meaning: translations should have the same impact on the target reader and the source reader. Hypertextual applies to translations that disregard the literary form of the source text, thus resulting in the creation of an adaptation, an imitation, or a parody (Berman 1991, 35), rather than an actual translation. Berman also remarks that ethnocentrism and hypertextuality are intrinsically linked: to make the translation invisible, translators use hypertextual literary processes (Berman 1991, 35) to fit the target language. Because “every translator is inescapably exposed to this play of forces [i.e., ethnocentrism and hypertextuality], even if he (or she) is animated by another aim” (Berman 1985, 286), Berman calls for a “reflection on the ... *ethical* aim of the translating act” (Berman 1985, 285). He then postulates that translation should receive “the Foreign as Foreign” (Berman 1985, 286) and avoid domestication—that is, removing any traces of otherness from the source text to prevent the target reader from being unsettled by the foreignness of the original.

Of course, altering the strangeness of a foreign literary work always leads to deforming it to various degrees, but we can argue that the potential damages are even more severe when it comes to science fiction. Indeed, the essence of SF being the creation of alternate realities, frequently as a way to critique our own reality, source texts feature not only the foreignness of the authors and their cultures but also the foreignness of their own

imaginary worlds. Unlike the lifelike fictional worlds encountered in realistic literature, the worlds created in science fiction are often alien to the fundamental scientific and/or social laws of our reality. This foreignness is a vital element of the SF genre, as Darko Suvin describes it in *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, and therefore it is crucial to preserve its integrity during the translation process:

SF is ... a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment. (Suvin 2016, 20)

With that in mind, it is most likely that many of the translations made before the 1990s domesticated the originals to some extent, even more so because, as SF translator H el ene Collon remarks it in an interview: “during the 1950s and 1960s, texts were not as respected as nowadays, especially science fiction ones ... and translators would use dated slang close to noir fiction” (Ch ery 2017). This is probably one of the reasons why Philip K. Dick, for instance, has been massively retranslated since the 1990s, with only five novels remaining unretranslated across his colossal body of work.¹¹ Indeed, according to Berman, “retranslation emerges from the necessity to reduce the original [translation’s] faultiness” (Berman 1990, 5), thus making it the ultimate restorative process. For the purposes of this chapter, “retranslation” will be considered as “new [whole or partial] translation in the same target language, of a work already translated in this language [i.e.,] any translation made after a first translation” (Chevrel 2010, 11), which includes any revision of an existing translation. Through his “retranslation hypothesis,” Berman points out the dichotomy of translation—initially target-oriented and then source-oriented—as described by Yves Gambier:

[F]ollowing Berman (1986 and 1990) we can say that first translations always tend to be rather assimilative, to reduce foreignness in the name of cultural, editorial imperatives ... Retranslation under these circumstances would be a return to the source text. (Gambier 1994, 414)

Berman’s point of view, which is far from unanimous, would imply that (re)translators are always more source-oriented than their predecessors. And while the best way to achieve the most faithful translation is still a

divisive issue among translators, it seems rather difficult to generalize about the orientation taken by retranslations. So, if retranslation can be a great tool to reinstate the original foreignness and reduce translation flaws, it “cannot be a direct return always closer to the source text” (Gambier 2012, 59).

With 23 novels and 90 short stories translated twice, and 9 novels and 28 short stories translated thrice over a 60-year period—from 1954 to 2002 for the first translations, and from 1973 to 2014 for the retranslations—by at least 65¹² different translators, Philip K. Dick provides us with an exceptional opportunity to observe both the effects and the limits of translation and retranslation on SF texts.

PHILIP K. DICK IN FRENCH, A JOURNEY THROUGH TRANSLATION

It has been said far too often that Dick’s writing is of low quality and without style (Goimard 2002, 306), but as Goimard reminds us, “what we hear in the first place is the translator’s voice” (Goimard 2002, 306). Considering the numerous translators who have worked on Dick’s translations, French audiences have had access to a plurality of voices that have affected Dick’s words and worlds in their own way. Through a selection of Dick’s original texts and their (re)translations, we will see how the issues with ethnocentrism, hypertextuality, and foreignness, which are more prominent in first translations, tend to be reduced in retranslations without being entirely resolved.

The first translation of “The Father-Thing” is an excellent example of hypertextuality. It contains extensive cuts and several summaries of the original text and complete rewritings in which the translator inserted his own material, the most blatant example being the alteration of the ending. Released in the American magazine *Fantasy & Science Fiction* in 1954, the short story was translated by Alain Dorémieux in 1956 under the title “Le Père truqué” (The Rigged Father) and then revised in 1995 by Hélène Collon with the same title. Set in 1950s suburban America, “The Father-Thing” tells the story of a young boy named Charlie who witnesses his father being killed and replaced by an unknown creature. He then seeks out help from two other boys from his neighborhood, Peretti and Daniels, to eliminate the father-thing and the other creatures they discover. The extract below, which concludes the short story, takes place just after

Daniels killed the father-thing and shows the boys on the verge of setting all the creature's larvae on fire:

"We better make sure," Daniels said grimly. He picked up the heavy drum of kerosene and lugged it to the edge of the bamboo. "It dropped some matches in the driveway. You get them, Peretti." They looked at each other.

"Sure," Peretti said softly.

"We better turn on the hose," Charles said. "To make sure it doesn't spread."

"Let's get going," Peretti said impatiently. He was already moving off. Charles quickly followed him and they began searching for the matches, in the moonlit darkness. (Dick 1999)

While in Dick's version, the creature's hypothetical origin is never discussed, Dorémieux's translation makes an explicit reference to the planet Mars at the end (highlighted in bold). To point out the differences between the two versions, I have translated Dorémieux's text as literally as possible:

"For all the others, we better make sure ...," he said with a fierce smile. "Go get the kerosene."

Bobby [Daniels] walked away.

"This creature ...," exhaled Charles.

"You wonder where it came from? Maybe from the ground, maybe it slept a very very long time and then it woke up ... Maybe it comes from elsewhere."

"You mean from Mars?"

"I don't know ..." Tony [Peretti] looked around him. "It's better that we never know."

He turned back.

"Come get the matches."

He was already walking away; Charles hastened behind him. They walked silently under the moonlight. (Dick 1989a, 125; Dorémieux tr.)

This alteration of the original is not insignificant. In adding this extra-terrestrial element, the translator increases the story's science-fictional scope and, therefore, the fictive world's foreignness. As we can see below through my literal translation, Collon's revision removed Doremieux's additions to deliver a version much closer to the source text:

“Might as well go all the way,” Daniels said severely. He went back to the garage, but soon came back dragging the heavy barrel of kerosene. “It dropped some matches in the driveway. Go get them, Peretti.”

They looked at each other.

“Yeah, you’re right,” answered Peretti.

“We should still take the garden hose,” Charles intervened. “In case the fire spreads.”

“Let’s go,” said Peretti impatiently, already walking away. Charles quickly followed suit and they began searching for the matches in the moonlight. (Dick 2006, 1403; Collon tr.)

There is no documentation to explain why Dorémieux made such a choice, but I believe that this was an attempt to counterbalance the loss of dramatic tension due to the numerous changes in his text. In Dorémieux’s shorter version, the plot appears rather quickly and easily resolved; this alleviates the difficulties encountered by the three young protagonists. The complete removal of the extract below, for instance, prevents the French reader from measuring how perilous their situation is and, in doing so, eliminates an element of suspense:

Peretti halted after a short time. “I’ll guard. It might be dangerous. The father-thing might come and try to stop us.” He posted himself on the back step with his BB gun while Charles and Bobby Daniels searched. (Dick 1999)

In this case, again, Collon’s version reinstates the original work’s integrity by reintroducing this passage in the French translation:

It was not long before Peretti gave up. “I’ll be on the lookout. What we’re doing might be dangerous. The Father-Thing might come and try to stop us.” With these words, he posted himself on the back step, air-rifle in hand, while the other two continued to comb the garden. (Dick 2006, 1397; Collon tr.)

Another significant try to give gravitas back to the narrative in Dorémieux’s text is visible in the augmented translation of Dick’s brief and relatively neutral description of the larva. “It stirred a little, moved its arm feebly.” (Dick 1999) Dorémieux’s translation depicts a horrifying scene by giving a gruesome description of the larva and making Charles “sick with horror,” thus distorting once again the source text’s foreignness by displacing it toward the horror genre:

Sick with horror, Charles watched it, fascinated. He saw a tremor run through it like a lump of soft flesh. Slowly, it stirred. The ill-shaped arms moved weakly in the dark. A stale odor was spreading. [...] Charles screamed. (Dick 1989a, 123; Dorémieux tr.)

This alteration is then corrected in the second translation, which is overall more faithful to the source text:

Besides, it stirred weakly and moved its arm. (Dick 2006, 1402; Collon tr.)

It is impossible to know for sure why Dorémieux delivered an adaptation rather than a proper translation. Perhaps he wrote what he thought the French readership was expecting to find in the SF magazine *Fiction*, or perhaps this was due to space and editing constraints, yet these reasons would qualify as ethnocentrism. But what is certain is that French readers had to wait until the mid-1990s to discover, for the first time, the mostly unaltered and entire short story.

Despite the considerable corrections brought by the second translation, one crucial point remains unsolved: how to efficiently translate the “it” pronoun that refers to the father-thing:

It ate him while I was inside. Then **it** came in the house. **It** pretended **it** was him. But **it** isn’t. **It** killed him and ate his insides. (Dick 1999)

The use of this pronoun makes it evident for the English reader that the father-thing is more “thing” than “father.” But in French, where there is no equivalent for this neutral pronoun, the reader cannot perceive this distinction:

I ran home. And then “**he**” killed him, he filled himself with him and he came to us pretending to be him. (Dick 1989a, 117; Dorémieux tr.)

He ate my father while I was in the kitchen. Then **he** arrived. **He** was pretending to be my father, but it wasn’t true. **He** killed him and ate everything that was inside. (Dick 2006, 1395; Collon tr.)

In these extracts, we can observe the French translators’ challenge in rendering the ambiguity and dread carried by the pronoun “it.” Because there is no French equivalent, they resorted to using typographic

markers—quotation marks in the first translation, italics in the retranslation—to make the reader know that this “he” pronoun bears much more meaning than a regular one. But even with this strategy, the translations are approximate, since they lose the explicit reference of the father being not just something strange, unknown, but also a *thing*. This loss of meaning is accentuated by the translation of the compound noun “father-thing” itself. Indeed, while “father-thing” is relatively self-explanatory and easily triggers the reader’s imagination, “père truqué” (rigged father), however, is quite obscure. In the passage below, I think that Collon’s retranslation gives us a good solution to fix this issue:

The father-thing was coming up the stairs, nearer and nearer. “Charles!” **it** shouted angrily. “Are you up there?” (Dick 1999)

Up the stairs **the rigged father** was coming. Nearer and nearer ...

“Charles! Charles!” said the rigged father. “Are you up there?” (Dick 1989a, 114; Dorémieux tr.)

The thing-Father (la chose-Père), the rigged father (le père truqué), was coming up the stairs. Nearer and nearer from him ... “Charles!” **he** shouted angrily. “Are you up there?” (Dick 2006, 1391; Collon tr.)

First, by translating “the father-thing” as “la chose-Père” (the thing-Father), it brings back the notion that the father is above all a thing, a creature. Secondly, in doing so, it would allow the translator to shift from the “il” (he) pronoun used for “le père truqué”—“père” is a masculine noun—to the “elle” (she) pronoun used for “la chose-Père”—“chose” is a feminine noun:

The thing-Father was coming up the stairs. Nearer and nearer to him ... “Charles!” **she** shouted angrily. (Collon’s translation, modified by me)

This pronoun swap highlights the peculiar nature of the father-thing by shifting the focus to “la chose” (the thing) instead of “le père” (the father), just like the “it” pronoun does. This allows the translation to come closer to the original’s foreignness.

Hypertextuality can also manifest through register changes as in the short novel *War Game*. Published in 1959 in the American *Galaxy Magazine*, it was first translated into French in 1965 by Pierre Billon

under the name *Jeu de guerre*, then retranslated by Alain Dorémieux in 1979 and finally revised in 1997 by H el ene Collon with a slight title modification, *Un jeu guerrier*. The story is about a group of toy safety inspectors in charge of examining toys made by aliens to determine if they are safe to be imported and sold on Earth. Particularly suspicious about a game involving soldiers attacking a citadel, they discuss its potential threat to humans in the following quotation:

“The next one [soldier],” Wiseman finished, “may have them make a ninety-degree turn and **start firing** at the nearest human being.” (Dick 2002c, 115)

While the original style is neutral, Billon’s choice to translate “start firing” by “canarder” results in a colloquial tone to the text that was not intended in the original:

«...la derni ere peut aussi bien leur faire ex ecuter un virage   quatre-vingt-dix degr es pour **canarder** l’ tre humain le plus proche, » acheva Wiseman. (Dick 1965, 139; Billon tr.)

Indeed, though the meaning of “canarder” (to fire at someone multiple shots while being shielded) is not that far from the meaning of “to fire,” it does not belong to the same register. Moreover, because “canarder” is an informal term associated with noir novels, this register modification drags the text toward a different genre. On the other hand, the two succeeding translators, by using the verb “tirer,” which is the expected translation of the verb “to fire,” bring back the translation to the initial neutral tone:

... la derni ere peut aussi bien les faire **tirer** sur l’ tre humain le plus proche, acheva Wiseman. (Dick 1989c, 246; Dor emieux tr.)

... en former une qui les pousse   prendre un virage   90 degr es et   **tirer** sur le plus proche  tre humain, acheva Wiseman. (Dick 2002d, 510; Collon tr.)

However, improper rendition of registers is not merely found in first translations. In the following example from *The Father Thing*, Dick describes the atmosphere as the three boys hunt down the commanding creature in Charles’ backyard: “The moon had come out; a cold, misty light **filtered down** over everything” (Dick 1999). We can notice that the

description is simple and made with no particular literary style, which is not the case in the French translations. Indeed, Dorémieux's clause "lais-sait suinter son jour froid" (leaving its cold day oozing) as an adaptation of "misty light filtered down over everything" adds a slight poetic tone to the text:

La lune s'était levée et laissait **suinter** son jour froid. (Dick 1989a, 119; Dorémieux tr.)

The moon had come out, leaving its cold day **oozing**.

This is then emphasized in Collon's translation of "to filter down" by the very literary verb "nimber" (to surround something or someone with a halo), which elevates both the register and the source text's style; and can be translated as "to enshroud":

La lune s'était levée, **nimbant** le jardin d'une clarté froide et brumeuse. (Dick 2006, 1397; Collon tr.)

The moon had come out, **enshrouding** the garden with a cold and hazy glow.

Considering that Collon describes Dick's writing style as "without flourish nor research" (Chéry 2017), I believe that this overtranslation is a sign of—conscious or unconscious—ethnocentrism from the translator. Indeed, Berman observes that one of the specificities of ethnocentric translation is that it does not feel like a translation, but rather gives the impression that the original text was written in the target language from the start (Berman 1991, 35). He then adds that for a French translation to reach this level of invisibility, it should be written in what feels like great literature, that is, using classical French (Berman 1991, 35) that showcases the beauty of the French language through a higher aesthetic and a certain richness of style which are fundamentally opposed to Dick's raw writing aesthetic.

As we have seen before, ethnocentric translations can be prejudicial to the source text's foreignness at different levels. One great example can be found in the translations of *What the Dead Men Say*. The novella was published in 1964 in the magazine *Worlds of Tomorrow* and was translated into French three times, first by Pierre Billon in 1964 with the title *La Voix venue du ciel* (The voice coming from the sky), then by Alain Dorémieux in 1979 with the title *Ce que disent les morts* (What the dead say) and

finally by H el ene Collon in 1997 under the same title. In this story, a recently deceased tycoon named Louis Sarapis is placed in cryosleep, allowing him to be brought back to life for short intervals when needed, in order that he can continue to manage his company. But after his resuscitation failure, Sarapis' voice is mysteriously heard by a lunar base, and then everywhere on Earth, through radios, televisions, and phones. Johnny Barefoot, one of Sarapis' employees in charge of supervising the half-life procedure, is obviously from a Native American background, as his name—which was kept intact in the French translation—and the adjective “Chiricahua” used in the quotation below points out:

She reached up and brushed the black, shiny **Chiricahua** hair back from his (Johnny Barefoot) forehead. (Dick 2002e, 131)

However, the first and second translators chose to remove the reference to Johnny Barefoot's origins, consequently altering the source text's foreignness:

She reached up and brushed the black and shiny strands of hair that fell on his forehead. (Dick 1964, 72; Billon tr.)

With her hand, she lifted the black and shiny strands of hair that fell on his forehead. (Dick 1989d, 265; Dor emieux tr.)

Although “Chiricahua” is most definitely reminiscent of a Native American tribe to an American reader, it might not be the same for a French one; therefore, keeping it in the translation was probably deemed irrelevant. The third translation shows us how it is possible to preserve the original foreignness and make it accessible to the target reader with a minor alteration by changing “Chiricahua”—one of the tribes included in the Apache group—for the better-known “Apache”:

With her hand, she lifted the black and shiny strands of hair, **indicative of his Apache origins**, that fell on his forehead. (Dick 2002f, 639; Collon tr.)

Ethnocentrism can also impact the author's science-fictional world, like in both translations of *Now Wait for Last Year*. Published in the United States in 1966, the novel was translated in 1968 by Michel Deutsch with the title *En attendant l'ann ee derni ere* (Awaiting last year) and revised by

Nathalie Mège in 2013 with the same title. Set during an intergalactic war involving the ‘Starmen and the Reegs, the novel tells the story of Earth inhabitant Eric Sweetscent, who gets caught up in war politics and addicted to the JJ-180 drug, which makes him travel through time. In the quotation below, Dick gives his readers some details about the ‘Starmen species. One of their key features is their resemblance to regular Earth inhabitants:

[T]he ‘Starmen were phycomycetous mentally, but morphologically they could not be distinguished from **Terrans**. (Dick 2011, ch. 2)

While the French adjective “Terriens” (Earthlings) chose by both translators to translate “Terrans” seems to convey the same meaning as the original, that is, “inhabitants of the planet Earth,” there is nonetheless a slight but crucial difference between the two of them:

Sur le plan morphologique, en effet, rien ne les distinguait des **Terriens**. (Dick 1977, 34; Deutsch tr.)

En effet, s'ils avaient un mental de phycomycètes, rien ne les distinguait des **Terriens** sur le plan morphologique. (Dick 2015, 34; Mège tr.)

If we search for “Terran” in the Corpus of Contemporary American English, we can notice that the 423 occurrences of the word found in the database are used in the context of science fiction. This English word conveys an entire image that is not accessible to the French reader anymore. Indeed, “terrans” implies that the author is talking about Earth inhabitants in a context where fully developed extra-terrestrial civilizations cohabit with a human civilization from Earth, but the French word “terriens” (earthlings) is lacking this implicit science-fictional dimension. As it confers the image of Earth’s inhabitants in our actual system of reality, that is, with no civilization other than human, using “terriens” alters the foreignness of the original text and fictive world.

In the example above, “Terrans” is what Marc Angenot calls a “fictive word—[a word] created by SF writers to convey a feeling of estrangement” (Angenot 1979) that is necessary to build tangible SF worlds. Fictive words require special attention when it comes to translating them. Even though Philip K Dick’s science fiction primarily depicts “everyday life, under realistically described systems of economy and politics” (Kucukalic 2009), several fictive words can be found in his texts. We will only consider a few of them for this chapter.

“Conapt”: Condominium Apartment

Found in several of Dick’s texts,¹³ this fictive word is not always translated the same way or translated at all, depending on the translator. For instance, in the case of “We Can Remember It for You Wholesale,” a short story published in 1966 in the United States, the first translation made by Michel Demuth in 1966 with the title *De mémoire d’homme* (In man’s memory), shows that “conapt” (Dick 2002g) is either translated as “appartement” (apartment) (Dick 1966; Demuth tr.) or cut out, whereas the following translations by Bernard Raison in 1984 under the title *Souvenirs garantis, prix raisonnables* (Guaranteed memories, affordable prices) and by Helene Collon in 1998 with the title *Souvenirs à vendre* (Memories to sell), keep the fictive word “conapt” (Dick 1984; Raison tr.) (Dick 2002h; Collon tr.) untranslated.

Another example is the novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, published in 1968 in the United States, and its two translations. In the first one, by Serge Quadrupani in 1976 with the title *Robot Blues*, “conapt” (Dick 2007) is translated as “coprop,” (Dick 2008; Quadrupani tr.) which is short for “copropriété” (condominium), while in the second one released in 2012, titled *Blade Runner – Les Androïdes rêvent-ils de moutons électriques?*, Sebastien Guillot (Dick 2019; Guillot tr.) chose to keep the original fictive word. As a result, the French readers of these two first versions were deprived of experiencing the science-fictional foreignness carried by the word “conapt.” Moreover, the inconsistency of translation also prevents readers from becoming aware of the intertextuality created by the use of “conapt” in other of Dick’s texts.

“Precog”: A Mutant Who Can Predict the Future

Just like “conapt,” “precog” translation is not similar across all the French translations which impaired intertextuality. In both *Now Wait for Last Year* translations, “precog” (Dick 2011) is translated by “cognitive” (Dick 1977; Demuth tr.) (Dick 2015; Mège tr.). But when it comes to the short novel *Minority Report*, published in 1956 in the United States, we can note that in the first translation made by Mary Rosenthal in 1975 titled *Rapport Minoritaire*, “precog” (Dick 2002a) is either translated by “télépathe” or “préconnaissant” (preknowing) (Dick 1989b; Rosenthal tr.). The fictive word “precog” (Dick 2002b; Collon tr.) was then restored in Collon’s retranslation published in 1997 with the same title.

“Homeopape”: An Automated Device That Produces Newspapers

Within this chapter’s corpus, this fictive word is found in the 1969 novel *Ubik* (Dick 2012), *Now Wait for Last Year*, and “We Can Remember It for You Wholesale”, and is either translated into French by “homéo-journal” or “homéojournal.” But what is surprising is that in the second translation of *What the Dead Men Say* made in 1979, Dorémieux—who also translated *Ubik* in 1970 (Dick 2016; Dorémieux tr.)—inserted “homéojournal” even though “homeopape” was not in the original text, thus introducing intertextuality where it should not have been:

At a newsstand, Claude St. Cyr tossed down coins, picked up the **newspaper**. (Dick 2002e, 164)

Claude St-Cyr jeta une pièce de monnaie sur le comptoir et prit un **homéojournal**. (Dick 1989d, 305; Dorémieux tr.)

The addition was not kept in Collon’s retranslation, which translated “newspaper” by “journal,” as it should have been, just like in the first translation by Billon:

Claude St-Cyr jeta quelques piécettes sur le comptoir du kiosque à journaux, prit son **journal**. (Dick 1964, 100; Billon tr.)

Claude St-Cyr s’arrêta devant un présentoir de presse, jeta quelques pièces de monnaie et prit le **journal**. (Dick 2002f, 152; Collon tr.)

To conclude this section, I would like to quickly address the case of fictive words invented by the translator through the example of “furtidague” encountered in the third translation of “We Can Remember It for You Wholesale” made by Collon in 1998:

A one poscred **sneaky-pete** side arm. (Dick 2002g, 272)

Une arme **portative** à un crédit. (Dick 1966, 97; Demuth tr.)

Une arme **électronique** à un poscred. (Dick 1991, 77; Raison tr.)

Une **furtidague** à un poscred. (Dick 2002h, 230; Collon tr.)

We can see how all the translators misunderstood or voluntarily adapted the compound name “sneaky-pete”—which means “cheap wine” in slang. While in the original text, the “side arm” is qualified as “cheap,” it is successively described in French as “portative” (portable), “électronique” to eventually become a whole new piece of equipment, a “furtidague.” Built from two words, “furtif” (furtive) and “dague” (dagger), it has a close similarity with Dick’s way of forming neologisms and could easily pass as one of them. Although this addition from the translator blends perfectly with Dick’s style, it is still problematic as it introduces a technology feature that the author did not intend, and therefore increases the science-fictional feel of the extract.

Even though, as Collon says, “it is not that complicated to invent French neologisms to translate English linguistic inventions” (Chéry 2017), it is fundamental to keep in mind that their translation is not simply a question of meaning but also of preserving the foreignness and intertextuality of the original work.

This brief comparative analysis allows us to place Berman’s retranslation theory and translation ethics into perspective and reflect on their ramifications when it comes to science fiction. In accordance with Berman, we have observed how first translations tend to be more detrimental to the source text, due to widespread ethnocentrism and hypertextuality. This chapter shows that these deformations impact science fiction texts more heavily than realistic ones, as they modify both the source texts and the alien worlds they foster. Retranslation, then, appears to be the best way to bring the writer’s voice back to the foreground, by delivering a translation closer to the original work. However, when it comes to science-fictional foreignness and intertextuality, retranslations remain imperfect and can produce their share of deficiencies. But retranslation bears another significant advantage in Dick’s case, as it allows his translators’ number to be drastically reduced. Only six different translators have been working on his texts since the mid-1990s; this consistency can only benefit his work’s cohesion.

ORIGINAL FRENCH TRANSLATIONS

Pages 149–150:

- « Pour tous les autres, autant être sûr ..., dit-il avec un sourire féroce.
Va chercher le pétrole.
Bobby s'éloigna.
- Cette bête..., souffla Charles.

— Tu cherches d'où elle venait ? Peut-être de la terre, peut-être qu'elle a dormi très longtemps et qu'elle s'est réveillée... Peut-être qu'elle vient d'ailleurs.

— Tu veux dire de la planète Mars ?

— Je ne sais pas... » Tony regarda autour de lui. « Il vaut mieux qu'on ne le sache jamais. »

Il fit demi-tour.

— « Viens chercher les allumettes. »

Déjà il s'éloignait ; Charles se hâta de le suivre. Ils marchèrent sans parler au clair de lune. (Dorémieux)

— « Autant aller jusqu'au bout », dit Daniels d'un air sérieux. Il repartit vers le garage, mais revint bientôt en traînant le lourd baril de pétrole. « Il a laissé tomber des allumettes dans l'allée. Va les chercher, Peretti. »

Ils s'entre-regardèrent.

« Ouais, t'as raison, répondit l'interpellé.

— On devrait quand même prendre le tuyau d'arrosage, intervint Charles. Au cas où le feu s'étendrait.

— On y va », conclut impatiemment Peretti, qui s'éloignait déjà.

Charles lui emboîta prestement le pas et ils se mirent en quête des allumettes au clair de lune. (Collon)

Pages 150–151:

Peretti ne tarda pas à déclarer forfait. « Moi, je vais faire le guet. C'est peut-être dangereux, ce qu'on fait. Le faux père pourrait venir nous en empêcher. » Sur ces mots, il alla se poster sur le pas de la porte de service, carabine en main, pendant que les deux autres continuaient de ratisser le jardin. (Collon)

Malade d'horreur, Charles l'observa comme fasciné. Il vit un tressaument la parcourir comme une masse de chair molle. Lentement, elle remuait. Les bras mal façonnés s'agitaient faiblement dans l'ombre. Une odeur fade se répandait. [...] Charles hurla. (Dorémieux)

D'ailleurs, elle remua faiblement et agita le bras. (Collon)

Page 151:

« Je me suis sauvé à la maison. Et puis « il » l'a tué, il s'est rempli de lui et il est venu en faisant semblant d'être lui. » (Dorémieux)

« C'est pendant que j'étais dans la cuisine qu'il a mangé mon père.

Puis il est arrivé. Il faisait semblant d'être mon père, mais ce n'est pas vrai.

Il l'a tué et il a mangé tout ce qu'il y avait à l'intérieur. » (Collon)

Page 152:

Dans l'escalier montait le père truqué. Toujours plus près, toujours plus près ...

— Charles ! Charles ! prononçait le père truqué. Tu es là-haut ? (Dorémieux)

La chose-Père, le père truqué, montait l'escalier. Toujours plus près, toujours plus près de lui... « Charles ! » lançait-il avec colère. (Collon)

Page 155:

Elle leva la main et repoussa les mèches noire et brillantes qui tombaient sur son front. (Billon)

Elle releva de la main les mèches noires et brillantes qui lui tombaient sur le front. (Dorémieux)

Elle releva de la main les mèches noires et brillantes, révélatrices de ses origines apaches, qui lui tombaient sur le front. (Collon)

NOTES

1. The research for this paper is based on Philip K Dick's bibliography gathered in Collon 2005, and on the bibliography available on the website quarante-deux.org, which specializes in science fiction.
2. In an interview for franceinfo, Audrey Petit, editor at Livre de Poche, and Laëtitia Rondeau, a publishing assistant at the same house, said that "SF, Fantasy and Fantastic literatures represent approximately 7% of the publishing market" Boticelli (2018).
3. "Marsan evokes "a cultural and intellectual discrimination" (Marsan 2017, interview)" is from the same interview by Gary Nicolas.
4. *ibid.*
5. For instance, *Fiction* (1953–1990), *Satellite* (1958–1962), *Galaxie* (1953–1959 & 1964–1977), and the more recent *Galaxies-SF* (1996–2007) and *Bifrost* created in 1996.
6. For example, quarante-deux.org, a very complete website created in 1994, that gathers extensive bibliographies, literary critics and articles on the topic of SF.
7. One of the most famous, *La Grande anthologie de la science-fiction*, was created by Jacques Goimard, Gérard Klein and Demètre Loakimidis in 1966 and published 42 thematic short story collections.
8. Several encyclopedias were published, such as *L'Encyclopédie de poche de la science-fiction* written by Claude Aziza and Jacques Goimard in 1986 or *La Science-fiction* by Gilbert Millet and Denis Labbé in 2001.

9. Many awards have been created over the years for a total of 12 still existing currently. The first ever created was the Jules Verne Award (1927–1933 & 1958–1963) and more recently the Extraordinaire des Utopiales Award in 2015.
10. « *Les Belles Infidèles* » refers to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literary translations, whose aim was to adapt the original texts to suit French literary and social conventions as much as possible.
11. To this day, only 5 out of his 37 novels have not been retranslated: *Ubik* – Dick, Philip K, *Ubik*, trans. A. Dorémieux, Ailleurs et demain, Robert Laffont, 1970. *A Maze of Death* – Dick, Philip K, *Au bout du labyrinthe*, trans. A. Dorémieux, Ailleurs et demain, Robert Laffont, 1972. *Deus Irae* – Dick, Philip K, *Deus Irae*, trans. F. Cortano, Présence du futur, Denoël, 1977. *A Scanner Darkly* – Dick, Philip K, *Substance morte*, trans. R. Louit, Présence du futur, Denoël, 1978. *The Dark-Haired Girl* – Dick, Philip K, *la Fille aux cheveux noirs*, trans. G. Goulet, Folio Science-fiction, Gallimard, 2002. However, his entire body of short stories has been retranslated and, or, revised.
12. The first translations of *Autofac* (1956, Galaxie), *Colony* (1954, Galaxie), *Expendable* (1954, Fiction) and *The Short Happy Life of the Brown Oxford* (1954, Fiction) are from unknown translators, so it is impossible to know the exact number.
13. So far, I have found occurrences of “conapt” in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, *Now Wait for Last Year*, “We Can Remember It for You Wholesale”, *Precious Artifact*, *Retreat Syndrome*, *Faith of Our Fathers*, *The Day Mr. Computer Fell out of its Tree*, and *Ubik*.

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Ponying the Slovos: A Parallel Linguistic Analysis of *A Clockwork Orange* in English, French, and Spanish

Niall Curry, Jim Clarke, and Benet Vincent

INTRODUCTION

The dystopian novella *A Clockwork Orange* (henceforth *ACO*), written by English polymath Anthony Burgess, was first published in 1962 and, following the global success of its cinematic adaptation by Stanley Kubrick, the novella became Burgess's most successful book. It remains popular to this day, selling around 150,000 copies annually almost 60 years later. This influential work of science fiction provides a dark vision of a grim urban world populated by feral teen gangs. Among its unique features is the invented idiolect in which it is written, Nadsat. Nadsat, a transliteration of

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the Russian suffix *-надцать*, which approximates to the English term ‘teen’, is the slang argot of the novella’s protagonist and narrator, Alex. This name derives from the fact that, as discussed below, Nadsat comprises significantly of an Anglicised Russian lexis, in addition to other morphological variations such as rhyming slang and baby talk. As an invented language, or, more precisely, anti-language—a deliberately obscure argot created by a group that sets itself up in opposition to the values of the society in which it exists, for example Cockney rhyming slang (Fowler 1979; Halliday 1976)—Nadsat has no organic acculturation beyond the artistic creation of *ACO* and its ancillary artistic creations (see Burgess 2012 for examples of these).

As such, there is a paucity of linguistic knowledge surrounding the development of Nadsat; this has posed a set of challenges to the more than fifty translators who have worked on *ACO*. Nadsat is based on various linguistic components, most prominently anglicised Russian lexis. Without a foundation on which to base translations of Nadsat, translators are challenged to find a means to convey its complexities and nuances. Another aspect to this challenge, in line with Burgess’s (1972b, 2002) view of what Nadsat should achieve, is to force readers to attain fluency in Nadsat and thereby be brainwashed into seeing the world as Alex sees it, in parallel with the brainwashing technique performed upon Alex by government medics. Understanding the ways translators go about this illuminates their translation strategies and reveals functional and creative elements of the praxis of literary translation.

In this chapter, we compare two of the most established translations of *ACO*: the French and Spanish translations. The French translation, *L’Orange Mécanique* (Burgess 1972a; henceforth *LOM*), by Georges Belmont and Hortense Chabrier, was first published in 1972 in the wake of the release of the cinematic adaptation by Stanley Kubrick; it has remained in publication ever since as the sole French translation. Similarly, the Spanish translation *La Naranja Mecánica* (Burgess 2007; henceforth *LNM*), by the Argentinian translator Anibal Leal, was first published in 1971 and has remained the sole translation in the Hispanophone world. For this analysis, we draw on corpus linguistic techniques to identify, analyse, and categorise Nadsat in each language, building on previous work in Vincent and Clarke (2017, 2020). Our primary focus in approaching these two translations is to use quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis to determine what similarities and differences are apparent in their

treatment of Nadsat. A further aspect of analysis relevant to translation arises from a noteworthy anomaly with the Leal translation that distinguishes it from the French translation. Anthony Burgess's original novella, published by Heinemann in London in 1962, featured twenty-one chapters. However, the Norton edition published in the United States a year later omitted the final chapter, and it was this version which was filmed by Kubrick. The Leal translation, and a number of others, worked from this Norton edition and hence omitted the final chapter. Only in the current century was this omission resolved in the Spanish translation, when Ana Quijada Vargas was commissioned to translate it to be appended to Leal's original translation. The Leal/Quijada Vargas translation thus offers a unique opportunity to investigate both the development of Spanish-Nadsat and intra-translation variation between the two Spanish-language translators.

BURGESS'S NADSAT IN ENGLISH, FRENCH, AND SPANISH

Nadsat poses stylistic and creative challenges for translators, since it is composed of different categories that draw on different word-formation principles, including the introduction of Russian words (e.g. *droog* from *друг* to mean 'friend'), baby talk (*skollimol* for 'school') and wordplay such as *syphilised* ('civilised') (Vincent and Clarke 2017). Work comparing Nadsat in *ACO* and *LOM* (Vincent and Clarke 2020) shows a number of key similarities and differences in its realisation. Among the differences seen in French-Nadsat was the lack of archaic words, such as 'thou', and the use of a new category of anglicised words, such as the verb 'drinker' used for 'to drink' instead of standard French *boire*. Key differences often result from specific strategies used by the French translators centring on translating Nadsat composition processes, rather than being confined strictly to a word-by-word literal translation (Pochon 2010, 98). Such an approach positions Nadsat as the third language, separated from English and French, and allows for increased creativity through substitution (Gimbert and Zabalbeascoa 2011, 126). Overall, Nadsat development in *LOM* reflects a systematic approach (Vincent and Clarke 2020). The formal/functional categorization used is intrinsically multilingual in nature and reflects a bottom-up approach to understanding the Nadsat formation processes in each language. Building on this work, an investigation of the word-formation principles that guide Spanish-Nadsat would add a

valuable perspective to the growing cross-linguistic body of knowledge on Nadsat.

In the context of Spanish-Nadsat, there is a general lack of linguistic research, but what exists provides some indications of strengths and weaknesses. Contrastive work by Malamatidou (2017) compares the French and Spanish translations in terms of how Russian-derived nouns are treated in relation to gender assignment and adaptation; that is, whether endings are retained from Russian or adapted in line with native norms, noting that the number of nouns involved in both translations is quite similar. She finds that, with respect to gender, the Spanish translation is more representative of the treatment of Russian loan-nouns in the language as a whole than the French translation. Maher (2010) also considers the Spanish text to be superior to the Italian translation, arguing that the text is exemplary in terms of its inclusion of Russian-based words.

However, Malamatidou (2017, 304) is less positive about the treatment of adaptation in the Spanish translation. She finds that the Spanish translation has a far higher degree of adaptation than both the French and *ACO* itself; this is problematic since it suggests that these Nadsat words are more assimilated into the language, altering the way readers react to them. A further critique of *LNM* is that it essentially replicates most of the Russian items of English-Nadsat in Spanish-Nadsat, meaning that the translation may not serve its intended purposes for Spanish readers (Gimbert and Zabalbeascoa 2011, 126). Such a view echoes Morilla (1994), who finds that the Spanish text is less creative and hence less effective in capturing the deviant character of Alex as represented through Nadsat. Morilla notes the importance of the English-Nadsat word *horrorshow* to Alex and the inefficacy of the Spanish-Nadsat *joroschó* in translating this complex item for the Spanish context. *Horrorshow* is based on the Russian *xopowo*, which means ‘good/well’; changing the conventional transliteration from *khorosho* to *horrorshow* adds extra meaning and is an indication right from the start of the book that what Alex and his gang consider to be ‘good’ is not in line with what we may think. The Spanish-Nadsat *joroschó* carries none of these meanings, however.

Morilla (1994) attributes the lack of inventiveness in the Spanish translation to an effort to make the text more readable for Spanish readers, and though Maher’s (2010) evaluation of the Spanish translation is more positive, this critique of lack of inventiveness in the Spanish texts remains at the centre of the discussion of the Leal/Quijada Vargas translation (cf. Adcock 2020). Overall, the argument that the Leal translation may lack

some qualities is well espoused and is succinctly critiqued by Pérez Palerm (2016), who calls for a new Castilian translation of the novel with more attention paid to the recreation of the effects of Nadsat on the reader.

Therefore, we can say that despite the longevity of both French and Spanish translations of *ACO*, they have differing reputations. Whereas the French translation is mostly praised (Bogic 2017; Pochon 2010; Radionovas 2009), the Spanish one has not been so well received (Malamatidou 2017; Pérez Palerm 2016). This may be due in part to the contrasting careers of the translation teams and differences in approach. Belmont and Chabrier were literary translators primarily with experience of translating experimental texts, such as the work of James Joyce; they also translated several other works by Burgess. By contrast, while Anibal Leal started his career translating William Burroughs, he was primarily a translator of popular fiction, such as Dean Koontz and Winston Graham. However, a further point of potential importance is the fact that the final chapter in the Spanish text was translated by a different translator, Ana Quijada Vargas, who is an accomplished translator of Anglophone science fiction, best known as the Spanish translator of Ray Bradbury, Ursula K. Le Guin and Kim Stanley Robinson. Paloposki and Pokorn (2020) outline the range of complexities involved in translator collaboration and the myriad ways it can undermine an effective translation. However, they do not discuss instances of ‘collaboration’ that involve a second translator adding to the work of another thirty-six years later. This unique case in the Leal/Quijada Vargas translation merits comparison of their approaches to translating Nadsat.

A further point of interest relates to the contribution of Burgess to the translations. Martínez Portillo (2019, 148) asserts that Leal’s translation involved ‘collaborative work with Burgess, since it was specifically carried out and prepared to retain the flavor of the original narrative’. This claim is repeated in the note on the glossary appended to *LNM* and also by Maher (2010), but there is no documentary evidence of Burgess’s involvement in the Spanish translation. This stands in contrast to the French translation; Burgess was a close friend of Georges Belmont and extensive communication between the two exists. Indeed, according to Burgess’s autobiography, he met both Belmont and Chabrier in Rome to discuss how they could assist his profile in France, and the result of the meeting was a commission to translate *ACO* (Burgess 2002, 261). It is therefore possible that Burgess may have been consulted by Belmont and Chabrier during the creation of the French translation. It is important to note that,

whereas Belmont and Chabrier provided a brief translators' note to their translation, neither Leal nor Quijada did, and the French translators' note conveys minimal information about the translation strategies adopted. Therefore, conclusions about translation strategy must be derived from textual analysis in both instances.

Owing to the evident complexity in translating Nadsat, where translators are challenged not only to find cognate target language terms for Nadsat's semantic content but also to replicate its style, these texts remain a rich resource for unpacking translation practices and the realisation of Nadsat across cultures. Pochon (2010) has called for a comparative study of translations across multiple languages, in order to compare the strategies put in place by different translators when addressing Burgess's invented language. One of our aims in carrying out this comparison was to find out the extent to which the size of the English-Nadsat lexicon and its distribution across the whole work is replicated in the translations, as this can indicate the amount of effort the translators put into recreating the anti-language. Therefore, this study uses corpus linguistic approaches to respond to Pochon's call by contrasting the French-Nadsat of Belmont and Chabrier and the Spanish-Nadsat of Anibal Leal (with the belated contribution of Ana Quijada Vargas) with the English original. We are also interested in investigating how Leal's and Quijada Vargas's translation practices compare to one another and what impact this has on the representation of Nadsat in the final chapter.

DATA AND METHODS

This analysis is based on a parallel corpus of *ACO*, *LOM*, and *LNM*, analysed using the online corpus software Sketch Engine, which provides a number of useful tools for the quantitative analysis and comparison of texts. The methodology for identifying and categorising the Spanish-Nadsat lexicon in this study follows a procedure that we have developed over two previous studies on English-Nadsat (Vincent and Clarke 2017) and then on French-Nadsat (Vincent and Clarke 2020). The aim is not just to identify how English-Nadsat items are translated into French-Nadsat and Spanish-Nadsat—the 'coupled pairs method' (Toury 1995)—but to consider French-Nadsat and Spanish-Nadsat as varieties in their own right. This means taking into account efforts made by the translators to compensate for losses created by items that are not readily translatable. Such a descriptivist aim aligns well with the corpus linguistic approaches applied.

As the process for identifying the Nadsat in English and French is outlined in Vincent and Clarke (2017, 2020), here we will detail how Spanish-Nadsat items were extracted. At first glance, the Spanish-Nadsat glossary provided in the Spanish edition of the novel appears to be a comprehensive source. This glossary lists 209 items and, in line with the glossary of English-Nadsat created by Stanley Hyman and appended to the US edition (Hyman 1963), it attempts to distinguish between words with Russian derivations, such as *bábuchca* (English-Nadsat baboochka, ‘old woman’) and those with other derivations, for example *cancrillo*, the Spanish-Nadsat equivalent of English-Nadsat *cancer* (‘cigarette’). However, as pointed out in earlier work (Vincent and Clarke 2017), it is dangerous to depend on glossaries of this type since their means of compilation results in errors; Burgess did not want any glossary and so did not contribute. Hyman knew no Russian, was not entirely familiar with British English slang, and acknowledged that he did not employ a rigorous method for identifying Nadsat words, leading him to include some items in error and to miscategorise others.

The legacy of these issues can be seen in the Spanish-Nadsat glossary. The very first word in the glossary, *apología*, appears to be a misprint for *apologías* (English-Nadsat *appy polly loggies*). The glossary also includes items that are not Nadsat items since they are not confined to the language of Alex and his droogs, such as *chaplino*, which is simply general prison slang for ‘chaplain’; it miscategorises *yarboclos* (‘balls’ based on the Russian for ‘apple’) and fails to note that this item is also spelled *yarblocos*. Thus, while the Spanish ‘glosario’ is useful in that it lists a good number of Spanish-Nadsat words, it contains a number of errors.

A more systematic method was thus needed to isolate Spanish-Nadsat items, one which identified all forms of these words for the purpose of tracking their use through the translation. To this end, an electronic version of *LNM* was obtained and then analysed. The analysis aimed (1) to identify and categorise Spanish-Nadsat wordforms/phrases and (2) investigate variations between Nadsat translation practices of the two translators credited with translating the Spanish text.

To identify Spanish-Nadsat wordforms/phrases, we first used keyword analysis. By comparing the words in *LNM* against a corpus of Spanish texts (in this case, the 17.5-billion-word esTenTen18 corpus, available to all Sketch Engine subscribers), we retrieved a list of ‘keywords’, wordforms occurring comparatively more frequently in the book than in Spanish in general. This is an effective way of capturing Spanish-Nadsat words since

they are either not standard Spanish words or unusual, and thus their appearance even once in the book would lead to their retrieval.

It is important to note here that by ‘word’ we are referring to what is normally termed ‘wordform’ in the corpus linguistics literature, that is, any form separated by spaces or punctuation in the text. This means that all forms of a word are retrieved; they can then be listed under a headword (or ‘base form’). Taking the example of *bábuchca*, forms realised in the book also include *bábuchcas* and *bábuchka* (alternative spellings are not necessarily a sign of carelessness but may reflect the translator’s recognition of the variable spellings of Nadsat words in *ACO*).

Once we had the list of keywords, those that were Spanish-Nadsat were identified by isolating those that were either not standard Spanish items or Spanish words used with a non-standard meaning. A good example of the latter is the Spanish-Nadsat word *filosa*, which literally means ‘sharp’ (in reference to, e.g. knives), but is also used in *LNM* as a translation of English-Nadsat *sharp*, meaning ‘woman’ (see also our section on ‘overlexicalisation’ below). Since *filosa* is also used in its conventional sense in *LNM*, we also had to ensure that only the relevant sense was included in the frequency counts presented in the results below. Another criterion for categorising a word as Spanish-Nadsat is that it is used solely by Alex and his gang. This is important, since to count as ‘anti-language’, an item cannot have passed into more general usage but must remain obscure to users of the standard language (Fowler 1979; Janak 2015), but also it helps to distinguish Nadsat words from those that belong to other varieties present in the book. We have already mentioned one example of a word excluded from consideration on this basis—*chaplino*, from prison slang. *A Clockwork Orange* contains an array of different forms of non-standard language extending beyond Nadsat to include two other teen anti-languages and the slang of the prisoners.

