**Facultad de Filosofía y Letras
Departamento de Filología Moderna**

**Nancy Huston:
The Ways of Self-Translating**

**Nancy Huston:
Estrategias de autotraducción**

Marlisa Amanda Richters

2012

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A thesis submitted by Marlisa Amanda Richters in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of a Doctor in Philosophy in English Philology at the Universidad de León. Directed by Julio César Santoyo Mediavilla.

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2012

To my parents

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I

Introduction

“Do you know Nancy Huston?” After asking a large number of people this question – family and friends who live in France, expatriate Canadians living in Spain and in Germany, even new people I meet, particularly if they are readers – my conclusion has been that Huston is fairly unknown to the average reader. As a matter of fact, I have only met one person so far, a Frenchwoman living in Belgium, who reads her regularly, and avidly at that. And yet, at the age of 58, Huston has a long list of works to cite, including twelve novels, all of which she has translated, several books comprising her numerous essays, and such diverse publications as film scripts, in one of which she also plays a minor role, or plays such as *Jocaste Reine*, also translated into English, or the musical *Angela et Marina: Tragicomédie musicale* – not to mention the translations of other authors' books.

The name Nancy Huston crossed my path while teaching French literature at the University of León several years ago. The textbook I was using was wonderfully suited to introducing French literature to intermediate students. French writers, but also French-writing authors, among them Nancy Huston, are introduced with a short extract of one of their major works and some questions for reflection. The extract by Huston was taken from her collection of essays entitled *Losing North*, originally written in French as *Nord Perdu*. I found the extract in question intriguing –

in it she spoke about how a different language brings with it a new world view. As a result I ended up buying the book in order to be able to read all she had to say on the topic. The reading was thoroughly enjoyable and spoke to me on a very personal level. The obvious reason for this is that I am not only an expatriate, living in Spain at the moment, but also bilingual in English and German, having spent most of my childhood in Germany with American parents.

Huston's biography, which is to be found in chapter 3, explains why Huston became a writer in France and in French, and the analysis of her novel *Plainsong* will give insight into why she started translating her own works on a regular basis. But what *Losing North*, and its counterpart *Nord Perdu* for that matter, express very well is what it is to be an expatriate. In the chapter called *Orientation* she writes: "Even *with* a French childhood, there are any number of people who have a hard time feeling French! Without one, it's impossible." (p. 7). I have come to the conclusion that I feel my character to be more German than American, because I spent my formative years in Germany. However, until I saw it in writing, I was unsure if my analysis was isolated, i.e., limited to my own experience, or more general. In the chapter *Disorientation* Huston expresses the thought that "here you set aside what you used to be..., there you set aside what you've become..." (p. 11). In other words, your life in the "other place" has very little bearing on your life here; which also explains why expatriates generally find each other abroad. As the saying goes: 'Birds of a feather flock together.' If, furthermore, two foreigners are from the same country, there is the advantage of being able to speak and reminisce about 'life back home.' And on goes the list of points that Huston makes, with which I found myself agreeing at every turn of the page.

But apart from the relative obscurity of Nancy Huston – in fact, she has won a large number of prizes in France and abroad, on both sides of the Atlantic – and the evident connection I feel to her 'plight' as an expatriate, there is a third issue that made me choose Huston for my dissertation: my status as a bilingual speaker. She considers herself a 'false bilingual,' to use her own term, with which she means that she reached bilingualism at a later stage in life and not as a child. For her, the two languages are completely separate: “I often have the feeling that they “sleep apart” in my brain. Far from being comfortably settled in face to face or back to back or side by side, they are distinct and hierarchized: first English then French in my life, first English then French in my writing. The words say it well: your native or “mother” tongue, the one you acquire in earliest childhood, enfolds and envelops you so that *you* belong to *it*, whereas with the “adopted” tongue, it's the other way around – you're the one who needs to mother it, master it, and make *it* belong to *you*.” (p. 47). Despite being a 'false bilingual,' Huston has a fantastic command of both languages, and is able to play with them, make puns, and use them in any way she chooses.