Once the full Spanish-Nadsat lexicon was isolated, it was then possible to propose categories of Spanish-Nadsat items in a similar way to previous work (Vincent and Clarke 2017, 2020). The first category, common to all Nadsats which base themselves on Russian lexis, is ‘Core Nadsat’, which includes all items based on Russian, the few items derived from other languages (e.g. *tastuco*, ‘handkerchief’ from German) and items whose etymology is obscure (e.g. *silaño*, ‘fuss’). It was then possible to identify other means of word formation which follow patterns found in English-Nadsat and French-Nadsat. ‘Babytalk’ contains words formed by the addition of syllables to create childish sounding items such as *apolologías* in line

with English-Nadsat word-formation principles (cf. *appy polly loggies*). ‘Compounds’ are unconventional combinations of words, often based on the English-Nadsat original such as *fuegodoros*, which is close to the English-Nadsat *firegold* (‘whisky’). The ‘Truncation’ category contains which have been shortened, for example *alc*, short for ‘alcohol’ in Spanish-Nadsat, French-Nadsat, and English-Nadsat. A further category we term ‘Creative morphology’ includes other novel uses of Spanish vocabulary; one example already discussed is the use of *filosa* to mean ‘woman’ in a calque of ‘sharp’ and another is the word *cancrillo* to mean ‘cigarette’, which, as in English-Nadsat refers to the cancer-inducing properties of cigarettes. The final category of Spanish-Nadsat words, ‘Anglicisms’, is also seen in French-Nadsat. Words in this category are based on English words and either replace Russian words which could not be adapted to Spanish spelling conventions, for example, *naito* (‘night’), used as a translation for English-Nadsat *nochy* (based on Russian for ‘night’, *ночь*), or words that the translator seemed to think fit in well with the sounds of Nadsat, for example, *snufar*, used for *snuff it*. This last item, along with some others in this category (e.g. *clopar* and *munchar*), seems to have been used by Leal on the basis that it is listed in Hyman’s (1963) glossary.

Following this broad categorisation, we then looked at notable differences between Leal’s and Quijada Vargas’s translation practices in regard to Nadsat. As noted already, the unique situation in which this translation was completed makes it an interesting case. This investigation involved comparison of Nadsat items in Chap. 21 of *LNM* with those found in the rest of the book to determine any differing usage in Spanish. The results of these analyses are presented in the following section.

RESULTS

Size of Nadsat Lexicon

The respective figures for the size of the Nadsat lexicon in the source text and the two translations are shown in Table 9.1. It is worth remembering that English has the property that nouns and verbs can have the same form (*govoreet* means both ‘to talk’ and ‘a talk’), which is not normally possible in French or Spanish. This means that the numbers in the columns are more suggestive than exactly comparable since the numbers for English are bound to be lower (nouns and verbs of the same form like *govoreet* were not listed separately in the English-Nadsat lexicon).

Table 9.1 Categories of Nadsat in terms of numbers of members

<i>Category</i>	<i>ACO</i>	<i>LOM</i>	<i>LNМ</i>	<i>Examples (ACO, LOM, LNМ, where appropriate)</i>
Core Nadsat	218	208	208	<i>govoreet, govoriter, goborar</i> (talk)
Compounding	46	28	8	<i>boot-crush, après-bouffé</i> (afternoon), <i>fuegodoro</i> ('firegold', i.e. whisky)
Archaisms	36	–	–	<i>thou, shive</i>
Creative morphology	20	95	7	<i>cancer, cancerette, cancrillo</i> (cigarette)
Babytalk	10	11	3	<i>jammiwam, conficonfiotte</i> (jam), <i>apolologías</i>
Truncation	21	6	5	<i>alc, alc, alc</i> (alcohol)
Rhyming slang	5	–	–	<i>pretty polly</i> (money)
Anglicisms	–	15	8	<i>drinker</i> (drink), <i>snufar</i> (snuff it)

In terms of categories, an obvious difference between English-Nadsat and its French and Spanish equivalents is that there is no 'Rhyming slang' or 'Archaisms'. In the case of the former, this is not entirely unexpected, since the way rhyming slang is created in English is almost impossible to recreate in another language. With the latter, however, it is surprising that neither translation tried to introduce archaic terms when they form quite a salient aspect of English-Nadsat and both languages present plenty of scope for recreating this effect (e.g. using archaic expressions such as 'vuestra merced' in lieu of the 'usted' pronoun for formality (Adcock 2020, 64)). Both French and Spanish translations compensate for these losses to some extent by including words based on English lexis (Anglicisms), although neither contains a large number of words.

Table 9.1 also shows a clear distinction between the French and Spanish translations. The figures for 'Core Nadsat' suggest that, although there are some losses, both French and Spanish translators decided to keep a high proportion of items from the original. However, their approach to other categories was quite different. The French translators tried to compensate for losses of Core Nadsat words, as well as the lack of archaisms or rhyming slang, by creating large numbers of new words which are mostly in the 'Creative morphology' category. The Spanish translators, meanwhile, were very much more conservative in their creation of words in other categories, effectively depleting the stock of Nadsat items, echoing a lack of creativity discussed in Morilla (1994). This is thus one indication that the Spanish translation is not as rich in creative translation practices as the French one.

Distribution of Nadsat Across the Work

A different way of comparing the translations with the original is to explore distributions of the categories across the texts. This comparative examination of frequencies of Nadsat categories across the original text and the translations into French and Spanish helps to indicate the distinct translation strategies of Belmont and Chabrier that were not used by Leal (and Quijada Vargas). Frequencies are here normalised (per 100,000 words) to allow a degree of comparison across the texts but, as with the figures in Table 9.1, we should be careful not to read too much into the differences across the texts. This is due to the nature of the languages themselves. Textual expansion is a common feature of literary translation; this is reflected in the length in words of the French translation, but curiously not the Spanish, which actually experiences a contraction (*ACO*: 59776 words; *LOM*: 73370 words; *LNM*: 55379 words). Nevertheless, it is possible to discern general patterns across the distributions shown in Figs. 9.1, 9.2, and 9.3. In the English text (see Fig. 9.1), we can see that core Nadsat words make up the significant majority of total Nadsat terms. The remaining categories make up only a small fraction in comparison. Considered as a proportion of all words in the book, core Nadsat approaches 6%, while

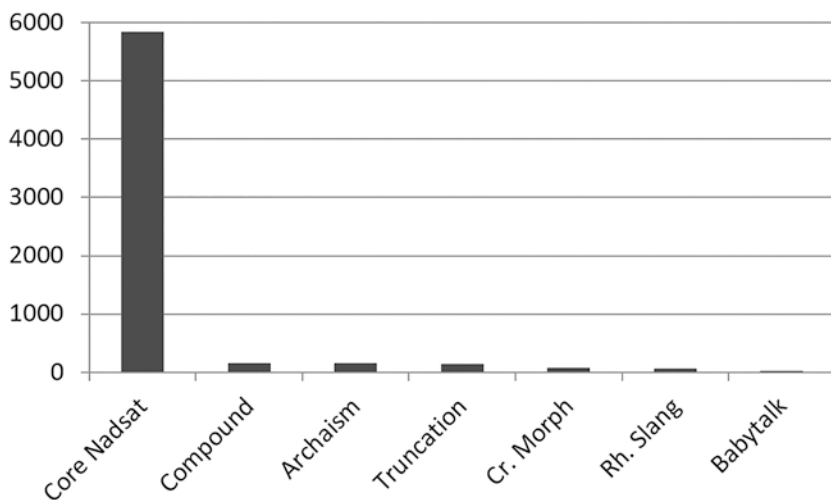


Fig. 9.1 Overall distributions of English-Nadsat categories in *ACO* (frequencies per 100,000 words)

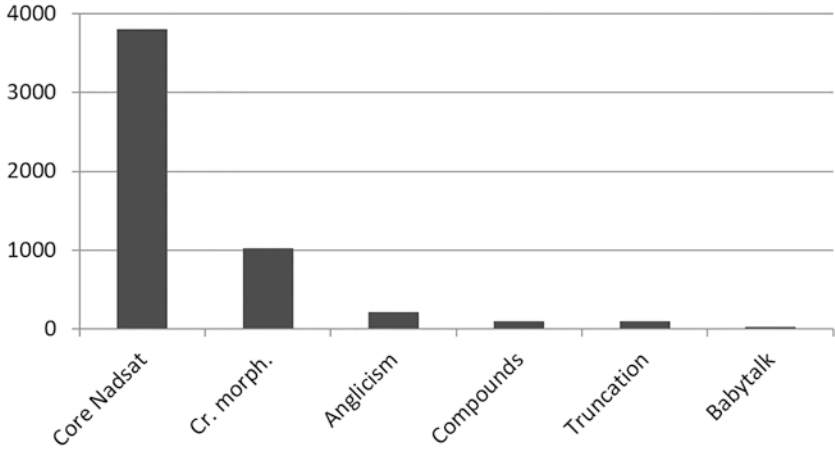


Fig. 9.2 French-Nadsat categories overall distribution (per 100,000 words)

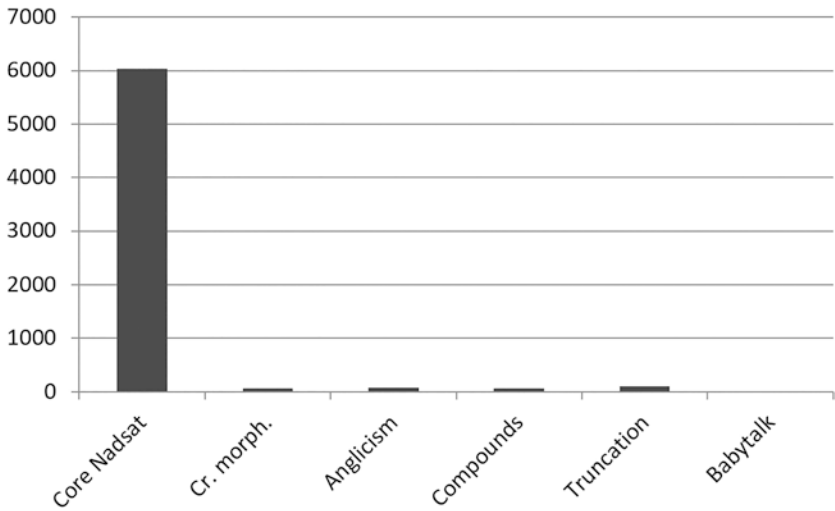


Fig. 9.3 Spanish-Nadsat categories overall distribution (per 100,000 words)

all other categories combined only make up just over a tenth of this. The significance of this figure is the burden it places on the reader; at around one core Nadsat item on average per sentence, readers are required to acquire these unfamiliar words in order to understand the text.

The other, non-core categories, which are far less likely to be unfamiliar, take up quite a small proportion of overall words. Nevertheless, they are critical to the efficacy of Nadsat as an invented idiolect, since they perform different linguistic and literary functions within the text to the primary alienation function of core Nadsat. Baby talk, for example, assists in highlighting Alex's youth (he is thirteen when the novel opens). Archaism facilitates a sarcastic formality on the part of Alex, particularly when communicating with his elders. These effects are achieved through the judicious sprinkling of non-core Nadsat throughout the text. To extend the metaphor, they are not so much the substance of Nadsat, as its flavouring. Without this flavouring, the Nadsat linguistically functions in a one-note manner, highlighting the alienation function of the anti-language at the expense of its nuances.

When we look at the distribution for the French translation (see Fig. 9.2), some differences are immediately apparent. Although we should be cautious with making comparisons of this sort, it is clear that Core Nadsat makes up a significantly lower proportion of all words in the book (just under 4% of all words). Also, the second most frequent category, Creative Morphology, is far closer in overall frequency to the core category than any category is in the English text (more than a quarter of the frequency of core Nadsat); the compensation strategy seems largely to be concentrated in this area. The result of these changes in the distributions tends to suggest that considering the book as a whole, French readers are presented with less of a challenge, even if the defamiliarization experienced due to the introduction of unusual lexis may be broadly similar to the English version.

We have mentioned above the translation strategy that leads to these differences between French-Nadsat and English-Nadsat (see also Vincent and Clarke 2020). One of the key challenges for translators of *ACO*, over and above the incorporation of foreign lexis, is the layering of meaning that Burgess brought into the work due to his sophisticated use of word-play, as seen with the English-Nadsat word *horrorshow*, which despite its negative meaning in Standard English is based on a Russian word meaning 'good/well'. The dilemma for the translator is whether to use the same Russian word adapted to fit the orthography of target language, and

thereby most likely lose the connotations present in the original, or to attempt another way of creating a similar effect. This seems a particularly important decision for frequently occurring Nadsat words such as *horrorshow*.

Belmont and Chabrier's answer to this dilemma for a number of key Nadsat words, including *horrorshow*, is to take the second option, that is, create a new word, *tzarrible*, a portmanteau word combining *tzar* (to give Russian flavour) with *terrible* to create a new word which comes close to recreating the complexities and nuances of *horrorshow* for a French-speaking audience (Bogic 2017). This is a strategy chosen for a number of core Nadsat items which also occur frequently and which when adapted to French can suggest connotations that would be absent if a straight Russian translation was used. That is, Belmont and Chabrier sacrifice some of the difficulty of reading *ACO* in the quest of recreating some of the effects that they see in English, reflecting Gimbert and Zabalbeascoa's (2011) substitution practice when dealing with a third, invented (anti-)language.

The distributions seen for Spanish-Nadsat in *LNM* (see Fig. 9.3) appear much closer to those for English-Nadsat than to those seen for French-Nadsat. Indeed, there is even more reliance upon core Nadsat terms at the expense of other Nadsat categories in the Spanish-Nadsat text; these combined only amount to one-twentieth of the frequency of core Nadsat. The lack of richness of the lexicon indicated in Table 9.1 is thus also reflected in a lower overall frequency of non-core Nadsat words. What this suggests about the Spanish translation is that the high proportion of core Nadsat words presents a Spanish reader with a challenge comparable to that of English readers of the original, although with a slightly reduced range of words, but that the other aspects of Nadsat, which fill out and flavour the reader's experience of the text are far less in evidence here (see also Maher 2010). Notably, while the French translation contains a number of attempts to evoke the effects of Nadsat in the source text by creating new words such as *tzarrible* for frequently occurring, key Nadsat words, in the Spanish text, however, such attempts are lacking; *horrorshow* becomes simply *joroscó*, a word that suggests nothing to a monolingual Spanish reader.

Indeed, all non-core Spanish-Nadsat items are based on other non-core English-Nadsat words or words that Leal apparently thought were Nadsat based on errors in Hyman's glossary, a good example being the coinage of *snufar* as an equivalent of 'snuff it'. Morilla (1994) argues that the limited use of non-core Nadsat in Leal's Spanish-Nadsat version functions to flatten the effect of Nadsat; however, his claim is tentative, owing to the

limited qualitative investigation he employs. Based on our extensive corpus analysis, we can draw a more definitive conclusion and argue that Spanish-Nadsat is disproportionately dependent on the alienation function created by core Nadsat. This may lead to a monotonous quality in the text, which is perhaps why some critics such as Pérez Palerm (2016) have found the Spanish translation to be somewhat unsatisfying.

Overlexicalisation: Differences in Treatment of Semantic Sets

While indicative of differences in approach and strategy on the parts of respective translators, differences in overall frequencies of categories can only reveal so much. It is important to look more closely at how Nadsat is realised in translations and whether they can claim to have created some of the same effects present in the original. One perspective which offers insights into this is a consideration of Nadsat in terms of ‘overlexicalisation’, the tendency of an anti-language to have multiple words which ostensibly have the ‘same’ reference and which therefore allow for increased nuance (Halliday 1976). A good example of this is the multiple words that exist for referring to women in Nadsat (see Table 9.2). There

Table 9.2 Overlexicalisation of words for ‘women’—comparison across English-Nadsat, French-Nadsat, and Spanish-Nadsat

<i>English-Nadsat (ACO)</i>		<i>French-Nadsat (LOM)</i>		<i>Spanish-Nadsat (LNM)</i>	
<i>Word</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Word</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Word</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
ptitsa (‘bird’)	55	ptitsa	56	ptitsa	64
devotchka (‘girl’)	47	dévotchka	47	débochca	50
baboochka (‘grandmother’)	15	babouchka	15	bábuchcas	15
*sharp (rhyming slang on ‘sharp and blunt’)	12	gironde	11	filosa	7
cheena (‘woman’)	7	tchina	7	china	7
forella (‘trout’)	5	forella	5	forella	5
dama (‘lady’)	1	dama	1		
*lighter	2				
soomka (‘bag’)	1	soumka	1	sumca	1
zheena (‘wife’)	1	zhina	1		
10	146	9	144	7	149

*Words not based on Russian lexis

is no particular ‘need’ for so many different terms but once they exist, they can develop their own contrasting connotations by virtue of their typical uses. It is interesting that, although *ACO* was written before Halliday’s work, Burgess, a keen linguist himself, incorporated this feature into English-Nadsat.

Table 9.1 above already suggests that the translators of *ACO* struggled to match Burgess’s inventiveness and range of lexical creativity. This is not entirely surprising, bearing in mind the challenges involved in literary translation and the constraints on commercial translators in terms of time and resources. In this section, we will show how the French and Spanish translations differ in their response to this challenge and provide further evidence of the shortcomings of the Spanish translation by discussing the translation of a highly overlexicalised area of English-Nadsat, words referring to women.

The key point here with respect to the authenticity of the translation is the extent to which French-Nadsat and Spanish-Nadsat attempt to maintain the same sorts of meaning distinctions that English-Nadsat sets up by having so many different words for women. This question can be approached from the perspectives of range of lexis and consistency of translation and we will also touch upon connotation.

In terms of range of lexis, we can see from Table 9.2 that there is a gradual reduction in variation across the three varieties from English-Nadsat (ten different items) to French-Nadsat and then to Spanish-Nadsat (seven items). The range of words available to refer to women in Spanish-Nadsat is narrowed, and the resulting nuance available is thus reduced. While French only loses the difficulty to translate (since it has no obvious etymology) *lighter*, Spanish loses both this and two Russian-derived core Nadsat items. There is no equivalent for English-Nadsat *zheena* (from Russian жена, ‘wife’), which Leal seems to have conflated with *cheena* (apparently a truncated form using the ending of Russian женщина, ‘woman’). As for *dama*, which transliterates the Russian word for ‘lady’, this is retained in Spanish but since it is already a Spanish word it cannot function as Nadsat. However, the overall frequencies of these items seen in the three books are very similar. This suggests that the Spanish-Nadsat items are used less discriminately; *ptitsa*, in particular, seems to have been used in several places where it is not employed in the original, suggesting inconsistency of translation.

Consistency of translation is important since the words were originally chosen for a reason, as the literal translations provided in Table 9.2 suggest. It is important to remember that, whether or not we believe that

Burgess intended readers of the book to learn and (following the logic of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Cheyne 2008)) be brainwashed into taking on Alex's twisted worldview, these words have different connotations and should therefore be employed carefully.

Taking the French translation, this work is generally very consistent in its use of items to translate from English-Nadsat. Thus where we have *baboochka* in *ACO*, there is *babouchka* in the equivalent place in *LOM* and where *sharp* refers to women in *ACO*, *gironde* is found in eleven out of twelve instances in the French text. One might argue whether *gironde*, which is based on a French word meaning 'good-looking' or 'pleasant', is the best translation of *sharp*, a word that seems to have much cruder connotations (see Table 9.2), but the choice is at least consistent. The situation is similar for *lighter*. As seen in Table 9.2, no special French-Nadsat word is used for *lighter*—but even here, the translation is consistent; the standard French word *copine* is used both times *lighter* appears in the text. On both occasions the *lighters* referred to are old women in the pub whom the droogs buy drinks for in order to buy their complicity. The choice of *copine*, which suggests 'accomplice', reflects the role that the old women referred to are about to undertake in providing an alibi for the droogs, and so in fact adds a meaning not present in the source text.

When we come to the Spanish translation, the situation is a little different. Although Leal is careful to translate core Nadsat items fairly consistently, there is some slippage with other items. We have already mentioned the overuse of *ptitsa* in Spanish compared to English; this is due to its use where in *ACO* there is merely a pronoun (*she* or *they*) and perhaps represents an attempt to compensate for other losses elsewhere in the text. The main ways in which the Spanish text diverges from the English in terms of translation is in its treatment of *sharp* and *lighter*. With the former, the Spanish-Nadsat coinage is *filosa*, which is a literal translation of *sharp* (i.e. opposite of blunt), a word without any particular connotations in Spanish. This seems a logical choice though without capturing the sense of the original. However, *filosa* is not consistently used as a translation of *sharp* in *ACO* since Leal uses a variety of other words as well: *pollita*, literally 'chick', *niña*, meaning 'girl' and *harpia* ('harpy'). A similar inconsistency is seen with the translation of *lighter*, where we see both *harpia* and *dama* ('lady'). What this essentially means for readers is that they cannot get a consistent idea of what these words mean; the system of meanings set up in English-Nadsat is not retained in Spanish-Nadsat. This lack of consistency in Spanish undermines a core feature of Nadsat in the novella and

potentially interferes with both the brainwashing emulation and the purposeful overlexicalisation of ‘woman’. As such, our findings and evaluation conflict with Maher (2010) and are more in line with Morilla (1994), as we argue that although a fundamental feature of the novella, there are core functions of Nadsat not evident in Spanish that could have been integrated through a more creative translation process.

Differences Across Translators of the Same Work

As noted earlier, the Spanish translation of *A Clockwork Orange* is highly unusual in that it had two different translators for different parts. Leal translated the first twenty chapters, basing this on the US edition of the book, while Quijada Vargas added her translation of the final chapter thirty-six years later. This unusual situation begs the question of whether there were differences in the treatment of Nadsat across the two translators of the same work and hence the extent to which readers of *LNM* experience this anti-language consistently when they get to the final chapter.

In the first phase of analysis, a review of Nadsat items in Chap. 21 of the English, French, and Spanish versions of the text reveals that Nadsat is relatively comparable and follows the overall trends with more examples in English (300) than French (289), and more examples in French (289) than Spanish (255).

Table 9.3 shows the top ten ranked core- and non-core-Nadsat words in each language, showing that, for the most part, the items are shared

Table 9.3 Top ten core- and non-core-Nadsat in Chap. 21 of the English, French, and Spanish versions of the text

<i>Rank</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>French</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
1	viddy	relucher	videar
2	droog	droug	drugo
3	bolshy	bolchoï	itear
4	itty	tzarrible	bolche
5	cal	itter	cala
6	devotchka	gouspin	débochca
7	gulliver	bidonsker	smecar
8	horrorshow	dévotchka	cheloveco
9	smeck	gulliver	golová
10	thou	viokcha	starria

across languages. We can note here the presence of *thou* in the English list, an archaism with no equivalent in French-Nadsat or Spanish-Nadsat. However, the most remarkable difference here is the absence of *joroscó* from the Spanish column, which is due to the fact that it does not occur *at all* in Chap. 21. This is very surprising, given the importance of this word for Alex, which we have mentioned several times already, and that its equivalents in English and French, *horrorshow* and *tzarrible*, are ranked 8th (eight occurrences) and 4th (ten occurrences), respectively. Upon investigation of the distribution of *horrorshow*, *tzarrible*, and *joroscó* across the novella, it becomes apparent that the absence of *joroscó* reflects an idiosyncrasy of Quijada Vargas's translation of the novella, as Table 9.4 indicates.

Further qualitative investigation of Chap. 21 of *LNM* throws up anomalies that indicate Quijada Vargas's lack of understanding of *horrorshow* in

Table 9.4 Distribution of 'horrorshow', 'tzarrible', and 'joroscó' across the novella

<i>English</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>French</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Spanish</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
S1C1	9	S1C1	9	S1C1	9
S1C2	12	S1C2	12	S1C2	11
S1C3	4	S1C3	4	S1C3	4
S1C4	8	S1C4	8	S1C4	8
S1C5	7	S1C5	8	S1C5	7
S1C6	5	S1C6	7	S1C6	5
S1C7	7	S1C7	6	S1C7	7
S2C1	4	S2C1	4	S2C1	4
S2C2	4	S2C2	4	S2C2	4
S2C3	8	S2C3	8	S2C3	8
S2C4	3	S2C4	2	S2C4	4
S2C5	4	S2C5	4	S2C5	4
S2C6	2	S2C6	2	S2C6	2
S2C7	4	S2C7	4	S2C7	4
S3C1	1	S3C1	2	S3C1	1
S3C2	3	S3C2	3	S3C2	3
S3C3	2	S3C3	2	S3C3	2
S3C4	1	S3C4	1	S3C4	1
S3C5	4	S3C5	4	S3C5	4
S3C6	9	S3C6	9	S3C6	9
S3C7	8	S3C7	10	S3C7	0
	109		113		101

ACO. This word is dealt with in four distinct ways in this one chapter, none of which is entirely satisfactory.

The first-way ‘horrorshow’ is translated as something bad, gruesome, or frightening, using standard Spanish words *espantosas*, *espanto*, and *estropeado*, which reflect a sense of something horrifying and gruesome or damaged. As the following examples indicate, this meaning is at variance with the meanings of the equivalent sentences from ACO and LOM, where the word in bold is clearly expressing Alex’s approbation.

- a. But it was always the same on the old nogas—real **horrorshow** bolshy big boots for kicking litsos in.
- b. Cela dit, on avait toujours les nogas dans les mêmes trucs: des vraies grosses bottes bolchoï **tzarribles** pour shooter dans les litsos.
- c. Pero siempre era lo mismo para nuestras viejas nogas, unas grandes botas bolches, realmente **espantosas**, para patear litsos.

The use of *espantosas* misrepresents Alex’s feelings about the items and activities described, suggesting that Alex was afraid of what he was seeing. The following example also misrepresents ‘horrorshow’, the implication in the source text being that ‘one or two of his [teeth] weren’t all that [great]’ when the Spanish translation has Alex saying ‘one or two less damaged [teeth]’.

- d. And he smekked real gromky and I viddied one or two of his zoobies weren’t all that **horrorshow**.
- e. Et il se bidonska vraiment gromky, au point que je pouvais relucher une ou deux de ses zoubies, qui n’étaient pas si **tzarribles**.
- f. Y smecó realmente gronco y vi que tenía uno o dos subos **menos estropeados**

A second way that *horrorshow* is translated is by using the word *película* (two instances), or literally ‘film’ (i.e. movie). The Spanish translation here makes little sense and certainly does not convey any nuance of *horrorshow* as used in ACO.

- g. Flip **horrorshow** takings there, droog, for the having.
- h. Y a des trucs branques **tzarrible** à rafler là-dedans, les droogs.
- i. Diversión de **película** y dinero todo junto, drugo.

A further translation of *horrorshow* found in Chap. 21 of *LNM* renders it as *de primera*, or ‘first-class’. In this case, the semantics of *horrorshow* are in fact retained but with none of the unpleasant connotations this word suggests in English.

- j. but with a **horrorshow** plott and litso and a smiling rot and very very fair voloss and all that cal.
- k. mais genre plott et litso **tzarribles**, avec la rote tout sourire, le voloss super blond et tout le gouspin à l’avenant
- l. sino que tenía un ploto y un litso **de primera**, y una rota sonriente y un boloso muy muy brillante y toda esa cala.

The fourth and final translation strategy seen with respect to *horrorshow* is simply to ignore it; where in *ACO* we have ‘I could not viddy [see] her all that **horrorshow**’ the Spanish effectively becomes ‘I could not viddy her’. Here we have, in effect, a typical example of translation loss.

In summary, then, Quijada Vargas seems not to have been able either to determine the most effective way of translating *horrorshow* or even to have done this consistently. It is interesting to compare this with Leal’s approach to the use of *joroscó*. Although, as noted earlier, this may not be the most effective translation of *horrorshow*, it is at least used consistently; of the 101 occurrences of *joroscó*, 100 of them correspond directly to the use of *horrorshow* in *ACO*. This further means that there are hundred examples of *joroscó* on which Quijada Vargas could have based her translation.

Although issues with the translation of *horrorshow* represent the most glaring problem with Chap. 21 of *LNM*, there are some other discrepancies that our investigations have revealed. Two other new Spanish-Nadsat items are also introduced, *gollis* (translates *pretty polly*, which rhymes with *lolly*, a British slang term for ‘money’) and *cáncer* (‘cigarette’). There are no earlier examples of *gollis* in the novella, which makes it hard for a reader to understand initially. This is likely Quijada Vargas’s attempt to transfer ‘gollies’ used in *ACO*, Chap. 1. However, given that Leal avoids this form in the first twenty chapters, it is unclear why Quijada Vargas includes it here. Quijada Vargas’s *cáncer*, a translation of English-Nadsat *cancer*, contrasts with the translation used by Leal, *cancriillo* (sixteen instances across eight chapters). These sixteen uses correspond directly to *cancer* in *ACO*. This means that readers may not understand that *cancriillo* and *cáncer* are essentially the same. Again, it is unusual that Quijada Vargas

deviated from Leal's use of Nadsat, even if in this case to create a word closer to the original.

Overall, this brief investigation of Quijada Vargas's translation practices reveals some interesting idiosyncrasies that create an incongruence between her and Leal's work on *LNM* and arguably affect the reader's experience of reading the work. We do not, however, have information about the circumstances in which Quijada Vargas took over the translation or the resources she had access to which might help explain some of these incongruities.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has offered evidence that corpus approaches can offer data-driven insights into the translation practices across languages in the genre of science fiction. This approach is particularly pertinent for unpacking invented (anti-)languages like Nadsat, as corpus linguistic approaches can effectively distinguish unique and rare wordforms. This research responds to Pochon's (2010) call for multilingual studies of Nadsat; a third language can tell us something valuable about the other two (van der Auwera 2012). Our findings offer a systematic description of the translation techniques and choices made regarding Nadsat, and our method suggests an approach that could be used more generally to analyse SF works employing innovative uses of language.

In terms of unpacking Nadsat in *ACO*, *LOM*, and *LNM*, our formal categorisation offers a bottom-up, language-agnostic approach to categorising Nadsat across languages. This helped us to show that although the Spanish text may appear to reflect Nadsat's Russian origins better, the nuance and complexity of Burgess's Nadsat construction is simplified and, in many instances, lost in the Spanish version; in this sense we build on the work of Malamatidou (2017). This contrasts with *LOM*, which endeavours to create complex equivalences by reflecting the conceptual development of Nadsat. Further, we have shown that the reduced lexicon used to discuss women not only reduces the range of ways in which women can be represented in Nadsat, but it combines terms used differently in the source text, detracting from the nuances they connote. Finally, in considering how Leal's and Quijada Vargas's translation practices compare to one another, we have shown that Quijada Vargas's translation contains a number of anomalies not yet discussed in the literature. The mistranslation of 'horrorshow' misrepresents Alex's perspectives in the final chapter and

creates confusion. Moreover, it reduces the presence of Nadsat in this chapter, suggesting reduced Nadsat use by Alex not apparent in *ACO*. Furthermore, the introduction of new Nadsat terms of ‘gollis’ and ‘cáncer’ reflects a lack of consistency with Leal’s work and undermines the author’s original intention for the reader to become enculturated into Nadsat over the course of the book. In this way, we have shown how corpus-based analysis can be used in translation studies to provide more robust, empirical evidence that can help support or overturn previously held evaluations of translations.

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Censorship or Cultural Adjustment? Sexualized Violence in Hungarian Translations of Asimov's *Second Foundation*

Bogi Takács

The *Foundation* trilogy by Isaac Asimov has been one of the most influential works of American speculative fiction (SF) in Hungarian translation. Sohár's (preprint/[forthcoming](#)) overview of SF in Hungarian translation remarks that Asimov was one of the earliest and most popular American authors to be translated. This might have been in part due to the fact that his writing did not contradict, and sometimes even supported, the Communist regime's goals such as emphasizing technological development or space exploration in the Kádár era (1956–1989) named after Premier János Kádár.¹ Asimov remains a cultural touchstone even after the fall of Communism: out of the 100 most popular science fiction books on the main Hungarian social media book site, Moly.hu, nine are Asimov's works.

The first Hungarian translation of the *Foundation* trilogy, by Gyula Baranyi, appeared in an adult science fiction imprint of major children's

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publisher Móra in 1973. This translation, by one of the most prolific translators of English-language SF in the Kádár era, was reprinted several times by Móra. The text was slightly revised for the rerelease of Asimov's science fiction oeuvre in ten omnibus volumes by major publisher Szukits (Asimov 2003), which is not a specialized children's publisher, in 2002–2012, well after the regime change. Another large publisher, GABO, released in 2018 a new translation by László Sámi that builds on Baranyi's work by keeping many of its phrasings.

Sohár ([forthcoming](#)) discusses that Hungarian translations of English-language SF during the Kádár era were expected to follow a relatively homogenous literary style. Politically motivated censorship was prevalent at the time: ideologically inappropriate details, for example, references to the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc, were often removed by either the translators or their editors. This resulted in situations where well-known texts in translation could be quite different from the originals. As a reader, I experienced this phenomenon first-hand, including with one of the most crucial texts of American Golden Age science fiction. One of my first interactions with American SF fandom² involved feminist criticisms of Asimov's portrayal of telepathic rape in *Second Foundation* (1953/2008). This discussion came to me as a shock, because I did not remember Asimov tackling rape, having read his writing in Hungarian. Rereading relevant passages in translation, the sexual connotations were missing, replaced by analogies to nonsexual physical assault like knife attacks or being mauled by an animal. Asimov does not portray physical interactions of sexual violence per se, though he uses (non-telepathic) rape *threats* as a plot device: he describes interactions of telepathic intrusion between characters *as* a form of sexualized violence. Asimov was himself known in SF circles as an author with a propensity to be sexually inappropriate to women, as Nevala-Lee (2020) summarizes in a recent write-up for the Asimov centenary. Some of his attitudes toward women were also apparent in his fiction, but his portrayals of sexualized telepathic violence generally occur between men. Several of these interactions cluster in *Second Foundation*, the apex of his *Foundation* trilogy. As *Second Foundation* just received a new Hungarian translation, it is worthwhile to examine this topic in this work.

I will examine how telepathic invasion between men is repeatedly described in the English-language text using the vocabulary of sexual violence, which comparison is tied to the main antagonist's characterization as a sterile mutant. In the Hungarian translations, telepathy is instead presented by analogy to a knife assault or an animal attack. Are these

differences due to censorship practices prevalent in the Communist era related to queer sexuality and/or rape, or a cultural adjustment to make the text more palatable to Hungarian audiences—or possibly a combination of these approaches? I will compare the original and the revised Baranyi translation, and the new Sámi translation.

I will demonstrate that because the sexualized nature of telepathy does not have cultural embedding in Hungarian public discourse, *and* because language around rape is in general evasive and allusive due to the effects of hegemonic patriarchy, these factors combine to erase the sexual assault aspects of the source text in Hungarian. These effects are in agreement with the translator's possible need to self-censor in an oppressive regime, potentially benefiting the translator. I also provide data showing that it is unlikely that there was a blanket ban or even an expectation-like prohibition in place related to sexual assault in speculative fiction for adults in the Kádár era, even in a same-sex context.

First, I will consider specific loci in the text and their translations and relate these to themes of the mesmeric threat of homosexuality (originating in Gothic romance, as documented previously in the literature: see, e.g., Sedgwick 1985, 91 as discussed later). Then, I will consider the permissibility of conveying such meanings in Kádár-era Hungarian SF and the possibility of translators' self-censorship. I will then address the issues of translating sexual assault itself, to examine the differing cultural contexts for the American text in the 1950s and its Hungarian translation. Finally, I will briefly examine two major Hungarian works containing telepathic invasion, one of which is explicitly themed after Asimov, to see how the influence of *Second Foundation* in Hungarian reverberated through the genre and how the changes made in the translation affected works inspired by it.

“THE QUEER, UGLY WEAKLING”: REVISING THE MULE

Academic treatments of gender and sexuality in Asimov's works generally focus on sexual aspects of interactions between robots and humans in his *Robot* stories (Martín Alegre 2018) or on the multi-sexed alien species in his novel *The Gods Themselves* (Patnaik and Praveena 2016). Some have also remarked on his negative portrayals of queer characters (Garber and Paleo 1990), though Webber (2016) finds positive gay subtext in one of his *Robot* stories, and also quotes Asimov's stand for queer rights. The only academic treatment of Asimov translations *into Hungarian* mentions

gender briefly, but intriguingly, Sohár (preprint/forthcoming) notes that the first Hungarian translation of *I, Robot* makes a misogynist remark that was even stronger than in the original text.

In *Second Foundation*, one of the main antagonists is the Mule, a sterile mutant portrayed as unattractive and quasi-monstrous, who has the unusual power of telepathic control. “He was not a man to look at, the Mule – not a man to look at without derision,” the narrative states about him, detailing his negatively portrayed features like his extreme thinness and his large nose (Asimov 1953/2008, 9). Using his power, he builds a galactic empire and looks for the Second Foundation, a secretive organization that might be the only other power standing in his way.

The Mule describes himself thus: “**I, the queer, ugly weakling**, am the ruler of the Galaxy” (Asimov 1953/2008, 68). At his first appearance in the previous book, *Foundation and Empire*, he is also called “queer” by others; he also uses the term for self-description. *Queer* as a descriptor was not *unambiguously* used for sexual orientation in the 1950s, but those connotations already existed, and when used by heterosexual people (in-group usage was more complex and often the opposite), frequently referred to effeminate gay men (Brontsema 2004)—which would fit the Mule, and also the other characters mentioned by Garber and Paleo (1990). Asimov also used “queer” in the sense of gender-nonconformance in his later work *The Gods Themselves* (Geetha Lakshmi Patnaik and Praveena 2016).

The Hungarian translation has no sexual aspect, and it uses *fura* or the variant *furcsa*, “strange,” but something else is intriguing about it:

[É]n, a *fura*, csúf nyomorék, a Galaxis ura vagyok! (Asimov 1973, 86,

Baranyi translation. The revised version only differs in capitalization)

[É]n, a *furcsa*, csúf, nyomorék nyápic korcsszülött, én vagyok a Galaxis ura!

(Asimov 2018, 702, Sámi translation)

The newer Sámi translation provides an entire string of terms, “strange,” “ugly,” “cripple” (from the Baranyi translation), “weakling,” and “freak of nature”—generally highly pejorative disability terms. Baranyi was the first to introduce *nyomorék*, “cripple,” for *weakling*, but Sámi adds two more descriptors. A negative allusion to one kind of marginalization, sexuality, has been replaced with another: disability. This has precedent in the English text focusing on the Mule’s physicality, so the switch is not out of place. But it hides that Asimov presents the Mule as the specter of the

emasculated and yet threatening gay man, a preexisting stereotyped character that could potentially be recognizable in Hungarian as well. This hiding is also present elsewhere, for example, a later angry comment from the Mule to the leader of the Second Foundation:

“And you will correct things now?” The Mule’s thin lips curled, his mind pulsing with hate: “What will you do? Fatten me? **Restore me to a masculine vigor?** Take away from my past the long childhood in an alien environment?” (Asimov 1953/2008, 73)

Here, all three translations offer the same take, slightly differently phrased: instead of *masculine vigor*, which has a sexual (albeit not specifically queer) element, the emphasis is on making the Mule into an *izomkolosszus* “a colossus of muscle” (Asimov 1971, 91, Baranyi translation; Asimov 2018, 707, Sámí translation), a common Hungarian expression for a hulking person, which is masculine-coded, but with no association of fertility or reproductive fitness.

THE THREAT OF THE UN-MASCULINE GAY MAN

The source of the Mule’s power is his skill of telepathic control, which is often conceptualized in sexual terms. One of the key passages in *Second Foundation* involves the Mule telepathically assaulting Channis, a “handsome and quick-witted” (Asimov 1953/2008, 7) young man. Channis is one of the Mule’s only followers who wasn’t coerced into his employ. Channis has lesser telepathic powers himself, as a member of the Second Foundation. The assault occurs when the Mule is trying to force the location of the Second Foundation out of Channis. The Mule succeeds, but he’s unaware that the Second Foundation planted an incorrect location in Channis’ mind. The attack is described in detail, in third person but mostly from the point of view of Channis. It underscores the allusion to sexual violence that the Mule physically corners Channis until his back is against the wall, which would be technically unnecessary in case of a mental attack.

And then there followed a **short, pregnant pause**, and Channis almost howled with the sudden pain of **that tearing penetration of the innermost tissues** of his mind. / **The Mule drew back** and muttered: “Not enough. You do not pass the test after all”. (Asimov 1953/2008, 68)

The English original explicitly uses sexual comparisons, evoking both the image of pregnancy and that of penetration. The Baranyi translation removes the sexual element. The following lines are identical in both the original and the revised versions:

Rövid, feszült csönd következett, *aztán* Channis kis híján felüvöltött a hirtelen fájdalomtól, amely **késként hasított bele agya legbenső szelvényeibe.** / **De az Öszvér azon nyomban vissza is vonult.** (Asimov 1973, 86, Baranyi translation)

A short, tense silence followed, and after that, Channis almost howled with the sudden pain that cut into the innermost lobules of his brain like a knife.
/ *But the Mule immediately withdrew.*

The metaphor is that of a knife attack, and the word choice for withdrawal (*visszavonult*) has the connotations of withdrawal from battle, not the pulling out of the penis. The *mind* becomes the brain (*agy*), and the word used for *tissues* is likewise more firmly grounded in the context of the brain: *szelvény* means “segment” or “lobule,” not a word that is applicable in the context of sexual intercourse.

The Sámi translation keeps all the imagery introduced by Baranyi, but adjusts the text to conform more to the original phrasing about *innermost tissues*:

Rövid, feszült csönd következett, aztán Channis kis híján felüvöltött **az agya legbelső szövetéibe késként hasító, hirtelen fájdalomtól.** / **Az Öszvér hátrébb húzódott.** (Asimov 2018, 702, Sámi translation)

A short, tense silence followed, and after that, Channis almost howled with the sudden pain that cut into the innermost tissues of his brain like a knife.
/ *The Mule drew back.*

The sexual connotations are still absent here. We will only examine a few comparable moments due to length constraints. The Mule talks about “arousal”: “You were waiting for me, weren’t you, waiting to greet me in a situation that would not too arouse my suspicions. **Too bad for you that I needed no arousal**” (Asimov 1953/2008, 68). The Hungarian expression here refers to “awakening my suspicions,” with no sexual connotations: “Rám várt, ugye. méghozzá olyan körülmények között, ami **nem ébresztette volna föl a gyanúmat?!**” (Asimov 1953/2008, 85, Baranyi translation; the revised version uses the loanword “szituáció” instead of “körülmények.”) Sámi has “Rám várt, ugye? Arra, hogy olyan

körülmények között üdvözöljön, **amik nem ébresztették volna fel túlságosan a gyanúmat?**” (Asimov 2018, 701, Sámi translation). This is almost exactly the same, with the exception of adding *túlságosan*, “overly.”

The Mule is punished in return by the First Speaker, a leader of the Second Foundation coming to the aid of Channis. The Mule gets a taste of his own medicine, with the First Speaker rapidly taking over his mind: “It required a rather insignificant fraction of a second to **consummate** the change completely” (Asimov 1953/2008, 77). The “consummation” sense is again missing from the Hungarian, which uses a neutral word for finishing/succeeding: “A változást a másodperc törtrésze alatt sikerült **végbevinnie**” (Asimov 1973, 96, Baranyi translation; Baranyi revised). “A másodperc jelentéktelen töredéke alatt sikerült **teljesen végbevinnie** a változást” (Asimov 2018, 713, Sámi translation; adding “completely”).

While we focus on this climactic set of interactions that concludes the first half, after which the Mule exits the plot, similar changes happen earlier on as well. An interesting example transpires when we see the Mule and Channis first interact: “If he could bend Channis’ curly head **in the profoundest adoration**, would that change his own grotesquerie,” the Mule wonders (Asimov 1953/2008, 15). Adoration, which can be romantic/sexual, is expressed in the Hungarian text with *bódolat* (instead of the more common *imádat*), a term that suggests reverence of a feudal subject to the king: “Ha Channis fürtös fejét **mélységes hódolatra** hajtaná, ettől talán megszűnne az ő torzsága” (Asimov 1973, 24, Baranyi translation; Baranyi revised). “Ha Channis fürtös fejét erővel **a legmélyebb hódolatra** hajtaná, az megszüntetné-e a saját torzságát” (Asimov 2018, 634–635, Sámi translation). The dominance/submission connotations remain, the romantic/erotic connotations are lessened.

Later sections likewise maintain the association between telepathic and sexual invasion, which is only absent when telepathic attack is carried out by means of a machine that produces “mental static.” The process of members of the Second Foundation telepathically spying on the Foundation is described in terms of “molestation.” Here the Hungarian has “háborgat” (Asimov 1973, 250; Baranyi translation)—“to disturb, to bother” instead, with no particular sexual connotations—and Sámi also changes one of the instances to “irányít”: “to control” (Asimov 2018, 879, Sámi translation). Finally, one of the characters proposes to “sterilize” members of the Second Foundation, and this mention is kept (“magtalanít” in Asimov 1973, 256, Baranyi translation, the more contemporary-sounding “sterilizál” in Asimov 2018, 884, Sámi translation).

Sometimes new connotations are added in Hungarian: the Mule is repeatedly described in animal terms. His “ferocious smile” (Asimov 1953/2008, 70) becomes a “bósz hiúzvigyor” (Asimov 1973, 88, Baranyi translation: “the ferocious grin of a lynx”) in Baranyi, but SÁMI does not keep this and uses “ádázul vigyorgott” (Asimov 2018, 705, “grinned ferociously”). When the Mule is “tearing” at Channis, this is conveyed with “*marcangol*” (Asimov 1973, 87 Baranyi, Asimov 2018, 703 SÁMI) in all translations, a term that specifically means tearing at something with an animal bite, mauling. Thus, in Hungarian, we end up with imagery of physically violent but nonsexual attack or secondarily, animal assault.

The Mule’s targets of his quasi-sexual assault are men, and the revenge is also enacted upon him by a man. The text itself remarks on it, as the First Speaker tells the Mule: “**You are definitely known to have had men under control**, and, further, to have had intimate emotional contact with them when out of sight and out of earshot” (Asimov 1953/2008, 90). In Hungarian, “men” is revised into the gender-neutral *emberek*, “people,” but this is a change that’s frequently made in Hungarian translation overall due to *férfiak*, “men,” often reading as overly specific. So while the queerness is also erased here, this does not seem as deliberate a decision as in other loci.

The unattractive and un-masculine Mule violates the idealized masculine hero, Channis. At least part of the tension stems from the Mule dominating the character shown as superior. The narrative also follows concepts of “sexual inversion” assumed to be characteristic of queer people in the late nineteenth century (Crozier 2008). At this time, gay men were often assumed to be feminine: psychosexual theorists cited these concepts well into the 1960s (Crozier 2008). The Mule mentally penetrates Channis like a man would penetrate a woman, in a stereotypical scene that was at this time assumed to happen upon gay sexual advances on a straight person; even murdering someone in a state of “homosexual panic” was considered justified. These themes in English-language literature go back at least to the Gothic novel (Sedgwick 1985, 91),³ but Asimov transposes them into the far future. Sedgwick points out that “a partly Gothic-derived paranoid racist thematics of male penetration and undermining by subject peoples became a prominent feature of national ideology in western Europe. Its culmination is an image of male rape” (Sedgwick 1985, 182)—and ties this to hypnosis as well.⁴

What were the reasons for these textual changes involving sexuality? Was it impossible to express overt queerness in Hungarian translations of American SF, was the issue with sexual violence, or with something else? I will begin by taking a look at the first possibility.

THE (IM)PERMISSIBILITY OF QUEER TEXT AND SUBTEXT IN THE KÁDÁR ERA

American SF started to examine queer themes openly in the early 1950s (Garber and Paleo 1990). Asimov was one of the early SF writers incorporating gay characters, but these were often negative portrayals. Could any of this explicit or implicit queerness appear in Hungarian translation? Unfortunately, the topic of queer themes in Hungarian translations of English-language works has only been discussed with respect to non-genre fiction (Gombár 2017). Thus, we will need to examine a broader range of works at least briefly in order to be able to assess the Asimov translation in its historical context. Samuel Delany was an author banned in Kádár-era Hungary due to being gay (Sohár [forthcoming](#)) — a similar ban on Joanna Russ (*ibid.*) might have been likewise due to the lesbian content of her works, in addition to her being an outspoken lesbian activist (Jones 2019). The publication of queer-focused work was thus often avoided, but queerness was mentioned in English-language speculative works even when it was not one of the major foci.

There are several discussions of queerness in translations of non-queer-focused work; I will list them in the order of publication. The first volume of *Foundation* was published in Hungarian in 1971, with Lord Dorwin the aristocrat as a gay-coded but not gay-identified character (Garber and Paleo 1990). Baranyi, who translated all three volumes, did not remove this characterization, though he softened the point-of-view's character's reaction to him from a "detestation" to a "dislike," *ellen-szenv*. The later Sámi translation is closer to the English. Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969), also translated by Baranyi and featuring sex-shifting humanoid extraterrestrials, was published in 1979. There are several similar mentions by other translators as well. In Clarke's *Rendezvous with Rama* (1973), published in Hungarian in 1981, astronauts Mercer and Calvert have a polyamorous marriage with a woman back on Earth, described as a triangle that "seemed to be an equilateral one": translator Piroška F. Nagy kept this detail. In Asimov's *The Currents of Space* (1952), published in Hungarian in 1982 and also

translated by Piroska F. Nagy, the bisexuality of the stereotypically portrayed, and also traitorous, male character the Squire of Steen remains explicit. In Clarke's *2010* (1982), published in Hungarian in 1985 and translated by Nagy, the two bisexual Soviet astronauts not only remain bisexual, but the wording was adjusted and modernized to offer "bisexual" (*biszexuális*) instead of the vintage English "polymorph." This work presented a doubly sensitive situation: the astronauts were not only queer but also Soviet. Frank Herbert's *Dune* (1965) (in)famously featured a male antagonist described as attracted to prepubescent boys (Garber and Paleo 1990). The Galaktika translation by András Békés from 1987 (Herbert, 1987) kept this aspect of the character.

We can see that both negative, positive, and neutrally portrayed queer characters in *non-queer-focused* works were generally not censored in Hungarian translation. Gender explorations related to fictional extraterrestrials were also allowed. This was in sharp contrast to, for example, mentions of the future of the Soviet Union, as described in Sohár (forthcoming), where even brief and non-negative discussion was often removed. Some of the above-mentioned works, like *The Left Hand of Darkness*, were not published in the USSR, probably due to censorship (Lemberg 2015). Censorship in Hungary in the Kádár era was different from the USSR and often did not function on the basis of explicit written guidelines (Sohár forthcoming; Panka 2020). The state apparatus relied considerably on self-censorship and informal interactions with editors. The status of SF was special within Hungarian literary translation, due to the influence of Péter Kuczka, the chief editor of Móra's SF imprints and the magazine *Galaktika*, and the de facto head of Hungarian SF publishing. Kuczka was a trusted Party member with a history of writing hardline Communist political poetry in the Rákosi era and taking leadership positions both in the Party and in publishing (Falcsik 2012). He experienced censure after his participation in the 1956 revolution and uprising against the Soviets, but due to his remaining Party connections, could not be excluded from the publishing industry altogether; thus, he was sidelined into SF. His entrenched political position afforded him considerable leeway (Szathmáry 2013), which he leveraged to publish authors like Borges and Eliade, out of reach of most other Hungarian publishers, but printable *as* SF. Many core English-language SF titles with political aspects that could not appear in many other places behind the Iron Curtain could also appear in Hungarian. Hungarian SF in the Kádár era bore Kuczka's stamp: it could often express more about society than non-genre fiction could. Kuczka also aimed to

present SF *as literature* as opposed to commercial fiction. These trends put in motion by him affected translations he commissioned (Sohár [forthcoming](#)).

Gyula Baranyi was a prolific professional translator often working for the imprints headed by Kuczka (Sohár [forthcoming](#)). It is unlikely that he could have missed the sexualization in *Second Foundation*; we have seen that similar references appeared in other works from these imprints. Was it a personal preference of Baranyi's to remove those details? While we cannot know this, there are hints in his other translations that suggest self-censorship. Arthur C. Clarke's *Imperial Earth* was published by Galaktika in 1992 after the end of Kádár-era censorship, translated by Baranyi. This novel discusses the openly bisexual protagonist having sex with two people of different genders simultaneously, but these mentions are rewritten in Hungarian. The protagonist Duncan is attracted to young woman Calindy and young man Karl, who are primarily attracted to each other—as Duncan complains:

As she made quite clear, I was much too young for Calindy, and of course Karl was now interested only in her. And to make matters worse, **they didn't even mind me sharing their bed—as long as I didn't get in the way.** [...] “Didn't mind, hell! They enjoyed having me there, just to tease me! At least Karl did. (Clarke [1976](#), 49)

While this can imply that Duncan didn't actively participate in a threesome and he was excluded from it against his wishes, his thoughts about Karl reveal that he frequently had sex with Karl:

Certainly **his lovemaking often lacked tenderness and consideration**; there were even times when he had scared Duncan into something approaching impotence. And to do that to a **virile sixteen-year-old** was no mean feat. (Clarke [1976](#), 49)

In Hungarian, there are three major changes here. The initial section about being in bed is translated relatively close to the English. But then the discussion changes:

Érzelméből mindig is hiányzott a gyengédség és a figyelem; sőt volt idő, amikor Duncanban megbénította a nyiladozó férfierőt. És ez súlyos dolog egy **tizenhat éves fiú** esetében. (Clarke [1992](#), 61, Baranyi)

Tenderness and attention have always been missing from his emotions; even more so, there were times when he numbed Duncan's awakening virility. And this is a grave matter in the case of a sixteen-year-old boy.

“Lovemaking” with Karl is removed in favor of a comment on Karl’s emotions. “Impotence” is changed into the much less explicit *férfierő* (“virility, male strength”), while the following mention of virility, with Duncan being a *virile* sixteen-year-old, is removed. The English also states that Duncan experienced “something *approaching* impotence,” meaning he was still able to act, just with difficulty. In the Hungarian, his virility is numbed/paralyzed altogether. Overall, the narrative is unclear: it reads as if Duncan was humiliated by lying in bed with the two of them, unable to do anything, while they were having sex with each other and making fun of him. He did not manage to have sex with either of them. This makes their later interactions confusing.

Could a teen readership have been the reason for such changes? Most speculative fiction was published through imprints of children’s publisher Móra, but the speculative imprints were universally considered to be for an adult audience. While Asimov’s *Foundation* series could in principle be a dual-readership text, just like Clarke’s *Imperial Earth*, the translations were aimed at adults. Yuan (2020) describes the challenges of translating sex-related content in dual-readership texts in the case of Chinese translations of *Peter Pan*; translations for children avoid sexual content or allusions, and use simplified vocabulary, and so on, none of which characterize these Hungarian translations.

Ultimately, we can conclude that there did not seem to exist a ban on queer *mentions* in Hungarian translations of English-language SF in the Kádár era, though authors *identified* as queer were not translated. This is in keeping with Gombár (2017)’s findings about non-genre fiction. In SF, there was more variance *by translator* than by author or theme, suggesting self-censorship, and Baranyi himself continued to remove queer elements after the regime change. Santaemilia (2008) states, “Self-censorship is usually a muted phenomenon, highly individual, highly unpredictable, sometimes with no overt logic,” and Sohár (*forthcoming*) would agree with him in the context of Kádár-era SF translations:

[I]n many cases it is impossible to decide who is responsible for any changes, and to what extent they can be attributed to the effect of censorship [...]
When politically sensitive issues are systematically omitted from the texts,

the explanation seems self-evident, but one-off cases, which are much more typical in literature, can easily be misinterpreted, so historical research on the translations of this period has to be circumspect.

We cannot draw conclusions about an individual translator's motivations. But we can still explore the social context of translation—and this might prove informative. As we will see, translating sexual assault is an ambiguous, often indirect endeavor. In the case of the Mule, the situation is complicated by the telepathic nature of the assault afforded by the speculative genre. Cultural concepts related to telepathy were distinct behind the Iron Curtain, and Hungarian concepts, while more similar to Soviet ideas about telepathy than to American ideas, did not reduce to either. These differences also affected the approaches to translating ambiguous and emotionally charged content.

THE AMBIGUITY OF RAPE DEPICTIONS

The (homo)sexual aspect of the Mule's telepathic invasion could have been acceptable to translate. But was there an issue with sexual *assault* instead of *sexuality*? Most mentions of queer sexual relations in English translations are of consensual situations, but, for example, the mentions of same-sex pedophilia in *Dune* are present in Hungarian. Further, in *Second Foundation* itself, an older man threatens the young girl Arkady Darrell with (non-telepathic) sexual violence. The same man also grabs his mistress strong enough to leave marks. A rape threat from a man to a woman is also used as a plot device in *Foundation and Empire*, where it is in fact the Mule who averts the threat by killing the man. These mentions were not edited out. To comment on this, we need to examine other instances of translating rape.

One of the more analyzed texts in relation to translating sexual violence is an early forerunner of speculative fiction: Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Spivak (1993) explores how the aspect of force affected interpretations of characters in *Metamorphoses*, though without explicitly focusing on translation as she frequently does elsewhere. Discussions of translating rape have tended to follow Spivakian or comparable intersectional feminist lines. McCarter (2018)'s feminist discussion of translating rape from Latin to English in *Metamorphoses* demonstrates how the aspect of force is removed or underplayed in translations; she also mentions that *Metamorphoses* itself has become a subject of controversy in campus #MeToo debates. She describes

“a lack of adequate vocabulary” pertaining not only to rape but also to consent and points out that translations reproduce the societal biases of translators. This interpretation emphasizes the maleness of translators, but arguably it is not just maleness but also the maintenance of a hegemonic position. It is just as important that the Hungarian translators of *Second Foundation* were *straight* men translating another *straight* man. (Piroska F. Nagy, possibly the only Hungarian woman translator of early queer mentions in American SF, translated more closely.)

Chau (2019)’s article on translating rape from Chinese to English, discussing “Xiaoxiao” by Shen Congwen and “Spring Silkworms” by Mao Dun, notes that when sexual assault is presented ambiguously in the source, “the translator must make a moral judgment” (Chau 2019, 66). “[S]light variations in word choice can have a crucial impact on the reader’s understanding of ambiguously narrated scenes of sexual violence” (Chau 2019, 73). Using a Spivakian approach, Chau concludes that writers, translators, and readers show an inability to discuss sexual violence openly, but as she examines, this is globally changing due to the #MeToo movement. Translations of rape can become a site where cultural stereotypes are even more manifest, at least in part due to this ambiguity stemming from a lack of open discussion. In her case studies, students’ stereotypes of Chinese literature affect both the translations and their readings. In our case, sexual violence or the absence thereof can also reveal more about the cultural context and associated stereotypes in the US versus Hungary. Asimov’s work is especially interesting here, because the violence affected by textual changes hinges on a concept presented as science fictional in the narrative: telepathy.

GENDERING TELEPATHY IN HUNGARIAN

The ambiguity in our case also involves the speculative element. Is mind rape a form of rape? The issues might not be with the differing cultural conceptions of rape, but rather with the aspect of tying rape to telepathy. Telepathy is generally gendered female and/or feminine in English-language public discourse; this has been true for over a hundred years, as demonstrated in Luckhurst (2002)’s monograph exploring the development of telepathy as a cultural concept in the Victorian era. Telepathy, from its earliest coinage in the nineteenth century, was associated with women and femininity. Initially, women sensitives were guided and/or studied by men, with women in a passive and men in an active role, in

keeping with Victorian English gender norms. Men were mesmerists and hypnotists, women were mediums. In later fictional portrayals, the woman mesmerist also appeared (Luckhurst 2002, 206). Luckhurst discusses queer women (Luckhurst 2002, 225–226) and feminine men (Luckhurst 2002, 221, 236) or men becoming women in some magical cross-gender way (Luckhurst 2002, 243, 248), and notices a linkage not just with femininity but also with queerness: “Telepathic connection and visionary powers, therefore, connected with same-sex desire, although there is no stable matrix holding this valency in place” (Luckhurst 2002, 226).

Many writers have explored the Gothic origins of American science fiction, but there has been little attention to Asimov’s Gothic sources of inspiration. MacArthur’s monograph (2015, 13) analyzes Asimov’s short stories “Obituary” and “The Billiard Ball” as examples of one of his “great deal” of works that “utilise the Gothic,” and also points out that Asimov

is able to continue the trend in later Gothic to make the villain less singularly dimensional and not only more interesting, but more credible too. The result of this is that within science fiction scope is created for the advocates of scientific development to adopt the role of simultaneous hero/villain. (MacArthur 2015, 15)

This description applies to the Mule, too; his character is built *both* from the tropes of the Gothic romance and of Campbellian science fiction. Thurschwell (2001) connects anxieties about telepathic invasion at the turn of the twentieth-century British/American fiction to anxieties about gay men and Jews and notes that the telepathy aspect does not reduce to “a cover for homosexuality” (Thurschwell 2001, 38). These were separate, though associated concepts: “Hypnotic sway, the non-benign, terrorizing form of magically thinking one’s way into the interior of another, is not simply a cover for sexuality, although it is also that” (Thurschwell 2001, 38). Along these lines, the Mule could be conceptualized as a science fiction Svengali, and Thurschwell’s analysis applies: “Any attraction to Svengali outside of the hypnotic bond remains almost entirely unfathomable” (Thurschwell 2001, 52).

However, Asimov’s Gothic and science fictional forerunners have been infrequently translated into Hungarian, in part due to Kuczka’s position against lowbrow fiction. The Gothic trope of telepathy as not only feminine but an actively *feminizing*—and also queering—force was not familiar to a Hungarian readership in the Kádár era. Cultural discourse was

often driven by Soviet concepts. Alaina Lemon (2017) explores concepts of telepathy and theatrical performance in Soviet and post-Soviet culture in the Russian Federation using an ethnographic approach, discussing noted male and female psychics alike. Telepathy and extrasensory perception were/are commonly associated with male performers like Wolf Messing or later/presently Allan Chumak and Anatoly Kashpirovsky. Noted parapsychological researchers were mostly male. Telepathy did not seem to acquire a strong female gendering either; Lemon discusses Luckhurst (2002), but does not remark on a gender bias in the Soviet/post-Soviet context.

While comparable literary-historical studies do not exist in Hungarian, concepts of telepathy are associated with Hungarian shamanism, which was a living tradition up into the 1970s in some areas of Hungary (Timaffy 1992) and still influences public discourse. While the traditional shaman (*táltos, tudós ember*) can show gender-nonconforming features like physical weakness and a lack of facial hair, he is primarily male and his power is associated with virile male animals (Kürti 2002). Thus, telepathy and other forms of extrasensory perception cannot be unambiguously linked to femininity, though those associations are also present, for example, in images of the woman herbalist (*javasasszony*) and fortune-teller (*jósnő*). Associations of telepathy to both binary genders and *also* to gender non-conformity prevent telepathy from becoming gendered and sexualized.

In English-language scholarship and also in common parlance, countries under Soviet military occupation are often conflated with the Soviet Union itself, so it is important to notice that Hungarian attitudes to telepathy cannot be reduced to Soviet views, either, even though neither seems to gender telepathy. Unlike in the USSR, in Hungary the use of hypnosis was legally restricted to medical doctors and psychologists (Mészáros 1984), so media performers who frequently relied on hypnotic techniques did not arise. TV psychics only appeared after the regime change.

The Mule in Asimov's work is described as un-masculine and infertile, in keeping with the English-language cultural tropes around telepathy; the contact he initiates is invasive and sexually charged. But because Hungarian culture does not sexualize telepathy, *and* because language related to rape is often indirect, aspects of sexual violence are easily removed from the source text and also facilitate self-censorship. When rape descriptions are tied to a familiar context, they are maintained easier in translation. For instance, in *Dune*, the stereotypical figure of the effeminate gay pederast is recognizable to Hungarian readers; or in *The Currents of Space*, the

backstabbing bisexual is also a familiar heterosexist stock character. This might also explain why the references to sexual assault are also missing from the new, post-Communist Hungarian translation (Asimov 2018). The cultural framework remained, and the imagery of the knife attack introduced by Baranyi was memorable enough to preserve. The foreword of the Hungarian publisher from Gábor Takács (no relation) stated their policy to maintain phrasings where possible, while modernizing expressions: “Just as Asimov did not revise the original stories, so did we keep the accepted expressions, and even where we changed phrasings, we focused on [preserving] the original tone and mindset” (Asimov 2018, 19). A further argument in favor of keeping these phrasings could have been that they were influential in their own right in the original translation, which did not have sexual overtones.

THE INFLUENCE OF *SECOND FOUNDATION* ON HUNGARIAN SCIENCE FICTION

Many later authors were inspired by *Foundation's* worldbuilding and referenced it, even if they wrote counter to Asimov's assumptions. While a discussion of the influence of *Foundation* on *American SF* is beyond the scope of this chapter, Manlove (1986) argues that the trilogy is “the basis of the development of the modern science-fiction epic” (Manlove 1986, 15). An illustrative example of Asimov's influence is Frank Herbert, whose *Dune* was defined against *Foundation* (Grigsby 1981), and which has been interpreted as *Second Foundation* from the point of view of the Mule (O'Reilly 1981). While *Foundation* wasn't the first to conceptualize telepathic invasion as sexual assault, these themes are more characteristic of Gothic romance rather than science fiction. Asimov's influence ensured their perpetuation in a new genre, at least in English. This influence played out differently in Hungarian speculative fiction. While Asimov's works were just as important, and his depiction of telepathy served as a template for later writers, those works likewise did not include telepathic attack as sexual assault. In the Hungarian text of *Second Foundation*, there is no indication that anything was removed or changed. Han Ziman (2008) discusses the Chinese practice of using suspension points to notify readers that sexual material was removed, but here the changes form an organic part of the text. Emphasizing disability instead of queerness, or changing sexualized to nonsexualized violence, do not seem out of place. The text

maintains its coherence—unlike in *Imperial Earth*—and changes are unnoticeable to the reader who cannot access the original English.

Hungarian science fiction is not homogenous in tackling the topic of telepathic influencing, but rape metaphors have been conspicuously absent from it. To illustrate the difference, I will examine two major works: *Kiálts farkast* (“Cry Wolf”) by András Gáspár and *Csodaidők* (“WonderTimes”) by Raana Raas. I chose these works because they are influential in their own right, and both feature consensual *and* non-consensual telepathic interactions. *Kiálts farkast* (1990) by András Gáspár is a quasi-cyberpunk, quasi-urban-fantasy set in a future Budapest. Space Corps veteran Zsigmond Vogel comes into contact with the Plasm, a giant amoeboid creature that has settled on Earth. Telepathic contact with the Plasm is presented in a religious context, even in a secular, postmodernist world. Characters offer a sacrifice of oranges for the Plasm to consume, as is customary. The ritual is described as *fohászok*, “petitionary prayers,” with people leaving *fogadalmi gyertyák* (“votive candles”) for the Plasm as part of an *áldozati szertartás* (“sacrificial ritual”); these terms have both Christian and shamanic connotations. The creature demonstrates positive telepathic influence on the two men in return:

Furcsamód csakugyan megkönnyebbült. A legtöbben hasonló viszontajándékban részesültek, mások egyszer fékevesztett, másszor csöndes derűt tapasztaltak, megint mások semmit az égvilágon. (Gáspár 1990/1997, 41)

Strangely, *he* [Vogel] *indeed felt better*. *Most people received such a gift in return, others sometimes experienced an agitated or quiet cheer, yet others nothing at all.*

Vogel is undergoing flashbacks from the time of his military service, and even medical treatment does not eliminate these reactions. Then the Plasm reaches out to talk to him directly, with great effort, and it turns out some of Vogel’s disturbing visions were caused by the Plasm. Diametrically opposite to mind rape tropes, the Plasm apologizes:

- Használt a szérum?
- Semmi bajom.
- Félreértés. Óvatlanság. Nem ismertük eléggé a gondolatait, mikor a kedvét kerestük. Nem sejtettük, hogy bizonyos emlékei... nem szokványosak. Zavar. Zavar odabent. Beavatkozás. Veszedelem.
- *Did the serum [Vogel’s medication] help?*

- *I'm all right.*
- *A misunderstanding. Carelessness. We did not know your thoughts well enough when we were seeking your favor. We did not suspect that some of your memories were... uncommon. Disturbance. A disturbance inside. An intervention.*

It is also noteworthy that the Plasm addresses Vogel in the formal mode, courteously, even while struggling with grammar (unlike contemporary English, Hungarian has a *tu/vous* distinction). The antagonists are trying to force their will on the Plasm, and the Plasm acts out. Yet the narrative makes it clear that this behavior is in self-defense, and the antagonists are presented as almost cinematically evil. The Plasm asks Vogel for help again, preparing and making great effort to carry on a coherent conversation, and describes feeling “the Latin *caritas*, the *agapé* of New Testament Greek” toward Vogel. They proceed to have a conversation about religion.

In a dramatic monologue, the main antagonist Pauker specifically states, “*A vallási, etikai vonatkozások igazában sosem foglalkoztattak, talán ez eredményességem titka*”—“I never cared about religious, [and/or] ethical aspects; maybe that’s been the key to my success” (Gáspár 1990/1997, 177). Discarding the spiritual aspects of telepathy leads to a loss of humanity: Pauker is repeatedly described in negative animal terms. (Cf. the Mule’s newly introduced animal aspect.) The final, climactic battle is again couched in religious phraseology, mostly with New Testament references. Yet organized religion does not present answers, and its representatives are portrayed satirically. Telepathy is related to religion through the medium of personal spirituality.

The religious link is also prominent in *Csodaidők* (Raas 2006, 2008, 2009, 2010, in four volumes) by Raana Raas (Etelka Görgey), a sweeping science fictional family saga and tale of interstellar political conflict (Takács forthcoming). It adopts Asimov’s telepathy-related terminology, including the concept of *mentalism* itself, and the author has also named him as an influence:

I can list two works as inspiration: the novel *Távolí tűz* [*Distant Fire*] by Péter Zsoldos is one, Barry B. Longyear’s short story “Enemy Mine” is the other [...] Maybe also the idea of mentalists from Asimov, but my mentalists are capable of much less than his were. (Uzseka 2008)

In *Csodaidők*, the Kaven, the in-universe group that has developed mentalism as an advanced technology, is a minority ethnoreligious group. Initially, mentalism is shown to be a tool of political power and interpersonal control; most mentalists become religious leaders in a society with no church-state separation. When a character's mentalistic skills are assessed without her consent, the experience is unambiguously intrusive and traumatic for her. The forcible imposition of the officials' will on the character is shown as repugnant, but not sexualized:

Immár csak egyvalamit szeretett volna: kikerülni ebből a helyiségből, minél hamarabb, el valahová, ahol **nem kerülgetik furcsa és őrjítő érzések, amelyek nem tőle származnak**, ebben teljesen biztos volt – az ő érzései mindig mások voltak, valahogy tompábbak, és mindig volt kezdetük és végük, nem csak úgy történtek vele. (Raas 2006, 127, italics in the original)

She wanted one thing only: to get out of this room, as soon as possible, away to a place where no strange and maddening feelings were circling around her that had not originated with her, of that she was utterly certain – her own feelings were always different, somehow blunter, and they always had a beginning and an end, they did not just happen to her.

Another character resorts to mentally immobilizing a young man in a family dispute. Later, he realizes that his actions had been wrong, and attempts to make amends. This family relationship is a major plot thread throughout the series and is nonsexual; just like the attack, which is portrayed in terms of interpersonal power relations that stem both from the attacker's senior position in the family and from his political power as a *safir*, a high-ranking religious judge in the fictional universe of the series:

Yaan szeme tágra nyílt a félelemtől, de nem bírt megmozdulni: tehetetlenül ácsorgott az ajtó előtt, keze a kilincs felé kinyújtva.

– Nem parancsolhatsz nekem! – suttogetta még egyszer.

Giin összehúzott szemmel nézett a fiúra.

– Nem? – A levegőben megállt kéz felé intett. – Akkor ez micsoda?”

(Raas 2006, 159) [...] “Ez volt az első alkalom, hogy családja meglátta Giinben a safirt.” (Raas 2006, 161)

Yaan's eyes opened wide from fear, but he couldn't move: he stood helpless in front of the door, his hand reaching out to the handle.

“You can't give me orders!” he whispered once again.

Giin looked at the boy with narrowed eyes.

“No?” *He gestured at the hand that had stopped mid-air. “Then what is this?” [...] “This was the first occasion when his family saw the safir in Giin.”*

As the setting is embroiled in war, mentalism by contrast is shown to have more non-violent uses. In the final volume (Raas 2010, 258), one of the protagonists even makes jokes that depend on mentalism. One of the series’ highest points is the scene where two high-powered mentalists, Giin and Shine Meron, accidentally produce a “bridge,” sharing their thoughts and memories (Raas 2010, 309–310). One of them thinks of his deceased wife, his relatives, and church buildings (!); these evoke similar images of family and religious observance from his connection partner. The experience is portrayed as intense, but nonsexual. The text repeatedly uses the imagery of a whirlwind to illustrate the overwhelming nature of it: “fejében **mintha óriási forgószeél söpört volna végig**” (Raas 2010, 309) “*it was as if a giant whirlwind had swept across his head.*”

Az élmény az egyik pillanatról a másikra ért véget, és Giin úgy érezte, **mintha forgószeélből szabadult volna: zúgó fejjel, szédülve hanyatlott hátra** a padon. Az előtte álló férfi úgy rogyott le a padra, hogy kis híján nekiesett Giinnekn. (Raas 2010, 309)

The experience ended abruptly, and Giin felt as if he had escaped from a whirlwind: his head roaring and vertiginous, he fell back on the bench. The man standing in front of him toppled to the bench, almost crashing against Giin.

After the event, they have a calm technical discussion about what had just happened and how to prevent it from happening again. The only emotion present is Shine Meron feeling embarrassed for having called Giin a complete stranger with a rather brash colloquial term (“vadidegen”—Raas 2010, 310).

The contrast is even more striking with another of the key final scenes, where an openly gay character tells one of his comrades in arms that he’d always loved him (Raas 2010, 377–378). The language is explicit about same-sex attraction, describing the scene as a “*szerelmi vallomás*” “confession of love” (Hungarian has different terms for romantic and filial love, and here the former is used). The recipient of the confession, the older, adult Yaan who is straight, gets extremely embarrassed and his face becomes “*paprikapiros*,” “red like paprika.” There is no need for subtext; the queer content is in-text. And while Yaan has strong mentalism, it does not affect this relationship.

Overall, we can conclude that the mentalism of *Csodaidők* is associated with power, family ties, and religion; abuses of it are not demonstrated with metaphors of sexual violation; and queer themes are presented as separate from mentalism.

CONCLUSION

The above discussion presents an inflection point where the development of Hungarian speculative fiction follows different lines due to how certain key scenes in one of the most popular works of Golden Age science fiction were translated into Hungarian. But as far as it is possible to infer, this editing was not due to state censorship policies, but rather to a mutually reinforcing combination of the following factors: (1) the lack of Hungarian cultural embedding of the concepts of telepathic influencing as sexual violence, due to telepathy not being a gendered and sexualized concept, as opposed to in-American contexts; (2) language connected to rape being evasive in the mainstream of public discourse; and (3) individual translators' tendencies to self-censor. Santaemilia (2008) states that "translating sex-related language may constitute a fertile ground for the articulation of both official 'censorships' and the multiplicity of 'self-censorships'." Societal and individual factors intertwine: cultural context and gendered language are connected, and so are the gendered and cultural characteristics of the translators and authors. We sought to examine each, from the standpoint of intersectional feminist analysis that owes much to Spivak. One reason we need to be alert to these aspects in fiction is their societal influence. The Gothic themes that Asimov built on caused harm in their own era—Thurschwell (2001) discusses how the assumption that gay men could extend mesmeric influence affected Oscar Wilde's trial and his treatment in prison. Present-day discourse is different, but gay and trans panic as criminal defense strategies are still accepted in many jurisdictions, implying irresistible mental influence. There is still much to dismantle and discuss, and translations offer us a space where conflicting cultural assumptions can reveal themselves.

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NOTES

1. The afterword to the first Hungarian edition of *Second Foundation* by László Makkai likewise emphasized the possible Marxist inspiration to Asimov's "psychohistory."
2. I first heard this point from Livejournal user spacehawk.
3. Asimov also uses other related tropes originating in the Gothic novel (Sedgwick 1985), like the feminization of the aristocracy, or juxtaposing physical "degeneracy" with powers of the psyche (Luckhurst 2002).
4. Here we cannot discuss the Mule's racialization in detail due to length constraints, but it is noteworthy that his only related descriptor is his overly large nose, which restates antisemitic stereotypes from Gothic romance that associate the threatening homosexual mesmerist with Jewishness or "Levantine" origins. What Asimov was trying to achieve as a Jewish author—a form of reclamation?—goes beyond this chapter.

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Translating the Pathologized Body as a Tool of Nationalism in Chinese Science Fiction

Virginia L. Conn

INTRODUCTION

In what is now a well-documented incident, the man considered to be the father of modern Chinese literature turned away from medicine and toward fiction as a means of addressing a sickness too pervasive for surgery, medicine, or modern science: a sickness of the national spirit. Writing in the preface to his 1922 “Call to Arms” (呐喊/*Nahan*), Lu Xun recounts his early medical training in a provincial Japanese medical college, where, alongside his Japanese classmates, he watched a slideshow on microbiology that concluded not with images of microbial organisms but with photographs of Chinese prisoners of war apathetically facing their execution.¹ Despite the prisoners appearing to be “strong fellows,” they were “completely apathetic” to their humiliation at the hands of outside forces (Lu 1972a, 2). This scene convinced him of the futility of applied medicine when the Chinese national character was itself so debilitated that its people

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could not—or would not—resist their own humiliation. Within the year, he had left the university, left Japan, and left medicine behind altogether. Rather than minister to the body, Lu Xun would now minister to the soul of the Chinese people.

Lu Xun's disillusionment with medicine stemmed from a more fundamental dissatisfaction with Chinese society and only secondarily with what he saw as a co-constitutive physical and spiritual deficiency. In his call to arms, he wrote that “the people of a weak and backward country, however strong and healthy they may be, can only serve to be made examples of, or to witness such futile spectacles; and it doesn't really matter how many of them die of illness” (Lu 1972a, 3). Chinese national citizens, and by extension, the country itself, were thereby enfolded into a pathologized stasis in which their sick bodies became representative of a deeper sickness in the state and illustrative of the “sick man of Asia” label imposed by external and internal commentators alike.

Focusing on two of Chinese science fiction's greatest authors, this chapter will map changing approaches to national illness through the trope of the “sick man of Asia” (东亚病夫/*dongya bingfu*), a concept that pathologized Chinese bodies through Western representations of them as inherently sickly, weak, and craven. As a thematic device, however, it remains largely unrecognized in Western scholarship of Chinese science fiction, despite having been initially introduced by Western commentators. By comparing two texts written almost a century apart, I explore how the “sick man of Asia” trope was initially translated by Western and Japanese colonizers into a sociological symbol that would define Chinese literature for more than a century, only later to be redeployed as a science fictional conceit for exploring ethnonationalist hierarchies of biopolitics and national influence. In their depiction of contemporary technologies for battling infirmity and prolonging life, both Lu Xun's short story “Medicine” (药/*Yao*, 1919) and Wang Jinkang's “The Reincarnated Giant” (转生的巨人/*Zhuansheng de juren*, 2005) explore the relationship of physical illness to the individual body and the state as a whole. I argue that while Lu Xun's “Medicine” takes seriously the trope of state illness as embodied in the individual, condemning China's national character in the process, Wang Jinkang's “The Reincarnated Giant” understands the idea of “national illness” as a tool of geopolitical maneuvering. In identifying “The Reincarnated Giant” as a significant cultural shift from Lu Xun's “Medicine” toward a science fictional literature of nationalism that rejects the pathologization of the Chinese body, the trope of the “sick man of

Asia” is redeployed through the problematization of those technological interventions that alter both bodily and national hierarchies. This chapter maps the changing signification of the term from its initial introduction, its early translations and internal appropriation, and finally the ways in which it has been re-translated as a tool of contemporary Chinese science fiction.

THE “SICK MAN OF ASIA” IN NEED OF WESTERN MEDICINE

The term “sick man of Asia” has a long history of circulation and internalization. Originally used by Western observers and politicians to describe the last crumbling years of the Qing government (1644–1912), over time it came to encompass the more literal sense in addition to its metaphorical one, applying equally to individual bodies and the nation alike. Historian Rebecca Karl notes that an understanding of the late Qing as “an era of weakening state power and of staged diachronic ‘backwardsness’ vis-à-vis Euro-America and Japan” led to an approach aimed at “making up for the legacy of ‘weakness’ through state-building” (Karl 2002, 22). The Chinese national body thus became burdened with an overabundance of degrading signifiers: weakness, corruption, and physiological susceptibility to both illness and moral degradation. As Ruth Rogaski would claim in her groundbreaking work on the evolution of the concept of hygiene in China, these attributions were intimately bound to “the notion that ‘natives’ themselves produced disease through inherent deficiencies of body and behavior,” with disease localized “within the inherent ‘racial’ habits of indigenous populations” (Rogaski 2004, 9). Bridie Andrews has written extensively about how this colonization of the body also took place at the linguistic level, noting that the word for sickness, “bing 病, could also mean any flaw or failing” (Andrews 2015, 10), so that the “long history of metaphorical equivalence between the management of the human body and the management of the political realm” became jointly conflated in the term “sick man of Asia”—both an indictment of the physical body and the political system (Andrews 2015, 10). As a result, China and the Chinese were considered untreatably ill as a foundational constitutional condition by Western medicinal etiologies—a characterization that was then translated into self-identification by Chinese physicians and thinkers such as Lu Xun.

While the designation “sick man of Asia” was introduced by Westerners, native Chinese authors and activists at the turn of the twentieth century

were themselves all too aware of the Qing dynasty's internal corruption. It was easy for the term "sick man of Asia" to make the leap from a Western imposition to a self-identificatory label. Already by 1895, translator and scholar Yan Fu had appropriated the term "sick man of Asia" to describe this weakness as the conflation of individual Chinese corporeal integrity and the lack of Chinese national strength in the face of imperialist opposition.² Liang Qichao and Kang Youwei, both highly regarded contemporaries of Lu Xun, used the term to describe the failing government and the people who had failed to protect their nation against threats both internal and external.³ Lu Xun himself saw the physical character of the Chinese people as so irreparably weak that saving their bodies was no longer a worthwhile task; rather, "the most important thing, therefore, was to change their spirit," with literature being "the best means to this end" (Lu 1972a, 3).

Lu Xun's understanding of literature as a "means to an end" was fundamental not only to the imagination of an embodied Chinese citizenship but also to the development of literature in the country overall. At the time of his writing "Medicine," science fiction did not yet exist as a defined genre in China, although an "anomaly of the emergence of science fiction in China is that while the genre itself saw its beginnings as a Western import through translation, the term 'science fiction' (*kexue xiaoshuo*) began to appear regularly as a literary genre category associated with specific stories in publication in China (c. 1904) *before it did in the English-language press*" (emphasis in the original) (Isaacson 2017, 7). The "specific stories" referenced here by Nathaniel Isaacson are those translated by Lu Xun into Chinese. Sinologist Rudolf Wagner notes that the original Chinese term for the genre that would become science fiction, *kexue xiaoshuo*, was introduced by Lu Xun in his 1903 translation of Jules Verne and that this term (科学小说/*kexue xiaoshuo*, as opposed to the more contemporary term for science fiction, 科幻小说/*kehuan xiaoshuo*) remained the accepted term in China up until the late 1960s (Wagner 1985). So while "Medicine" may not, strictly speaking, fall within the generic conventions of a literary genre that was only just beginning to be defined by its author, it provided a similar alternative imaginative framework for estranging the problems of the contemporary era, with literature as the future antidote to those same problems. In fact, speaking to a hypothetical interlocutor, Lu Xun wrote elsewhere that "If someone were to say to me, 'These many pages are nothing more than empty rhetoric, are they of any practical use?' I would respond: 'In fact, they are the mother

of the material progress of the modern epoch” (Lu 2010, 90). By rejecting a career in medicine and instead turning to literature’s material possibilities for progress, Lu Xun paradoxically made it his life’s work to heal the “sick man of Asia,” becoming what Julia Lovell has characterized as a “literary physician” (Lovell 2009, xvi). To the extent that science fiction can be understood as a genre imported from the West⁴ and the “variety of modern medical conceptual paradigms—which, in China, were typically coded as ‘Western’” (Rojas 2020, 639) were initially imposed on China by foreign powers, they became a persistent preoccupation for modernizing *litterateurs* such as Lu Xun, who—in diagnosing the body politic as ill—hoped to spur spiritual health through his written work.

In his 1919 story, “Medicine,” Lu Xun tells two inextricably intertwined stories: the Chuan⁵ family’s search for a “guaranteed” folk remedy for their consumptive son, and the execution of the Hsia family’s revolutionary son, who died opposing the corrupt state. Both end in death—one because of flawed medicine, one because of flawed policies—and in that final death, nothing separates them but a narrow dirt path. As scholars such as Leo Ou-fan Lee have noted, the story is among the most well-known examples of Lu Xun’s disgust for the spiritual and physical infirmities of his nation (Lee 1977, 166). Old Chuan and his wife dote on their consumptive son, seeking to cure his physical ailments through a particularly gruesome bit of folk medicine: they purchase a steamed bun soaked in the blood of a just-executed revolutionary, still dripping upon purchase. This medicine is heralded as “a guaranteed cure! Eaten warm like this. A roll dipped in human blood like this can cure any consumption!” (Lu 1972b, 29) By ingesting a more vital life, the Chuans hope to restore their frail, sickly child to health in the future.

The “guaranteed” cure doesn’t work, but the boy’s consumptive death reveals a more fundamental flaw in the body politic, a rottenness that sacrifices the future by clinging to a past that has long since ossified into obsolescence and superstition. It is revealed that the revolutionary who was murdered and whose curative blood soaks the bread was a young man roughly the same age as the Chuan boy, a “real rascal” who “even tried to incite the jailer to revolt” in his devotion to the idea that “the great Ching empire belongs to us” (Lu 1972b, 30). This “rascal’s” crime, in claiming control of the Qing empire for the people, is to incite a revolutionary upswell that rejects the decaying social structure of the time for modernizing reforms, just as Lu Xun supported such revolutionary measures in real life. By using his blood in the folkloric cure that has failed to do

anything but instill false hopes, “Medicine” underscores the depravity of a people who would kill progress itself to maintain an already-dying body. The body in question is both that of Little Chuan, wasting away, and simultaneously that of China at the end of the twentieth century, also wasting away.

Neither the death of Little Chuan nor the death of the revolutionary, “Widow Hsia’s boy,” is described; it is only when Old Chuan’s wife comes to the graveyard that her presence reveals that the “guaranteed” cure did nothing to save her son after all. “Left of the path were buried executed criminals or those who had died of neglect in prison. Right of the path were paupers’ graves,” collecting the empire’s discarded bodies in one place (Lu 1972b, 31). As she mourns by her son’s grave to the right of the path, another mother draws near to grieve for her own son, buried opposite Little Chuan’s final resting place on the left. The “flush of shame [that] spread over her pale face” (Lu 1972b, 31) implies that her son was the revolutionary whose heart’s blood was not enough to save a single consumptive boy, much less a declining empire. “Fearing sorrow might send her out of her mind” (Lu 1972b, 32), Old Chuan’s wife cajoles the other woman not to grieve, recognizing the shared grief of having lost a child even as they are separated by a vast ideological chasm. By uniting the bodies of the two young men in the cold ground, both past and present are simultaneously laid to rest. In fact, the name of the two boys—transliterated Chuan (华) and Hsia (夏)—when combined, create another word for “China” (华夏) and the corpses thereby become symbolic of the nation as a whole, a national body already consigned to the grave.

While many Lu Xun scholars view his misanthropic output as an expression of lyrical cynicism, I argue that it also establishes the seeds for utopian change taken up by Chinese science fiction over the course of the twentieth century. “Medicine” is not an explicitly science fiction text, but its implication that it is the racialized Chinese body itself that has doomed the nation develops out of the same reformist futurist impulse that would eventually come to characterize science fiction’s earliest instantiations in China. By combining 华 (Chuan) and 夏 (Hsia), the text creates a China at the intersection of past and present, body and spirit, and then inters it. The body in the ground makes a viable future for the extant body politic impossible because it has already wasted away and—in literature as in Lu Xun’s real-life medical studies—there is no cure for what Lu Xun saw as such an inherent deficiency. Yet while redemption and recovery are impossible for those suffering from this sickness of the spirit in the present, Lu

Xun's hope is that modernization will lead to the possibility of national recovery in the future. It is impossible to separate Lu Xun's account of his own father's death at the hands of traditional Chinese physicians from his broader conclusions that

those physicians [who followed traditional medical practices] must be either unwitting or deliberate charlatans; and I began to sympathize with the invalids and families who suffered at their hands. From translated histories I also learned that [new medical practices] had originated, to a great extent, with the introduction of Western medicine ... (Lu 1972a, 2)

By reading "Medicine" in dialogue with his self-stated beliefs about the necessity of embracing "progressive" science and technology and rejecting "traditional" medicines for transforming both the country as a whole and of individual bodies and souls, "Medicine" looks toward futuristic national reformation. Alongside his belief that science fiction could reform Chinese literature, this belief in national bodily reformation echoes Lu Xun's sentiment that despite his overriding pessimism for the China and Chinese people who existed at the time of his writing, he "could not blot out hope, because hope lies in the future" (Lu 1972a, 5). Lu Xun's belief that this future reformation would necessarily come from external sources, as opposed to internal ones, is central to his depiction of a constitutional deficiency at the heart of the national body politic, but is also a view that would undergo significant translation by other Chinese authors over the course of the twentieth century. While the mobilization of the "natural disease" rhetoric that is so central to the "sick man of Asia" characterization represents a temporal trope that naturalizes imperialist violence, science fictional depictions of futures in which China either overcomes or casts off its weaknesses allow for the translation of a national self-identification over time.

THE CHANGING NATURE OF ILLNESS NARRATIVES

Initially imposed on China by Western colonizers, internalized by Chinese literati and the public alike, then recontextualized and redeployed over the course of the twentieth century, the term "sick man of Asia" illustrates the "logic of reciprocity in translanguing practices" that Lydia Liu identifies as so central to "sovereign thinking" in China at the beginning of the twentieth century (Liu 2006, 7). Specifically, Liu's translational concept of the

super-sign is valuable in understanding how the shifting nature of “the sick man of Asia” integrated national self-identification and global power relations within semiotic production. A super-sign in Chinese, according to Liu, is rendered such “by virtue of being informed, signified, and transformed by the English [...] and must defer its correct meanings⁶ to the foreign counterpart” (Liu 2006, 33). The shift in object taken by the appellation reflects a literary deployment that recognizes “sickness” as a way of categorizing people and nations and, in doing so, asserting a geopolitical order of health, hygiene, and power. The key to this shift in usage over the twentieth century is the changing view, illustrated by Lu Xun and Wang Jinkang, respectively, that the label of “sick man of Asia” recognizes inherent bio-national characteristics versus the recognition that naming is itself an assertion of power. Lu Xun’s “Medicine” sees the “sick man of Asia” as a recognition of a physical and spiritual truth; Wang Jinkang’s “The Reincarnated Giant” treats it as a discursive imposition.

We might understand the process by which the “sick man of Asia” shifted from a marker of ethnonationalist deficiency in Lu Xun to a tool for emphasizing geopolitical strength in Wang Jinkang as a translational process situated at the intersection of Lydia Liu’s super-sign and Carlos Rojas’s description of the transformation of the term over the twentieth century via translational *ressentiment* (Rojas 2020, 641). Through what Rojas describes as “the practice of taking a condition of empirical weakness and transforming it into a site of symbolic power” (Rojas 2020, 641), Lu Xun diagnosed a condition defined by imperialist powers as an intrinsic part of his countrymen, and in the diagnosis, offered the possibility for transformation and healing in the future. This rhetorical strategy embraced a self-definition that inherently deferred its “correct meaning to the foreign counterpart” (Liu 2006, 33) while simultaneously embracing “a strategic affirmation of what might otherwise be perceived as weakness” (Rojas 2020, 641). The term itself, introduced and defined by imperialist forces, became simultaneously both diagnosis and rallying call for change.

Lu Xun’s utilization of the “sick man of Asia” trope to characterize his people and nation would soon undergo its own change, due in no small part to his own medicalized writing. Viewing literature “as the best means” to assuage the emotional and psychic damage of the Chinese people (Lu 1972a, 3), Lu Xun’s work was rooted in the discursive nature of Chinese traditional medicine, which scholar of contemporary and modern Chinese literature Howard Y.F. Choy identifies as a translation of natural forces into literary diagnostics. Choy points out that in Chinese, “linguistically,

the relation between ‘discourse’ and ‘disease’ is embodied in the Chinese character for ‘diagnose,’ *zhen* 诊, which is categorized under the *yan* 言 ‘speech’ radical⁷ and that “as a matter of fact, the four diagnostic methods (*si zhen* 四诊) in traditional Chinese medicine—observation, auscultation/olfaction, interrogation, pulse feeling and palpation (*wang wen wen qie* 望闻问切)—corresponding to looking/reading, listening/smelling, asking, and touching, are mostly related to language. Diagnosis on a disease can only be formed in the discourse of discussion and definition” (Choy 2016, 6). That is, to identify disease meant to write it so that it could be rooted out. For Lu Xun, literature became both diagnostic instrument and cure, conflating the metaphor of the national body with the literal sickness of the individual.

Lydia Liu has elaborated upon this conflation as a specific characteristic of the anti-establishment literary tradition in which Lu Xun worked, noting that “the medical and anatomical tropes that dominated the debate on literary modernity effected a subtle homology between the literary and the clinical, and this ‘metaphorical’ analogy helped arrogate the healing power of medical science [...] while elevating the status of literature above that of science” (Liu 1995, 50). Not only did literature occupy a preeminent place in the discourse of disease, as Choy claims, but it actually became elevated above physical interventions aimed at restoring life to the weakening national body.

Throughout his oeuvre, but also specifically in “Medicine,” Lu Xun’s depiction of China as the “sick man of Asia” required a complete reconceptualization of both the nation and the individual, one predicated on a pathologization that, though intrinsic, could be transformed through literary identification. Such pathologization served as a discursive transposition of Western and Japanese concepts onto the Chinese people. As Ari Heinrich writes, “the body, we must remember, constitutes the tabula rasa of pathology; to suffer from a peculiarly modern (or ‘Western’) disease, one requires a peculiarly modern (‘Western’) body” (Heinrich 2008, 115). Beset from within by an empire in the twilight of its reign and from without by Western and Japanese imperialist forces, Lu Xun depicted his nation as doubly victimized and its people incapable of becoming anything other than witnesses to their own death (Lu 1972a, 3). The “explicit comparisons between the body’s fight against germs and the Chinese national and racial struggle to resist foreign encroachment and subordination” is described by historian of medicine Bridie Andrews as an explicit illustration of how “the presence of imperialist forces (germs) on Chinese soil was

in itself strong evidence that the Chinese nation was diseased and helpless to resist” (Andrews 2015, 225).

Philosopher and literary critic Karatani Kojin goes further by arguing that the framework of disease as a metaphor is itself a Western imperialist imposition on national and bodily autonomy. For Karatani, “The very thought of fixing a single, original cause is theological and metaphysical” (Karatani 1993, 106), forcing the imagination of illness as “a form of invisible, ubiquitous evil ... as a sort of original sin” imparted to an unbelieving population by “enlightened” Westerners (Karatani 1993, 108). As with Howard Y.F. Choy’s description of diagnosis as a rhetorical device for imposing meaning on illness, the meaning imposed by the phrase “sick man of Asia” to Chinese bodies carried with it moralizing impositions. Much like anthropologist Johannes Fabian’s noted “denial of coevalness” (Fabian 1983, 31), in which different societies are situated as occupying different historical epochs, the “sick man of Asia” posited China and Chinese people as stuck in a perpetual limbo of sickness and degradation associated with the past, in need of the cure of Western modernity.

Yet as I have noted above, the metaphor of disease as symbolic of national degradation, though initially accepted and utilized by Chinese writers dissatisfied with the crumbling Qing regime, such as Liang Qichao, Kang Youwei, and Lu Xun himself, soon became a focal point for resentment against this same Western ideological imposition. While Lu Xun’s contemporary, the translator and philosopher Yan Fu, asked as early as 1895 whether “contemporary China resembles a sick man?” (Yan 1986, 15) and Lu Xun’s “Medicine” answered in the affirmative, this view of the Chinese national character was not considered static or irreparable. Following Choy’s recognition of diagnosis as, in part, a process of writing, and Lu Xun’s own position as a “literary physician” (Lovell 2009, xvi) ministering to the Chinese people, the literary and political establishment as a whole heeded Lu Xun’s call to arms. Following in the spirit of *ressentiment* described previously, the diagnosis of infirmity was itself a transformative goad toward national health that could only ever be posited as a future-oriented possibility.

Yet probably nothing did so much to translate the concept of national sickness from one internalized and accepted by Chinese literati and leaders alike to one resented, rejected, and reoriented as a tool of discursive opprobrium as the atrocities of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945). In fact, to some extent, the two texts examined in this chapter both respond to separate Japanese atrocities and the victimization

of Chinese citizens, and it is perhaps ironic that a national pathology born out of Japanese war crimes against Chinese soldiers would find its turning point in similar atrocities decades later. From Lu Xun's viewing of his countrymen being beheaded by Japanese soldiers while surrounded by Japanese classmates at the beginning of the century to the demonization of Japanese and imperialist geopolitical power in Wang Jinkang's "The Reincarnated Giant," writers translated China's semi-colonial subjugated status through their differing relationships to Japanese war crimes.

That the Chinese body had already long been constituted and translated through a lens of illness and corporeal inferiority, both imposed from external sources and appropriated internally for nationalist ends, was central to the reception of Japanese wartime atrocities following the Second Sino-Japanese War. Despite being concealed and actively denied for decades, the extent to which lethal medical experimentation was carried out on Chinese prisoners by Japanese doctors during the war provoked an outpouring of anti-Japanese sentiment among the Chinese public. Japanese doctors conducted experiments designed to research the effect of biological weapons on the human body; these were as inhumane and atrocious as any Nazi experimentation from the same time. The critical difference is that the majority of Japanese doctors involved continued on to successful medical careers in Japan and abroad following the conclusion of the war, unlike their German counterparts, who were publicly tried at Nuremberg. As Jing-Bao Nie, Guo Nanyan, Mark Selden, and Arthur Kleinman outline in their edited collection, *Japan's Wartime Medical Atrocities: Comparative Inquiries in Science, History, and Ethics*, this was primarily due to the fact that the American government granted prosecutorial immunity to the Japanese in return for the data collected from their experimentation upon Chinese prisoners (Nie et al. 2010).

Noting the remarkable absence of any significant legal pursuit or retributive justice on the part of China once such actions came to light, Jing-Bao Nie characterizes the initial silence as a pragmatic realpolitik predicated on forgetting. Nie here recognizes the nationalism that emerged following the Second Sino-Japanese War as requiring a rejection of bodily trauma in the Chinese literary context, formalizing victimhood as the antipode of national greatness. In Nie's estimation, the primary reason for invoking Japanese medical atrocities at all is to "sustain and enhance patriotism in the service of realizing the collective Chinese dream, to make the nation wealthy and strong" (Nie 2010, 131). Yanan He notes that when, in the 1980s, Japanese media took the opposite path, "increas[ing] coverage of

Asian victimization in history textbooks and respond[ing] to the international citizens' movement for redress of war victims" (He 2007, 63), it provoked an immediate neo-national backlash against the perception of national victimization. Unlike Lu Xun's characterization of national infirmity as a call to arms, the Chinese media approach that shaped twentieth-century depictions of the body was defined by the selective forgetting of historical atrocities in order to avoid characterizing China and Chinese citizens as victims. Such a stance contributed to what Ian Buruma has identified as the "pseudoreligion of victimhood" (Buruma 1999, 5), wherein even acknowledging medicalized terrorism was sufficient to continue categorizing the victim as inherently weak. This is a stark difference from the acceptance of pathological victimization depicted in Lu Xun's work at the beginning of the century.

It is in the changing cultural context of the "sick man of Asia" that Wang Jinkang's "The Reincarnated Giant" emerges as a redeployment of nationalist corporeality. While Lu Xun inherited the concept from theorists and literati who viewed China itself as physiologically decadent and morally bankrupt, the re-recognition of the term as an imperialist imposition over the middle decades of the century meant that by the time it was used by Wang, the term itself had become a weapon in global cultural battles. To be the subject against which it was deployed meant accepting that it identified an implicit deficiency. More importantly, its use also positioned a country and its people as subjugated victims. As I will investigate in my description of their deployment in "The Reincarnated Giant," literary and political tropes of national illness in the latter half of the twentieth century did not represent a rejection of racialized physical deficiency itself, but merely a reorientation of its object.

"THE REINCARNATED GIANT" AND THE REDEPLOYMENT OF TERMS

If we understand "the sense of a gradual decline, an ability to die" described by comparative cultural critic Rey Chow as signaling "not a new, radical beginning but rather a turning and twisting of tradition away from its metaphysical foundations" (Chow 1995, 195), then approaching the "sick man of Asia" trope as a traditional characteristic of national literature has already sown the seeds of transformation and change. Chow specifically points to Lu Xun's conversion from medicine to literature as "not simply

a famous writer's autobiography about his writing career but a story about the beginning of a new kind of discourse in the postcolonial "third world" (Chow 1995, 5). This "new kind of discourse" would point the way toward the weakening and decline of an old literary regime and, eventually, be reborn as a new literary tool—literally, in the case of Wang Jinkang's "The Reincarnated Giant."

Wang Jinkang (1948–) is a contemporary Chinese SF author, one of a select group known in Chinese as "the Three Generals of Chinese SF" along with Liu Cixin (the most prominent of these authors in the West) and Han Song. "The Reincarnated Giant" is his most-translated story. While influential science fiction scholar Song Mingwei reads "The Reincarnated Giant" as a self-reflexive "myth of unlimited development and its disastrous effects" in China (Song 2013, 93), I argue that while the story does interrogate myths of development and progress, its recognition of how those myths are deployed is weaponized outwardly, as opposed to internally. Specifically, Wang's short story "The Reincarnated Giant" translates the "sick man of Asia" stereotype from an inherent ethnonational characteristic to an appellation that can be redeployed against other countries.

"The Reincarnated Giant," which is more explicitly science fictional than Lu Xun's "Medicine," conveys the rise and fall of an economic tycoon through biomedical intervention aimed at immortality. Mr. Imagai, the wealthiest man in J-Nation (written in the text as "J国," a clear allusion to Japan), sees mastery over the body as synonymous with mastery over global and economic affairs, hoping to extend and strengthen his hold over his company through consolidation over his own bodily processes. The story follows three broad acts that roughly mirror the format of Lu Xun's "Medicine": the introduction of infirmity, the application of a biomedical cure, and the disastrous consequences that follow. In the first act of "The Reincarnated Giant," the narrator (Mr. Imagai's doctor) describes how he has taken legal steps to establish his employer's identity through a Ship of Theseus⁸ argument taken to its ultimate conclusion: no matter how many body parts Mr. Imagai replaces, he will still, in the eyes of the law, remain a distinct legal entity. Once this is established, Mr. Imagai announces that he will be replacing his entire aged body with that of an infant while retaining his brain and all its associated memories and proprietary rights under the law. Immortality is described here as a process of "human grafting" in the same way that trees retain their immortality through repeated grafting over generations—grafting an older human

part onto a younger one is likened to when “a black plum tree is grafted onto a wild peach tree,” thereby “resetting” its internal clock to zero (Wang 2012, 182). The purpose of this is explicitly stated to be continued capitalist control over his company—if the operation is successful, Mr. Imagai’s “two unfortunate sons could no longer be able to look forward to inheriting” (Wang 2012, 178) their father’s empire, and he will expand (literally and figuratively) forever.

In the second act, it is revealed that Mr. Imagai has purchased an anencephalic fetus into which he will transplant his brain, paying for a body to consume in the same way that Lu Xun’s Old Chuan purchased heart’s blood for his son to eat. Unlike the consumption of the bloody bun, however, Mr. Imagai’s biomedical cure is successful, and “a seventy-two-year old infant was born” (Wang 2012, 184). While the purchase of a bun soaked in blood is described by Lu Xun as an opportunity to “transplant this new life into his own home, and reap much happiness” (Lu 1972b, 27), for Mr. Imagai, the transplant means that if he is “able to live forever, [he] wouldn’t need to pay the government the seventy per cent estate tax that would be owed upon [his] death” (Wang 2012, 183). Rather than a transplantation of life, his transplant is primarily a wealth transfer. Following the operation, Mr. Imagai becomes an object of horror: “a bizarre beast with the body of a seven-month-old infant [...] with delicate limbs that waved about, very tender and sensitive skin, a fat little bottom ... and an enormous head” (Wang 2012, 184) that has been surgically enlarged to create room for the 72-year-old’s brain. He begins to grow at an astounding rate, eventually surpassing “sixty meters tall and weigh[ing] more than 300 tonnes” (Wang 2012, 187), at which point he is moved out to sea, where his body will benefit from being buoyed and where it can stand in as a visible symbol of the uncheckable growth of imperialist expansion.

In the final act, public opinion turns against Mr. Imagai and his utilization of biomedical science to avoid his responsibility to society in the form of estate taxes payable upon death. Mr. Imagai himself equates his own growth with wealth accumulation, announcing that he isn’t “afraid of becoming a living Bamiyan Buddha”⁹ in terms of wealth, yet roaring in frustration when “crippled by a disastrous domestic economy, the government could no longer afford to ignore the rampant corruption that ran through the financial sector” (Wang 2012, 202). This resistance to corruption—no matter how belated—diverges sharply from the depiction of the governmental corruption enabling the tragedy of “Medicine,” in

which governmental officials from “some soldiers strolling around” the execution site (Lu 1972b, 25), to “Red-eye, the jailer” stealing the dead boy’s clothes after giving “him a couple slaps” (Lu 1972b, 30), to the city planners who excluded “executed criminals or those who had died of neglect in prison” and “paupers’ graves” from inclusion within the city walls (Lu 1972b, 31) are all complicit in the death of Little Chuan and the Hsia boy alike. Whatever crimes J-Nation’s government has ignored up until this point, Mr. Imagai’s increasing control over the nation’s wealth makes rooting out the sickness that has “crippled” the country an imperative for the government, who are no longer comfortable with either Mr. Imagai’s wealth or body. In what is clearly an allegory of imperialist acquisition, the narrator is “terrified by the thought of this gargantuan eating machine surviving for at least another seventy or eighty years [...]” (Wang 2012, 204) and the effect it will have on the world’s natural resources. Mr. Imagai is served with an unenforceable summons and has warships deployed against him, none of which make a dent in his considerable size, but in his “delirious ..., instinctive greed” (Wang 2012, 205), he eats the narrator and almost immediately dies, “probably [having] died the moment [the narrator] fell down his throat” (Wang 2012, 207). The narrator, unscathed, crawls out of Mr. Imagai’s mouth, feeling a bit proud that despite the fact that “Imagai Nashihiko’s desire for possession was unparalleled,” he (the narrator) had not succumbed to those desires (Wang 2012, 206). Yet rather than having learned a lesson from his near-death brush with capitalist consumption, the narrator immediately begins to hope that he can find “a new client—a rich old man who wants to avoid paying estate tax when he dies” (Wang 2012, 209), thus predicting a repetition of the cycle of capitalist depredations.

While earlier authors such as Lu Xun imagined China to be deeply and intrinsically diseased, and intervening decades interpreted the “sick man of Asia” stereotype as a Western, imperialist imposition against which they struggled mightily, contemporary authors such as Wang Jinkang recognize the discursive potential of such a description to assert Chinese dominance through a pathological demonization of national enemies. Contemporary science fictional and biomedical interventions allow for the body to be made monstrous in a way that symbolically reflects and amplifies perceived national attributes—where Little Chuan, “beads of sweat [standing] out on his forehead, his lined jacket [clinging] to his spine, and his shoulder blades [sticking] out so sharply, an inverted V seemed stamped there” (Lu 1972b, 27), grows increasingly frail as the Qing empire itself

grew wizened, Mr. Imagai's "sixty-metre, 300-tonne body" (Wang 2012, 208) grows huge and bloated with imperialist acquisition gained from the horrific atrocities committed by the Japanese in order to expand their empire.

The utilization of the "sick man of Asia" stereotype shifts along with the imperialist aims animating it. Most notably, as previously mentioned, is the shift away from biomedical intervention as an attempt at securing happiness in "Medicine" to one securing wealth in "The Reincarnated Giant." Ironically, this shift is illustrated by the reframing of a commodified transaction as an act of generosity. In "Medicine," the blood-soaked bun is treated as a luxury item purchased with carefully saved coins, explicitly recognizing the commodification of death, while in "The Reincarnated Giant," Wang Jinkang describes the purchase of biological life in language framing it as a gift or a benevolent act. Two examples of this are notable: the procurement of a new body for Mr. Imagai, and the utilization of wet nurses to sustain such a body. In the first instance, Mr. Imagai has placed observers around every maternal unit in J-Nation, looking for an appropriate body. Its appropriateness hinges on its lack of social value in a society that assigns a eugenicized hierarchy of worth to bodies. It is for this reason that the Yamaguchis are chosen, because much like the Chuan and Hsia families, they are "fisher-people in financial straits" who have no economic power to oppose the extraction of their ill-fated infant (Wang 2012, 175). This is described as an organ transplant and a gift given by "a good-hearted old gentleman, who would like to do something for you" (Wang 2012, 175), rather than the blood-soaked transaction that it is. The lawyer frames this as an act of unsolicited generosity on the part of Mr. Imagai, noting that the couple would "receive considerable nutritional subsidies. You and I both know that organ selling is illegal, but the law does not forbid the family of a deceased patient from voluntarily donating the corpse, nor does it forbid a charitable individual from giving some nutritional subsidies to an unfortunate couple" (Wang 2012, 176). The unfortunate couple in question is thus remunerated for the body of their child without ever facing the ethical or legal repercussions of selling an individual. Conversely, the revolutionary Hsia boy is turned in by "Third Uncle Hsia [who] is really smart"; his death framed as a question of safety at the cost of life. "If he [Third Uncle Hsia] hadn't informed, even his family would have been executed, and their property confiscated. But instead? Silver!" (Lu 1972b, 30). The price of his life—silver and security for his family—is foregrounded as necessary for the happiness Old Chuan

hopes to attain. Yet the opposite framing is used in “The Reincarnated Giant,” where those seeking the death of the encephalitic child in order to prolong the accumulation of wealth claim that “the child will not survive anyway,” characterizing the choice as “not a question of ... callousness” (Wang 2012, 176), but as a gift of life.

Once such a body has been procured and the transplant completed, it begins to grow rapidly and must be sustained with an ever-increasing number of resources in direct proportion to its own growth. Mr. Imagai initially goes through three wet nurses but quickly exhausts their ability to produce milk; more and more are necessary to satisfy his growing demands. “By the seventh day he needed ten wet nurses, two weeks later he needed twenty-five, and a month later the number grew to 100. His growth was even more astonishing, and if you stood next to him as he nursed, you could almost see his body’s inexorable growth” (Wang 2012, 186). Initially, the genetic purity of the nurses is stressed, in that nurses had to be both racially pure and national citizens in order to provide “pure milk from the people of the rising sun” (Wang 2012, 187), but this is eventually bypassed in the interest of prudence and women from third world countries are hired. This association of national reproduction with individually embodied genetic purity is explored at length by scholars such as Ping Zhu, who identify the production of idealized bodies through the language of scientific progress as central to the production of “an unstable Chinese nationalist agency” (Zhu 2015, 15). The purity of racial bodies, based on Western theories of eugenics and evolutionism, is ultimately abandoned by Wang Jinkang’s central figures in favor of the imperialist necessity of national expansion and resource consumption.

While Mr. Imagai and the narrator frame themselves as members of a “pure race,” this assertion is undercut by Mr. Imagai’s own corporeal expansion and corruption—an expansion and corruption that are textually mapped to the Japanese empire’s own growth. The concept of cultural translation here extends beyond a hermeneutical or literal definition to recognize that the very concept of “national sickness” is “already heavily mediated, already heavily translated” (Chow 1995, 193). This allows us to recognize how, in assuming a complex stance that appropriates victimhood as a marker of the ability to impose an identity, rather than an inherent racial trait, Wang Jinkang is translating a term already defined in relation to external sources (Lydia Liu’s super-sign) and carrying within it the possibility of future transformation (Carlos Rojas’s description of literary *ressentiment*). Unlike Lu Xun, who understood illness and infirmity as

a corruption inherent to the collective national body that was simply laid bare by Western and Japanese recognition, Wang Jinkang acknowledges the imposition of the term but claims that it is those who first labeled China as sick who are, themselves, actually spiritually and physically corrupt.

In this, the very process of medicalized victimization becomes an indicator of the co-constitutive sickness of colonization and national character for the aggressor, not the aggressed. This shift in understanding from the beginning of the twentieth century to the beginning of the twenty-first recognizes changing global power dynamics and translates the accusation of the “sick man of Asia” from an external identification to a point of consolidation for ethnic and national allegiance. This maintains a recognition of past characterizations while mobilizing the tools of that imposed characterization as a rhetorical ploy for global repositioning. Unlike in Lu Xun’s “Medicine,” in which the consumption of the Hsia boy’s healthy revolutionary blood by the sickly Chuan unites the country into an integrated, ineffectual, and corrupted whole, Wang Jinkang severs the link between the consumed and the consumer and turns the diagnosis of national infirmity back on the world. Through a process of cultural translation and reorientation, the future imagined by Lu Xun, in which a sick nation has the potential to overcome its externally imposed and internalized infirmities, is achieved in Wang’s reimagining of the subject of a pathologized global hierarchy. In “Medicine,” only those who recognize and call out national illness, such as the Hsia boy, are well; in “The Reincarnated Giant,” those making the claims about the illness and weaknesses of others are the ones most in need of saving.

With almost a century between them, Wang Jinkang reconsiders who is actually sick in the international dynamic that identifies a country and its people as inherently ill on the international stage. While Lu Xun’s “Medicine” takes seriously the trope of state illness as embodied in the individual, condemning China’s national character in the process, Wang Jinkang’s “The Reincarnated Giant” takes as its baseline the assumption of China as a strong national body under threat from external imposition. In identifying “The Reincarnated Giant” as a significant cultural shift from Lu Xun’s “Medicine” toward a science fictional literature of nationalism that rejects the pathologization of the Chinese body, the trope of the “sick man of Asia” is redeployed through the problematization of those technological interventions that alter both bodily and national boundaries. As the literary tool projecting possible paths for national futures, science fictional

scenarios like Wang Jinkang's "The Reincarnated Giant" project historical traumas onto a recontextualized field and instrumentalize the pathologization of ethnonationalism. By reading these two texts as imbricated in the same concern with embodied national character, we can understand the very term "sick man of Asia" as one that demonstrates the shifting imperialist centers of power and justifications for the use of violence on an international scale.

NOTES

1. Writing in the preface to "Call to Arms," Lu Xun notes that "if the lecture ended early, the instructor might show slides of natural scenery or news to fill up the time. This was during the Russo-Japanese War, so there were many war films, and I had to join in the clapping and cheering in the lecture hall along with the other students" (Lu 1960, 2). The Russo-Japanese War was primarily fought over imperialist control of areas of China and Korea.
2. 蓋一國之事同於人身兮 夫人身逸則弱 勞則強者 固常理也 然使病夫焉 日從事於超距羸越之間 以是求強 則有速其死而已矣 今之中國 非猶是病夫也耶 "The condition of the nation is like the condition of the body. Indulgence weakens the body and exercise strengthens the body. If this universal rule is followed, then it will be impossible to become a sick man. If we cannot strengthen the nation in the correct way, it will only quicken its death. China's condition today is like that of a sick man." Yan Fu. "Yuan Qiang Xiudinggao" ["On Strength: A Revised Draft"]. *Yan Fu Ji, Di Yi Ce* [*Yan Fu's Writings*], edited by Wang Shi, volume 11, Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1986, pg. 27.
3. See Schell and Delury 2014. On page 95, Schell and Delury identify several military and political defeats as the impetus for Liang Qichao coining the phrase "sick man of Asia" to describe China's debased position, necessitating radical reform. According to Schell and Delury, existing social Darwinist beliefs about individuals and racial groups led Liang to believe that only radical social reform at the level of the individual body could change China's coming fortunes.
4. The extent to which this is true is a matter of significant debate. While the definition of a genre such as science fiction has long been hotly debated in English, it is further problematized by the differences in translation and literary form when translating into English from Chinese. Authors such as David Der-wei Wang identify science fantasies as developing through translations undertaken in the early Qing dynasty, while scholar Song Mingwei points to 1989 as the first important blossoming of science fiction in China. Scholar Wu Yan has long described science fiction in China as developing

out of the *zhiguai* (tales of the strange and supernatural) and *chuanqi* (fantastic tales and romances)—a position taken up in recent scholarship by Chinese SF scholars interested in “recuperating” an originary national origin for science fiction in China (see Song, Mingwei. 2015). After 1989: The New Wave of Chinese Science Fiction. *China Perspectives* 1: 7–13; Wang, David Der-wei. 1997. *Fin-de-siècle Splendor: Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction, 1849–1911*. Stanford University Press; and Wu, Yan, Yao Jianbin, and Andrea Lingenfelter (translator). 2018. A Very Brief History of Chinese Science Fiction. *Chinese Literature Today* 7.1: 44–53.

5. I am using the transliterations provided by Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang in their 1960 translation of the text, which is still the standard translation used today. The names of the two families involved would more contemporarily be translated as Hua (Chuan) and Xia (Hsia).
6. The super-sign makes visible the assumption of commensurability across languages at the same time as the dominant language retains the power to shape and define the terms of the translation itself. In Liu’s example, the word “夷” is defined by and in relation to the English word “barbarian,” a hypothetical equivalence that glosses certain aspects of the word’s in-language meanings and adds meanings from external language imposition, creating a new heteroglossic term that ultimately became fixed through repeated use. I will not recount in particular detail here the history of the word/sign “夷/yi/barbarian”—Liu does a brilliantly exhaustive analysis in *Clash of Empires*—except to explain that it was one of the seven major points enumerated in the Treaty of Tianjin, the set of unequal treaties ending the first stage of the Second Opium War. They are perhaps most notable for including the banishment of the character/concept “夷/yi,” translated into English as “barbarian,” alongside concessions to Western military, mercantile, and political demands. Liu claims, “If we read the ban carefully, Article 51 exiles the super-sign yi/barbarian but does not otherwise banish the English equivalent of the exiled term. It might be suggested that the English word enjoys the double advantage of being both the authoritative signified of the super-sign yi/barbarian and an independent English word, uncensored and safely bracketed by the treaty clause.” See Liu 2006, 38.
7. Chinese characters are often made up of multiple components. The word *yan* (speech), when written on its own, is 言, but when it becomes part of another character (here, 診), it becomes the radical component seen to the left of the character. This construction implies that the word *zhen* (diagnose) has a speech-related aspect to it.
8. The Ship of Theseus argument is a thought experiment, first described by Heraclitus and Plato, that asks if each individual component part of a cohesive object is gradually replaced, whether that object retains its original identity.

9. The Bamiyan Buddhas were two enormous statues of Gautama Buddha carved into the stone side of a cliff in central Afghanistan. The smaller of the two was 125 feet tall, while the larger was 180 feet tall. They were destroyed by the Taliban in 2001.

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Translating the Chinese Monster in *Waste Tide*

Yen Ooi

I think the economic logic behind dumping a load of toxic waste in the lowest-wage country is impeccable and we should face up to that ... I've always thought that countries in Africa are vastly under polluted; their air quality is probably vastly inefficiently low compared to Los Angeles ... Just between you and me, shouldn't the World Bank be encouraging more migration of the dirty industries to the Least Developed Countries? (Lawrence Summers, confidential World Bank memo, December 12, 1991 (Nixon 2011, 1))

Waste Tide (2019) is a near-future science fiction novel written by Chen Qiufan, set in a fictional town of Silicon Isle, which is known as Guīyǔ in Mandarin, a homophone for the real location of Guìyǔ (translated as “precious isle”), a town in Shantou prefecture on the eastern coast of Guangdong, 60 km from where Chen was born and grew up. It was a visit to Guìyǔ that urged Chen to write this novel after witnessing “one of the largest e-waste recycling centres in the world,” where “local workers,

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without any protection or prior training, manually processed tons of e-waste on a daily basis” (Scarano 2019). The story follows the plight of a *waste girl*, Mimi—a migrant e-waste worker from rural China, the lowest caste on Silicon Isle. Mimi puts on an augmented-reality helmet found among the waste by a fellow e-waste worker, Brother Wen; something in the helmet pierces her head and infects her with a virus. The combination of the virus with heavy metals that have accumulated in her brain over years of handling e-waste transforms her into something strange—another version of Mimi that is more confident, aggressive, and evil. The accumulated torture on Mimi’s physical self throughout her experience as a *waste girl* contributes to the process of transformation, but a moment of extreme violence—caused by local clan wars, where she is caught and raped—acts as a catalyst to the awakening of the monster, Mimi the cyborg.

Waste Tide has been categorised and scrutinised under many different subgenres within science fiction. It is known as a dystopian novel (Amazon.com), climate fiction or cli-fi (*Strange Horizons*), cyberpunk (Healey 2017, 4), and even sci-fi thriller (*The Verge*) and horror (*World Literature Today*). Its elusive nature is not only reflected through its categorisation, but also in the story it is trying to tell. We can begin to understand its complexity through Chen’s description of his novel in an interview, where he says, “*Waste Tide* could not be simply reduced to black and white, good and bad: every country, every social class, every authority, and even every individual ... are equally as responsible for the grave consequence of mass consumerism happening across the globe” (Woodbury 2020). The message that he wants to communicate through the novel is extremely complicated in itself. What comes through clearly in the story is in the depiction of the monster, which is aligned with Daniel Punday’s recognition in his paper on “Narrative Performance in the Contemporary Monster Story,” that “literary monsters serve to challenge the homogeneity of society by revealing its tensions, inconsistencies, and gaps” (Punday 2002, 803). *Waste Tide* is Chen’s monster story, a trope that is “one of the most traditional ways that a writer can explore society through the body” (Punday 2002, 803). In examining the monster in Chinese fiction, it is appropriate to begin with David Der-wei Wang’s *The Monster That Is History*, where Wang draws on the ancient Chinese concept of the monster *Taowu*—an ancient mythological creature known for its power to see the past and the future so as to make the best of its own life—and plots its metamorphosis into the modern, a journey that Chinese science fiction itself has taken. Here, Wang advises,

If one of the most important lessons one can learn from modern Chinese literature and history is the tortuous nature of Chinese writers' attempt to grapple with polymorphous reality, this knowledge can be appreciated in full only by a criticism equally exempt from any form of formulaic and ideological dogmatism. (Wang 2004, xxii)

I chose *Waste Tide* for this critical examination because of Chen's unique position as a bilingual (Chinese-English) author. In a personal conversation with Chen (Manchester, October 2019), he described the translation process to be a three-way exchange between himself, Ken Liu (the translator), and the English editor. Rewrites were sometimes managed by Chen himself, something that is rarely found in publishing translated fiction. Chen was so pleased with the English translation that an updated version of the novel in Chinese was published in 2019, six years after the original debuted in China, to reflect the updates made in the English version. It is through this that we know from Chen that the English version was written as he intended and approved, and thus can be read as original material.

This chapter will examine the monster in *Waste Tide* through the considerations of cultural translation between China—where the author is from and the story is set—and the West, where it is widely accepted among Chinese science fiction writers that the larger science fiction genre originated. I will do this first by giving a brief overview of the position of Chinese science fiction in the wider mainstream genre of science fiction. I will then attempt to reflect on the interpretation of the monster as a product of China's progress in the world and how the science fiction genre provides for a platform to evaluate and criticise the response to this economic growth today. And as advised by Wang in the quote above, to avoid any form of formulaic and ideological dogmatism, I will try to do so by using a range of critical ideas around the monster trope: this supports the understanding that Chinese science fiction is a hybrid and “combines, subverts, and reinterprets conventions of both earlier Chinese literary traditions and the Western sf canon” (Healey 2019a, 511).

I hope to show that Chinese science fiction (and China more generally) today is the product of the last four decades of modernisation that negotiates both the external pressures from Western developed countries and the internal drive from the Chinese state. If we return to the opening quote from the World Bank memo, which suggests “more migration of the dirty industries to the Least Developed Countries” (Nixon 2011, 1) and the

fact that in 2013, a “United Nations University report confirms that China is the world’s largest e-waste dumping ground, with Guiyu at the industry’s center” (Healey 2017, 3), we can start to piece together the complicated relationship that China has with the rest of the world—something that we will learn through translating the Chinese monster in *Waste Tide*.

CHINESE SCIENCE FICTION AND *WASTE TIDE*

Though elements of science fiction (in different guises) have been a part of Chinese literature since 500 BCE (Wu and Murphy 1989, xi), most, if not all Chinese science fiction scholars today will agree that the current form of science fiction from China can be comfortably traced back to a renewed initiative in 1989 that “signalled the arrival of a new wave in Chinese science fiction” (Song 2015, 8). Through its complicated history that has been rendered with various gaps, Chinese science fiction can be seen to be influenced by Western science fiction that has been brought into China through translations from English, French, and Russian (Wu and Murphy 1989, xiv). In recent years, Chinese science fiction has been growing and gaining recognition, due in part to the international attention that it has received over the last few years through a culmination of awards and collaborative translation projects with Asian-American colleagues. This new wave in Chinese science fiction as described by Professor Song Mingwei, a pioneer in Chinese science fiction research and specialist in modern Chinese literature, “is more sophisticated, reflective, and subversive in terms of mixed representation of hope and despair, utopianism and its dystopian reflection, and nationalism and cosmopolitanism” (Song 2015, 8). This newly found recognition—through translation from the Chinese language to English—is a process that researcher Angie Chau calls *littérisation*, which transmutes Chinese science fiction from genre fiction to literary fiction, prominently placing the “cultural currency of contemporary Chinese literature as the most accurate lens through which to view and truly understand China” (Chau 2018, 113).

Despite this cultural currency, to many writers, Chinese science fiction isn’t a natural development in China’s history of cultural production. Prominent Chinese science fiction writer Han Song sees the values of science fiction, which he characterises as science, technology, and modernisation, to be alien entities to writers from China. He says, “If we [writers from China] buy into them, we turn ourselves into monsters, and that is the only way we can get along with Western notions of progress.” He also

suggests that “science fiction is perceived as inconsequential [in China] because it is unable to solve real-life problems. And the government can step in if it seems that the genre has gone too far conceptually” (Han 2013, 20). Han Song recognises that as long as science fiction is seen to be useful in encouraging the progression of science and technology in China’s modernisation, and isn’t subversive, it will be allowed to continue. This recognition places science fiction writers in China as outsiders to the genre, dabbling in a Western concept only so far as it is not seen as a threat by their own government, and that the fruits of their imagination will inevitably be monsters due to the hybridity of the genre. Since Han Song’s statement in 2013, however, Chinese science fiction’s popularity has grown so quickly that it seems to match or even surpass the rapid economic growth that China experienced in the last four decades. Regina Kanyu Wang’s essay on “Chinese Science Fiction Goes Global” describes this progress, which led to China becoming the first country to recognise science fiction as an industry. “In 2017 and 2018, it [science fiction] accounted for a total output of 14 billion yuan and 45.6 billion yuan [approximately 1.81 billion Euro and 5.88 billion Euro], respectively,” with the majority of this share due to the growing film industry, which signals to the Chinese government that “science fiction is not only literature, but a lucrative industry” (Wang 2020). Despite some authors like Han Song’s apprehension, science fiction has gone mainstream and has become a stronghold for cultural engagement and production with the rise of writers like Chen, who uses science fiction to engage readers in topics that are critical to sociopolitical issues around the world. The growth and recognition of Chinese science fiction highlights the strength of this repurposed genre, not only within China, but also internationally—where it enjoys support from notable fans like Barack Obama and Mark Zuckerberg, and collaboration from various key science fiction publishing organisations like *Clarkesworld* (UK) and *Future Fiction* (Italy) (Wang 2020).

In the first chapter of *Waste Tide*, we are introduced to Silicon Isle, where e-waste is processed, through the first visit by Chen Kaizong, the male protagonist who had moved to the US as a child and returned to China due to work:

On the ground in front of him was a wriggling prosthetic arm. Whether intentional or not, the stimulus loop of the arm was left open, and the internal battery, incompletely disassembled, continued to provide power. The

electricity flowed along the artificial skin to the synthetic nerves revealed at the broken end, and triggered cyclic contractions in the muscles. The five fingers of the prosthesis continuously clawed at the ground, pulling the broken forearm along like some giant, flesh-colored inchworm.

... A little boy ran over, picked up the prosthetic arm, and put it back down on the ground facing a different direction. His expression seemed to suggest that the arm was nothing more than a common toy car. And so this bizarre toy continued its endless journey to nowhere, apparently only to terminate when its battery ran out. (Chen 2019, 33)

The plain and clear narration describes a scene of a severed prosthetic hand moving along by itself in the middle of the room. With reference to an inchworm, the writing suggests that it is acceptable for the reader to react in disgust to this. Just two paragraphs along (the second paragraph above), we see a little boy interact with this prosthetic hand; in his natural interactions with it, the writing suggests that the reader could categorise the boy together with the hand in the same weird world. Within these two paragraphs, the novel has set Kaizong, who represents a version of the West, as familiar and civilised, with Guiyu village and its inhabitants (both from the local clans and the e-waste workers), representing the subaltern, as bizarre and coarse. It is notable that in this way, Chen Qiufan has posed his native culture as foreign and subaltern.

The opening chapter depicts the different layers in society through their knowledge, understanding, and usage of science and technology and the notion of modernity, as a way of portraying ideas of progress. Though all layers of society in *Waste Tide* have daily physical contact with technology, the waste workers, in their haphazard usage of the technology they have mined from the e-waste that they have to process, are at the bottom-most rung. In a scene a few pages later, we learn of a waste worker injured in an accident:

during the dismantling of the junked robot arm, the man had triggered the backup feedback circuits and got his head caught in the viselike grip. This man was clearly unlucky and had angered the spirits somehow. (Chen 2019, 37)

The introduction of “spirits” further removes the waste people from concepts of science and technology, cementing their position in this world as premodern. This illustrates one of the possible outcomes of what Han Song suggests as the monster of progress. In China’s effort to compete

and take its place within the world economy, it has thrown a population of its people into a desperate position, working with hazardous materials.

Scott Brandle, the American protagonist, who is Chen Kaizong's manager and representative of an eco-solutions organisation, is set as the agent of the West. In this scene, where Scott and Kaizong, together with a local representative—Director Luo—are having lunch, we can perceive the representation of privilege to knowledge:

Scott had no appetite, especially after he learned how duck liver, pig lung, cow tongue, goose intestines, and other organ meats had been prepared. He chose plain rice porridge and soup—choices that appeared to offer the least risk of accumulated heavy metals. He restrained the impulse to pull out the field testing kit.

This is a stark difference from Kaizong's reaction to the meal.

Kaizong was a bit surprised that he, who had left Silicon Isle as a child of seven, could still recall those tastes and flavors. Crossing the Pacific seemed to have also carried him back across a gulf of more than a dozen years. (Chen 2019, 24)

Kaizong's character clearly bridges two vastly different cultures. Through Scott's representation of knowledge and power, we learn that Kaizong earned his own knowledge and power from his time in the US. His experience and education living in the US have given him knowledge that may someday be comparable to that of Scott, but it doesn't take away his lineage and attachment to his culture, having been born on Silicon Isle.

Like Chinese science fiction, Kaizong's position is one of hybridity and another possible representation of Han Song's monster of progress. The introduction of the Western education and experience that is based on science, technology, and the modern concept of progress championed by the West itself is in essence *foreign* to the Chinese nation that has only enjoyed a period of stability and growth since the 1980s. As Anne Dunlop and Cordelia Warr clearly describe in their paper "Foreign Bodies: Neighbours, Strangers, Monsters," "Monsters were, almost by definition, foreign in the sense that they were 'other'" (Dunlop and Warr 2019, 11).

This places Han Song's concept of the monster of progress in correspondence with Homi K. Bhabha's concept of postcolonial hybrid culture that considers contra-modernity as "contingent to modernity,

discontinuous or in contention with it, resistant to its oppressive, assimilationist technologies” (Bhabha 2013, 108). Han Song, we know, is in contention with modernity, but aware of its power and importance for the future of the genre and the country. And though the descriptions of the local representatives of Silicon Isle might suggest that they are coarse and uneducated, in small ways, they show themselves not to be, through these actions of contra-modernity. In the same scene where Scott, Kaizong, and Director Lin are having lunch, Scott tries to win Director Lin over with a bit of persuasion.

This project is going to be a win-win for everyone. There are no downsides. Anything can be discussed. If it succeeds, it will be a model project for Southeast China. This is an important step for China’s national recycling strategy. Your contribution will not be forgotten.

This invited the following response from Director Lin:

Interesting. Americans will dump all their trash on another’s doorstep and then, a few moments later, show up and say they’re here to help you clean up and that it’s all for your own good. Mr Scott, what kind of national strategy would you call *that*?

The scene continues:

The sharp retort from Lin stunned Scott. Apparently this man was more than the cowardly bureaucrat he had imagined. He carefully considered his response, struggling to inject sincerity into his words. (Chen 2019, 25)

Scott’s inability to foresee that the local representative of Silicon Isle is intelligent and knowledgeable of the facts that have brought the e-waste situation to their town shares the traits of postcolonial subjectivity. In Amal Treacher’s article titled “On Postcolonial Subjectivity,” to understand the intertwined relationship between the coloniser and colonised subjects, she says: “The division between the West and the non-West is constructed around a worldview that believes in the absolute superiority of the West over the Rest” (Treacher 2005, 44). As Scott “others” the locals in Silicon Isle, he creates and perpetuates subordinate monsters in them. At the same time, Lin characterises Scott as a different sort of monster, one that has power and influence over the livelihood of Silicon Isle’s inhabitants.

If we take the e-waste situation in Silicon Isle, or in the city that had inspired the book, Guìyǔ, like Chinese science fiction, its development (with waste) came about from the process of modernisation through which China strives to keep up with the West.

TECHNO-ORIENTALISM, TECHNO-OCCIDENTALISM, AND MONSTERS

Techno-Orientalism: Imagining Asia in Speculative Fiction, History, and Media (Roh et al. 2015) is the groundbreaking collection that examines the phenomenon that was first coined by David Morley and Kevin Robins in *Spaces of Identity: Global Media, Electronic Landscapes, and Cultural Boundaries* (Morley and Robins 1995), in an effort to modernise the theories of Edward Said's Orientalism. Roh et al. define techno-Orientalism as

the phenomenon of imagining Asia and Asians in hypo- or hypertechnological terms in cultural productions and political discourse. ... techno-Orientalism presents a broader, dynamic, and often contradictory spectrum of images, constructed by the East and West alike, of an "Orient" undergoing rapid economic and cultural transformations. ... techno-Orientalism is first and foremost an effect of globalism ... invented by the world of information capitalism. (Roh et al. 2015, 2)

If we consider China's recent economic developments using a global benchmark that implicitly centres the West for comparison, it is almost impossible to not apply techno-Orientalist notions to it. China, after all, has become the highest technology exporter in the world (Knoema), which automatically places it in hypertechnological terms—an analysis that ignores any meaningful details of progress. In addition, despite being the second-largest economy in the world—a rapid growth achieved in the last four decades—China is still categorised as a developing country, which juxtaposes them in hypotechnological terms. All of this indicates that China's development is driven by the pressures of globalism, to modernise and progress in a world of information capitalism that is led by the West.

In this context, Chinese science fiction dwells comfortably in techno-Orientalist tropes. Any imagination of a futuristic or more technologically advanced setting for Chinese science fiction would understandably extrapolate from the current reality, which is firmly embedded in techno-Orientalist characteristics. However, it would be unjust to assume that

there is no escape from techno-Orientalist tropes that were originally developed by the West to “express and assuage Western anxieties about Asia’s growing cultural influence and economic dominance,” in a hope to “critique racist and imperialist attitudes” (Roh et al. 2015, summary). As described above, the characteristics of China today easily conform to much of the descriptions of techno-Orientalism; Chinese science fiction writers would not consciously apply these characteristics as stereotyping or racism. The response or action applied in Chinese science fiction to compensate for these techno-Orientalist tropes is what separates Chinese science fiction from problematic techno-Orientalist productions. This strategy can be understood as techno-Occidentalism—Asia’s response to the techno-Orientalist anxieties of the West.

The writing of *Waste Tide* is itself a techno-Occidentalist response, as Chen Qiufan uses his novel to bring to attention the issues of e-waste that are the responsibility of the world, and not only of China. In *Waste Tide*, though the *waste people* can be criticised as a techno-Orientalist product—hypertechnological in their work and usage of technology, hypotechnological in their spiritual beliefs, and voiceless and generic as a community—Mimi the cyborg, *Waste Tide*’s monster, is the techno-Occidentalist compensation to this stereotype. She pushes the boundaries of the hypertechnological by taking on two forms: Mimi 1—a powerful and omniscient digital consciousness that lives in Mimi and is a part of her; and Mimi-mecha, an abandoned robot controlled by Mimi, who, as a cyborg, is now able to interface with the machine. The two entities—cyborg and robot—share one human consciousness.

In David Der-wei Wang’s study of historical Chinese literature, he notes that writers since the turn of the twentieth century, “have excoriated social evils and called for the implementation of individual punishment; they have usually come to the conclusion that justice cannot be done without violence—in the form of a revolution in the self” (Wang 2004). Mimi the cyborg, born from a series of injustices, is a desperate monster, tortured into existence, born out of violence. The accumulation of violence upon Mimi provokes a revolution within herself in a fight for survival that creates a monster for justice. Before the change, Mimi’s character is quiet, thoughtful, and somewhat naïve. After the change, we learn later that she leads a revolution for the waste people. This transformation uses an extreme representation of the hypertechnological: Mimi’s cyborgism isn’t due to wearable or implanted technology. Rather, it is due to the environmental effects of handling e-waste, which caused a buildup of

heavy metals in her brain. This is an Anthropocenic effect of a human-distorted nature.

In the scene when Mimi is first injured from putting on the augmented-reality helmet found among the waste, we learn that another boy, the son of one of the local clan leaders, Luo Jincheng, had also worn the helmet and received the same wounds. “The skin below his occipital bone was punctured by a pin-sized hole, and blood was oozing out” (Chen 2019, 63). The boy, Luo Zixin, fell ill directly after the event, into a deep coma; the Luo clan assumes that his illness is related to Mimi, due to their proximity the day before. Later in the story, after the awakening of Mimi the cyborg, she is asked to help heal Luo Zixin in a spiritual event involving the “*lohsingpua*—a local witch of Silicon Isle” (Chen 2019, 64), with pre-choreographed theatrics involving pieces of “green film with the character for ‘edict’—*chi*,” stuck onto the foreheads of all three—Mimi, Luo Zixin, and the witch. The event, however, does not unfold as planned.

The film over Mimi’s forehead began to flicker at a different frequency, no longer in sync with the other two. Her placid expression had also changed: she knit her brows, deep in thought, or perhaps struggling against some invisible force. ...

The film over Zixin’s forehead syncopated and departed from the flickering rhythm of the film over the *lohsingpua*’s forehead. Gradually its rhythm approached Mimi’s. Some invisible hand seemed to be adjusting and coordinating the three lights. Right now, Mimi and the comatose boy were turned to the same channel. (Chen 2019, 202)

The witch, a charlatan, completely loses control of the situation, which seems to develop on its own, with Mimi and the boy locked in a trance. As the event comes to an end, the boy wakes from his coma, but not without complications.

“... *Baba?*” he offered tentatively.

Luo Jincheng remained still, utterly amazed. Everyone present had heard him clearly; though the tones were only slightly different, the change was unmistakable. This boy of Silicon Isle, after being in a coma for months, was speaking Modern Standard Mandarin instead of his native topolect. (Chen 2019, 204)

Mimi the cyborg is able to access and control the virus that had infected the boy as it did her. During the event:

Her consciousness jumped across the springboard of her body film's radio transmitter and reached into the boy's brain like a tentacle sweeping through regions of the cortex, seeking a deeper cause.

It was language. ...

The Silicon Isle toplect was an ancient language containing eight tones with exceedingly complex tone sandhi rules. Its informational entropy thus far exceeded that of Modern Standard Mandarin with its simple four tones. This was the root cause of the boy's coma. (Chen 2019, 206)

In the action she takes to revive the boy, she also unavoidably changes his linguistic programming.

The Anthropocene of China's rapid economic growth simplifies the task of worldbuilding in this novel. Near death after the rape, Mimi is dumped in the sea, in a place known to be "the forbidden ground, the mass grave for babies born out of wedlock and unchaste women" (Chen 2019, 142). Here, Mimi finds the "almost three-meter-tall exoskeleton robot, a mecha" (Chen 2019, 124) which she had shown Kaizong in an earlier scene. It is a service machine from Lockheed Martin that was "nothing more than a toy abandoned by some impulsive, wealthy individual." When it was first found in Silicon Isle, Brother Wen claimed it and tried to make it workable. However, in the process, Brother Wen chose an orphan, Ah Rong, "to climb into the cockpit of the mecha and pilot it by having the powered armor sense his movements and mirror them" only for the mecha to catch fire and burn Ah Rong to death in it (Chen 2019, 125). Since the incident, the mecha has been left at Tide Gazing Beach as a totem.

The alloy armor was covered by Daoist charms so that it was no longer possible to tell the armor's original paint color; from every protrusion in the armor hung strings of plastic or wooden Buddhist prayer beads that struck each other in the breeze like wind chimes; even the joints were covered with bright red ribbons representing wishes for good fortune. (Chen 2019, 124)

In her near-death state, Mimi's consciousness connects with the mecha and assimilates: they become Mimi-mecha. In this new form, Mimi-mecha fights off the perpetrators of her rape, then digs through the wet grave to retrieve her human body, and performs a makeshift defibrillation that saves herself from death:

Mimi-mecha extended her arms and gently lifted the body out of the grave and more gently set it on the ground. The plastic shroud unrolled, revealing the clam-like pale flesh speckled with hints of green, appearing swollen in the rain. Mimi gazed at that familiar yet strange face, an unspeakably odd sensation in her mind—this was not like staring into a mirror.

... Mimi [mecha] extended two thick metal fingers, placed them between the two small breasts, and began to rhythmically compress the center of her breastbone like they taught on TV.

... *I need electricity!*

The thought set Mimi-mecha's nerve bundles aflame like lightning. Within thirty microseconds, the electroactive muscle bundles in her arms created a circuit and formed positive and negative terminals, with the current and voltage adjustable by contracting the muscle fiber bundles.

... *Crackle.* Blue sparks flickered. The current flowed from the left side of the breastbone into the heart and then out of the right scapula.

... *Crackle.* The whole body bounced off the ground and fell back, splashing mud everywhere.

... *Crackle.* Another violent jolt. A feeling of nausea overwhelmed her. In a moment, Mimi seemed to be back in that cold, wet, scarred human body, but within tens of microseconds she was back in the hardened safety of her steel castle. (Chen 2019, 146)

When her body recovers, we are reminded of her monstrosity: “Mimi’s consciousness oscillated rapidly between the robot and the human body, her vision flickering uncertainly” (Chen 2019, 147). This introduction to Mimi-mecha plays directly to the readers’ experience of the monster. In Stephen Asma’s book *On Monsters: An Unnatural History of Our Worst Fears*, he defines this experience as “the simultaneous lure and repulsion of the abnormal or extraordinary being” (Asma 2009, 6). Here, we have a girl with an extraordinary power to connect with and control a robot. Her violent revenge and godlike powers repulse us, but keep our attention in the sublime, while her ability to save her bodily self through the robot affirms her science fictional manifestation of the grotesque wonder. Mimi-mecha transforms her from Mimi the waste girl—a techno-Orientalist character—to Mimi the cyborg, a techno-Occidental result. The extraordinary in *Waste Tide* can also be projected onto China itself, through the techno-Orientalist anxiety of the West’s relationship with the rapid economic growth that the nation has achieved. Mimi the cyborg becomes an imaginary and futuristic outcome of this progress, born from techno-Orientalist anxieties—a techno-Occidental outcome.

“HUNGRY WOMEN” AND MIMI

Women and hunger are most peculiarly linked in the configuration of gender, materiality, and revolution in modern Chinese fiction. ...when hunger is treated in literary terms, it manifests itself in a wide variety of typologies, from famines caused by nature to “hunger revolutions” dictated by ideology. ... Hunger is a recurrent theme throughout modern Chinese history, and hungry women are recurrent protagonists in modern Chinese fiction. (Wang 1998, 48)

Soon after we are introduced to Mimi-mecha, we are reminded of Mimi’s vulnerability: “Below the immense metal shell was the young girl in a coma” (Chen 2019, 148). Mimi’s youth is often stressed in *Waste Tide* to create a sense of weakness; this is emphasised by the frequency of her fainting. Though this might be construed as necessary to highlight the amount of physical torture and difficulty she endures, the contrast to the male characters needs to be noted. As highlighted by Liz Bourke in her review of the book,

There are multiple distinct and distinctive male characters in *Waste Tide*. The same isn’t true for women. ...the more power she [Mimi] has to affect things, the more helpless she seems to be as herself, [with the book concluding] by giving its only major female character brain damage that reduces her to the capacities of a child. (Bourke 2019)

This inadequacy in Mimi that gets worse as her powers increase creates an urge in her for agency to be herself. This urge can be perceived as a form of hunger, as described by Wang above. All the things that Mimi yearns for do not come easily to her.

The Mimi of yesterday had worked hard to sniff burning pieces of plastic for twenty-five yuan a day, for the hope of one day being able to care for her parents ... (Chen 2019, 141)

Starting at an early age, Mimi had been used to doing everything by herself, but she envied other children who had older siblings to take care of them. (Chen 2019, 60)

Mimi wants to earn an honest living when she first arrives at Silicon Isle, but through a chain of events that are out of her control, she is pushed

further and further away from this goal, making her drive—the hunger for a normal life or for an income—stronger, but not by choice. David Der-wei Wang tells us that Chinese “national hunger has been imagined in feminine terms, owing perhaps to women’s somatic vulnerability during natural and man-made famines, or to women’s conventional role in the semiotics of victimology” (Wang 2004, 103). In *Waste Tide*, the national hunger is represented by the national revolution for internationally recognised progress through science, technology, and modernisation; this ideology brings with it a man-made famine that presumes a scarcity if the nation did not participate in the global market. Through this, the role of women as victims is changed and brought to attention. This hunger is metaphorical, a familiar technique of using women’s bodies as a site for social critique in modern Chinese literature (Healey 2017). Like the texts that Wang examined, the use of Mimi as a hungry woman in *Waste Tide* leads us to:

assess the following aspects of female subjectivity and its manifestation in modern Chinese literature: (1) the consumptive and enunciative capacities of women in quest of social and economic selfhood; (2) the deployment of biological and gender resources in both the public and private spheres; (3) the mythification of hunger and femininity as an arguably male imaginary of the physical and metaphysical destitution that besets modern China. (Wang 2004, 105)

Chen’s decision to allow his male protagonist to go by unharmed while every violence imaginable falls to his female protagonist in *Waste Tide* enforces the issues highlighted in these points. Mimi’s move to Silicon Isle is her quest for economic selfhood. Within the *waste people*, the women have no place in management or leadership ranks. And in modern China, despite its place of economic and technological leadership in the world, the state of e-waste management as highlighted in *Waste Tide* exposes the physical and metaphysical destitution that it is experiencing.

Mimi’s rape is also allegorical:

[Her] gendered body echoes the violence committed by the locals toward the migrant workers, by transnational corporations against the Chinese people, and by the waste processing industry against Guiyu’s natural environment. (Healey 2017, 16)

The woman protagonist in *Waste Tide* isn't allowed her revolution: her salvation from the monstrosity that is her revolutionary selfhood comes from relinquishing her powers in an act of self-sacrifice. Healey describes this in her review of the novel as "a typical May-Fourth-era heroine, suffering for the sake of male characters' development and the novel's larger societal message, rather than a three-dimensional person in her own right" (Healey 2019b). Where the May Fourth Movement, a sociopolitical reform movement carried out by "new youths" who drove an intellectual revolution that culminated in an incident on May 4, 1919, inspired an era of literature that centres on issues of democracy or nation building, "Global capitalism and environmentalism are the objects of the *Waste Tide*'s social critique" (Healey 2017, 14). Though Chen's decision to have a helpless female character raises issues, his observation on how hunger affects Mimi's fate is important to understand how *Waste Tide* comments on Wang's points above.

TAOWU AND WASTE TIDE

In ancient China, there was said to be a monster called *Taowu*, a creature that looked like a tiger but had "a human's face, a tiger's feet, a pig's teeth, and a tail as long as eighteen feet." Aside from its vicious nature, *Taowu* was known for its power to see the past and the future so as to make the best of its own life. From such origins, *Taowu* went through various incarnations over the centuries, to the point where it became identifiable with humans of evil inclination and, more intriguingly, with history itself. Since the seventeenth century, the meaning of *Taowu* has taken on yet another dimension: as a fictional account of history.

... never have we seen such a moment as we have in modern times, when official history has been so dictated by the ideological and institutional machines as to verge on make-believe, and representational art so arrested by a desire to reflect the past *and* future as to appropriate the functions of traditional history with respect to facts. (Wang 2012)

Waste Tide was born from the reality of what is happening in the e-waste industries in China, and thus the story itself can be seen as a fictional future, extrapolated from this convoluted present-past. Mimi-monster and *Waste Tide* are both representational of *Taowu*: "A monster [that] haunts the human for self-betterment" (Wang 2012). Michael Szollosy in his paper titled "Freud, Frankenstein and our fear of robots" suggests that "the monsters we imagine are not real, but offer tremendous insights into

the very real anxieties and fears of human beings in a particular cultural context” and by examining this context, Szollosy believes that “we can gain a much better understanding of what it is we are really afraid of” (Szollosy 2017, 434).

In *Waste Tide*, though China’s present-past should be celebrated as one of progress, economic achievement, and technological power, Chen doesn’t celebrate these in the book, but rather uses them to reflect on the inhumanity that is connected with this progress. This reflects upon Wang’s assertion that

at any fold in time we may come to realize that without the imagination of past violence, we are unprepared to recognise it in its future incarnations, and for this reason all modernities bear the imprint of primitive savagery. (Wang 2012)

The suffering inflicted on the *waste people* and the problems of e-waste management are the primitive savagery that Chen is trying to bring into recognition so that we will learn from our mistakes, the way *Taowu* reveals both the past and future, “registering what is immemorial and yet unforgettable in Chinese collective memory, and cautioning against any similar mishaps in the future” (Wang 2004, xix). As a science fictional story, *Waste Tide* looks into the future while drawing its references and inspirations from history, “Just as, for centuries, Chinese intellectuals wrote about the past as a way to critique the present, today’s science fiction authors write about the future to comment on our contemporary world” (Healey 2017, 26).

In a more direct reference, Mimi the cyborg shares similarities with *Taowu* in that they are both rooted in history and they function in seeing the future, through omniscience and divinatory power. Chen, through Mimi, tries to register in *Waste Tide* his personal history—the experience of visiting an e-waste processing environment that had left a heavy mark on his consciousness and awareness of the ecological wake of our current Anthropocene. In his science fictional future, Chen uses Mimi to caution not only the Chinese collective memory but a world collective memory against continuing down this path that would hurt and destroy humanity as much as the Earth we live on. David Der-wei Wang warns that

Ambiguity abounds when one looks into the way by which *Taowu* the monster is translated into *Taowu* the diviner, and when *Taowu* as history is folded

into *Taowu* as divination. In view of the incessant outbursts of violence and brutality from one generation to another, one has to ponder: could history be regarded as both an embodiment and an indictment of monstrosity? If so, to what extent has the contemplation of history entailed insight as well as indifference? This paradox becomes all the more poignant in modern times, when monstrosity has taken on an unprecedented multitude of forms. Particularly in view of the massive scale of violence and pain that the Chinese administered to China in the name of enlightenment, rationality, and utopian plenitude, one senses that the line between understanding and complicity had never been so difficult to discern. (Wang 2004, xix)

For *Waste Tide*, the last four decades of progress initiated by globalisation is the cause of the monstrosity of a new violence and pain on Earth's ecology as well as communities of people around the world, like the waste people in Silicon Isle. In the novel, the American character Scott Brandle highlights this blurring between understanding and complicity in his thoughts about the Chinese:

The frightening Chinese who pirated and copied everything.

The situation was a bit absurd. While American working class decried the cheap Chinese laborers robbing them of jobs, they were also thankful that the inexpensive Chinese products helped them maintain their dignified standard of living. (Chen 2019, 99)

It is these products that litter the world in a throwaway culture that goes hand-in-hand with economic and technological progress. The ambiguity is no longer applicable only to understanding and complicity; it is also applicable to the boundaries of nations through the effects of globalisation. This means that *Taowu* in *Waste Tide* isn't a Chinese monster anymore. It is a shared monster of the world.

This "transcultural interaction" that is presented through Mimi as both a science fictional monster and *Taowu* is as described by Julie Ha Tran in how Japanese literary critic Takayuki Tatsumi envisions cultural transactions of techno-Orientalist constructions between Japan and the US that "traverse back and forth across the Pacific, much like the shifting mechanism of a manual car" (Roh et al. 2015, 140). This movement of transcultural interaction affirms the hybridity of Chinese science fiction while recognising the convoluted journey modern culture has in its development. It also places Mimi-monster as a shared global anxiety. Tom Shippey's review of *Waste Tide* in *The Wall Street Journal* focuses precisely on the horror of this anxiety.

The waste is hellish in more than one sense. Much of it, in Mr. Chen's horrifying vision, will come in the near future from prosthetic implants, artificial cochleas, breast implants and the other self-enhancements of the developed world. The microbatteries in discarded prosthetics live on, the limbs twitch, dead but microchipped guard dogs wag their tails, the boundary between life and death isn't clear anymore. (Shippey 2019)

We are again reminded to feel repulsed by these human-made monstrosities that amalgamate into Mimi, the robot, cyborg, digital consciousness, and ultimately the panacea for the *waste people*. But what about the *waste people's* repression? Is it a reconsideration of how *progress* is valued in our modern technologically driven world, especially in the capitalist environment?

MIMI THE TECHNO-OCCIDENTALIST GHOST

Now that we understand that the waste people are a product of modernisation, globalisation, and play to techno-Orientalist tendencies, and that Mimi-monster is a techno-Occidentalist recourse to the stereotype, we can also consider a final characteristic of Mimi-monster that further affirms her techno-Occidentalist position—as a ghost. David Der-wei Wang sees the ghostly narrative in Chinese literature as leading us to “the task of memory and mourning” (Wang 2004, xxiv).

the meaning of *ghost* is ‘that which returns.’... If life is seen as a temporary sojourn among the living, death represents a return to the source from which all creatures have come ...

While death indicates a “homecoming,” what remains understated ... is that this “return” presupposes a departure—departure from all those human traits that came with living. Ghosts have not yet returned to this home of all things, simply because they have not put off all their humanity. (Wang 2004, 253)

In what should have been her last moments before death, after being dumped into the sea, Mimi's consciousness returned, “anger expanded slowly like a vortex until it turned into fury ... She was going to torture him [her rapist] in every way she could, even if she didn't know that much about torture.” In rejecting death for revenge, Mimi becomes a ghost. Wang's critical review of premodern Chinese ghost narratives examines how the “writers are obliged to renegotiate the law of verisimilitude of

both realism and fantasy in a way hitherto unseen in the tradition” (Wang 2004, 270). In this, *Waste Tide* presents a final twist to the Mimi-monster.

There were two Mimis, she had gradually come to accept this fact, and she named them “Mimi 0” and “Mimi 1”. Mimi 0 was the waste girl from the distant home village ...

Mimi 1, on the other hand was a presence that she could not summarize at all. On that long, dark, rain-drenched night, it had come to possess this body like a ghost and become its master. It seemed to be omniscient and omnipotent. Though the two of them shared this body, Mimi 0 was like a hitchhiking passenger who knew nothing about the thoughts of Mimi 1 and certainly could not interfere with them. She saw everything Mimi 1 wanted her to see, and she struggled to follow the inhumanly complex and profound streams of consciousness, learning, understanding, being uplifted. (Chen 2019, 210)

Here, Mimi the cyborg becomes a postmodern ghost. Near the end of the novel, as Mimi organises a digital revolution for the waste people, it is revealed that Mimi 1 is the downloaded model of the consciousness of Hedy Lamarr, who was frozen at her death in 2000, but thawed a couple of decades later and neural mapped (Chen 2019, 296). It was then coded as a virus that ended up infecting Mimi. This is the description that Mimi gives of Hedy Lamarr:

she was the prettiest and smartest woman in the history of the human race. She was the inventor of CDMA [Code Division Multiple Access], sharp, sensual, and she lived a life of endless adventure and glamour. (Chen 2019, 297)

The consciousness brings with her a wide knowledge from outside of Silicon Isle, of science, technology, and philosophy that surpasses anything that Mimi could imagine. In becoming Mimi 1, she is suddenly awakened and aware. Everyone is spellbound by Mimi 1 in her confidence, her abilities and knowledge, and her charm. The waste people follow her willingly while others like Kaizong watch her transformation and leadership questioning, but transfixed. When Mimi 0 finally asks Mimi 1 “What *are* you?” the answer is:

A nuclear explosion that has been slowed down a million times; a by-product of billions of years of convergent evolution; your second personality and life

insurance; the free will that emerges from quantum decoherence. I'm accidental; I'm inevitable. I'm a new error. I'm the master and the slave. I'm the huntress and the prey. ... I'm only a beginning. (Chen 2019, 324)

The climax of *Waste Tide* sees Mimi 0 and Mimi 1 negotiating whether to save the waste people from a typhoon. After an agreement, using her digital powers, she instructs the waste people to organise themselves to flee Silicon Isle. Mimi 1 then has a final fight with Scott, who wants to take Mimi away to be kept safe in a final moment of heroism, still believing that he is right and his method is the best. After managing to capture Mimi and knock her unconscious, Scott has moments of self-reflection:

This is also the best choice for Mimi, he emphasized to himself repeatedly. *We have the best doctors, the best equipment, and the best environment. I haven't lied. ... in her body, in her brain, is concealed the future for the entire human race. We'll give her a happy life, very happy.*

And he begins to have moments of self-doubt.

What if she's a new creation? ...

But who is her creator? Scott shuddered as though a pair of eyes were staring at his back. (Chen 2019, 331)

In these moments that are interlaced with psychosis where he confuses Mimi with his dead daughter Nancy, we learn that Scott wants to save Mimi and protect her. While he is lucid, however, he believes instead that Mimi is a monster that needs to be stopped.

When Kaizong catches up with them in a drive to save Mimi, Scott explains,

Don't you understand that I'm the only one in the world who can save her? No one else! It's too bad that you don't believe me ... This is a miniaturized EMP gun. Though it's not extremely powerful, it's more than enough to fry the circuits in your girlfriend's brain. If I can't get her, no one else will either. So, don't you dare to play any games with me. (Chen 2019, 337)

When Mimi comes to, she kills Scott by taking control of his pacemaker and stopping his heart. After which, Mimi 0 has a rare moment of clarity and autonomy.

Mimi pulled up Kaizong's hand and aimed the EMP gun at her own head. "Pull the trigger."

"Are you crazy?" Kaizong couldn't believe his ears. "Why?"

"I'm no longer the Mimi you knew. I've killed many ... (Chen 2019, 339)

Mimi continues to plead with Kaizong until she warns him, "Do it now! Before she [Mimi I] recovers!" Kaizong shoots Mimi at the end, understanding that it was necessary to rid Mimi 0 (the girl) of the monster (Mimi I). In the epilogue, we learn that "the damage to her logical thinking, emotional processing, and memory was severe" (Chen 2019, 344). It turns out that without the monster—the ghost, Mimi was as good as dead. Everything that had happened from the awakening of the monster until the end was never Mimi the girl and was always Mimi the monster—the ghost.

CONCLUSION

In the past, "Cultural capital has tended to flow one way. It is very much in the interest of non-Anglo societies to translate Anglo-American power products" (Csicsery-Ronay 2012, 483). However, Chinese science fiction texts such as *Waste Tide* show that the hybridity of the genre can be used to explore problematic topics and create a space for thoughtful and open engagement. Though it is not a perfect novel in any sense, *Waste Tide* displays traits that make it a powerful literature of change, a concept that Elisabeth Anne Leonard postulates:

Science fiction is a genre which is continually evolving, and as it encompasses a wider range of writers and readers it will reach a point where writing from or about a racial minority is neither subversive nor unusual but rather one of the traits which makes it a powerful literature of change. (James and Mendlesohn 2003, 262)

Mimi-monster compels us to consider the multiplicity of forces that influenced China's rapid economic growth in its effort to compete with the West and which produced the techno-Orientalist anxieties that led to techno-Occidental reactions. It makes us deliberate the complicated nature of Chinese science fiction in its need to assimilate to the wider science fiction genre, while expressing its own unique characteristics in a hybrid. In this way, the monster Mimi is not just Chinese. She is an

amalgamation of China's history, present, and future, in relationship with the world. *Waste Tide* becomes a techno-Occidental manifesto for the waste people, locally and internationally, whose "unseen poverty is compounded by the invisibility of the slow violence that permeates so many of their lives" (Nixon 2011, 21). Since 2013, when the first Chinese edition of *Waste Tide* was published, there have been improvements made to the city of Guìyǔ, which inspired the novel in the first place. Toxic waste is reduced and there are improvements to working environments (Mujezinovic 2019). However, we know that if international e-waste weren't processed in Guìyǔ, it would be passed on to yet another nation that cannot avoid the pressures of progress.

Perhaps novels like *Waste Tide* will continue to be the voice of waste people not only in Guìyǔ, but around the world, to remind everyone that we, as consumers of technology, are all equally responsible for the monsters that are created. And like *Taowu*, it will remind us of its wickedness as warning for us to take precaution, as "Through the multitude of representations of the monster, we find ourselves imagining past inhumanity in the hope of a future in which such inhumanity can scarcely be imagined" (Wang 2012).

Kaizong walked in front of her, squatted, and carefully examined that blank face, softly calling her name, caressing her long hair with the same fingers that had pulled the trigger. Mimi gazed back at him as though looking at a lifeless thing. Something had been wiped from her gaze forever, leaving her a soulless shell. She opened her mouth, but no voice came out. Her face was expressionless, like a machine that had been restored to factory defaults. (Chen 2019, 344)

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Ghosts, Aliens, and Machines: Epistemic Continuity and Assemblage in Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay's Science Fiction

Suparno Banerjee

Indian Bengali author Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay presents a brilliant example of genre blending tendencies of postcolonial science fiction (sf).¹ Known as one of the finest modern Bengali authors, Mukhopadhyay works in many genres—most of his adult fiction is realistic social fiction, while his juvenile fiction mostly plays with the realm of the fantastic: mystery, ghost stories, sf, or a blending of all. Some of his works have been translated into English.² Mukhopadhyay's seamless blending of the scientific and the supernatural realms in his stories represents a larger trend in Bangla³ sf in specific, and Indian sf in general, that repeatedly works as a device of subversion of hegemonic western notions of science and reality. Mukhopadhyay places the ideas of modernity and progress as a contrast to the fast-vanishing traditions and narratives of rural and small-town values of the country. His stories often bring technological innovations and complex scientific ideas face to face with age-old superstitions and beliefs in

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supernatural occurrences, stemming both from the mainstream Hindu/Vedic tradition and from the local/folk customs, ubiquitous in his contemporary rural and suburban India. These contrasts are apparent in the settings for most of his stories, which are situated in his contemporary villages and small towns of eastern India, rather than in the futuristic urban landscapes that are more common fare in sf. In other words, the backwaters and not the metropolis is his location of choice: such a choice provides him with a field where these various epistemic traditions can interact more freely.

This blending of the natural and the supernatural in Mukhopadhyay's works simultaneously represents the flux resulting from modernization of traditional Bengali society and the hybrid identities such change creates. Standing at this juncture, Mukhopadhyay performs a "cultural translation" of western ideas of science, technology, and sf into the Indian setting. I use "cultural translation" not in Homi Bhabha's original context of immigrant narratives in the metropolis, but rather to indicate traffic in the opposite direction, something Bhabha himself often identifies as "mimicry" with a subversive purpose. In the chapter "How Newness Enters the World" in his *The Location of Culture* (Bhabha 1994, 212–235), Bhabha presents "cultural translation" as a discursive practice for the postcolonial migrant in the first world—a process of negotiating and rewriting the oppressive western discourses to expose their inconsistencies and thereby making place for something new. This is not only the assimilation of the non-western migrant culture into the dominant mode, but also transforms the dominant culture into a form more appropriate for the migrant—a third space where hybrid identities are formed. As Bhabha writes in context of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988), "As the unstable element—the interstice—enables the linkage black/blasphemy, so it reveals, once more, that the 'present' of translation may not be a smooth transition, a consensual continuity, but the configuration of the disjunctive rewriting of the transcultural, migrant experience" (Bhabha 1994, 226). However, in case of Mukhopadhyay, this process walks in the opposite direction. Here, intrusive colonial/western ideas and practices are negotiated by the Indian subject who holds a locally dominant cultural position yet must defer to the global hegemony of the western mode. This process then destabilizes the local structures through the insertion of foreign ideas and at the same time transforms the western elements at the demands of the non-western receptors—thus creating something new and in-between. This, then, is again a third space generating hybrid ideas and identities.

While I have argued elsewhere about the appropriateness of Bhabhaian “mimicry” in the relationship between Hollywood and Indian sf cinema, Mukhopadhyay’s sf is a more complex scenario, for which “cultural translation,” with all its associated dilemmas, is a more useful term,⁴ especially because of the regular association of techno-scientific imagery and terminology with identifiably western cultural roots in Mukhopadhyay’s works. Mukhopadhyay pits the nostalgia for the quickly vanishing beliefs of rural Bengali culture against a westernized techno-scientific idea of urban civilization and repurposes such western sf tropes to foreground a hybrid (both in Bhabha’s sense and in its general understanding) mode of storytelling. The presence of aliens, high-tech gadgets, and local ghosts within the same universe without any epistemic rupture thus present readers with a unique narrative space highly conducive to the explorations of postcolonial Bengali identity formed through cultural transactions and translations between India and the West. In this chapter, then, “translation” is used not in its linguistic transformative sense, but to signify a cultural transaction—that between the techno-scientific tropes of the West and the socio-cultural milieu of India. I will discuss three of Mukhopadhyay’s short novels, *Blutur Ghori* (“The Spooky Watch,” 1984), *Patashgarher Jangale* (“In the Forest of Patashgarh,” 1989), and *Patalghar* (“The Underground Chamber,” 1996), to emphasize this epistemic continuity and assemblage that, on the one hand, blur generic boundaries and, on the other hand, foreground the transplanting and integrating of western sf imagery into Bengali cultural landscape.

The hybridity in Mukhopadhyay’s works is symptomatic of the epistemic tussle present in different layers of Indian society and the ways such an epistemic base may influence the life of the Indian population. I have argued in my book *Indian Science Fiction: Patterns, History and Hybridity* (Banerjee 2020) that some crude demarcation is possible between the western concept of science and the Indian modes of knowledge, especially in context of the colonial relationship between India and Europe, the beginning of which roughly coincides with the later part of the European Enlightenment. The distinction that I highlight here relates primarily to the systematic and empiricist aspect of science that Europe established between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, leading to technological, industrial, and medical developments resulting in the consolidation of Europe’s various colonial empires, and the more intuitive, less organized, and community-based traditions of India. These Indian epistemic traditions often competed with “colonial science.” These traditions are often

insufficiently theorized collective knowledge about the natural world, sometimes (but not always) associated with the supernatural.⁵ This alternative to imperial European science is, however, not a single tradition. On the one hand, localized folk knowledge such as agricultural and healing practices⁶ (e.g., “Khanar Bachan” or Khana’s formulae of weather prediction, ninth–twelfth century CE), and, on the other hand, ancient philosophical, mathematical, astronomical, medicinal, and other formal treatises associated with the Vedic, Buddhist, and Jain traditions (e.g., medical knowledge of Charaka and Shusruta, astronomy of Aryabhata, the Vedic mathematical treatise “Shulva Sutra,” and the ancient astronomical treatise of “Vedanga Jyotisha,” etc.)⁷ reflect these alternative epistemic cultures. None of these traditions, though, resembles what we may call “laboratory-based science.” In these traditions, most of the seekers and keepers of knowledge are ascetics, monks, textual scholars, and diviners depending on a community knowledge base and intuitive methodology often akin to the mystical.

This distinction, nevertheless, is not only a methodological and epistemological one. This difference is significant from socio-political perspectives: within the colonial hierarchy, these indigenous traditions were delegitimized, and their practitioners were often placed in oppositional relationship to colonial scientists. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, taking a Foucauldian stance, claims that this “epistemic violence” legitimizes the normative position of the imperial narrative:

Perhaps it is no more than to ask that the subtext of the palimpsestic narrative of imperialism be recognized as “subjugated knowledge,” “a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naïve knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity.” (Spivak 2001, 2197)

In other words, indigenous knowledge is inefficient and not systematic and must give way to the “rational” science of the European colonizers. Establishment of colonial universities and colleges, which became centers of western scientific education, along with that of English language education (e.g., Hindu College in Kolkata, 1817), played a huge role in establishing this division. The scientists thus became associated with not only the empirical tradition but also colonial authority. Such authority was vested onto the British as well as the local elites, some of whom were

studying at these colonial establishments, and later became instrumental in ushering in western-style modernity in India. Social reformers such as Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820–1891) and Raja Rammohan Roy (1772–1833) saw such scientific education as a remedy for contemporary superstitions.⁸

Relationships between colonial science and Indian epistemic cultures became particularly complex toward the end of the nineteenth century. I have argued in *Indian Science Fiction* in further details that with a surge of nationalism, a polarization between a spiritual East and a materialist West was propagated by another section of the educated elite such as Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay (1838–1894), Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902), and Dayanand Saraswati (1824–1883). In the 1870s Bankim Chandra presented science as a material force of the West and equivalent with “outer knowledge,” while “dharma” or spirituality as intrinsic to the Indian civilization and equivalent with “inner knowledge.” However, in Vivekananda and Saraswati a strange rapprochement between Indian and western epistemes can be seen. Vivekananda (2014), although maintaining the position initiated by Bankim Chandra, claimed that the path to India’s superiority is through mastering of science. Saraswati went even further. By reinterpreting the Vedas and associating scientific terminologies with his interpretation, he appropriated modern science for India. He projected modern scientific concepts back on the Indian past and claimed India as a fountainhead of all scientific knowledge. Such statement as the following is typical of this tendency of historical revisionism: “Masters of all four Vedas, masters of all the sciences and arts, who invent (or construct) air ships and such machines, those who are embodiments of righteousness and wisdom, those who acquire control over the elementary result [sic] from the Sattva [truth] of the highest degree” (*Satyartha Prakash*, quoted in Tauber 2018, 26).⁹

In recent years, scholars such as Vandana Shiva, Shiv Visvanathan, and J. V. Narlikar have highlighted these alternative traditions of knowledge, although not in the above nationalistic sense.¹⁰ Rather, they question the hegemony of colonial western science and seek to undo the epistemic suppression of Indian knowledge traditions. However, I wish to emphasize not only a postcolonial effort at recovering lost knowledge, but also a historical revisionism that lets the educated elite utilize both the colonial science and alternative knowledge for their own advantage. Consequently, although in the wake of independence in 1947, India witnessed a strong emphasis on techno-scientific development from Prime Minister Jawaharlal

Nehru, leading to rapid industrialization and scientific education in its socio-economic sphere, in political and literary discourses Vedic science also saw a resurgence, providing a boost to nationalism.¹¹ Such nationalistic discourses pit a backward-looking narrative of “tradition” against the techno-scientific ideas of urban civilization. Literary works, especially sf, arising out of this situation play on these often-counteracting epistemologies, often attempting to reconcile them within the ambit of Vedic science as discussed above. Yet these traditions of knowledge present a further internal hierarchy: the western notion of science standing at the top and being increasingly and vocally challenged by proponents of an indigenous Vedic knowledge tradition. Recent claims of ancient Indian flying machines in the 2014 Indian Science Congress and an argument for astrology to be considered as science are a few examples.¹²

However, underneath both these established traditions lie multiple local modes of knowledge practiced and preserved through oral transmissions, rumors, and evolving ritualistic practices. These unstructured epistemologies (such as naturalistic medicine and knowledge about weather and crop cycles) often affect the daily lives of people as much as the other two traditions. As Ülo Valk in his discussion of ritualistic practices and folklores in eastern India says, “A narrative is [often] transformed into psychological and social reality” (Valk 2007, 13). In an increasingly modernized India, if western techno-science serves most of the material needs of the society, and the Vedic tradition provides a philosophical and spiritual dimension for the dominant Hindu majority, often working as an nationalist instrument, the local traditions often serve a “practical” spiritual and material purpose—avoid the unlucky face to have a trouble-free day, pray to the tree spirit for healing purposes, call the “ojha” (a type of healer) to exorcize an evil spirit or get relief from a snake bite, and so on. Although predominant within the rural population, such practices exist everywhere, especially within the lower strata of society.

Such oppositional yet intersecting epistemologies evoke Thomas Kuhn’s concept of “paradigm shift” in science. In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Kuhn 1962), Kuhn proposes that the scientific community functions on a set of received paradigms that are accepted as already proven. However, periodically such paradigms shift, rendering the earlier scientific facts and theories non-scientific. Kuhn proposed that no observation is possible without a theory, as assumptions and belief systems always underlie any system of interpretation. Science, then, fails to derive a knowledge of a reality that is mind-independent, making the “objects”

of scientific inquiry as much intentional as those of literature. To put it differently, “science” may potentially be as “fictional” as literature. In our case, different paradigms govern the different epistemes mentioned above. While apparently the western scientific tradition has displaced the other two in the mainstream of Indian society, all three often work as parallel modes of knowledge, equally valid in different circumstances for the people concerned. Emerging out of this epistemic flux, Mukhopadhyay’s works evoke this playful blending of different worldviews within the Indian social milieu. This process is not that of replacing one set of beliefs with another, as it happens in scientific revolutions; rather, this is a denial of the hegemony of all such systems. As mentioned above, the presence in many of Mukhopadhyay’s stories of aliens, gadgets, religious rituals, and ghosts within the same universe, without any apparent epistemic ruptures, thus provides the readers with such an intertwined space where the social flux and shifting paradigms of modern Bengal can be freely explored and enjoyed.

Starting from the 1970s, Mukhopadhyay’s stories for children and young adults regularly exploit the fantastic—either through a direct use of the supernatural or through a mixture of the supernatural and sf. However, most of the time, his use of the supernatural is directed toward the comical, not horror. The most interesting point of this mixture of these diverse traditions in his sf (our focus) is their separate yet complementary conceptual existence. Such works as *Bhuture Ghori*, *Patashgarher Jangale*, *Patalghar*, and *Sharbaneshe Vul Anka* (“Dangerous Wrong Math,” 2013) maintain an excellent balance among these various epistemologies. Even a story like *Bonny* (1990) set in 1980s USA includes an oblique reference to the occult. *Banadevi Ar Panchti Payera* (“Banadevi and Five Pigeons,” 2013), a rare narrative set in the far future, also hints at a combination of the natural and the supernatural. However, in works like *Bikeler Mrityu* (“Death of Bikel,” 1987) or “Somoy” (“Time,” 1993), Mukhopadhyay displays a more conventional approach to sf—primarily using scientific concepts in the western sense: high-tech cars, “unambiguous” temporal anomalies, and so on, operating within a world functioning on known physical laws accepted by the western paradigm and set within an urban context. As our detailed examination later in the chapter will show, in most of these works, Mukhopadhyay’s repeated association of European figures (or aliens in the guise of Europeans) with advanced technology, on the one hand, and ghosts and other supernatural elements with the local

landscape, on the other hand, transplant western cultural imagery into the Indian landscape.

This transplantation is reminiscent of the metonymic link between science and European colonialism and the relationship of such link with that of the Indian epistemic traditions that we discussed above. Given that much of Mukhopadhyay's children's fiction focus primarily on the supernatural and the fantastic, the hybrid epistemic approach seen in his sf demands a closer examination of the very category of "the fantastic" and its relationship to Mukhopadhyay's fiction that seems to blur generic boundaries. This blurring, though, is often dependent on the perception of the natural and the supernatural and how such perception functions in the text. In his *The Fantastic*, Tzvetan Todorov defines the category of fantastic in a threefold scheme: the uncanny, the fantastic, and the marvelous. Todorov claims, "In a world which is indeed our world, the one we know, a world without devils, sylphides, or vampires, there occurs an event which cannot be explained by the laws of this same familiar world" (Todorov 1973, 25). The person experiencing this event either looks for a rational explanation or seriously considers the possibility of the event as something beyond the laws of the known reality. The first is an instance of the "uncanny" and the second that of the "marvelous." The fantastic resides in the dilemma in the middle, where textual evidence by itself does not allow for a final verdict for one way or the other: "The fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event" (Todorov 1973, 25). While Todorov's overly structuralist account of the fantastic has come under criticism from such scholars and authors as Stanislaw Lem and Mark Bould,¹³ it does provide a scheme that can be of help in understanding the generic tendencies in this type of non-mimetic texts and the problems of genre divisions. From a directly formal point of view, most of Mukhopadhyay's texts fall into the bracket of the marvelous: his ghosts are ghosts, not strange occurrences created by humans. However, problems arise when we take up his sf. The ghosts that permeate these tales are often also ghosts, without any clearly rational explanation. But then again, Mukhopadhyay often states that ghosts are simply another form of existence, which could be explained by sufficiently advanced science, invoking Arthur C. Clarke's famous principle, "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic" (Clarke 1973, 36).¹⁴ Ghosts and other paranormal activities that occur in his stories, from such an angle, are just waiting for a proper scientific explanation. Hence, in Todorov's

scheme, they should be categorized as uncanny. But presently lacking any such explanation, they can very well be considered an example of the fantastic.

However, at another level, functioning within an agreed-upon estrangement developed logically, which is viable for many of his readers, Mukhopadhyay's tales also behave as *sf* as defined by Darko Suvin—cognitive estrangement—or at least as stories with a “cognition effect” as further developed by Carl Freedman. For Suvin, the “necessary and sufficient” condition of *sf* is the interaction between estrangement and cognition, an “imaginative framework” that is alternative to the author's own reality and creation of a “novum,” something completely new, that radically differentiates the universe of the story from the continuation of the author's real world (Suvin 1979, viii and 21). For Suvin, “cognition” stands for the rational process of knowing analogous to “science,” while “estrangement” functions as a process that defamiliarizes our mundane world or makes it strange. Freedman argues that adhering strictly to the meaning of “cognition” and “estrangement” excludes much of the works in the popular pulp *sf* tradition while including many works that show less affinity with the popular notion of *sf*. To solve this dilemma, Freedman modifies the term “cognition” to “cognition effect” to include texts that present an appearance of a cognitive approach though without strictly being cognitive (Freedman 2000, 17). The Bangla corresponding concept of “*kalpabigyāner golpo*” (which roughly translates as “stories of imagined science”) is closer to Freedman's more open-ended formulation. Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay has highlighted the cultural specificity of the idea of “science” in context of defining “*kalpabigyān*” (Chattopadhyay 2016, 437), especially the idea that “science” is a subset of holistic and transcendental knowledge of the universe. On different occasions, I have made similar arguments regarding the cultural specificity of “science” and the diverging understanding between Indian and western concepts leading to generic hybridity.¹⁵ Mukhopadhyay's stories provide excellent examples of such generic complexity at work.

All three stories under consideration are set in semi-rural or small-town Bengal and offer intriguing interactions between techno-science and a nostalgic traditional Bengali lifestyle that put more value on human interaction and meandering daily routines of smaller communities than the humdrum of the city and technological devices. The title of *Bhuture Ghorī* itself—the supernatural and the mechanical (like “ghost in the machine”)—excellently presents this juxtaposition. The title refers to a reality where

superstitions and beliefs in supernatural (“spooky”) co-exist with techno-scientific progress (“watch”). This tension is highlighted through the dialogue between two old friends—the atheist and rationalist Haranchandra, who believes in the notion of empirically provable science, and his Tantric¹⁶ friend, Jatai, who not only practices religious rituals but also delves into the world of the dead—controlling ghosts and demons. The text, however, does not show any preference for one type of epistemology over the other. To the common population of this story, both of these are perfectly possible ways of seeing the universe, and thus not necessarily discontinuous. For example, when Haranchandra’s new wristwatch starts making strange noises at night, he gives it to Jatai for examination for spirit possession instead of a technician, signaling his willingness to make compromises between the technological and spiritual paradigms. The watch then makes its way to the English scientist Gordon, who tries to decipher the same mystery. Both Jatai and Gordon fail and go stark mad, leaving Haranchandra completely perplexed and uttering religious pieties. This continuity of paradigms is highlighted through breaking down of sectarian and philosophical barriers in the face of true wonder—the arrival of the aliens. The spooky or strange watch in question in the text that makes other machines behave erratically and emit strange sounds turns out to be a highly powerful and coveted alien machine rather than an earthly device under spirit possession. The best examples of this in the normal human world in addition to atheist Haranchandra’s rising belief in ghosts and gods are Tantric Jatai’s sudden reverence of Vaishnavism (another competing sect of Hinduism in which Lord Vishnu is the prime deity), and the Vaishnava Nitya Das’s acceptance of Tantra, and English scientist Gordon’s loss of reason. All these breakings of barriers happen because of the contact with the alien machine. The technologically advanced aliens, who fight over the artifact in this small town, make it amply clear that human understanding of the universe and its physical laws is severely lacking. Not only do human science and human spiritualism fail to decipher the function of the watch, but both also appear completely helpless in front of this alien adversary. The aliens also suggest that ghosts are only a part of nature: there is nothing supernatural about them. Thus, *Bhuture Ghori* seamlessly blends the different paradigms: faith in the supernatural (divine or ghostly), the empirical mode of western science, and a speculative belief in alien knowledge that supersedes our understanding of nature.

Another interesting aspect of this text is a clear association of advanced techno-science with outsiders—Englishman Gordon and the aliens from

another planet. The spooky watch in question comes to Haranchandra as an expensive imported watch brought from the metropolitan city Kolkata, and its arrival starts the string of strange occurrences that are stirred by alien forces. The aliens behind these actions are described in a way consistent with Caucasian physiology—especially the evil Khruuch Khruuch, with whom a clear resemblance of Abraham Lincoln can be discerned: “After a few seconds a shape of a face gradually starts appearing on the dial of the watch. A strange face. A hooded cap covering the forehead. A longish, rough, hollow-cheeked face. The eyes disappearing within their sockets ... A bit like Abraham Lincoln. But sharper and keener” (Mukhopadhyay 1984, 51).¹⁷ Furthermore, the mad scientist Gordon is an Englishman, a relic from the colonial times who refused to go back, whose strange inventions like a flying motorcycle and a robot often disturb the peace of the small town. Gordon also stands on the other side of the Indian/western dichotomy: while Jatai and Nitya represent the extremes of supernaturalism in the Indian mode, Gordon stands for experimental science to the extent of eccentricity. While Jatai with his ghost companions and Tantra seems to fit within the community, Gordon and his machines remain an odd incongruity. Furthermore, it is in Gordon’s house that the aliens finally meet and engage in a destructive fight over their lost artifact—the spooky watch. Mukhopadhyay leaves these metonymic links between technology and the West strewn throughout the story, and thus, arguably performs a “cultural translation,” in which western sf imagery awkwardly creeps into small-town Bengali cultural life, giving birth to a narrative that is truly transgressive of both norms.

Set in a similar semi-rural/small-town locale, *Patalghar* not only deals with a comparable juxtaposition of ghosts and aliens as in *Bhature Ghori*, but it also further highlights the coexistence of the scientific and the superstitious.¹⁸ The continuity between the epistemic traditions is even stronger in this story. Science in its western understanding is presented here as an Indian tradition hybridized with western notions: Aghor Sen, a fictional nineteenth-century scientist, is at the center of this tradition.¹⁹ He invented something akin to cryogenic sleep and practiced his science in an underground chamber. Although his methods primarily show influences of western laboratory experimentations, his use of archaic language forms and terminology create an association with the Vedic tradition. A note written by Aghor Sen in Sanskritized archaic Bengali of the nineteenth century is found on the cryo-sleep box with instructions for waking up the subject, which mentions “amrita bindu” (drops of elixir of life) and

“jagadishwar” (god of universe) (Mukhopadhyay 2017, 52). While both these words can be taken in their symbolic sense, the very imagery together with the Sanskritized language suggest an elite upbringing and familiarity with mainstream Hindu cultural and epistemic lineage. Such traditional associations are supplemented by the underground laboratory, its paraphernalia, and scientific notes and instructions easily identifiable as the features of a systematic colonial science. Furthermore, Aghor is assisted in his efforts by alien technology from a planet in Saptarshi Mandal (the constellation Ursa Major), the constellation named after seven ancient sages. The book’s antagonist is also an alien, whose son returns after 150 earthly years to claim Aghor’s invention as his property. This speculative and hybrid scientific epistemology, however, is cleverly merged with local beliefs in the supernatural and superstitions.

While interactions with Aghor’s ghost, who visits Bhutnath (another scientist trying to find Aghor Sen’s laboratory), fall in the same line as in *Bhuture Ghorī*, the use of a superstition related to “apaya” or “unlucky face” adds a further local dimension: anyone who sees the face of “apaya” Gobindo (a character who lives in the same neighborhood in the present of the story where Aghor lived in the past) in the morning has a miserable day. This power of adversely affecting people’s lives by only showing his face has made Gobindo into a local legend of sort. Gobindo introduces himself thus to Subuddhi and Kartik (two major characters in the book) after they have suffered the effect of his unlucky visage throughout the day (chased by a bull and stung by hornets, among other things):

I am the renowned apaya Gobindo Biswas. If you see my face in the morning, you are done for the day! Suppose you saw me on your way to the market. That’ll be it for you. Either pick-pockets will steal your money, or the traders will sell you a rotten fish or a worm-eaten eggplant, if not this, you’ll get gored by a bull. (Mukhopadhyay 2017, 52)

As is apparent, Gobindo is proud of the effectiveness of his maleficence, which to him and the local population is a matter of practicality—either to avoid and be saved or to employ and harm others. Nobody is concerned about the philosophical implications of this baleful power. The book adds on to this theme by introducing Gobindo’s ancestor Sanatan, who is a bestower of even greater ill-luck, as the person put under cryo-sleep by Aghor 150 years ago. At the end of the story, a look at Sanatan’s face defeats the belligerent alien in search of Aghor’s machine. This

superstition, which has no apparent connection to the great Vedic tradition, is an example of another alternative epistemology. Unsanctioned by any great traditions, practices like these rule common people's everyday lives in all corners of the country. The fact that the story offers it an equal amount of importance in the narrative universe, without trying to fit it within the paradigms of either western science or Vedic traditions, attests to Mukhopadhyay's aim of integrating the mutually exclusive traditions of knowledge—and creating a continuity that can be often seen existing in the lower intellectual strata of Indian society. Within these strata, ghosts, magic, the divine, and advanced science are often put at the similar level of wonder without any specific sense of rupture, and thus point at the hybrid syncretic potential of Indian mass psychology and mass entertainment.

Like *Bhuture Ghorī*, here too we see association of advanced technology with an outsider, or “Other,” that closely resembles the westerner. Hick and his son Vik, the aliens who supply Aghor with the equipment for his experiment with cryogenics, are addressed as “saheb,” meaning white man in general, but also with an association of social/official hierarchy. Obviously, this is a colonial legacy still lingering in Indian society. But when combined with the characters' alien origin, the association with the foreignness of advanced technology in Bengali village life again becomes prominent. In the end, the alien had to run in the face of Bengali “apaya” power—Vik suffers a broken leg after encountering Sanatan's unlucky visage. Furthermore, as the main technological support, which remains an anomaly in ordinary earthly life, comes from the aliens, such technology remains an incongruous transplantation. In addition, the story creates a discourse about science as a “western” epistemology and emphasizes its problematic relationship with things closer to home. While Aghor's scientific ideas needed alien supplements, his exploits were also published in a British scientific journal, which led another English-educated scientist, Bhutnath,²⁰ to search for Aghor's laboratory. In any case, both Aghor and Bhutnath appear as discrepancies in Bengali village life and remain isolated and incongruous—almost like a foreign signifier with an uncertain meaning within a native cultural context. The appearance of Aghor's ghost and his “scientific” explanation of afterlife and Butnath's easy acceptance of such explanation, as well as the conflation of alien Vik with “bemmodotti” (the ghost of a Brahmin man), are like the miscommunications and transformations that underlie every act of cultural translation. In these cases, the transplantation is not only that of western techno-scientific imagery,

but most important of all, a translation of the recurring trope of the “mad scientist” in western sf into the rural/small-town Bengali milieu.

A different iteration of this theme of intrusion of alien technology into rural Bengal can be found in *Patashgarher Jangale*. This story that functions on the basis of dimensional anomaly and alien technology, has a village math teacher (Joypataka) and a daredevil kid (Bhutu)²¹ at its center. After an unfortunate altercation with a sacred bull,²² Joypataka ends up in the mysterious and dangerous forest of Patashgarh. He encounters the “Garh-bhutua” (the ghost of the fort or a disembodied voice known to lead people to danger in the forest) in the jungle, who leads him to a fort situated on a knoll sitting in the middle of a quicksand field. Joypataka finds a well-maintained mansion, plenty of food, and books on highly advanced alien science and encounters other miracles. But all these disappear in the morning and the place appears as a derelict ruin. Three other characters, including Joypataka’s grandfather, also get trapped on the knoll after coming there in search of him. In the meantime, Bhutu, who was responsible for letting loose the enraged bull, also comes to the forest in search of Joypataka and encounters the Garh-bhutua, notices anomalies of space-time in parts of the forest, and ends up in the ruins of the fort. He accidentally establishes contact with an alien AI, who augments his brain and explains that the fort of Patashgarh is an alien experimental station and exists in different conditions in different dimensions. The AI lets Bhutu contact the alien master of the station in a part of the forest that exists on a different temporal plane; he instructs Bhutu to solve a math equation to find the way back out of the quicksand pit. After Bhutu solves the equation, he is transferred back into the dimension in which Joypataka exists and rescues him and the others.

In *Patashgarher Jangale* we do not have the mad-scientist intermediary between the aliens and the rural Bengali landscape, although there is a math teacher, and the final rescue depends on mathematics. Rather, the alien here directly contacts the local population. However, the alien does not willfully come to the earthlings, but the earthlings intrude upon it. Several aspects of the story demand our attention regarding this self/other interaction. The fort of Patashgarh is related to the British colonizers and the occupying alien is referred to as “saheb.” Thus, in a sense the “mad scientist” tropes found in the other two stories are replaced here by the “mad alien scientist.” The connection between the British and the aliens is obvious and needs no explanation. The math teacher is given “alphabet soup” (with both Roman and Bengali letters floating in it) for dinner,

making the connection with “English” and alien even stronger. Furthermore, we learn that any people in the vicinity around dinnertime are lured to the fort by Garh-bhutua to provide companionship to the “saheb,” fed amply (as Joypataka experienced) on exotic foods (such as alphabet soup) and trapped there to die the next morning when the fort disappears into another dimension. As the AI explains to Bhutu, “We used to bring people at dinner time. But they were stupid and couldn’t converse about knowledge and science to Saheb’s satisfaction. That ruined the dinner for Saheb ... Most of them tried running away and drowned in the quicksand” (Mukhopadhyay 1989, 84). This ritual amply clarifies the position of the local people as objects to be used by the alien and made to partake in alien cultural practices that the people try to decipher from their own perspectives. For most, such an experience not only leaves gaps in understanding their situation but also proves fatal.

In addition, we find a similar discourse on ghosts and their scientific explanation that we saw in the other two stories. However, while in the other two the ghosts were finally left mysterious, here we do get an explanation of “Garh-bhutua,” which appears to be part of the AI that maintains and protects Patashgarh fort, although to the common folk it remains a supernatural legend and everyone is happy to escape without seeking any clarification of its origin. Thus, genre-wise this one edges closer to Todorov’s “uncanny” than to “marvelous” or “fantastic.” This is in a sense a little different from *Bhuture Ghorī* and *Patalghar*, regarding the mixed epistemic approach of the texts that we have discussed above. However, if we look at the attitude of the characters within the text, such epistemic bricolage remains intact. The characters in the text after all do not receive any clarification regarding Garh-bhutua. Furthermore, Joypataka’s misfortune remains forever entangled with his harassing of the sacred bull. As one character says, “In fact, some people strongly condemn the act. They believe Kalu [the bull] is a representative of Lord Shiva, and shouldn’t have been harassed in front of a crowd” (Mukhopadhyay 1989, 15). The suffering of Joypataka, thus, for such people is an act of divine or otherworldly retribution. Consequently, an overall sense of cultural hybridity and translation of western sf tropes within the native culture is again prominent.

These works are perhaps some of the best examples of the epistemic continuity and assemblage found in Indian sf. Such assemblage further emphasizes the process of metamorphosis of the feudal, largely agrarian culture of rural and small-town Bengal through the influence of an

industrial modernity. As is probably apparent, Mukhopadhyay's stories function within a society whose base still operates with internal hierarchies that were established centuries, perhaps millennia, ago. The caste and class orders as well as relationships between various religious sects point to at least the medieval times²³ if not older, and the characters that play within such a field function according to the appropriate epistemic orientation. The British colonial presence and its "epistemic violence" within this landscape creates the flux that prepares the ground for further introduction of technology that will change this society forever—but such technology and other foreign elements are also changed in the process. Dominant western sf images and themes are thus metamorphosed within this specific Bengali landscape—not merely mimicking but profoundly transforming, reflecting the new plant's relationship to the existing cultural ground. Thus Jatai, Nitya Das, Gobindo, Sanatan, Aghor, Joypataka, Gordon, Ramraha, Vik, Alphabet Saheb, Garh-bhutua, and Jatai's friendly ghosts can all exist and interact within Mukhopadhyay's stories without difficulty and without any worry about generic boundaries.

NOTES

1. Some portions of this chapter were previously published as part of my book *Indian Science Fiction: Patterns, History and Hybridity* (2020) published by University of Wales Press and are being reprinted here with their permission.
2. His sf *Bonny* (1990) was translated as *No Child's Play* (trans. Bhaskar Chattopadhyay, HarperCollins, 2013) and his ghost story *Gosain Baganer Bhut* was translated as *The Ghost of Gosain Bagan* (trans. Nirmal Kanti Bhattacharjee, Ponytale Books, 2008).
3. Sf written in Bangla language and works that reflect the culture of "Bengal," an ethno-linguistic and geopolitical region, that comprises the eastern Indian states of West Bengal and Tripura and the country of Bangladesh, where Bangla is the dominant language. This area was part of the Bengal Province of British India. I use "Bangla" to designate the language as per native custom, use "Bengal" to indicate the geographical region, and "Bengali" as an adjective for cultural identity.
4. See my article "Melodrama, Mimicry, and Menace: Reinventing Hollywood in Indian Science Fiction Films" (2014) article for a discussion of this topic.
5. For a brief but insightful overview of the history of Indian science, specifically of its revisionist nature, see Phalkey 2013. For more detailed discussion on the state of science in India in context of indigenous science and

knowledge systems, see Narlikar 2003 and Dharampal 1971. Also see Ray 1902 for a discussion of indigenous practices related to chemistry from ancient to sixteenth-century India. Ganeri 2013 provides a concise comparison between the Indian epistemic cultures and the western notion of science.

6. See Shiva 1992 for a discussion on this topic.
7. See Ray 1902 and Narlikar 2003.
8. See Harder 2001 and also Sengupta 2010. Colonial education further provided incidental benefits of this “epistemic violence” to the local elites. Being on the vanguard of the colonial education and reformation system, the educated Bengali elite produced several internationally renowned twentieth-century scientists such as Jagadish Chandra Bose, Sattyen Bose, Meghnad Saha, and Prafulla Chandra Roy, and Kolkata (then Calcutta) as well as Chennai (then Madras) played major roles in the Nobel winning physicist C. V. Raman’s career.
9. See Tauber 2018 and Harder 2001. Such ideological slant is also present in P. C. Ray’s effort at recovering suppressed knowledge in *A History of Hindu Chemistry* (Ray 1902). In this voluminous work, Ray starts his exploration of Hindu chemistry from the alchemic ideas found in Rigveda and knowledge of plant-based medicine in Atharvaveda, before going into Charaka and Shusruta’s medicinal knowledge and later metallurgical practices.
10. See Narlikar 2003, Visvanathan 1998, and Shiva 1993.
11. Mukherjee 2020 provides an intriguing discussion on the relationship between science and sf in India between the 1940s and the 1970s.
12. In *The Scientific Edge*, eminent astrophysicist Narlikar gives a scathing criticism of this type of claim, while highlighting the evidentially proven ancient scientific achievements.
13. See Bould 2002 and Lem 1974.
14. Formulated in “Hazards of Prophecy: The Failure of Imagination” (Clarke 1973).
15. See Banerjee 2020.
16. A sect of Hinduism that practices Tantra form of worship. In our context, Tantric refers to the Shaiva and Shakta Tantra traditions that worship Lord Shiva in various forms and Goddess Kali among several other Shakti goddesses. In many instances Tantric tradition is seen as different from Vedic tradition, with which Vaishnavism, the other sect mentioned in this story, is more closely associated. For more, see Flood 2006 and Gray 2016.
17. All translations from the original Bengali are mine.
18. *Patalghar* (2003), a film based on the book, further complicates matters by turning the Bengali scientist Aghor almost into a Vedic sage who works with ancient sounds to put creatures to sleep.

19. The name “Aghor” refers to Lord Shiva, one of the three principal deities of Hinduism.
20. Interestingly, “Bhutnath” also means Lord Shiva.
21. Notice that all three stories play with the word “bhut” (“bhutur,” “Bhutnath,” “Bhutu,” “Garh-bhutua”), which in Bengali means “ghost” as well as “the past.” This play is another indication that in this universe, the boundaries between the natural and the supernatural (and maybe the past and the present) are only tenuous.
22. In Hindu culture, the bull is the vehicle of Lord Shiva. Thus, stray bulls in India enjoy a certain privilege—being considered sacred they are often fed by people and roam around undeterred, often assaulting people and other animals. Notice that in *Patalghar* Subuddhi was chased by a bull after he stared at apaya Gobindo.
23. The medieval period in Indian history, according to various historians, spans from the sixth to the sixteenth century CE. See Stein and Arnold 2010.

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The Clockwork Chrysalis: Enslavement Poetry of Juan Francisco Manzano

Alexis Brooks de Vita

To explain how he experiences what is happening to him, enslaved Cuban poet Juan Francisco Manzano immerses his verse in otherworldly imagery that foreshadows not only African/Diaspora literary tropes of capture and liberation but also European and American Steampunk and science fiction (SF). As I argue in “Living the Transatlantic Apocalypse” in Dale Knickerbocker’s *Lingua Cosmica: Science Fiction from around the World*, historical continental African experience of alien invasion, genocidal slaughter to facilitate mass enslavement, and deportation of trauma-shocked citizens of millennia-old advanced civilizations, followed by homeland colonization of a destabilized continent, establish the parameters of what would be appropriated as the tropes of European/American science fiction (Brooks de Vita 2018). Manzano’s poetry further defamiliarizes the process of his dehumanization in a gadget-focused chattel enslavement society so that he becomes not so much one of its talking

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brute animals, as established by race-based colonial law, as one of its functioning cogs, thereby specifically highlighting chattel enslavement's Steampunk surrealism. Manzano as simultaneous honorary royalty and legally classed talking beast of burden deftly employs Steampunk's simultaneous capacities of nostalgically evoking "alternate histories" while delivering scathing "social commentary" (Marler 2018). If Steampunk speaks for an "underground movement" with "anarchist leanings," then it lends itself to the autobiographical and poetical reflections of an escapee whose life experience convinces him that his words must impart urgency and immediacy to his message of "resistance" and "transgression" (Marler 2018). As Araceli Rodríguez points out in "Iberoamerica: The Lost World": "People who are drawn to the steampunk and dieselpunk movements often forget that there is more to these genres than the Anglo-Saxon interpretations in film and writing" (Rodríguez 2011, 17). Manzano's poetry illuminates the inherent otherworldly yearnings and descriptive possibilities of Steampunk art. This analysis also employs the techniques and references the underlying theories of the Russian Formalist Critics Viktor Shklovsky and Boris Eichenbaum.

Irish Abolitionist physician Richard Madden, in his professed effort to expose to the English-speaking world the inalienable humanity of supposed talking animal producers of colonial European/American wealth, translates Manzano's searing Spanish blank verse with excessive deletion and singsong rhyme, necessitating questions about Madden's apparent erasures as he represents Manzano's complex visionary verses as simplistic and vacuous. Analysis of Manzano's "El reloj adelantado," "La cocuyera," and "Mis treinta años," published in 1837, in comparison to Madden's translations "The Clock that Gains," "The Cucuya; or Fire-Fly," and "Thirty Years," queries the transcendentalist vagaries of Madden's translations and analyzes the privileged assumptions inherent in Madden's understatements and omissions of Manzano's texts.

In his "Introduction" to *The Life and Poems of a Cuban Slave*, Edward J. Mullen argues that Madden's text serves as "less of a translation than as an abolitionist reconstruction, a recasting of a slave's discourse" that reveals "an extremely complicated process of literary construction" (Mullen 2014, 30). Mullen's book-length apologia in defense of Madden's intent, at the cost of encouraging exploration of his impact on Manzano's accessibility to English-speaking readers, attempts to understand and justify Madden's lack of awareness of the potentially racist impact of his voice and his translational domination of Manzano's narrative at the expense of

broadening scholarly interest in Manzano's life and poetic voice. In "Disarming Racial Microaggressions," Sue, Alsaïdi, Awad, Glaeser, Calle, and Mendez explain that "well-intentioned" people "may be unaware that they have engaged in racially demeaning ways toward target groups" (Sue et al. 2019, 129). Sue describes "good, moral, and decent human beings who move about in an invisible veil of Whiteness" behind which, when racist impact is identified, they may prefer to privilege good intent over the need to redress harmful impact, leading them to "excuse or rationalize away the behavior as due to reasons other than racism" (Sue et al. 2019, 133). Sue explains that one effective way to avoid redressing racist damage is to demand that focus be recentered on intent "because proving biased intent is virtually impossible," rather than allowing analysis and action based on "impact instead of intent" (Sue et al. 2019, 139). Refocusing, then, on Madden's translational erasure of the literal poetry Manzano has written, Mullen, like Madden, appears to ignore or be in ignorance of the significance of Manzano's earliest self-image firmly established not as "a slave" but as a human being born into relative privilege, not yet having been shattered, melted down, and remolded into an enslaved person until he is entering adolescence. In short, Manzano has probably not written "a slave's discourse" so much as a subjective close observation of the callous process of systematic dehumanization necessary to deconstruct the individual personhood and disempower the human machinery of a mechanized chattel enslavement society.

Madden's translation of Manzano's *Life of the Negro Poet* describes an early life in which Manzano not only did not know he was enslaved, much like Harriet Jacobs writing *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* while in hiding as Linda Brent, but lived as if he were the adopted favorite child of the aging Doña Beatriz de Jústiz, Marquesa de Santa Ana, whom his mother served as head lady-in-waiting. From birth, Manzano was taken and raised by the marchioness as if he were heir to a royal title. He spent most of each day in her company as she petted and pampered him and proclaimed him to be the child of her old age; Manzano reciprocated this adoration and called and thought of the marchioness as his own mother, as if she had given birth to him. Manzano was baptized in the luxurious clothes in which the marchioness had dressed one of her daughters for baptism, and her baptismal gift to his parents was her promise to free them upon their purchase of themselves from her, given that they had not been freed upon their marriage to each other, as was her usual custom. When separated from the marchioness, Manzano was

permitted to throw tantrums until the household managed to reunite them. The child Manzano was kept from the company of other enslaved children and did not learn to identify with their status nor think of himself as one of their company. Adults, including his own parents, were forbidden to flog, whip, or strike Manzano, as a child, though he recalls being shown the whip as an incentive to behave. The adult Manzano also recalls a period of time when his biological father, a highly trained tailor for the family that owned them, having taken it upon himself to physically discipline Manzano without their owners' knowledge or consent, fell into disfavor with the marchioness to such an apparently destabilizing extent for the household that her Franciscan confessor intervened by clarifying the relative authorities of biological parent and owner in respect to the child they both loved (Mullen 2014, 78).

From the age of six through ten, Manzano was sent at noon most days to be educated by his godmother, Trinidad de Zayas, and began to receive gifts for himself and his parents as he recited from memory some of the sermons of the Renaissance mystic Luis de Granada and some works of opera that he memorized when he was taken to a performance. At the age of ten, when he recalls his presence at the bedside of the dying marchioness with his mother, a priest, and one of her daughters, Manzano also remembers being put into the educational care of his godfather, who did not want him to learn to write. Manzano does not appear to recall other restrictions or duties during that time that might have impressed upon him his status as an enslaved being, other than his removal from not only his biological parents but also his godparents. He mentions being dressed "in gold lace" and "fine clothes," taken to "the theatres, tertulias, balls, and places of amusement," his hair combed by "Donna Joaquina" and his meals served "at the feet of" the Marquesa de Prado Ameno, his new owner, though he does not seem to have understood the nature of her relationship to him, at the time (Mullen 2014, 80). By the age of twelve, Manzano is composing and memorizing poems he dictates to a girl named Serafina, who knows how to write (Mullen 2014, 80).

It is somewhere between the ages of thirteen and fourteen that Manzano's life appears to begin to swing between descriptions of the most dizzying heights of social privilege unpredictably interspersed with acts of cruelty that threaten his sanity as well as his survival. For failing to answer as soon as he is called, for uttering a sound when struck so hard the blows

“often made the blood spout from both my nostrils” (Mullen 2014, 81), Manzano might find himself locked in the pitch blackness of a coal cellar for twenty-four hours at a time, hoping for bread and water to be slipped to him by relatives of the marchioness or his freed brother. His daily routine becomes to rise at dawn from sleeping outside the bedroom of the marchioness, clean and sweep the house, and then follow her throughout the day, removing her dishes from her meals, sitting and sewing her fine dresses and household linens, waiting and watching from behind her chair when her family enjoys drawing lessons, which he imitates to his owner’s delight. When the marchioness goes visiting or card-playing at night, Manzano tends the lantern of her coach and stands by her chair during the entertainment, until she retires. If the lantern goes out, if he falls asleep on his feet while in attendance, if he takes a geranium leaf from the garden so he might gain poetic inspiration from its crushed fragrance, he finds himself put in the stocks or in the morgue with the dead bodies and whipped in the morning. Once, having fallen asleep at the back of the coach, dropped the lantern, and run home late, unable to find it, Manzano remembers his mother attempting to speak in his defense, and his own unhabitual ferocity and consequent near loss of life upon finding her struck, stripped and flogged along with him. Manzano recounts these minor errors and their excessive consequences as events that happened weekly, sometimes several times within a week. It is not until midnight or later, if he is not confined and awaiting corporal punishment, that Manzano can escape to his mother and brother in the quarters of the enslaved people, there to be comforted and to rest until these exacting rounds and their excessive consequences will begin again the next day.

By his sixteenth year, Manzano begins to describe even more harrowing events of false accusation, such as for the theft of a young chicken, followed by bloodthirsty rounds of being roped and dragged to the place of confinement by a rider on a horse, bitten in the face and legs by dogs for falling, and imprisonment including stripping, spreadeagled forced confessions, whippings, and life-threatening hard labor dressed in coarse cloth. For someone’s gift of a peseta that the giver does not recognize, he finds himself imprisoned without bread or water except for what the brothers of the new marchioness can slip to him for four days in a dungeon, followed by transport to a prison where he is to receive twenty-five lashes morning and evening for nine days, a punishment even the jailer

decides is too excessive to execute. Manzano survives his sixteenth year and the depression and chest congestion that threaten to end his life by being put into the care of a young male relative of the marchioness, Don Nicolas, who hires him a doctor and treats him as something of an unfortunate son of the late marchioness. When he heals, Manzano attends Don Nicolas as he has been taught to do and takes up the duties of a romantic go-between, as his brotherly owner is courting a bride. For the three years that Manzano finds himself healing in the care of Don Nicolas and his bride-to-be, he is so gifted with tips and allowances and free time that he purchases ink, pens, a penknife, “and some very fine paper” (Mullen 2014, 91) to teach himself to write. Though Don Nicolas has obeyed the law and social custom by stating to Manzano that he should not learn to write, he does nothing to stop Manzano’s five-hour daily practices and is as pleased as the family’s doctor when Manzano proves to be an efficient notetaking bedside caregiver for ailing family members. This brief autodidactic sojourn ends when the Marquesa de Prado Ameno hears of Manzano’s recovered health and popularity among other members of her family and sends for him again, a catastrophe Manzano addresses by writing an advertisement for a new owner.

Madden’s translation of Manzano’s prose and autobiographical accounts of Spanish colonial injustices help the Abolitionist debunk apologist interpretations of Spanish enslavement, and Mullen rightly concludes that Madden’s translation of Manzano’s *Autobiography* makes available to a broader readership “a remarkable expression of human experience” (Mullen 2014, 30). However, Madden’s unconvincing poetic translations of Manzano’s hard-wrought verse have not appealed to English-speaking scholars of chattel enslavement familiar with works such as Phillis Wheatley’s *Poems*, Frederick Douglass’s *Narrative* and Olaudah Equiano’s presciently SF *Interesting Life*. While this could be because some English speakers may not read Spanish or recognize American chattel enslavement’s ties to Cuba, when English speakers encounter Madden’s poetic translations of Manzano, these may come across as underwhelming, unconvincing, and therefore suspect. The goal of this comparative reading of three of Manzano’s poems in contrast with Madden’s paternalistically simplifying translations is to detail their effective misrepresentation and cross-cultural silencing. This analysis focuses on what the enslaved Cuban poet seems to say in his colloquial Spanish compared to what Madden,

demythologizing chattel slavery in Cuba, claims the enslaved Manzano says, conversely and ironically establishing a translational domination narrative as the author of poetic texts that succeed in publicizing Madden's message in the guise of, or passing it off as, Manzano's voice. This relational reverse puts Manzano's name at the service of Madden's Abolitionist purposes, destabilizing the traditional service a translator is assumed to render the author of an original work written in a foreign language.

Manzano's verbal creativity benefits from an analysis that references what Russian Formalist critic Boris Eichenbaum explains is "the formation of collateral meanings, which disrupts ordinary verbal associations". Manzano writes in an exquisite mixture of pidgin, precision, and autodidactic vocabulary that can only have come from his binary experiences of heights of Cuban social privilege coupled with abject humiliations and depredations. Manzano's poetry provides a fecund field for "the Formalists' investigation not only of acoustics and syntax, but also of the shades of meaning peculiar to poetic speech" in which "as words get into verse," Formalists consider them distanced from "psychological linguistics" (Eichenbaum 1965, 129). In contrast, Madden's seemingly unconscious assumption of intellectual superiority over Manzano appears to interpose an unfortunately Eurocentric humanism that presumes the summit of linguistic achievement is the purview of privileged men such as himself, who legislate and observe the dehumanization of others.

MANZANO'S "EL RELOX ADELANTADO"

Manzano's "The Fast Clock" (my translation) transports poet and reader into an eternal singularity of wrongful affliction. Reflecting his dehumanized condition as a titled woman's talking beast, Manzano has found himself cast from sharing in heady privileges—listening to the private recital of a poet and practicing calligraphy, painting and having his services requested by a celebrated portraitist—to suffering the most debased and undeserved of public punishments at the caprice of his owner. His poem captures this sense of shock and otherworldly incredulity:

<i>El reloj adelantado</i>	<i>The Clock that Gains</i>	<i>The Fast Clock</i>
<i>(Manzano's original)</i>	<i>(My translation)</i>	<i>(Madden's translation)</i>
En vano, reloj mio Te aceleras y afanas. Marcando silencioso Las horas que no pasan; Sí, aunque veloz el tiempo Como el viento se escapa. Jamás el sol brillante De sus límites pasa Él con dedo de fuego Las verdades señala, Y en las reglas que fija ni un solo punto falla. Sí, hurtando los momentos, A mis ojos engaña, No por eso este día Más brevemente pasa. Pero si un mal interno, O de tus ruedas varias Los aguzados dientes Te muerden las entrañas; Aprende de mi pecho, Que en tal fatal desgracia. Por ser igual al tiempo De lágrimas se baña. Mas ay! que no me entiendes, Ni en tu carrera paras, Tal vez horas buscando Ménoas duras y amargas Tus pasos desmedidos, Tu acelerada marcha, Todo sigue, y demuestras Una ofensiva causa; Y en tan disorde curso Y á mi dolor iguales. Que con el largo tiempo Siempre más se adelanta.	In vain, my clock You accelerate and hurry. Marking silently The hours that do not pass; Yes, though fast the time Like the wind escapes. Never the brilliant sun Surpasses its limits He with fiery finger Points out the truths, And in the rules that he fixes not one rule misses. If, stealing the moments, To my deceived eyes, not for that does this day More briefly pass. But if from internal malfunction, of your shifting wheels, The sharpened teeth Bite your guts; Learn from my breast, In such fatal disgrace, To be equal to the time That bathes itself in tears. More - oh!- you do not understand me, Nor stop your course, Perhaps hours searching Less hard and bitter Your limitless steps, Your accelerated march, All follows, and you prove An offensive cause; And in such discordant course You equal my pain. With vast time Always further ahead.	The Clock's too fast they say; But what matter, how it gains! Time will not pass away Any faster for its pains. The tiny hands may race Round the circle, they may range, The Sun has but one pace, And his course he cannot change. The beams that daily shine On the dial, err not so, For they're ruled by laws divine, And they vary not, we know. But tho' the Clock is fast, Yet the moments I must say, More slowly never passed, Than they seemed to pass today.

Manzano's "Relox" recounts an eternity of suspension outside the movement of other lives, a stasis in which prayers, penitence, and blasphemy have proven ineffectual to end or mitigate his anguish. "Marcando silencioso/ Las horas que no pasan"¹ ["Silently marking/ The hours that do not pass"], the poet floats in timeless torment, aware of the exquisite uselessness of his ability to observe and describe the cogs that bite into him as the machinery engulfing him grinds on, clicking through the passage of time that is otherwise meaningless to him because it will change nothing: "Los aguzados dientes/ Te muerden las entrañas" ["The sharpened teeth/ Bite your guts"]. The poet's objectification is hellish in its mindless unresponsiveness to his suffering and its seeming endlessness. "Aprende de mi pecho,/ Que en tal fatal desgracia" ["Learn from my breast/ In such fatal disgrace"], the poet's stunned but eloquent spirit observes and recounts, as he suffers: "Por ser igual al tiempo/ De lagrimas se baña" ["To be equal to the time/ That bathes itself in tears"]. This poem captures the breathless articulation of Manzano's exile from considerations of justice, fairness or mercy, waiting and watching, suspended and isolated: "Tal vez horas buscando/ Menos duras y amargas/ Tus pasos desmedidos,/ Tu acelerada marcha" ["Perhaps hours searching/ Less hard and bitter/ Your limitless steps,/ Your accelerated march"].

Manzano's ability to objectify and articulate suspension in a space where only incredulous pain is eternal, in his banishment from relative privilege into helplessness and hopelessness, mourning exile and isolation in acute self-awareness, heightens the reader's sensitivity to the poet's humanity in poignant contrast to the evidences of his being denied it: "Todo sigue, y demuestras/ Una ofensiva causa" ["All follows, and you prove/ An offensive cause"]. "Relox" thus becomes one of literature's most effective accounts of the collective yet individualized experience of legalized brutalization recorded by a victim of chattel enslavement. As persuasive as Abolitionist arguments that Manzano is human and should have enjoyed civil protections under the law may be, his own account of his suffering is irresistible precisely because his sensitivity and perceptiveness are denied. The reader observes that Manzano dares not squander his ability to exist by hoping for change: "Y en tan discordante curso/ Y a mi dolor igualas" ["And in such discordant course/ You equal my pain"]. Ironically, it is the poet's eternal soul and the endlessness of its existence—a soul theoretically denied him by his captors—that condemns him to the continuity of his anguish: "Que con el largo tiempo/ Siempre más se adelanta" ["With vast time/ Always further ahead"].

The poet's immersion in agony is infinite and changeless. Manzano describes solitary imprisonment in the meaninglessly aggressive clock of a society that condemns him to starvation and thirst locked as an adolescent in the darkness of his owner's coal cellar and as an adult in the local prison, awaiting twice daily castigation, like a firefly perpetually pupating, shredding the boundaries of its body where it lies curled and sightless, underground. Manzano's captivity reads like being trapped in an event horizon, a concept not yet invented when he wrote. He is banished from recognition as a human being concurrently as he vanishes into the singularity of non-existence as anything but the sentient target of unpredictable and immeasurable durations of suffering that trigger his metamorphosis.

Madden's translation appears to assume that Manzano's efforts at communication beyond the experiential or perceptual range of which Madden is capable must be deviant, corrigible, or nonexistent. Therefore, what appears to be Madden's operative viewpoint causes the raw suffering and naked yearning communicated in Manzano's poetry—by language eloquently broken and thrown back in upon itself—to be lost. It is in such an apparently unselfconscious spirit of self-righteousness that Madden manages to inflict a sweeping interracial, intercultural, and linguistic erasure upon Manzano's poetic achievements, upholding racial dominance and slave society hierarchy as explained by Ira Berlin in *Many Thousands Gone*, all in the act of translation. Berlin explains that, in what he calls slave societies because chattel enslavement is integral to their structure and function, "if slavery made *race*, its larger purpose was to make *class*" (Berlin 1998, 5). While Madden's translations serve to bolster the Euro-colonial Abolitionist movement with proof that Manzano's humanity is denied him and he has suffered unbearably during chattel enslavement, his English language oversimplifications of Manzano's multi-layered complex poetic messages render the poet himself potentially dismissible post-emancipation to a racist Anglophone readership. This was the fate of Wheatley before him, who starved to death for lack of paid employment. Supposedly, Manzano's suffering in enslavement will have ended with the outlawing of chattel slavery. The fact that Manzano's poetry draws into question the oversimplifications of racist stereotyping is not troubled by Madden's translations but upheld. Madden's translations satisfy Madden's own goal of attacking chattel enslavement on the grounds of its inhumanity without compromising chattel slavery's foundational racism, which Manzano's original poetry destabilizes with its sensitive observations and disruptive laments that testify to the complexity of character of the philosophical poet.

Manzano's man-eating clock foreshadows the castrating and castrated one described a century later by Ugandan poet Okot p'Bitek's traditional Acoli wife in *Song of Lawino*, a defamiliarized SF lament against the sinister enchantment placed on her husband by colonizing Englishmen. Lawino sees the pendulous grandfather clock her husband has brought home as an accoutrement of bewitchment that Europeans who have bedeviled his mind have burdened him with, to keep him obedient. "I wonder what causes/ The noise inside it" (p'Bitek 1984, 63), Lawino says, "And what makes it go" (p'Bitek 1984, 63), as if her husband is caretaker to a mechanical sorcerer crouching in a corner: "On the face of the clock/ There are writings/ And it's[sic] large single testicle/ Dangles below" (p'Bitek 1984, 63), defamiliarizing the clock's coded messages to her husband: "Time has become/ My husband's master/ It is my husband's husband" (p'Bitek 1984, 63). Lawino describes the infantilization of colonized African men: "Like a small boy/He rushes without dignity" (p'Bitek 1984, 68), Lawino says, trying to reason her husband out of his ensorcelled madness.

Likewise, Manzano foreshadows the surrealism of African American Ralph Ellison's 1953 National Book Award-winning *Invisible Man*, in which antihero Trueblood dreams of running through a burning hot grandfather clock before electric light—which he cannot provide for his family's home—explodes him into freedom, sailing out over a graveyard as he embarks in real life upon the incestuous assault of his daughter, embracing his degradation (Ellison 1990, 58). This dream and these acts delineate Trueblood's societal position as so bestial as to be beyond the laws of the Anglo-American society that segregates and subjugates him and the family he cannot provide for or protect until he is financially rewarded for describing his assault of his daughter. In *Invisible Man*, Trueblood in degradation finds himself surrounded and attended to not only by the sheriff and his deputies but also by formerly disinterested wealthy benefactors who now listen, rapt, to his repeated account of breaching one of society's most heinous taboos in the rape of his daughter. These salacious racists pay Trueblood for the vicarious incestuous rape experience that his repeated description of the event affords them and vow to protect him from angry African American neighbors who want him punished and driven out of their community. Trueblood is being paid for upholding not only racism's tenets of Anglo-American moral superiority to his race but, moreover, for titillating his racist supporters with vicarious enjoyment of Trueblood's fully embraced and enacted bestiality. Conversely, Cuban

laws render Manzano unable to escape his pinioned and helpless stasis in order to arise, self-empower, and reclaim himself, due to his race. No matter what he does and no matter what provisions his mother may have willed to rescue him,² the reader empathetically mourns with Manzano the indignities inflicted not only upon his person but upon his humanity. It is in this way that Manzano's original "Relox" depicts transformative agony rather than Madden's translational inference of tedium.

Madden's translation of "The Clock that Gains" erases Manzano's dehumanization in favor of an ironic existential dissatisfaction with the human condition that is denied Manzano. Madden seems ignorant of the fact that Manzano is not writing as an Everyman in a society so skewed by extremes of wealth and power that an Everyman cannot exist. Manzano writes as a chattel enslaved man. Madden, in his apparent obliviousness toward this element of Manzano's perspective, shows himself to be an unreliable translator. Madden's singsong versification of Manzano's "Relox" renders it not only trivial but depthless: "Time will not pass away/ Any faster for its pains" (Mullen 2014, 109), Madden opines. It might be that his translational shallowness is because Madden cannot wrest coherence from Manzano's Spanish, which flings together words in unique ways that are striking, jarring, and discordant. Perhaps Madden becomes lost in Manzano's style and translates imagery rather than words. But his translational difficulty may lie in unselfconscious assumption that no one of African descent is capable of abstract reasoning, a paternalistic theory popularized by Enlightenment propagandists such as Thomas Jefferson. "Among the blacks is misery enough, God knows, but no poetry" (Eze 1997, 99) Jefferson claims, postulating that even poet laureate Wheatley's only capacity is imitative. Madden's treatment of Manzano's poem proposes navel-gazing triviality available only to the privileged: "The tiny hands may race/ Round the circle" (Mullen 2014, 109), Madden philosophizes about Manzano's anthropomorphized clock. Though Madden preserves the ominous tick-tock that Manzano posits as his cannibalistic society mindlessly eating through his humanity, Madden assigns such Luciferian mindless chewing the comparatively harmless rhythms of a metronome: "For they're ruled by laws divine,/ And they vary not, we know" (Mullen 2014, 109), Madden surmises, as if the punishing clock is as helplessly entrapped in its brutalizing role as is its pinioned victim.

Manzano's poetic voice describes being cursed by his soul's immortality and his resulting inability to lose consciousness of his suffering as he endures it. Madden's rewriting of Manzano's juxtaposed imagery conjures up a man frustratedly awaiting the end of day, a finite routine goal that has already been reached before the poem is written: "Yet the moments I must say, / More slowly never passed / Than they seemed to pass today" (Mullen 2014, 109), Madden translates, like a fractious man heading to bed. Madden appears to gesture toward Manzano's humanity by sweeping away his disturbingly bitter revelations about dehumanization in favor of Eurocentric universalism. Madden's translations of Manzano appropriate the enslaved poet's suffering to express experiences common to colonizing men of European descent privileged enough to have learned to read and philosophize about transient dissatisfactions.

In *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature*, Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa Jemie, and Ihechukwu Madabuike debunk universality as cross-cultural erasure in which one "judges by a criteria [*sic*] allegedly universal which on closer scrutiny turn out to be European" (Chinweizu et al. 1983, 10). To say that Madden has trivialized Manzano's poetic achievement is insufficient criticism of the wrongdoing that Madden's immersion in safety and privilege has inflicted upon Manzano's hard-wrought poetry struggling up out of words not routinely forged together. Madden overlays on Manzano a superficiality that the latter may have observed in his position as human chattel but would likely neither have taken for granted nor adopted. By stripping "Relox" of its shocking pain and disjointed incoherence and substituting a glib ennui, Madden makes Manzano's anguish insignificant and his dehumanized reality indiscernible rather than central, rendering the enslaved man's debasement irrelevant to his artistic expression of distress.

Decades before, and half a world away across the Transatlantic Human Trade, Manzano cannot know—though Madden surely must—that the Cuban poet's explorations of cannibalistic anthropomorphized enslavement machinery coupled with painful self-reflection were employed by Olaudah Equiano in his *Interesting Narrative*, published in London in 1789. Equiano's account of alien invasion and abduction is the English language's seminal pre-SF rendering of helpless horror in the face of hostile alien takeover. Equiano describes being sold further toward the West African coast and eventually into chattel enslavement to the English, who deny him human status according to Anglo/American pseudoscience and law. Equiano's *Narrative* introduces and relies upon what will come to be

known in the twentieth century as SF tropes of alien invasion, interspecies capture, and entrapment in a ship that comes from some unimaginably distant place and moves by unfathomable means: “I asked how the vessel could go? they told me they could not tell; but [...] the white men had some spell or magic they put in the water when they liked in order to stop the vessel. I was exceedingly amazed at this account, and really thought they were spirits” (Equiano 1789, chapter 2). Equiano describes a previously inconceivable hell where red-faced demons whose skin seems peeled or boiled from them feed terrified people into the noxious hold of a vessel that skims the mighty waters roiling at the rim of the world, a cauldron boiling on deck, children falling into vats of human waste and risking suffocation, and the crew raping girls while laughing at his horrified astonishment. Equiano fears that he will be eaten by these technologically advanced spirits who neither look nor act human, according to any definition he knows. Equiano’s defamiliarization of European and American conventions of the capture of African citizens makes it possible for his inured reader to be shocked out of complacency as colonizing culture is estranged, as explained by the Russian Formalists (Shklovsky et al. 1965, 22): objectified, deconstructed, and unapologetically reconceptualized by an intelligent being who is irrevocably harmed by African/European contact.

Madden’s rendering of Manzano’s poetry requires similarly Russian Formalist defamiliarization of cultural and linguistic assumptions. Madden has turned Manzano’s hybridized colloquial and conqueror’s Spanish into a standardized English that implies the poet speaks conqueror’s Spanish. Madden’s translational denial of Manzano’s authoritative voice contributes to Manzano’s subjugation. Manzano has not written in formally trained Spanish. Manzano’s poetry calls for careful and constant reconsideration of words, questioning the purpose of translation as the translator searches for words most faithful to the impact of his imagery if not to his dismissal of grammatical sense. Manzano’s poems follow few political, linguistic, or social conventions.

MANZANO’S “LA COCUYERA”

In his poem “La cocuyera,” Manzano exemplifies Ira Berlin’s theory that, in slave societies, “all relationships mimicked those of slavery” (Berlin 1998, 7) by giving imagery to his desire to flee servitude to those by whom he is not loved, in contrast to willing captivity to one who would love him.

<i>La cocuyera</i>	<i>The Cucuya; or Fire-Fly</i>	<i>The Firefly</i>
<i>(Manzano's original)</i>	<i>(My translation)</i>	<i>(Madden's translation)</i>
Un incauto cocuyo Revolaba brillando Ya del prado á la selva. Ya de la selva al prado. Libre cual mariposa Hendiendo el aire vago, Liba en vírgenes flores Jugos almibarados Ora esplende, ora occulta Del fósforo inflamado La luz á que no cabe Color acomodado. Cómo vuela invisible! Lucero es ya bien claro: Si puesto se oscurece, Presto ilumina el campo En vano los mancebos Le siguen anhelando. Con teas encendidas. El placer de tomarlo. Pues revolando en torno Al silbo suave y blando, Vuelve la luz en niebla, Si pierde entre las manos: Y en la frondosa capa De un florido naranjo, Opaca luz despide Dejándolos burlados Entónces Niña bella, Gloria y honor del campo, Envidia de las flores, Delicia de su amado, Toma la cocuyera, Que con curiosas manos Labró en felices días Su tierno enamorado, Y en alto suspendiendo Tan bellissimo encanto, La mueve, y mil cocuyos Alumbran encerrados. “Baja, le dice, baja,	An incautious firefly Flies around shining From the field to the forest. From the forest to the field. Free as a butterfly Cleaving the vagrant air, It drinks in virgin flowers Syrupy juices Now shining, now shadowed Its inflamed phosphorous The light whose Color does not dim. How invisibly it flies! Clear morning star: Sunset darkens, Suddenly it lights the countryside In vain the youth Eagerly follow it. With lit tapers. Pleased to catch it. Then flying back To the soft smooth whistle, Returns the light in the mist, Lost in the hands: And in the leafy cover Of a flowering orange tree, Opaque light disperses Mocking them Then the beautiful Girl, Glory and honor of the land, Envy of the flowers Delight of her lover, Takes the firefly, Who with curious hands Cultivated in happy days Her tender beloved, And on high suspending Such beautiful enchantment, Moves her, and a thousand fireflies	The fire-fly is heedlessly wandering about Through field and through forest is winging his route; As free as the butterfly sporting in air, From flower to flower, it flits here and there: Now glowing with beautiful phosphoric lights, Then paling its lustre and waning in night: It bears no effulgence in rivalry near, But shrouds ev'ry gleam as the dawn doth appear. It sparkles alone in the soft summer's eve, Itself, though unseen, by the track it doth leave, The youth of the village at night-fall pursue O'er hill and o'er dale, as it comes into view; Now shining before them, now lost to their eyes, The sparkle they catch at, just twinkles and dies; And the mead is one moment all spangled with fire, And the next, every sparklet is sure to expire. On the leaf of the orange while it disports, When the blossom is there, to its cup it resorts, And still the more brightly and dazzling it shines, It baffles its tiny pursuers' designs. On such beauty as her's, one might envy the doom Of a captive “Cucuya,” that's destined like this, To be touched by her hand, and revived by her kiss' Imprisoned itself, by a mistress so kind, It hardly can seem, to be closely confined,

(continued)

(continued)

<i>La cocuyera</i>	<i>The Cucuya; or Fire-Fly</i>	<i>The Firefly</i>
<i>(Manzano's original)</i>	<i>(My translation)</i>	<i>(Madden's translation)</i>
Que en mi amante regazo Cañas dulces te ofrezco, De cañutos dorados: Dormirás en mi alcoba Mi aliento respirando; Serás de mis amores Confidente sagrado.” El fúlgido cocuyo Plácido susurrando, Vuela, desciende y toca Sobre sus mismos labios; Probó la miel hiblea, Con que amor ha endulzado Los divinos claveles, Honor del cútis blanco Del nuevo prisionero Celébrase el hallazgo, Y en la prisión content Brilla que es un regalo ...	Shine imprisoned. “Descend, she says, descend, So that in my loving lap Sweet cane I offer you, Of golden cane stalks: You will sleep in my bedroom Breathing my breath; Of my lovers you will be My sacred confidant.” The light-giving firefly Calmly rustling Flies, descends and touches On her very lips; Tastes the Sicilian honey, That with love has sweetened The divine pinks, Honor of the white skin Of the new prisoner Celebrates the discovery, And in seizure content Shines as a gift. . .	And a prisoner thus tenderly treated in fine, By a keeper so gentle, night cease to repine. In the cage which her delicate hands have prepared, The captive “Cucuya” is shining unscared, Suspended before her, with others as bright In beauty’s own bondage revealing their light. But this amongst all is her favourite one, And she bears it at dusk to her alcove alone, ‘Tis fed by her hand on the cane that’s most choice, And in secret it gleams, at the sound of her voice. Thus cherished, the honey of Hybla would now Scarce tempt the “Cucuya” her care to forego; And daily it seems to grow brighter and gain Increasing effulgence, forgetting its pain. Oh! beautiful maiden, may heaven accord, Thy care of the captive, its fitting reward; And never may fortune the fetters remove, Of a heart that is thine in the bondage of love.

Manzano's poetic voice appears to have been rendered incapable by chattel enslavement of conceiving a relationship without intruding into it the trappings of capture, his only potential for joy being in the realization that he could have borne his captivity with contentment if it had been loving, as with the marchioness whom he called mother. In "Cocuyera," Manzano's "incauto cocuyo" (Mullen 2014, 201) ["incautious firefly"] claims the poet's life and body as his own while proclaiming Cuba "Ya del prado á selva/ Ya de la selva á prado" ["From the field to the forest/ From the forest to the field"] as his native homeland, making his seizure by "curiosas manos" ["curious hands"] an alien intrusion into his idyll (Mullen 2014, 201). Madden explains in his "Glossary" that the "cocuyo" is so bright that "in the darkest room it is possible to read by holding one of these insects along the line" and, true to Manzano's vision, "Creole girls adorn their hair with them, or keep them in cages and feed them on cane and sugar" (Mullen 2014, 195).

Manzano's "Cocuyera" opens in the viewpoint of the exultant firefly: "Libre cual mariposa/ Hendiendo el aire vago" (Mullen 2014, 201) ["Free as a butterfly/ Cleaving the vagrant air"]. The flitting and adventurous freedom of Manzano's firefly presages a short-lived cult-favorite SF television series of that name in which a motley crew aboard a silver vessel journeys throughout the galaxy, evading war, capture, and entrapment (Whedon 2002). In Manzano's firefly's initial freedom, "Ora esplende, ora occulta/Del fósforo inflamado" ["Now shining, now shadowed/Its inflamed phosphorous"] and sudden entrapment, "Cocuyera" merges with Manzano's "Relox" to make a recognizable trope of Steampunk concept art: the transformative flying creature surrounded by or imbedded with cogs, gears, and machinery (Mullen 2014, 201). The difference is that Manzano's poetic voice describes willing surrender as the "nuevo prisionero/ Celébrase el hallazgo" ["new prisoner/ Celebrates the discovery"], an experience Manzano is denied, who can never "en la prisión contento/ Brilla que es un regalo" (Mullen 2014, 201) ["in seizure content/ Shine as a gift"]. Manzano's "Cocuyera" thus reconceptualizes servile self and useful servility as the light-bringing firefly, foreshadowing such imaginings as the bound elementals in Kate McIntyre's Steampunk *The Deathsniffer's Assistant* and *The Timeseer's Gambit*, who function as enslaved organic engines in a troubled alternative universe. Manzano's poetic voice implies his heartbroken yearning for the idealistic and willing

surrender of his body as a necessary part of the progress and literal enlightenment of a larger society that cannot develop without him, asking only that his self-surrender be acknowledged and that, in exchange, he be loved. In this imagery, Manzano encapsulates the apologist's ideal of Spain's slaveholding colonial Cuba that Madden has come to the island to debunk. Manzano's text presages Steampunk depictions of struggle toward industrial Utopias such as imagined in Sharon Cameron's *The Dark Unwinding* in which there is no racial persecution because there is no racial difference between or among the classes; Cameron's wealthy are protective caretakers of those whose labor, together with the inventions of the idle privileged, advance a common good. Manzano's use of the imagery of himself as utilitarian tool in the firefly's body presages Steampunk's presentation of "a world in which individuals are masters of their tools, rather than being restrained," advancing Manzano's argument that he as pre-Industrial Age invention should not be held and used against his will (Bowser and Croxall 2010, 20). Manzano as firefly epitomizes what Donna Haraway describes as "transgressed boundaries, potent fusions and dangerous possibilities" (Haraway 1991, 363). Chattel slavery's use of intelligent human bodies legally classified as talking brutes renders these human tools pre-cyborg utilitarian objects.

Manzano's poetic voice makes clear, by its focus on the Girl calling the firefly to descend in imitation of fireflies' mating patterns, and her kiss that inspires the firefly's willing imprisonment among her light-bringing collective, that loving entrapment is not the condition in which the enslaved of Cuba labor for Spain in the image of its Infanta. In 1837, when "Cocuyera" was published, Manzano was turning forty as Queen Isabella II was turning four. La Infanta, as she would have been called, was embarking on a thirty-five-year reign that would usher in a constitutional monarchy that neither ended chattel slavery nor its attendant colonial corruptions committed in the name of the "Niña bella,/ Gloria y honor del campo" (Mullen 2014, 201) ["beautiful Girl,/ Glory and honor of the land"]. Manzano's lament disabuses the reader of any belief that those whose labor is as the collective light of fireflies to the night have been gathered in Cuba in an idealized colony that disrupts the darkened world with self-perpetuating light, love, and sugarcane. Manzano explores, as much by "Cocuyera"'s omissions as by "Relox"'s excruciating details, how grotesquely his freedom has been traded, as the poet labors not for love but in fear of the barbarous cruelty of an isolated, hierarchized society trembling on the brink of self-extinction.

“Cocuya’s” warning of silent servile dissatisfaction mirrors historical Cuban colonial fears of the influence of French-speaking revolutionary sympathizers immigrating from neighboring Haiti. This hint of unrest leading to the threat of impending overthrow presages SF depictions of revolution aboard such sharecropping airships as depicted in *An Unkindness of Ghosts*, the rebellion-plagued *Hive* of the *Hell Divers*, and the nightmarish *Snowpiercer* steaming toward self-destruction, in contrast to the escapist arcadia busily whisking its developing conception of Utopia away from a ruinous world in *Iron Council*’s “Perpetual Train,” also featuring an anthropomorphic firefly. Manzano’s poetry collectively argues as irrevocably as Madden’s biographical accounts of unpunished Cuban crimes that chattel slavery cannot constitute the basis of a just society because its captives are not and cannot be concurrently brutalized, dehumanized, trapped, and yet loved (Brooks de Vita 2021).

Madden’s lighthearted couplets skirt human analogy in his “Cucuya, or Fire-fly” while juxtapositions of flight, fear, and yearning in Manzano’s “Cocuyera” express what will come to be a widespread African/Diaspora allusion to racially persecuted people as analogous to entrapped winged creatures. Madden translates from Manzano’s *Life of the Negro Poet* that, “from the moment that I lost my hopes, I ceased to be a faithful slave; from an humble, submissive being, I turned the most discontented of mankind: I wished to have wings to fly from that place” (Mullen 2014, 95). Despite his discovery of his owner’s indebtedness to his late mother and his inheritance of Spanish galleon-worthy riches from her, Manzano cannot purchase his freedom. As with complicit witnesses to the stripping of her inheritance from the girl called *Our Nig* in Harriet E. Wilson’s autobiographical novel, none of the European colonizers who witness the financial dishonesty that keeps Manzano in servitude defend his right to self-ownership.

In Dorothea Mathews’s 1928 poem “The Lynching,” a victim faces his mob death thinking “of quiet things” that combine water with flight. Mathews’s target of racial violence imagines “The way the river-ripples sob” for the protagonist’s inevitable terror and death and “The silver flight of pigeon’s wings” above the tree from which he will be hanged (Honey 1996, 95). Effie Lee Newsome’s 1927 “The Bird in the Cage” describes a songbird reminiscent of Manzano’s mechanically moving, chronically depressed younger self who “beats its little fretted green wings/ Against the wires of its prison all day long” while the poet can only “listen for its

hungry little song,/ Which comes unsatisfying,/ Like drops of dew dispelled by drought” (Honey 1996, 67), as potentially liberating water is evaporated by the captive’s dry-throated cries, recalling the budding poet Manzano’s imprisonment without bread or water. Conversely, Georgia Douglas Johnson’s 1927 poem “Wishes” expresses both the desire “to sail on a swallow’s tail and peep through the sky’s blue glass” and the poet’s wish that she may “keep all the tears I weep and sail to some unknown place” (Honey 1996, 60) on them, liberating herself, like Wheatley, by her poetic expressions of her suffering. Though there is little reason to suppose that Johnson was acquainted with the memoirs or poetry of Manzano, her poem “Your World” epitomizes his ultimate decision to risk his life to escape his enslavement, beginning: “I used to abide/ In the narrowest nest in the corner,/ My wings pressing close to my side” in a place “Where the skyline encircled the sea” but finishes as the poet “cradled my wings on the breeze,/ Then soared to the uttermost reaches/ With rapture, with power, with ease” (Honey 1996, 63), just as does Manzano when he puts aside fears of recapture and flees another impending round of imprisonment and torture. These images translate the poet Manzano’s evolution into the amalgamated being who can self-liberate, which Madden’s versifications do not render.

Johnson’s “Your World” bridges understanding of Manzano’s transformations from “Relox” and “Cocuyera” via the poet’s disintegration and reassembling in the chrysalis of “Mis treinta años” [“My Thirty Years”]. In Equiano’s autobiographical account of devolution into and evolution from the brutalization of chattel enslavement, the captive learns to praise and emulate his captors. Johnson and Equiano, never having read Manzano, but having inherited the African and Diaspora legacies of colonial dehumanization that Manzano is at pains to artistically describe, fall back upon the tropes Manzano uses to describe evolution toward self-liberation. But Equiano’s account of transition from Igbo citizen to dehumanized chattel reflects even older mythologies of the soul’s confrontation with its destruction: Inanna’s sojourn in the land of her deathly sister, Ereshkigal, to rescue and resurrect her lover; instructions in the Ancient Egyptian *Book of Coming Forth by Day* explaining how to avoid annihilation in the soul’s quest for eternity; Dante’s descent through the circles of Hell until he encounters the mindless Lucifer. In being stripped from life as he knows it and laying bare what it means to possess a human spirit,

Equiano in extremis embraces the raceless, nationless, orphaned essence of his existence, thereby empowering himself to rise above his victimization in ultimate self-assertion via self-redefinition: “might not an African ask you, learned you this from your God, who says unto you, Do unto all men as you would men should do unto you? Is it not enough that we are torn from our country and friends to toil for your luxury and lust of gain? Must every tender feeling be likewise sacrificed to your avarice?” (Equiano 1789, chapter 2). Equiano, unable in his hard-won freedom to return to his pillaged homeland, claims for himself what he proclaims is most admirable about his captors—Christianity and mastery of European erudition—and self-empowers by cloaking himself in these trappings. Equiano thus arises from the Transatlantic Human Trade redefined, detached, and essential, reclaiming his Igbo name and committed to the destruction of the engine of dehumanization—racism—that has stranded him in the epicenter of English colonization. Manzano’s poetry similarly recounts such a passage of disintegration and reintegration as the wronged soul that must reinvent for itself a new wholeness arising from its meltdown.

Manzano’s and Equiano’s destruction, descent, and resurrection mirror the trajectory of the angry god Ulu in Chinua Achebe’s *Arrow of God*, an unappreciated Igbo savior who manipulates the invading English to help him defeat his millennia-old rival, the ubiquitous snake god. Imitating and usurping the story of their nameless English god, Ulu gifts himself a sacrificial son, the precious blood offering needed to call a new god into being—“Obika’s death shook Umuaro to the roots; a man like him did not come into the world too often” (Achebe 1974, 228). Anointed in the blood of the sacrificial son, Ulu resurrects himself in the Christian church: “many a man sent his son with a yam or two to offer to the new religion and to bring back the promised immunity” (Achebe 1974, 230). Ulu resurrects himself supreme and uncontested in the Englishmen’s formerly empty church, to be worshipped hereinafter by Igbo and English alike. Manzano describes his evisceration and meltdown in the darkness as parts of the process of emerging determined to change his future. Ulu has stripped himself to his essence to reinvent himself and defeat his nemesis. This is the transcendental reversal that Manzano enacts when he decides that he must risk his life for his freedom.

MANZANO'S "MIS TREINTA AÑOS"

<i>Mis treinta años</i>	<i>My Thirty Years</i>	<i>Thirty Years</i>
<i>(Manzano's original)</i>	<i>(My translation)</i>	<i>(Madden's translation)</i>
<p>Cuando miro el espacio que he corrido desde la cuna hasta el presente día, tiemblo y saludo á la fortuna mia más de terror que de atención movido. Sorpréndeme la lucha que he podido sostener contra suerte tan impía, si tal llamarse puede la porfía de mi infelice sér al mal nacido. Treinta años ha que conocí la tierra; treinta años ha que en gemidor estado triste infortunio por doquier me asalta; mas nada es para mi la cruda guerra que en vano suspirar he soportado, si la comparo, oh Dios!, con lo que falta.</p>	<p>When I look at the distance I have run from the cradle to the present day, I tremble and salute my destiny more from terror than excited attention. I am surprised by the war I have been able to sustain against such impious luck, if such is what perfidy calls itself of my unhappy existence's unfortunate birth. Thirty years I have known the earth; thirty years I have been mourning sad misfortune for whatever assaults me; nothing more for me is the crude war that in vain sighs I have sustained, if I compare it, oh God!, with what remains</p>	<p>When I think on the course I have run, From my childhood itself to this day, I tremble, and fain would I shun, The remembrance its terrors array. I marvel at struggles endured, With a destiny frightful as mine, At the strength for such efforts—assured Tho' I am, 'tis in vain to repine. I have known this sad life thirty years, And to me, thirty years it has been Of suff'ring, of sorrow and tears, Ev'ry day of its bondage I've seen. But 'tis nothing the past—or the pains, Hitherto I have struggled to bear, When I think, oh my God! on the chains, That I know I'm yet destined to wear.</p>

Mullen (2014, 199)

Manzano becomes his own blood sacrifice to purge his fated "terror" of "Mis treinta años" ["My Thirty Years"] that has resulted from "suerte tan impía,/ si tal llamarse puede la porfía/ de mi infelice sér al mal nacido" ["such impious luck/ if that is what perfidy calls itself/ of my unhappy

existence's unfortunate birth"]], to make real his choice to free himself or die in the attempt (Mullen 2014, 199). Manzano, whose poetic voice envies beloved servitude in "Cocuya," becomes his own blood offering in the process of "Treinta años" as he determines to die seeking emancipation. Manzano, like Equiano, is introducing what will become African/Diaspora literary tropes of chrysalis obliteration effecting transformation and self-actualization. After "Treinta años," which was first read aloud to a public audience in 1836 and then published in 1837 when Manzano would have been turning forty, faced with another looming threat of torture and imprisonment, Manzano saddles a horse for the first time in his life and flees into a downpour along the Cuban coastline, choosing probable death if captured over certain continual persecution if he remains enslaved.

While Manzano's dread-filled gaze into his enslaved future sees something so unspeakable that it must be indicated by his poetry's interruption with cries to a seemingly uncomprehending god, calling out "oh" in "Relox" and "oh Dios!" in "Treinta años" (Mullen 2014, 199 and 200), Madden reduces Manzano's awestruck rendering of that complex abstraction into physical "pains" and "chains" (Mullen 2014, 106 and 199). Despite Madden's outspoken opposition to chattel enslavement of people of African descent, arguing that, "bondage is an evil that cannot be mitigated by any partial measures of reform" (Mullen 2014, 169), it is perhaps Madden's own unacknowledged racism that has led him to translate Manzano superficially and in reality-bound imagery. Whatever the cause, the result of Madden's rendering of Manzano's poetry into English is a cobbled-together evidence of the lack of capacity that Jefferson attributes to poets of African descent, particularly the celebrated Wheatley. Jefferson pronounces that "The compositions published under her name are below the dignity of criticism" (Eze 1997, 100) denouncing racial equality and commingling of the races of precisely the type that he is engaging in as he pens his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, raping and impregnating his wife's underaged half-sister, who is chattel enslaved to him and will not be freed before his death.

Madden's translations of Manzano prove that abolitionism and anti-racism are divergent convictions, a conflict continually explored in inter-species SF and Steampunk in which one class or species must labor or reproduce to meet the survival needs of another. In Octavia E. Butler's *Xenogenesis* trilogy, the idealized Oankali mate for life with earthly humans, whenever possible, and build colonies and raise children with them, but

their ruling class of each family's androgynous adult member remains firmly Oankali, maintaining their racial hierarchy. It takes two generations bordering on creation of a third of intermarriage and colonial settlement for the Oankali/human construct children themselves to risk ostracism and death to break through their civilization's hegemonic monopoly and claim the right to metamorphose into androgynous adults, disrupting the hegemony and establishing interspecies equality (Brooks de Vita 2021).

Similarly, the unconscious racial hegemony portrayed in Madden's translational choices and elisions reveals perhaps unconscious allegiance to chattel slavery's deeply imbedded philosophies of racial hierarchizing. Madden's translations of Manzano's surreal poetic imagery substitute disturbing reality-bound trivializations that gesture toward simplistic apology or defense of English racism, shielding Anglo/American readers from racism's falsity and their complicity in chattel slavery's systems of privilege and unjust affliction. The African Diaspora's encapsulation of the tropes of SF and Steampunk to describe its invasion and colonization nearly two centuries before those genres were invented as Euro/American entertainment mark one of that culture's significant contributions to literary arts. Manzano's prototypical imagery of his imprisonment in a cannibalistic timepiece, of an illusory Infanta trapping his winged body as an instrument of light, and his poetic despair as he gazes into a fruitless future after thirty years of epic war against his fate combine to attest to the autodidactic genius, SF visionary eloquence, and proto-Steam-punk prescience of the poetry of Manzano.

NOTES

1. All translations of Manzano's poetry not marked as Madden's are mine.
2. His mother left Manzano a will, letters of debt from his owner, and a cache of Spanish jewelry that was soon stolen. Manzano remained enslaved.

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The Estrangement of Political Trauma in Two SF Novels by Basma Abdelaziz

Ian Campbell

Egyptian trauma specialist and novelist Basma Abdelaziz sets her 2013 novel *al-Tábúr*, [“The Queue”, 2018a] in an estranged version of contemporary Cairo. The text opens with Tarek, a physician, looking at the file of a patient, “with the words *Suspended Pending Approval by the Gate* written on the cover” (Abdelaziz 2013, 9; 2018a, 3).¹ The “Gate”, *al-bawwába*, from *al-báb*, “door”, might also be translated as “gateway” or “portal” (Cowan 1994, 98). The English text implies this hauteur by capitalizing the G in Gate; Arabic lacks capital letters. The English text italicizes the words on the cover of the file; the Arabic text both italicizes them and places them between the double carats often but irregularly used in modern literary Arabic as the equivalent of italics. Anglophone readers unfamiliar with Egypt might interpret the Gate with its initial capital as denoting some part of the government; readers more familiar with the tropes of SF might understand the capitalization as part of the novel’s estrangement function. Both groups would be correct. As the text will show, the Gate is a mysterious building that appears one day and gradually

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usurps the functions of the government, extending these to become a panoptical surveillance state; the displacement of the regime onto this *novum* enables Abdelaziz to make an extended and scathing critique of the current regime. The indirectness of the critique helps insulate Abdelaziz from the potentially ruinous consequences of a more direct critique. This use of SF as a means of plausible deniability is not unique to Arabic SF, by any means: it was a common feature of Soviet-era Russian SF. While the estrangement in *The Queue* isn't nearly indirect enough to qualify as the "Aesopian language" (Satkauskyste 2018, 19) used by Soviet writers to present censor with noise and reader with signal (Loseff 1984, 45), SF in the Soviet tradition was where Aesopian language played less of a role (Kaspe 2011, 35), perhaps because SF is already engaged in defamiliarizing the familiar.

In her 2018 novel *Huná Badan* ["Here is a Body"], whose Arabic title I will retain as it is not as of yet (November 2021) available in English translation, Abdelaziz takes a different tack. Here, the regime remains the regime: the *novum* is the displacement of the gap between supporters of the regime and its primary antagonists, reactionary Islamists, into a physical separation. The regime creates from homeless children fascist cadres in order to destroy its opposition. The estrangement function here is to show how the conflict between regime and Islamists erases Egypt's small secular middle class that would prefer modern democracy; moreover, the regime, in adopting and adapting more quickly and better to technologies originally imported from the West, has always already leapfrogged and defeated its reactionary opposition. In neither novel is there any means to defeat the regime, nor to escape it other than via emigration or death.

These novels exemplify two of the primary trends in Arabic SF of the current century. In the early years of Arabic SF, beginning in the mid-1960s, Arab protagonists were generally depicted as creators of advanced technology; it is possible to read this as an estrangement of the then-larger technological gap between either the Arabic-speaking world and the Western world or the present and the distant past, when scientific progress was the province of the Arabic-speaking world. (Campbell 2018, 114) Now, however, Arabic SF novels tend to show Arab societies' reacting to technological developments, sometimes by adapting to them as in *Huná Badan*, but additionally and more often by estranging technology by means of irruptions that appear to hew more closely to the fantastic as in *The Queue*. We must be careful, however, to note that most such novels portray these irruptions as cognitive within the framework of the text: this

“cognition effect” enables the texts to remain within SF rather than fantasy (Freedman 2000, 18). *The Queene* gives us its monolithic Gate; Ibrahim Nasrallah’s *Dog War II* (Nasrallah 2016) has the length of daylight decline to five hours; Mohamed Rabie’s *Otared* (Rabie 2016) has Egypt conquered by a modernized Knights of Malta. Most examples of either case, including both these novels by Abdelaziz, exhibit the well-documented trend toward dystopia in Arabic literature in general (Altermay 2016) and in Arabic SF in particular: Sarah Marusek, in an interview with Abdelaziz, reports the writer saying that the idea behind *The Queene* was to

build in our imagination an exaggerated conception regarding the smartness, the strength and the cleverness of a totalitarian authority, how would we use this conception to resolve our internal conflict, saying: Oh, it is that strong so we can’t face it ... let’s surrender and give up, no need to resist, we will keep waiting. (Marusek 2020)

The Queene is thus explicitly SF, along the lines of Darko Suvin’s definition: “the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author’s empirical environment” (Suvin 1979, 10), as modified by Freedman’s cognition effect. It is an estranged version of 2010s Egypt intended as a means of social critique: in Abdelaziz’s view, of the passivity of the citizenry, and in this reading, of that citizenry as less despairing than traumatized. *Huná Badan* takes a similar approach, but uses less strange in its estrangement.

This chapter will undertake a reading of both *The Queene* and *Huná Badan* as estrangements of the traumatic effects of dictatorial rule in Egypt, which was restored after a brief period of democracy in the early 2010s following the Arab Spring protests that toppled the Mubarak dictatorship. Abdelaziz is herself a specialist in the study and effects of trauma (Altermay 2016), so my perspective here is not an especially daring choice. Yet not only is the subject a valuable topic in itself, but both novels present, in different ways, technology as an essential aspect of the missed encounter that structures the experience of trauma. Both works translate the SF trope of the encounter with a technologically advanced Other into the context of Egypt under dictatorial rule, effectively separating the briefly democratic country into the regime and its subjects/victims. The English translation of *The Queene* has in certain small but critical respects the effect of “domesticating” the text and thereby reducing the impact of

the traumatic encounter represented by the Gate; *Hunná Badan* translates the encounter by presenting the Islamists, then as now in the real Egypt the regime's best-organized opposition, as bewildered and ultimately slaughtered by the regime's use of mundane technologies. It then moves to frame this encounter as traumatic for both the Islamists and the cadres who massacre them.

DOMESTICATION

Lawrence Venuti has argued at length that the dominance of English in the translation of literature produces two interlocking consequences. The first of these is that Anglophones, able as they are to read the literatures of other cultures in English, become reluctant to master foreign languages and thus be subject to other modes of thought, with the potential consequence of considering Western modes of thought expressed in English as more true or right than others (Hermans 2009, 98). Venuti characterizes the general habit of removing or blunting foreign structures, narratives, characterization, and especially language as "domestication": a domesticated text has been made easier for Anglophone readers to parse, more familiar to their modes of thinking.

Domestication has the effect of stripping away elements particular to the source culture: as Venuti says, "The foreign text is rewritten in domestic dialects and discourses, registers and styles, and this results in the production of textual effects that signify only in the history of the domestic culture" (Venuti 2000, 471). This results in the "invisibility of the translator", which "enacts and masks an insidious domestication of foreign texts" (Venuti 1995, 16). For Gayatri Spivak, "the task of the translator is to surrender herself to the linguistic rhetoricity of the original text" (Spivak 1992, 199), but this would be challenging enough for a text in a language closely related to English. For Arabic, whose morphology and syntax aren't related at all to those of English, it would produce far too foreign a text to be appealing to readers: the sentence "Um Mabrouk had just finished up tidying the last room when it was time for her to leave" (Abdelaziz 2018a, 16) in the translation reads in Arabic as "did-not she-almosts Um Mabrouk she-ended from tidying of the room the last until was-announced promise-place the-act-of-going-away" (Abdelaziz 2013, 24). We cannot fault Elisabeth Jaquette for rendering the Arabic into smooth English, as she'd be out of a job were she to do it any other way. For the very most part, it's an excellent translation. Nevertheless, certain aspects of the

depiction of trauma in *The Queue* have been smoothed out to the point where readers in English do not have access to the full impact of the trauma the Arabic text describes.

TRAUMA THEORY AND *THE QUEUE*

The study and theory of trauma in literature was originally based upon studies of and interviews with Holocaust survivors. Freud first noticed well before the war that survivors of trauma often had a compulsion to repeat aspects of a traumatic experience; trauma has been theorized as fundamentally a missed encounter with death. In Cathy Caruth's words, trauma

is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor ... [T]rauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely not known in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later on. (Caruth 1996, 4)

The encounter is missed in two ways: not only does the subject not die, but nor were they consciously present during the encounter. They cannot access the encounter as part of the narrative of their memory; rather, to the extent that they can remember the event at all, it's as scattered sensory inputs. The traumatic event can be viewed as an encounter with the Real of Jacques Lacan: that is, reality unmediated by and inaccessible to language or consciousness, neither framed as an image in which the self can recognize itself, nor as words, narrative or a chain of cause and effect. According to Bruce Fink, for Lacan trauma is that which resists symbolization: what remains of the Real after experience has become a smooth narrative, with its disjunctions ironed out (Fink 1995, 27). For many survivors of trauma, the event can only be inferred by decoding the symptoms, hence the tendency of traumatized people to revisit the circumstances of their trauma, in an attempt to re-experience the event and perhaps understand how it structures their lives.

To begin to heal from trauma is generally understood to involve a process of *testimony*, wherein the subject gradually transforms the unknowable encounter into part of a story that happened to them. For Dori Laub:

There is, in each survivor, an imperative need to *tell* and thus to come to *know* one's story, unimpeded by ghosts from the past against which one has to protect oneself. One has to know one's buried truth in order to be able to live one's life. (Laub 1995, 63, italics in original)

Because this process is difficult, painful, circuitous and often requires the guidance of a therapist, victims of trauma often unconsciously construct lives that serve as mute witness to their trauma. For Laub, "survivors who do not tell their story become victims of a distorted memory... which causes endless struggle with and over a delusion" (Laub 1995, 64).

Depictions of trauma in SF, and analyses thereof, are widespread and well-integrated into SF studies. Research exists on trauma in SF relating to topics such as alien abduction (Luckhurst 1998), nuclear weapons (Hendershot 1999) and climate change (Kaplan 2015), on whole genres such as film and television (Mousoutzani 2013) and on individual authors and works, for example, Octavia Butler (Parham 2009), Kurt Vonnegut (Wicks 2014) or Philip K. Dick (Vinci 2014). Depictions of trauma in Arabic literature tended to be piecemeal prior to the 1980s. I have written before about Ghassan Kanafani's *Returning to Haifa* (1970), which tells two parallel stories of Palestinians who were purged and forced to flee what is now Israel in the 1948 *Nakba* or "catastrophe". In both stories, characters become victims of distorted memory: in one, a man, Faris, who returns to his former apartment twenty years later finds that its new inhabitant has kept a photograph of Faris' long-dead son on his wall the entire time. He tells Faris, "I found a friend who spoke to me and talked with me" (Kanafani 1984, 126), a compelling depiction of distorted memory. When he takes the photo off the wall to give it to Faris, a blank spot is revealed where the wall hasn't weathered: "The square space it left behind was pale with a meaningless whiteness, like some disturbing vacuum" (Kanafani 1984, 127). The man has "sutured the traumatic cause" (Campbell 2001, 70), the occupation, instead of narrating the story of what happened to him in particular and Palestinians in general.

In recent decades, writers in Arabic have paid much more attention to trauma, especially the collective, political understanding of same (Milich 2016). To take two of many hundreds of examples from literature, Rosa Yassin Hassan's *Guardians of the Air* (Hassan 2009) takes as its subject a Syrian interpreter who transcribes the stories of refugees seeking asylum until she herself begins to suffer the effect of trauma, while Ahmad Sa'dawi's *Frankenstein in Baghdad* (2013) has an alcoholic junk dealer,

traumatized from constant violence in post-invasion Iraq, collect the body parts of people killed in car bomb explosions until he assembles a whole corpse, which animates and is recognized as “the first true Iraqi citizen” (Saadawi 2018, 146).² Notable among critics is Hanadi al-Samman, who uses the pre-Islamic practice among Arab tribes of female infanticide through burial as a metaphor for how certain Arab women writers frame individual and collective trauma (al-Samman 2015, 45), and the anxiety it produces. In Abdelaziz’s case, before writing *The Queue*, she counseled survivors of torture at the hands of the government; she published several nonfiction books on torture and the human rights violations committed by the Mubarak regime before trying her hand at SF (Altermay 2016). So while the depiction of trauma is not new in Arabic literature, and has grown increasingly common, Abdelaziz approaches it from the perspectives of both a clinician and a novelist and therefore adds additional depth to her depiction.

In *The Queue*, the file Tarek has is that of Yehya, an ordinary Egyptian salesman who went to watch an anti-regime protest and was shot when security forces assaulted the demonstration. The primary plotline of the novel concerns Yehya’s ultimately futile attempts to secure approval from the Gate to have Tarek remove the bullet that is still lodged inside him and is gradually killing him. The titular queue, of citizens waiting for the Gate to open and enable them to acquire the “Certificate of True Citizenship” needed for even the smallest change in status, gradually stretches across Cairo and becomes a society unto itself. Much of the action in Yehya’s plotline revolves around him and his friends, who try to obtain from the Gate an X-ray image of the bullet inside Yehya: the image proves Yehya’s story and will in theory enable him to obtain approval for surgery. The Gate appropriates the piece of film and conceals it, then claims it does not exist. Yehya’s entire plotline can be understood as a depiction of a traumatized subject who is attempting to treat or heal from his wound, but whose attempts to tell his whole story are constantly disrupted or deferred. That his trauma is an actual bullet wound may seem a bit obvious—*trauma* is simply the Greek word for “wound”—but bullets are in fact an all-too-common source of trauma, and as we will see, the very mundanity is part of the novel’s estrangement function:

Word spread that a small group of people, who had recently joined together, were going to organize a protest. [Yehya] was skeptical that an uprising would be possible under the Gate’s reign, but all the same he excused him-

self from work and left at the agreed-upon time, having decided to watch from afar. He had taken just a few steps in the direction of the square when **he suddenly lost all sense of things—he realized he'd fallen to the ground, although he didn't feel any pain**, and then he lost consciousness. He didn't wake up until he arrived at the hospital. Later, he learned that the Gate had closed that day in response to what became known as the Disgraceful Events. It hadn't opened since, nor had it attended to a single citizen's needs, yet it also hadn't stopped issuing laws and decrees. (Abdelaziz 2018a, 33, boldface mine)

Yehya's wounding is clearly framed as a traumatic encounter. While it may have been in hindsight ill-advised even to approach the protest, he's clearly there as an observer rather than a participant: he didn't intend to engage in battle. The text never clarifies whether he was deliberately targeted, nor even whether he was shot by the security services. Both of these ambiguities are essential to the portrayal of trauma in *The Queue* and the text's estrangement of the Egyptian political situation, examined below. Just as importantly, this is a missed encounter. The encounter is an encounter with the Real, in that it is absent from both Yehya's narrative of his experience and from the text itself, creating a disjunction that resists his and our regard.

The English translation domesticates the Arabic text of this event through what appear to be simply variant word choices. The Arabic text for the boldface part of the above citation has him taking a few steps, then, "he did not understand what happened [*lam yaḥsham má jará*]; he found himself falling [*wajada nafahu yasqutu*] to the ground without pain" (Abdelaziz 2013, 43). The verb *jará* is polysemous but probably most literally translated as "to run" or "to flow", as in a stream: events are outside Yehya's control or even his awareness. *Wajada* translates well to English "to find" in both the literal and figurative sense (Cowan 1994, 144 and 1230–1231). English "to realize" implies that Yehya has sorted out the run or flow of events, whereas the Arabic has Yehya only "find himself" already falling. His consciousness only apprehends his experience after the fact. In Arabic, both verbs are in the past tense, which can only be used if the event is fully in the past:³ it might be more precise to render the Arabic as "he did not understand what *had* happened". The English version of Yehya gives him more control over, and certainly more awareness of, the narrative than does the Arabic original; and here, where the text establishes that trauma is the background for Yehya's story, the

translation blunts the effect of this encounter that will structure Yehya's attempts to render the encounter into a narrative. I should note here that the traumatic event that structures the novel, and the responses to it, do not partake of what a layperson might describe as SF, in that there are no aliens, advanced technology, and so on, present in the text. Yet Abdelaziz explicitly structures the text on the principle of SF estrangement; moreover, the fact that much of the technology in both novels is outdated (e.g., cassette tapes rather than digital recordings, X-ray film rather than digital image) rather than advanced can be viewed as an adaptation of SF tropes to the Egyptian context.

At this point, the text has already described Yehya's stay in the hospital from Tarek's point of view: asking Yehya questions, ascertaining the cause of the wound, imaging it with X-rays, writing a diagnosis and treatment plan. Yehya has been told he was shot and that the bullet is still inside him, but it's a story that has been told to him, not one that he is telling for himself. He can only perceive the wound through its symptoms, which both the English and the Arabic text go into gory detail describing in several instances. Like a psychological trauma, the symptoms are readily apparent to him, but the cause is (literally) opaque. The X-ray image remains forever unavailable throughout *The Queue*.

ESTRANGEMENT IN *THE QUEUE*

Most of what we see in the text regarding Yehya's wound comes from the point of view of Tarek, a man "who didn't overstep boundaries, a man who'd never been to the Gate, not once in his life" (Abdelaziz 2018a, 5). The trauma spills over onto him, as well:

Why had he stayed in the hospital that day, when he always left right after finishing his shift? ... Why had he been drawn to Yehya in particular, rushing to perform an X-ray and disregarding everyone else? His head was all muddled; **the answers and details steadily slipped away**. There were parts of that day that he did remember, and he had reviewed them over the course of the intervening weeks, but these were rapidly outnumbered by parts he couldn't recall. It was as if entire pieces of what had happened **were simply gone**. (Abdelaziz 2018a, 6)

The blankness and inability to narrativize seen here in the English is stronger in the Arabic: what had happened "had evaporated and

disappeared”, and the answers and details “continue to escape him” [*tatūlu minhu bi-stimrār*] (Abdelaziz 2013, 13), with the verb *tāha* in the present tense because the action is ongoing. *Tāha* is a specific sort of escaping: the verb gives us the *tīb*, the trackless desert waste, a great blank spot that is not mapped (Cowan 1994, 120–121). In the Qur’an (5:26), the Israelites are condemned to wander [*yatībūna*] in the desert for forty years: that generation is as lost to the narrative of history as Yehya’s and Tarek’s experiences of the day Yehya was shot are to each of them.

Subsequently, lost in thought about the events of that day, Tarek doodles on a page of Yehya’s file, “summoning an artistic side he had long since abandoned, one detached from everything else surrounding him” (Abdelaziz 2018a, 25). The Arabic text makes the passage scan differently: the artistic side is grammatically feminine, but the verb “detached” [*infasala*] is masculine (Abdelaziz 2013, 35). It is Tarek who is detached, not his artistic side, though the English does say he “awoke from his reverie” where the Arabic just has *‘afūqa*, “he woke up”, or “came to” (Abdelaziz 2018a, 25). His unconscious mind has drawn “a figure resembling Yehya, nearly naked, and a small, solid circle, completely shaded in, occupying a space in the lower left part of his stomach” (Abdelaziz 2018a, 25). The invisible bullet inside Yehya is to his painful and gory symptoms as the Disgraceful Events, the Gate’s name for protests against its authority, are to Tarek’s inability to narrativize them except when detached. Tarek’s *conscious* mind, once he sees what his unconscious mind has done, carefully erases the drawing: “He lifted the paper up to the light coming in through the window and looked at Yehya’s outline and the shadow of the solid circle, no longer there” (Abdelaziz 2018a, 26). Though his reason for erasing the document isn’t directly stated, it’s evident that Tarek fears surveillance—with good reason, as the rest of the text details.

Each chapter of *The Queue* begins with a document from Tarek’s file about Yehya. The next chapter has Tarek, frustrated, rereading the description of Yehya’s wounds:

Each time, he flipped the page over to check the other side, and each time he found it blank. He was searching for the detailed description he’d written and signed off himself after seeing the X-ray, but it wasn’t there. There were pages missing; he didn’t know how they had disappeared, but some other hand had clearly been meddling with the file. (Abdelaziz 2018a, 41)

The blank spaces are here again, but now the story is no longer simply missing, nor erased by Tarek's own hand out of a prudent fear of surveillance, but rather erased by another's hand. Tarek flashes back to a few days after Yehya was shot, when a military doctor with "the sort of ID that one didn't dare question" (Abdelaziz 2018a, 42) shows up to his office and politely confiscates the X-ray:

[Tarek] knew full well that the visit had something to do with the Gate of the Northern Building ... A few hours later, he heard that the new X-ray machine in the basement had severely malfunctioned, and [head nurse] Sabah mentioned that she'd seen a Gate car with tinted windows take it away to be inspected and repaired. (Abdelaziz 2018a, 43)

The X-ray is gone; a new one cannot be taken; even the car that takes the machine away is blank, unreadable. The real story of Yehya's wound, which is the story of the Disgraceful Events, which is the name the Gate gives protests against it, cannot be told. Only the Gate's version of events can be accepted. The next chapter's document has in place of medical details an armchair psychoanalysis of Yehya that ascribes to him "an irrational belief that he can alter reality" (Abdelaziz 2018a, 102), while the one after that has simply "The Gate's Response" and a blank page. The final chapter's document is labeled "Follow-up" and explains that even this file, with the Gate's story in place of Yehya's, "shall not be disclosed under any condition without official signed and stamped permission. Inquiring as to the identity of the individuals tasked with updating this information is not permitted" (Abdelaziz 2018a, 192).

Not only does the Gate render opaque that which might have a narrative that critiques or opposes it, but it also substitutes its own narrative in place of others, just as it does with "Disgraceful Events" in place of "protests". Um Mabrouk, an impoverished woman, is in the queue in order to obtain a permit for her daughter to undergo treatment for a condition from which her other daughter has already died. An official explains to her that:

She wouldn't receive a Treatment Permit for her second daughter unless she amended the application form, he said, and her first daughter's death certificate as well... [He] told her that the cause of death written on her daughter's death certificate was *inappropriate*. The girl died because her time was up, he said; she couldn't expect doctors to alter fate... to obtain a Treatment

Permit, she had to fill out a new application, praising the care her dearly departed daughter had received before her time was up. Then she must go to the Gate of the Northern Building and change the cause of death to something more *appropriate*. Finally, she had to withdraw the complaint she had submitted about her elder daughter's death, and the documents she'd attached to prove that her living daughter's condition had deteriorated. (Abdelaziz 2018a, 67; italics in original)

This trope is repeated throughout the text. The Gate stops people from living their lives, even when like Um Mabrouk, they've never engaged in anything like political dissent. To even have a hope of addressing their problems, Egyptians have to agree to replace their own narratives with those that work in the interests of the Gate. When the queue becomes so long as to stretch across Cairo, it is viewed as a threat, because the people waiting start working together to address their problems: Um Mabrouk makes a decent living running a tea shop from a blanket spread out on the pavement. Since no independent power source can be tolerated, the Gate oppresses them, and they revolt in what is called—by the Gate, and thus by everyone—the Second Disgraceful Events. The Gate puts a psychologist on the air to say that the agitation was caused by the hot weather; he is interrupted by a news bulletin that states that “officials were investigating the possibility of placing parasols near places of heavy traffic, to calm citizens' nerves and reduce their irritability” (Abdelaziz 2018a, 87).

The Gate is the *source* of trauma in *The Queue*: it blocks the sunlight that might enable the real story to be told and replaces the real story with a false narrative intended to consolidate its power. Herein lies the estrangement undertaken by Abdelaziz: the Gate is clearly intended as a stand-in for the dictatorial regime.

Since the Gate had materialized and insinuated itself into everything, people didn't know where its affairs ended and their own began. The Gate had appeared rather suddenly as the First Storm died down, long before the Disgraceful Events occurred. The ruler at the time had been an unjust one, and popular resistance gathered to oppose him ... One night, as tensions were building, the ruler broadcast a short speech on television, in which he spoke of “the necessity of reining in the situation.” There was no other harbinger of the Gate's appearance: the next day, people awoke and it was simply there.

At first no one knew what this immense and awe-inspiring structure was that simply offered its name—the Main Gate of the Northern Building—as

the pretext for its existence... Then one day the Gate issued an official statement detailing its jurisdiction, which extended over just about everything anyone could think of. (Abdelaziz 2018a, 31)

After this, “the ruler” is never heard from again. The Gate, and the building behind it, simply appear and assert jurisdiction over all of Egyptian life, to a comically totalitarian extent. The Northern Building—which in the English translation, but not in the Arabic original, is described as “a strange crimson octagonal structure” (Abdelaziz 2018a, 35)—is simply there, suddenly, one day, taking the place of “the ruler” and going much further in its control over resources, information and reality itself.

Abdelaziz can depict totalitarianism in all its cruelty precisely because none of the signifiers in her text has a direct referent. An all-powerful Gate that speaks for a building that manifested in the wake of a leader’s disappearance can be both a scathing critique of the current regime’s proclivities and a manifest oddity that cannot be directly linked to that regime: the vagueness is a key part of the plausible deniability. Who is “the leader”? Not only does the text’s lack of clarity mirror the actions of its characters, who constantly hear or read the Gate’s decrees and have to decode them to sort out what sort of truth might be obscured, but the lack of clarity and the clearly fantastical nature of the Gate make it impossible for censors or other members of the current regime to argue that Abdelaziz’s novel is seditious without looking foolish—a real issue in the current climate (Farid 2017). The characters accept the Gate as cognitive. They must, given its near-total power over their lives and even their reality. Yet at the same time, its appearance and powers are counterfactual: again, this both sharpens the critique by focusing on the Gate’s powers to dictate reality and also gives a censor or other critic little to take hold of.

Abdelaziz makes the consequences of a direct critique explicit very near the beginning of the text. A schoolteacher, Ines, is in the queue because she was impressed by one of her students’ writing that critiqued the “state of the country and developments in the region” (Abdelaziz 2018a, 13). Ines holds it up as a model for the rest of the class “as an example of outstanding work” (Abdelaziz 2018a, 13). The text continues:

The next day, the girl was absent from school. A soft-spoken inspector arrived at the principal’s office, asking to see Ines’s Personnel File and inquiring as to how she’d been hired. He informed the principal that Ines was missing certain forms and that she needed to go to the Gate to obtain a

Certificate of True Citizenship. He told him that if she didn't, he would be forced to refer her to the Administrative Office, where she would be retested and reevaluated, and they would determine whether it was truly in everyone's best interest for her to continue as a teacher. Before leaving the school, he left a cassette tape with the principal. Ines later learned that it was a recording of the girl reading her assignment. (Abdelaziz 2018a, 13)

While Ines didn't write (or assign) this critique, and she holds it up as an example of form rather than content, it makes her a victim of surveillance and control. She has become a non-citizen, someone condemned to spend most of the rest of her life in the titular queue, waiting for something she will never receive—the characters in the book are all well aware of the irony of something that never opens calling itself a Gate. Within the novel, critique of the Gate has catastrophic consequences; the novel itself is critiquing the Egyptian government via estrangement by means of the Gate. Were this an Anglo-American SF novel, there would almost certainly have to be some means to explain the Gate's manifestation and powers. Here, however, the lack of explanation is part of the critique: power is only answerable to power, and citizens are victims of collective trauma.

The regime's power extends to surveillance, as well. A development in the plot concerns Violet Telecom, a new cell phone company whose rates are almost too good to be true, but whose phones turn out to record conversations around them. Yet by the time people understand this, the other companies have stopped opening new accounts. Moreover, one of the opaque communiqués promulgated by the Gate has a signatory, a "Former Major General Zaky Abd el-Aal Hamed, President of the Northern Building" (Abdelaziz 2018a, 110). This is the first time this person has been mentioned; any Egyptian reader would see the estrangement of the Sisi regime. When a boycott of Violet Telecom is announced, the newspaper with the wonderful name of "The Truth" [*al-Haqq*] publishes a statement saying how well the company is doing and how happy is its CEO, Mr. Zaky Abd el-Aal Hamed (Abdelaziz 2018a, 122). The real-world Egyptian military, which has received \$50 billion in direct US aid since Egypt signed the 1979 Camp David accords with Israel (US Department of State 2021), is one of the biggest investors in the Egyptian private sector, (Reuters 2018) so any Egyptian reader would readily understand the estrangement here. Shortly thereafter, the High Sheikh declares the boycott an offense against religion: the military, bureaucracy, private sector and now even the religious establishment are arrayed as one against any

effort by the people to free themselves. The regime is opaque, it cannot be described, and it not only prevents people from narrativizing their stories but also imposes its own narrative that legitimizes itself: it should come as little surprise that poor Yehya is never able to have the bullet removed.

The English translation of *The Queue* is for the most part very good at capturing the literal meaning as well as the nuances of the Arabic original, with some significant exceptions detailed above. Where it domesticates the Arabic text, this is usually done with good reason: for example, when people drink a glass of *yensoon* in the Arabic text, the English translation gives it as “*yensoon*, the hot anise drink” (Abdelaziz 2013, 49). Just leaving it as *yensoon* might have made it seem exotic, when in fact it’s prosaic, but the drink will be unfamiliar to most Anglophone readers, so translating it with the explanation is a productive use of domestication. Yet, as mentioned above, when the Gate itself is first described, the English text adds in descriptive text not found in the Arabic. Yehya’s friend Amani reflects upon the Gate:

She’d seen the Northern Building often, but only ever from a distance: a strange **crimson octagonal** structure, slightly higher than the concrete walls that extended from it on either side. **The main entrance to the building was the Gate itself, built into one of its eight sides.** It had no visible windows or balconies, only barren walls of cast iron. (Abdelaziz 2018a, 35, boldface mine)

What’s here in regular text is quite faithful to the Arabic original, (Abdelaziz 2013, 45) but the text in boldface has been added to the English translation without any referent at all in the Arabic. There’s no color, no shape to the building, no “eight” anywhere in the original novel. This intrusion into the English text is both unwarranted and also has a more problematic effect, in that it makes the building *too readable*. If the essence of trauma is to be confronted with an irreducible knot in the symbolic order, one that cannot be directly perceived by language and conscious thought absent a long and often painful process of transforming trauma into narrative, and Abdelaziz is portraying the regime as the cause of trauma, then the very unreadability—no windows, no balconies, no lines of sight—of the Gate becomes crucial to the means by which *The Queue* sets up the relationships of power that structure the novel. Adding this descriptive language to the Gate, like making Yehya more able to narrativize what happens to him when he’s shot, reduces the overall effect of the text in

situating the regime as the cause of trauma. I cannot answer *why* the English text contains these additions, other than to speculate. Yet whereas domestication such as *yensoon* is beneficial to Anglophone readers, these other alterations clearly render the text of *The Queue* meaningfully less impactful than the original and thus represent the sort of domestication that Venuti and other translation theorists find most problematic.

ESTRANGEMENT IN *HUNÁ BADAN*

One of the tertiary plotlines in *The Queue* addresses Shalaby, a man trying to persuade the Gate to award posthumous honors to his cousin Mahfouz, a member of the security forces who was killed in the Disgraceful Events, but who was so notably thuggish that even his employers disavowed him. A similar story becomes a main plotline in *Huná Badan*, where a homeless boy is abducted by the regime and indoctrinated in a camp as a fascist cadre via mundane technologies such as propaganda and the sort of techniques used by drill sergeants to create obedience and group cohesion among recruits.

Huná Badan is more firmly grounded in the here and now than *The Queue* with its manifested, opaque Gate. The *novum* here is the exaggerated split between the two primary antagonists in Egyptian politics: the military regime and conservative Muslims who in the book and often in the real Egypt refer to themselves as “Salafists”, from *salaf*, “ancestor”: that is, they want to live as their ancestors did. In the novel, they have disintegrated themselves from ordinary urban life and moved to the desert, in order to live according to their beliefs in camps segregated from a society dominated by modernity and the regime. Through most of the novel, the Salafists’ neat, tidy camp and the society they create is examined in the even-numbered chapters in third-person *style indirect libre*. The odd-numbered chapters detail in first-person narration from a teenage street urchin how he is abducted by the regime and indoctrinated in a separate camp as a fascist cadre; it is as if Abdelaziz has chosen to explore how Mahfouz from *The Queue* might have been created. This indoctrination is all very low-tech: drill sergeants, group living, deprivation in order to produce camaraderie, and propaganda videos. The narratives merge two-thirds of the way through the very long text when the regime uses the fascist cadres to invade and destroy the camps, killing most of the Salafists. An extended dénouement explores the traumatic effects of this on the

survivors from both sides. One of the protagonists, Aida, reflects upon the events that spurred the Salafists' segregation:

Her busy mind began to show images of the many details and worked on recording the most important of them. Perhaps the last one she thought of was when the day came when she went out to occupy (*ta`tasim*) the streets, in the middle of thousands of people, protesting some political matter. But what was the use, when the leader had been kidnapped months before? When he'd been removed from his position and his group dismissed from power in such an insulting manner, and all attempts to find out where he was and to pressure the general to restoring him had failed. Was there no longer any stratagem to hand other than to flee to the expanse [i.e., of the desert] and occupy (*i`tisám*) it, until the new regime (*nizám*) responded? (Abdelaziz 2018b, 56)

This is (barely) an estrangement of a real event. The 2011 Arab Spring protests were so quickly effective that the protestors, who came from all walks of life, had no time to develop a political or economic platform other than "Mubarak must go". This permitted Mubarak's party, the military establishment, to dominate the constitutional process and the Muslim Brotherhood to profit from its own organizational experience delivering social services that the regime could or would not provide to working-class Egyptians. Parties that the small, secular educated middle class supported were squeezed out after the first round of presidential elections; Brotherhood candidate Muhammad Morsi won a narrow majority over a regime candidate in the final round. Morsi was less than adept politically, hamstrung by the military establishment, and perceived (mostly correctly) as authoritarian and (less so) as trying to impose Islamic law. His actions provoked a rebellion called Tamarod ("Rebellion") in the spring of 2013; in July of that year, Morsi was deposed and replaced by General Abdelfattah al-Sisi in a coup d'état that had broad support from the populace. Sisi even now continues to rule as a de facto dictator (Brown 2016, 15). In response to Morsi's removal, some pro-Morsi protestors began occupying or camping out in public squares: in the Arab press, this action is usually denoted by the verb *i`tasama*, seen in two different forms in the quotation above. On 14 August 2013, Egyptian security forces swept through these camps, killing approximately 900 people in the "Rabaa massacre" while clearing the camps out (Haddad 2015). It is this event that the climax of *Huná Badan* will estrange.

It should be noted that there's a linguistic peculiarity to the verb *i`tasama*: while the verb itself is mostly used in modern journalistic Arabic to indicate sit-ins or occupation, the verb's root means "hold back, hinder" as well as "safeguard, protect", and the verb itself can also mean "cling to", as in something whose time has already passed (Cowan 1994, 722). The Salafists in the novel are clearly and repeatedly portrayed as building an unsustainable fantasy in the desert: there are constant mentions of trucks delivering water to them, among other things. The regime has the initiative, here: the Salafists are reactionary in both senses of the word.

A second linguistic curiosity in the novel is the word *badan* in its title. It doesn't mean "body" in the sense of "corpse", nor is it even the second-most common word for the living body. It's the meat, the tangible part of a living being, as separate from the animating spirit, the flesh in "flesh and bone". It's often used to denote the concept of "trunk" in English: the torso less the limbs and head (Cowan 1994, 59). Throughout the long, repeated scenes in the odd-numbered chapters showing the indoctrination of the protagonist, Rabee—whose personal name is absent from the narrative until halfway through the text—his trainers only refer to him and his companions as "bodies", never "people" or anything that denotes a concern for what they might think or feel. They are flesh for the regime to use as a spearhead. Later in the text, he will see an old acquaintance, a girl named Hannah Jaris, who isn't being trained in thuggery but rather in shouting slogans, both to antagonize the Salafists and their supporters and also to inspire the "bodies" in combat. The text transforms Hannah Jaris into *hanajir*, "larynxes" or "throats", which becomes the name for her cohort—once again, not the person performing the action, but the flesh that performs it. Whereas in *The Queue*, the regime replaced narratives mainly through documents, here the very subjectivity of the cadres is taken away: they become bodies and larynxes with which the regime battles its antagonists.

Many of the same elements of estrangement are present here as in *The Queue*: most notably, the overlap between military regime, the business oligarchy and the official, anti-Salafist religious establishment that forecloses any meaningful opportunity for a counterforce to the regime other than the Salafists. As with much of modern Arabic literary fiction that engages with politics, characters consider emigration as one of the very few alternatives to suffering in silence. The later chapters of the text describe in great detail the efforts of Aida, one of the few survivors of the

assault upon her camp, to neither take the easy way out by emigrating to the Gulf, nor to abandon her goals, but rather to try to gather the remaining survivors and reconstitute her group. Another widow of the assault, who is still coughing up phlegm from having been teargassed, invites her to join other such women and:

become active on social media sites. They want to start pages on Facebook, where they'll present the facts that the regime media are erasing. There's room to develop the idea: [the pages] might become [a separate] website or a YouTube channel ... (Abdelaziz 2018b, 477)

We might view this as a sign of progress: the reactionary Salafists are joining the new century rather than clinging to the past as the use of the verb *i'tasama* implies. Yet while Aida does start working with the Facebook group, the page is soon drowned in vile comments from regime supporters (Abdelaziz 2018b, 484), and when they begin to post memorials to those killed in the attack, “the idea was aborted before it began: matters took a turn for the truly horrible, when security forces attacked the home of the sister responsible for the page and arrested her” (Abdelaziz 2018b, 486). The text doesn't specify whether the “sister” founded the pages under her own name or used an alias, but anyone who's used Facebook or any other social media site in the last five years can immediately understand the estrangement at work: not only does the regime engage in the sort of panoptical surveillance that its counterpart does in *The Queue*, but Facebook's own panoptical surveillance of anyone who uses it makes it always already a tool much more useful to authoritarians than democrats. The 2011 protests that toppled Hosni Mubarak may have made use of Facebook, but that window has been (fore)closed, and once again, there is no way to organize meaningful resistance to the regime.

This estrangement of post-2013 Egyptian politics is science fictional, but not because *Huná Badan* contains Facebook and YouTube, which are now as prosaic in Egypt as *yensoon* ever was. Rather, these technologies come from without: the names of the two sites remain in English, even when they're written in Arabic characters. While the Mubarak regime struggled to adapt, the Sisi regime—same regime, different figurehead—has leapfrogged its predecessor, and now has social media as well as regular media under its control. If technology is alien, then the regime has made a better adaptation to, and deal with, the aliens: that \$50 billion the Egyptian regime has received from the USA is mostly invested in business

ventures that enable it to maintain control over the commercial sector, and very little of it trickles down into the pockets of working-class Egyptians. In William Gibson's formulation, "The future has arrived—it's just not very evenly distributed". In Abdelaziz's novels, that uneven distribution is the work of the regime—and its source of power, as well.

TRAUMA IN *HUNÁ BADAN*

The dénouement of *Huná Badan* provides multiple and very clear examples of the effects of trauma upon both the Salafists and the cadres who survive the assault on the camp. Different Salafists exhibit different constellations of symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder: Aida's attempts to narrativize the deaths of her friends and husband are but one of many examples. One woman, the wife of a well-connected businessman who was part of the Salafist group but whose connections gave him enough warning of the assault to remove his family from danger, returns immediately to her pre-camp life of "gossip sessions and pleasures that didn't challenge her" (Abdelaziz 2018b, 429), and castigates her daughter for the acute depression the younger woman suffers as a result of the political murder of her friends and acquaintances. Yet when the wife expresses reluctance to follow her husband to the Gulf, the text expresses this as "she clung [*i'tasamat*] to her opinion" (Abdelaziz 2018b, 429), where the verb is used in its non-occupying sense as if to confirm the linguistic link between the Salafists and reactionary views.

The sections of the dénouement addressing Rabee also show the effects of trauma, thereby humanizing someone who willingly participated in mass murder. Most of Rabee's PTSD is displaced onto his friend Yusuf, who was the sensitive intellectual among Rabee's tribe of street urchins. Yusuf was too empathetic to succeed as a cadre; in the midst of the assault, he refused to kill an unarmed Salafist, so one of the drill sergeants summarily executed him. This renders Rabee unable to enjoy the camaraderie of his fellow "bodies" in the aftermath. He finds a journal of sorts that Yusuf kept and obsesses upon it, keeping it hidden from the other bodies. This is the sole note of anything that might be considered optimism in the otherwise unrelentingly bleak text: an alternate history or critique of the regime might be preserved through samizdat. While the portrayal of trauma is accurate and sensitive here, the state as its instigator is more germane to the link between the two novels and how they translate tropes of SF into the Egyptian context. The regime is invested in eliminating any

source of competition, and since historically the Muslim Brotherhood has been the only real competitor to the Nasser/Sadat/Mubarak/Sisi regime, assaulting the Salafists follows naturally. For all its thuggery, the regime is forward-looking and will always already be steps ahead of reactionaries—but just as with the only free and fair elections Egypt has ever had, the system erases the secular middle class who would prefer something like Western democracy and modernity over either sort of authoritarianism.

The text also shows that the regime traumatizes its supporters as well as its opponents: the very persistence of an authoritarian state is always already a source of trauma. Abdelaziz takes this another step further, however, by refusing to limit her indictment of contemporary Egypt to the regime. Rabee and the other bodies are homeless street children, who call themselves *ahl al-maqlab*, “the people of the dump”, because they live in the middens of Cairo, eking out a meager existence through beggary, petty theft, odd jobs and trash-picking. We might well imagine this as a further indictment of the regime for its inability or unwillingness to provide social services, and in fact, there’s an ongoing subplot where one of these children ends up in the camp of the Salafists, who provide for him. Few of these children are orphans, however; rather, they’re people of the dump because they’ve been discarded by their own families, who can’t be bothered to take care of them, or who can’t afford to, or who expel them, usually when a new man moves in with a single mother and doesn’t want her previous children around. The regime is only able to train and traumatize its cadres because Egyptian society provides them with an inexhaustible supply of throwaway bodies.

Yet we must keep in mind that no matter how many times the drill sergeants and other regime agents call him a “body”, Rabee continues to speak. Abdelaziz’s two similar-but-different estrangements of contemporary Egypt, one somewhat fantastical and the other almost entirely prosaic, are grim but not utterly hopeless, if only in their portrayal of a panoptical state of surveillance and control as so resolutely unpleasant as to generate its own resistance. While the technology in both *The Queue* and *Humá Badan*—tape recorders, X-ray film, propaganda films—barely leaves the twentieth century, both novels use cognitive estrangement to describe what the regime is doing, though they mostly leave blank the pages on which a program for resistance might be written.

NOTES

1. Translations of *The Queue* are taken from the English translation by Elisabeth Jaquette (Abdelaziz 2018a) unless otherwise noted. Translations from *Huná Badan* are my own.
2. See Campbell 2020 for an extended analysis of Sa`dawi's work.
3. In English, we use the past tense when the event *begins* in the past, whereas in Arabic we have to use the present tense unless the action *ends* in the past. The Arabic past tense (*al-máadí*, "the past") is often referred to in English-language grammar books as "the perfect" (i.e., "complete", not "flawless") for this reason.

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The Translation of SF Tropes in *Dog War II*

Ikram Masmoudi

The war that's knocking on our door is nothing more than the Second Dog War: it is the doubles who will spark it, and this is the most strange thing to me, because humans do not like the different and don't like the similar, and someone has to tell us clearly what man wants! (Nasrallah 2016a, 205)

In his novel *Dog War II* (2016), Palestinian/Jordanian novelist Ibrahim Nasrallah explores and critiques aspects of human relationships and his own culture, as well as the dangers threatening society that lead to the breakout of a devastating war, referred to as the Second Dog War. Set in the near future, in an estranged Middle East, the novel is a social and political critique of a world governed by fear and greed, where climate change and technology exacerbate threats to human life. Using and building on technological and scientific applications in the fields of genetics and aesthetics, and drawing on climate change fears and authoritarian political trends, Nasrallah imagines a dark alternative world where social stability is endangered by the sudden emergence of the phenomenon of people

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acquiring identical doubles, and where authoritarian control stifles freedom.

In this chapter, I examine how Nasrallah uses SF tropes to criticize aspects of human relations under authoritarian regimes as well as human vanity, and how he warns against ill-uses of technology that lead to the homogenizing of society and to the control and abuse of human relations. In particular, this chapter sets out to examine and discuss the narrative strategies and choices Nasrallah makes to adapt SF tropes to writing in Arabic and whether using SF makes his critique more effective or less visible. I argue that Nasrallah's narrative strategy and use of SF tropes to estrange and criticize the political and cultural climate in the Middle East oscillates between two trends: on the one hand, he gives free rein to a pseudo-scientific imaginary extrapolating the technological advances in the field of cosmetic aesthetics to criticize the prevalence of a culture of forgery and deception, and on the other hand, he draws on the growing fears of climate change which lead to distortions and an apocalyptic collapse of human life.

Science fiction is not a well-developed genre in Arabic literature; however, a few authors have experimented with writing SF, and in particular, dystopian novels such as Egyptian authors Ahmad Khaled Tawfiq, who published *Utopia* (2008), which prefigures Egypt's Arab Spring (Campbell 2015, 541), as well as a series of horror/thriller novels; and Mohammad Rabie, who published *Otared* (2015), an apocalyptic text on the Arab Spring. Ibrahim Nasrallah is an award-winning Jordanian poet and novelist of Palestinian origin. He is not primarily an SF writer, as he is best-known for his narrative project called "The Palestinian Comedy", a multi-novel narrative endeavor dedicated to documenting the history of Palestine and the struggle of the Palestinian people, as described in his novels *The Lanterns of the King of Galilee* (2015), which is set in eighteenth-century Palestine and imagines the establishment of an autonomous Arab state on the shores of Galilee's Lake Tiberias; and *Time of White Horses* (2016b), where he explores an Arab tribe's struggle against invaders and colonizers from the Ottomans to the British. Nasrallah has also published a series of five other novels in which he examines the reality and representations of power; this project is entitled *al-Shurufat* ["Terraces"], of which *Dog War II* (2016) is the most recent publication. *Dog War II* won the International Prize for Arabic Fiction in 2018.

In *Dog War II*, under the authoritarian rule of the government of the Castle, people live in fear and suffocation: essential ingredients such as

oxygen, daylight and freedom are in short supply in this unnamed Middle Eastern country. As the Castle tightens its grip on the population, enforcing conformity, strange phenomena involving resemblances between the people emerge, threatening individuality and social stability. Rashed, the protagonist, was once a progressive political opponent of the regime and a principled prisoner who resisted torture. Yet he ends up bridging the gap between himself and the Castle: he allies himself to the regime by marrying Salaam, the sister of its highest officer. From that moment on, Rashed, who was a man of the people, changes alliance and becomes a corrupt partner of the Castle. He also becomes a materialistic hospital director who profits from the distress of the sick, the diseased and prisoners. He partners with the executive director in the Castle in recruiting ambulances to bring to the hospital all sorts of patients/clients who sometimes might just die even before getting to the hospital—only to charge their families full prices for the services. At the core of the story is the romance between Rashed and his mistress, the secretary whom he fashions in the image of his wife by subjecting her to a high-tech aesthetic operation, out of which she emerges identical to his wife in beauty and attraction, even surpassing her in sexual appeal. At the same time, his neighbor, a meteorologist, surprises Rashed one day by looking exactly like him, causing him much anxiety. As the phenomenon of the double spreads to the whole population, a war erupts where people usurp one another's identities and kill one another—not because of their differences, but rather because they look the same. Fearing for its stability, the Castle starts arresting and imprisoning the doubles, and later on, in an effort to end the war, they shoot at everyone. While the pattern of the double is a familiar SF trope, Nasrallah uses it to estrange the fight over identity in Palestine and to criticize a corrupt and authoritarian political regime that oppresses the population. Nasrallah warns against the dangers of such practices as he points out to the corruption and failure of the opposition and perceived ideas of resistance against authority.

Wars and conflicts are often sparked by fears emanating from religious, ideological and cultural differences among individuals, groups and countries, and are exacerbated by greed and profit. But strangely enough, in the universe of *Dog War II*, conflicts seem to be ignited not by differences but rather by similarities and sameness between individuals in this society. Nasrallah describes and develops an alternative imaginary world where he seems to question the assumption that differences cause conflicts by exploring the hypothesis of war erupting in a society where people start

suddenly having doubles looking like them. Are there doubles that we can embrace and others we hate and seek to eliminate? The novel tries to answer these questions by estranging the sociocultural and political context and by establishing an alternate reality to our empirical world, to use the words of Darko Suvin, who defines SF as

a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment. (Suvin 1979, 13)

LIFE UNDER DARKNESS

The existential threat of the double that makes people live in fear of seeing strangers look like them and usurp their individuality and their personality does not emerge out of the blue. It is apparently the latest development in the dystopian universe of this unnamed Middle Eastern country, where changes affecting the environment are exacerbated by distortions of social and political order, and where human existence seems to be threatened by two phenomena. First, there is an environmental danger visible in climate change; this functions as a backdrop to the second problem: the contagion and the spread of the phenomenon of the double. In this universe, where dramatic climate changes have impacted the environment, the essential ingredients for sustainable life have become scant, and resources are on the decline. Daylight is scarce and oxygen levels in short supplies, while the atmosphere is full of the smells of dead animals and birds, to the point that putridity has become the new normal and the new name for air. The sun is only printed as decoration on the clothing people wear. The four seasons have been reduced to just one single season, and the production of fruits and vegetables has become sparse. In this unhealthy environment, many people suffer from chronic respiratory diseases. They also avoid stepping outside as much as possible even though “the Ministry of Health started a program to diffuse medical steam to control and reduce the bad quality of the air” (Nasrallah 2016a, 22). The city is gray like the color of cement, and the only way for the community to remember nature's beautiful colors is to paint the façades of houses with blue, yellow and green, in order to recall the sky, the sun and the forest. Against this gloomy environmental backdrop, the consumption of cutting-edge technology seems to thrive. Most people ride self-driving cars equipped with computers that

can also entertain the rider on any topic. Kitchen utensils are equipped with smartphone functions, and big three-dimensional television screens are everywhere. The old mythic binary of light and darkness seems to have taken root in this universe with the strong powers having the monopoly of light, advanced science and technology, and weaker enclaves ceding power to the self-governing authoritative regimes of the Castle, the novel's estrangement of authoritarian governments in the real Middle East.

The regime of the Castle is built on the suppression of freedom and the total control of the population, where security forces and high-ranking officers are allowed to get an upgraded vision parallel to that of the owl, so that they can have better control of the people and do their work properly as the hours of darkness grow longer due to climate change. In order to secure homogeneity and abolish the differences, freedom of thought and freedom of the press are suppressed, and the most severe punishments are reserved for all dissidents. A poem, a Tweet, a publication can land their authors in prisons or just make them disappear altogether. Nasrallah clearly borrows the metaphor of darkness, putridity and climate change to refer to the suffocating political and cultural atmosphere under the rule of the Castle that he uses to estrange Middle Eastern countries. This will endanger life and engender the phenomenon of the double where uniformity and conformity will prevail, erasing differences and individuality.

More frightening is the Castle's implementation of a decree abolishing the past and the memory of the country, on the basis that people never learn from their past mistakes. Against this backdrop, scientists in this new world rely on and benefit from the science and technology of cloning: from cloning organs and cells up to cloning people. The social stability of the community is shaken by the contagion and spread of the double, involving not only physical resemblance but also resemblance from the inside, including psychological and behavioral traits. The spread of the double will eventually create an unlivable atmosphere of fear, suspicion and hatred among the doubles as they usurp each other's lives and personalities, leading to social confusion, mistrust and violence, and eventually sparking the Second Dog War.

The desire to look alike and to resemble and emulate others is apparently nothing new since, as the narrator puts it, humans have always been enthused and fascinated by the fancy of resemblance, not only physically through aesthetic surgery, which started in the eighth century BCE at the hands of an Indian doctor named Susrutha (Nasrallah 2016a, 23), but also psychological, moral and behavioral resemblance which preceded

Susrutha's work, as the narrator informs us. It is also this desire to resemble his executioners that makes Rashed, the main character in the novel, seek to ally with the regime of the Castle and marry the sister of the highest officer who was in charge of torturing him when he was imprisoned: "He (Rashed) wants to be like them and they did not establish the Castle but to have people such as him resemble them" (Nasrallah 2016a, 23).

The novel postulates the existence of two kinds of doubles: one is based in pseudo-science and obtained through technological advances, where the author seems to draw on SF tropes to extrapolate this novum. This double is based in Rashed's vanity, fantasy and betrayal of his wife. It critiques an age of forgery and post-truth. The second double is not the result of science; it is rooted in apocalyptic fears and anxieties of identity usurpation, a hint to the game of identity and cultural appropriation taking place in Palestine/Israel. The consequence of the emergence of these doubles is total chaos leading to war.

THE MISTRESS: A DOUBLE ENGINEERED BY SCIENCE AND THE AGE OF POST-TRUTH

The first double to emerge in the universe of *Dog War II* originates in Rashed's fantasy to have a second woman who looks like his beautiful wife, Salaam. When he married her, he had secretly entertained the fancy of also marrying her sister Maraam, or one of her cousins. His dream will come true via the aesthetic operation to which he subjects his secretary. The engineered double of the secretary is the result of an intentional endeavor to conceal Rashed's affair; it is an artificial creation through an aesthetic operation and is presented as a miracle of science and technology. It functions as an extrapolation from and an analogy to the author's empirical world that will introduce irreversible and significant changes in the economy of the plot. But while aesthetic surgery has become a common and familiar trope of twenty-first-century popular culture, where people try to look like movie stars and other icons, it is strange for a husband to seek to have his mistress become his wife's double via an aesthetic operation. Rashed knows that what he is doing by having his secretary as a mistress is morally and socially reprehensible. This is why, for example, he cannot let the secretary kiss him in public and he hides the relationship in the confines of the office space in the hospital, where the secretary has agreed to live. Yet, by taking advantage of scientific and technological progress,

Rashed's ingenious idea is to cover up his cheating by having the secretary look exactly like his wife, as if he had recruited the latter to help him in the office—a convenient and comic lie he will actually use when his wife and her brother confront him. Nasrallah extrapolates this novum to expose and criticize outlandish fancies and strange applications in the field of aesthetics as well as the husband's cheating, as Rashed will use scientific advances to safely fulfill his desires, where he will not only deceive and abuse his wife but also defy her brother the officer, and indirectly the authority of the Castle. All that is needed is a photo of the wife, a machine, a doctor and a trip outside the country to an unnamed location. Before he travels, Rashed takes a photo of his beautiful wife's face so as to make her believe that she will accompany him on his trip, and asks the doctor he travels to with the secretary for the operation to make her look exactly like the person on the photo. His abuse of his wife is doubled by the abuse of the secretary, who has no say on being made into a copy of an image, and who just obeys the orders of her boss/lover. Later on, once the change is made, the secretary's narcissism will kick in, and she will ask Rashed why he didn't make his wife a copy of her.

Whether it is out of love for the beautiful wife, as Rashed is pretending, or maybe out of convenience to cover up for his cheating and deception, the secretary/mistress is made into a beautiful woman in the image of her lover's wife. "She was there in the surgery room that looked like a spaceship that no humans built; or so it seemed to her" (Nasrallah 2016a, 101). Before the operation, and as he looks at the photo on a huge 4D screen, the doctor asks Rashed some important questions:

I think you made a good choice with this photo. Is it a real, authentic one
or is it Photoshopped, made of different faces?

It is a real photo.

Did the owner agree to the use of her picture?

Yes, she agreed; she even was happy this morning when I informed her that
her photo will accompany me.

Can I ask you a question that has nothing to do with the ethics of my job as
a doctor?

Sure.

Can you give us permission to use this photo? I guarantee you that we won't
produce more than a few copies, twenty or forty copies? If you agree, I
will cancel the fees of your friend's operation.

NO, said Rashed in an emphatic tone that scared the doctor.

Can I ask you why this emphatic 'NO'?

Because this is my wife's photo.
 I don't understand? Why are you using your wife's photo?
 Simply because I love her.
 You love her?
 A lot, and I have never seen someone more beautiful than her. (Nasrallah
 2016a, 102–103)

The doctor is intrigued; with a hint of disapproval, he concludes the exchange by confessing to Rashed that “this is the strangest thing that has ever happened to me”. “The same for me”, Rashed replies with laughter. However, the doctor doesn't reciprocate Rashed's laughter.

The secretary closed her eyes as she lied down a metallic tunnel like those she saw many times in movies; the tunnels for time travel. It was without any hand touching her and without one single drop of blood, and after a little while she opened her eyes and she was outside of the lit tunnel. (Nasrallah 2016a, 103)

The secretary comes out of the tunnel looking exactly like the photo of Salaam, Rashed's wife. She is now Salaam's double. At the center of the operation the secretary undergoes is the machine or the metallic tunnel that she enters from one side looking like herself and exits from the other end looking not as she desires but like the photo of her boss's wife, as Rashed desires. Nasrallah draws on our popular knowledge of SF: he borrows familiar tropes and language from space opera and time travel as he introduces the novum. First, there is the operating room that is described like a spaceship, as if the operation the secretary will undergo will send her to some other planet. Then there is the machine itself, where the operation is performed, dubbed “tube technology”, that will engineer the first double in the story. This technology of the metallic tunnel is a device that evokes the technology used in medical imaging, for example, but the metaphor of the concept of time travel and the device of the time machine as popularized by the movie industry is even better. It is as if they traveled in time for infinite possibilities but without coming back, and without a return to what they once looked like.

Rashed is fascinated by and very excited about “tube technology”. He even tries to ask the doctor about the possibility of transferring it to the hospital where he works. “I think this is the greatest medical achievement ever: one can enter through an opening and exits looking totally different

or rather looking like any other person he or she desires to look like” (Nasrallah 2016a, 103). The doctor’s reply further entices our imagination:

We are using only ten per cent of the capacity of this ingenious discovery (...) We are capable of reproducing all the details of the body all at once, and so we can adjust the area of the neck, the waist, the size of the breast, the legs, the butt, with extreme precision without having to inject the body with anything. All we do is activate the multiplication of some cells or transfer some cells to different areas or eliminate surplus parts. We do it with such an ease so as to the person, man or woman can define the measurements of their clothes as he or she pleases. We can make that happen for them just by clicking on the right key of the machine as we observe the photo of the sample body projected on the multidimensional screen before us. (Nasrallah 2016a, 104)

The doctor informs Rashed that this futuristic, cutting-edge technology is achieved through a machine that exists only in advanced capitals and is not owned by hospitals. When he objects to the non-democratic and the monopolizing aspect, Rashed is surprised to learn from the doctor that they are in fact working on the production and commercialization of a personal version of this machine so that it may become available to everyone who desires to lose or gain weight in any area of the body. The machine will help achieve results in minutes, in such a way that it won’t be necessary to get rid of our clothes when we gain weight, according to the doctor.

Nasrallah’s novum that gives us the double of the secretary-mistress is not only based on shared knowledge about science fiction and the scientific advances of our time, but it further extrapolates upon other possibilities, based on knowledge of modern society’s consumeristic habits and access to individualized gadgets and devices. Rashed’s eagerness pushes him to further inquire about when this technology will be available, and if he can book his own device in advance, only to hear the doctor urging him to wait since it would be worth it and to meanwhile visit again if he needs to:

It is worth waiting, and a year or two is not a long period, when you think about the happiness that will fill the users of these devices and which will represent a revolution in the universe of cosmetic aesthetics ... you have to wait, and I don’t think you have a problem, since you can fly over to us any time and the biggest machine is at your disposal. (Nasrallah 2016a, 105)

After the procedure, when she looks in the mirror, the secretary, who was familiar with the photo of Salaam, feels like she views a face she has seen before. The mirror-stage of recognition of her new face first confuses her and then confirms to her that she is now a copy or a double of the photo of Rashed's wife:

It seemed to her that she saw in the mirror a face that she was familiar with, a face she saw before but she forgot where she saw it. She tried to remember, and it seemed to her that indeed she saw what she was really seeing and that the person before her was a framed copy of the photo. She stood there as she contemplated the gorgeous face, the most beautiful face she ever saw. She looked around and then looked back at the mirror fearing the disappearance of that beautiful face. (Nasrallah 2016a, 106)

Not only does the secretary emerge from this bloodless transformation looking very beautiful, as the double of the wife's photo, but she seems to be a combination of her original attractiveness with the hidden secret of the wife's beauty. It is as if a third human being incarnating the magic of the two women combined inhabits her. This gives her a higher sexual appeal, arousing Rashed, and as soon as he hugs her "he was seized by a stormy desire he never experienced before" (Nasrallah 2016a, 106).

The extrapolation of the novum points to a deeper problem when it comes to the political situation of Palestine. We can interpret the manufacturing of the mistress as a double of Salaam as a hint to the acceptance of fake solutions brokered in the West to the problem of Palestine (Oslo Accords), as well as societal and cultural problems in the Middle East, where concern for appearances, consumerism and cosmetic changes seems to dominate people's minds over more important and structural issues of survival. Nasrallah criticizes a culture emptied from the inside, one that values the copy, the lifeless image, and the fake appearance without concern for substance. The secretary submissively obeys to be a copy of an image of another woman as her lover desires. And Rashed, as an abusive boss, doesn't even ask her opinion on this. As a greedy hospital director, he is eager about importing the machine that will make him much profit, all while people are suffocating outside, suffering from chronic respiratory diseases because of the corruption of the environment, a clear metaphor for the absence of essential life ingredients such as freedom and breathable air. It is also interesting to point at the fact how Rashed, whose name means "rightly guided/reasonable", doesn't live up to his name and is

clearly misguided in the choices he makes: he drops the original for a fake copy; the real Salaam, his wife, for a coveted mistress, a fake Salaam. This is a metaphor for the age of post-truth, the triumph of forgery and the loss of identity.

BETWEEN COMEDY AND TRAGEDY

Nasrallah builds a suspenseful narrative moment around the double of the secretary and the tragi-comic confusion and chaos that ensue in the family. This first engineered double will paradoxically and mysteriously unleash the pattern of the double as a full-fledged phenomenon in the society at large. Having two women in his life looking exactly the same and keeping one at home and one in the office allows Rashed to have the illusion of more fulfillment. However, the estrangement becomes comical. The officer is shocked to see his sister in her husband's office, and Rashed just confirms to him what he thought: Salaam is now helping him in the office, he pretends, since the kids are all grown up. Rashed is so confident of the high success of the operation that no one, not even the officer with his enhanced vision, would find out the truth of the matter. Yet many of her acquaintances mention to Salaam that they have seen her in many places in town; some even become upset because she didn't say hello. As the rumors increase of people telling her that she was seen in different places at the same time, Salaam finally gives in to her suspicions when her brother calls congratulating her on her new job working in her husband's office. She pays an unannounced visit to her husband in the office, only to come face to face with herself:

She walked towards the door leading to the secretary's office and pushed it with horror. Everything came to a standstill: the air, the noise coming from the outside, Rashed, the secretary and Salaam's hand. She was before herself. (Nasrallah 2016a, 185)

Salaam's shock doubles when she goes to a café and discovers that the waitress looks exactly like her and the secretary. She first thinks that the secretary is following her: "Are you following me? Salaam asked; how dare you after all you have done?" (Nasrallah 2016a, 188) The waitress angrily accuses Salaam of following *her*:

For two months, I've been trying to get rid of you, with no success. I left my job because of you; I left my home and my city. How many times do

I have to hide, get lost! Isn't it enough that I was accused of a murder you committed?"

Salaam froze; the voice of her double was exactly like hers.

Me?

Who else? I was planning to return to my home, but they told me that they saw you here. How did you know I am here?

The waitress broke into tears. At that moment Salaam felt like she had to run away. But the waitress started yelling at her:

How did you manage to escape from prison? How? And then she screamed,

"She is a criminal, a criminal; arrest her!" (Nasrallah 2016a, 188)

The scene ends in total confusion as other doubles spring out almost everywhere and people start fighting each other, while Salaam is arrested by the security guards. What was just a rumor about people starting to look identical, brought to her by friends who reported seeing her in different places while she was at home taking care of her kids, takes frightening proportions, as Salaam finally sees with her own eyes at least two doubles looking exactly like her in two different places at the same time. The secretary and the waitress have the same voice, the same face and the same height as Salaam. This irrational phenomenon captures people's minds, as the phobia of the double spreads through the society and a curfew is declared throughout the country. Through the establishment of the first double of Salaam, with the help of what is clearly framed as Western technology, the novel inaugurates an era of the spread of falsehood and lies. Identity is threatened and truth is buried.

RASHED'S MANEUVER

To defend and extract himself from the mess using to his advantage the contagious spread of the double, Rashed abuses Salaam by offering her a false narrative: he tells her that he thought that it was really she, his wife, who came in for the job of the secretary as an exciting and fun game he thought she wanted to play with him:

I will tell you that when I first saw the secretary I really thought that it was you and that you were playing with the game of the double as a way to alleviate my anger and anxiety about my own double: the meteorologist ... and to tell the truth, I courted her thinking that it was you! (Nasrallah 2016a, 203)

Rashed pretends to have found out that the secretary is not the real Salaam but her double only when the administration needed a copy of her ID to make her payments, and finally claims that his goodness and his conscience didn't allow him to lay her off:

If we really look well, we will see that you and she are like the original and the image, like a real painting and its commercial copy, and you know well that there is nothing I hate more than those lifeless fake images ... and please forgive me that I felt like her presence reminds me of you at all times, so I kept her. (Nasrallah 2016a, 204)

The second kind of double, that is not the result of intentional action through technology, but rather a strange and a paranormal phenomenon, will help defuse the tension of Rashed's hypocrisy and abuse. Rashed feels that the spread of the doubles is a heaven-sent phenomenon; he couldn't have hoped for a better excuse to cover up what he did. He even regrets that he rushed and traveled with the secretary, subjecting her to an aesthetic operation; had he waited, perhaps nature would have fulfilled his desire to have not only another Salaam in the office but perhaps more of her.

THE METEOROLOGIST AND THE DOUBLE INDUCED BY CLIMATE CHANGE

Rashed's life is at the same time enhanced and troubled by two different doubles surrounding him. One is in the office, the double of his wife achieved through technological transformation performed on the secretary, which fills Rashed with joy and pleasure. As for the second double, it is located in the person of Rashed's unnamed neighbor, the meteorologist who lives in the same building as him and who starts suddenly looking like him. This kind of double is presented as an uncanny phenomenon that springs out of the blue, perhaps as a consequence of climate change. One day, Rashed comes face to face with himself as he waits for the elevator of his building:

Time stopped and there was a heavy silence. The neighbor looked at his watch urging Rashed to enter, but Rashed kept pressing the button of the elevator, walked one step forward and in a flash he lifted his finger from the button and slapped his neighbor:

I will kill you if you continue doing this.

The neighbor was shocked. The elevator door closed; it went up and kept moving higher and higher, as the numbers on the electronic screen showed, even though there weren't that many floors there: it was as though the slap catapulted the neighbor with the elevator to the seventh heaven. (Nasrallah 2016a, 87)

The two kinds of doubles, the engineered one and the one induced by climate change, appear almost at the same time and in parallel. The first double through technology can be looked at as an introduction that paves the way to the game of the doubles, which will become a very serious and tragic existential threat to the community. Rashed is first confronted with his double even before he travels with the secretary. His neighbor starts imitating him in everything, in the way he walks and the way he talks; he even buys a red car like Rashed's. What really scares Rashed is that now they are the same height. Anxiety and fear from the double usurping his identity and his life seize Rashed, even though he doesn't know that the neighbor who looks like him was able to deceive his wife, who bumps into the double one day in the elevator and succumbs to his charm and caresses, even sleeping with him, as she is totally misled by the resemblance between the two men. Men who fear they have doubles keep warning their wives not to open the door to anyone, while Salaam suggests to Rashed that she kill the secretary and he the meteorologist, in order to be free of anxiety. Rashed starts to observe the meteorologist and to follow him:

One idea took over his mind: he wants to invade me and grab everything I have: Salaam, the kids, the job. Then, he thought about the secretary; how did I forget the secretary, nothing will prevent him from getting to her once he was beyond my three defense lines. (Nasrallah 2016a, 166)

When his brother-in-law, the officer, pays a visit to his sister at home, he thinks he just bumped into Rashed only to hear the person denying being Rashed: "I am not him; I am the meteorologist (...) I told you I am not him" (Nasrallah 2016a, 117). Then, the following dialogue takes place between Salaam and her brother, where the officer explains what he would do if someone became his double:

I just saw someone looking exactly like Rashed: or am I wrong?

No, you're right.

He is exactly like him; how can two neighbors take after one another to this point?

I don't know. Rashed will explain to you. He is certain that when we started living here that man didn't look like him at all. But then things changed, and I pointed out to him that the neighbor looks like him. Rashed says that it may be related to the weather and climate change since the seasons almost got reduced to one single season. I noticed that this idea terrified him. (Nasrallah 2016a, 117)

When Salaam asks her brother if he has bumped into anyone looking like him, the officer is categorical:

Never; I'd kill him if that ever happens.

You'd kill him?

Sure. I think one single mirror is enough for me. To have a double means that every day you go to work or any other place carrying with you your living room mirror. That's crazy, don't you think? (Nasrallah 2016a, 118)

It may not be a coincidence that it is the character of the meteorologist who first starts exhibiting signs of the paranormal resemblance, eventually becoming Rashed's first double, before his personal driver becomes Rashed's second double, looking exactly like him. The meteorologist's job is to prepare weather forecasts, and with climate change and the distortion of the seasons, all his predictions have lost credibility: some people start seeing him as the culprit. As he is the first to suffer from the double distortion, it is as though Mother Nature took revenge on him by distorting him. "Through his weather forecast bulletins, he was promising people nice weather and balanced temperatures with some clouds in the sky at dawn. But he was lying" (Nasrallah 2016a, 201). The climate-induced double and the figure of the meteorologist can be interpreted as an estrangement of a bankrupt political elite that keeps promising better life conditions; perhaps even a hint at a failed Palestinian leadership that keeps selling to the Palestinian people empty promises and false hopes for independence and autonomy, only for the situation on the ground to become worse and unlivable under the relentless system of land grab and occupation.

Rashed attacks his double one day on the parking lot; the fight between the two men attracts onlookers and other neighbors who try to end the attack. One person, the vegetable seller, urges the meteorologist to leave the neighborhood, accusing him of being the root cause of all their problems:

Honestly, the neighbors should have killed you since the blunder of your weather forecast... half of our calamity is because of you. You distorted the reputation of the sun, the clouds, the wind and the air and so the sun could never rise again, and it stopped raining, and all that's left to us is the putrid smell of the air. (Nasrallah 2016a, 217)

The vegetable seller is adamant in his attitude toward the meteorologist, accusing him of wanting to usurp Rashed's identity and then become a threat to the community, as he argues with him in this exchange:

You want to get rid of him before he gets rid of you.
 And why would I want to get rid of him at the first place?
 Because you are his double.
 Rather, he is my double.
 No, you are his double.
 And what's wrong with that?
 What's wrong with that?

The vegetable seller yelled as he hit the meteorologist on his head with his chopper. The meteorologist fainted and fell to the ground. "This is because after you get rid of him, you will try to be my double and get rid of me, you, liar who distorted everything from the sun to the innocent clouds and the history of the wind." (Nasrallah 2016a, 217)

The uncanny contagion of the doubles becomes more widespread, leading to a state of chaos and crimes of people killing their doubles, while others who were unsatisfied with their looks start kidnapping people in order to try to look like them:

Some people who were not satisfied with their looks took the opportunity and kidnapped people they wanted to look like, hoping for the contagion to work, only to be disappointed when those kidnapped ended up looking like their kidnappers. And instead of seeing themselves in the mirrors, they now meet with them outside the mirrors. As for the rich, they started migrating to faraway planets ... (Nasrallah 2016a, 225)

The novel's estrangement of the cultural and political environment and the dramatization of the climate-induced double rely on, among other things, scientific fears and warnings. In face of the spread of the double and alarmed by the extent of the phenomenon, the scientific community

in the novel gets involved. Weighing in on the phenomenon, scientists in the fields of social sciences and evolutionary biology are invited to a television program; they start making apocalyptic, frightening scenarios, predicting that this might be the beginning of the collapse of human society and the disappearance of differences, where eventually only one single human being would survive and emerge out of this. Worse, rumors of mutation cases between humans and their domestic animals start to circulate, a risk that is said to be scientifically plausible, as the genetic maps between some animals and the human species are very close. This risk is also endorsed by the climate imbalance and the upsetting of nature, as an evolutionary biologist argues:

We should keep in mind that Mother Nature is upset: the imbalance we see in the length of the day and night, and the confusion of the seasons, all of that points to that direction. And if the seasons got reduced to one season, why wouldn't humans become reduced to just one single human, or even become in the form of their animals? The literature is rife with mutation stories like this as we can find in popular literature, for example. Honestly, we have caused so much damage to this planet. (Nasrallah 2016a, 235)

Once again, behind the game of the doubles' threat to invade and usurp each other's identity, the novel is clearly hinting at the Palestinian predicament, the issue of belonging and the disputed claim to the land, as both the Palestinians and their neighbors keep asserting their rights to the same ancestral land and culture, while the Palestinians are relentlessly attacked by a powerful settler-colonization machine that tries to erase their existence and appropriate the history and the culture of Palestine. At the core of the game, we find the fear of erasure that terrifies the different actors and drives them to cling tightly to their identity and selves in the existential fight for survival.

THE CASTLE

Things take a more frightening turn when a double emerges of the highest executive authority in the Castle; this leads to rumors of an attempted coup against the leader, putting the country on alert. A curfew is declared in the country, and checkpoints are set everywhere to verify the identity of people as the war of the doubles breaks out and people kill each other while prisons are full of criminals. In this condition, the authorities of the

Castle resort to a more dramatic and irrational action when they start firing randomly on all the inhabitants to try to end the war, causing more people to die. They also stop the tanks of medical steam which were used to diffuse breathable elements into the air, while Rashed thinks that “the country needs a giant device to take it back to what it was before the War” (Nasrallah 2016a, 314).

At the center of the novel, we find the social and political criticism the author formulates indirectly both at the authoritarian and corrupt governing elite, but also at the supposedly progressive intellectuals and opponents to the regime. Rashed incarnates the figure of the dissident who was known for his opposition to the authority of the Castle: he stood by his ideals and resisted torture. But he soon bridges the gap and rallies to the side of his former executioners when he marries Salaam, and later by joining the Castle in a business partnership when he creates the project called the Prisoners of Hope. His alliance with the authorities corrupts him: it makes him a greedy businessman, and in the end, he is made into a copy of the men of the Castle. All along, the Castle and the officer keep Rashed under their surveillance until they break his spirit. As his brother-in-law, the officer keeps a close eye on the household of his sister and follows the unfolding of the comedy of the secretary’s double: he was aware of Rashed’s cheating and deception. One day he asked Rashed, “Why did you deceive me?”, only to hear Rashed defusing the tension by saying: “I was a victim like you, and if I didn’t turn it into a comedy, I would have gone mad!” (Nasrallah 2016a, 226).

On his birthday, as he is buying a cake to celebrate, Rashed ends up arrested and put in jail for his attempt to kill his neighbor, the meteorologist who wanted to get the cake himself to celebrate Rashed’s birthday. His brother-in-law and the executives of the Castle take their revenge on him. Once in jail, with the Prisoners of Hope, a project he helped create, as a cheater and a deceiver of Salaam and the authorities, Rashed finds his punishment in the dungeons of the Castle. Furthermore, his brother-in-law, the officer who supervises torture, turns him into a puppet and an executioner, when he asks him to beat and torture other prisoners on the pretense that they were looking like his (Rashed’s) double. Rashed does this, only to find out that this was a trap set by the officer, as the supposed doubles were only wearing masks and disguised as if they were Rashed’s doubles. The officer not only deceives Rashed and takes revenge on him on the day of his birthday, but he also proves to him that from a prisoner Rashed has become an executioner, and ultimately he has now become a

symbolic double of the officer and the highest executive authority in the Castle, sharing with them their corrupt practices and their immoral evil essence. This is the ultimate success for the bankrupt Castle: to domesticate the population and keep everyone under their control. “How do you find the celebration?” the executive of the Castle asks Rashed. “You know, our ability to deceive you is perhaps our best bet to celebrate your birthday” (Nasrallah 2016a, 291).

In conclusion, *Dog War II* can be described as an apocalyptic dystopian fantasy that while drawing on familiar SF tropes such as the fear of the double and climate changes, succeeds in estranging these tropes and adapting them to the critique of a dark authoritarian social and political context of Arab culture, all while exposing policed regimes where human lives are threatened in their existence, surveilled and devalued by a system that cares only about its own survival. The novel warns against threats to peace in an age where the false and the fake would prevail, eclipsing rights and truth, and where the fight to assert identity preservation and rights would be at its highest. *Dog War II* ends on a touch of sarcastic dark humor, perhaps an allusion to the cyclic nature of wars, presaging Dog War III, when the undead ghost of the meteorologist is back, riding a camel and haunting Rashed, who is standing in front of his black tent wearing a turban, a long beard and a long black dress. Rashed addresses the meteorologist by asking him: “May your mother lose you, son of al-Ghabra; what brought you back here?” (Nasrallah 2016a, 340). This is a reference to one of the longest pre-Islamic wars, between the tribes of Dahes and al-Ghabra, and to a perennial cycle of wars in the Middle East.

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