I, on the other hand, would be considered by Huston as a 'true bilingual,' having grown up with two languages. I believe my bilingual status is the reason for my love of languages. It was therefore a logical conclusion for me to search for a topic which would allow me to use more than one language. Given my present situation, in which I am teaching French part-time at the local university, it seemed an appropriate choice to make English and French the two languages to work with. With these considerations in mind, it was an easy step to translation studies and more particularly, self-translation, which is relatively little researched compared to other fields, and which is attractive to me because a minimum of two languages is involved. Furthermore, if I am ever able to realize my dream

of writing a book reflecting on my experience of living as an expatriate in León, the questions arise: should I attempt to translate this as yet imaginary book into German, and why?

More will be said about the field of self-translation, both in the chapters 'History of Self-translation' and 'Theoretical Framework.' In the subsequent chapter, Nancy Huston will be given prominence with a biography and her bibliography. The analyses of three of Huston's novels will follow. The first is *Plainsong*, which Huston translated from English to French because she could not find a publisher for the English version. It was a return to English for her. Since then, she has chosen the language of her characters as her first language in which to write. The second book to be analyzed, *Slow Emergencies*, was also written in English and tells of a family in a small university town somewhere in New England. The third book, *L'empreinte de l'ange*, was written in French, as the story takes place in Paris.

II

Self-translation in Perspective

“I also, at times, translate my own work either from English into French or vice versa. That self-translating activity is certainly not very common in the field of creative writing. In that sense I am somewhat of a phenomenon.”¹

“Oui, déjà des auteurs bilingues, il n’y en a pas beaucoup. Encore moins qui se traduisent eux-mêmes; le seul qui faisait cela à ma connaissance, c’était Beckett.”²

It is a widespread belief that self-translation is a rare phenomenon. Strange as it may seem, even some self-translators are unaware of the actual situation regarding self-translation, as demonstrated by the quotes by Raymond Federman and Vassilis Alexakis above. In fact, self-translation has been carried out for centuries and is a much more widespread occurrence than is generally known. In literary studies it is frowned upon, in translation studies it is mostly ignored. It is a field that needs to be explored to a much greater extent in order to be fully understood. I will start by sketching the history of self-translation and the present-day situation.

2.1. History of Literary Self-Translation

Literary self-translation is as old as the Middle Ages, if not older. Julio

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¹ Raymond Federman. 1993. *Critifiction: Postmodern Essays*. New York, State University of New York Press, p. 76.

² Marchand, Nathalie. 2002. “Vassilis Alexakis, des mots pour héros”. In: *Info-Grèce*, <http://www.info-grèce.com/modules.php?name=Magazine&op=printpage&artid=88>. (10 August 2011)

César Santoyo, in his article “Autotraducciones: Una perspectiva histórica,”³ mentions the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus from the first century AD, who wrote seven books in Aramaic and later translated them himself into Greek, all the while correcting mistakes in the first set of books. Next, Pedro Alfonso, another Jew, who lived in Spain during the Middle Ages, is mentioned. At that point in time, Latin was the *lingua franca* of the educated world, and literary production utilized that language, not the vernacular. Jan Walsh Hokenson and Marcella Munson, in their book, *The Bilingual Text*, speak of a vertical axis, in which Latin was very much superior to the vernacular, both in prestige and actual vocabulary. A translation into the vernacular often had to revert to paraphrasing or to the use of several synonyms to express one idea in Latin. It was often the case that a vernacular text or poem was translated into Latin, in order to reach a wider readership or to become 'immortal.' It must also be understood that in those days the concept of translation was not the same as ours, nor was the concept of authorship. “Medieval translation challenges our modern paradigms through its emphasis on generational transition or evolution (*translatio*), rather than sameness or equivalency: the point was not to produce an identical text in a different language, but instead to produce a “new” text that would prompt a revaluation of the *auctoritas* on which the new is based.” (Hokenson & Munson 2007: 26). Furthermore, the translated text was not necessarily meant to be a separate entity, instead the two were to be complementary.

With the onset of the Renaissance, however, the vernaculars, such as French, took on a more dominant role. The translation from Latin helped establish poetic traditions in the vernaculars. It was also during this time that the Reformation took place, when the Bible was first translated into

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³ in *Meta: Translator's Journal*, vol.50, n°3, 2005, pp. 858-867.

vernacular languages. In those days, nevertheless, there was not always a clear-cut line between imitation and translation, so that "translating one's own poems may well have been seen as a double act of poetic creation." (ibid.: 67).

One of the first poets to have translated his own work vernacular-vernacular was the fifteenth century French poet Charles d'Orléans. He was a transitional figure, part medieval, part Renaissance, and "bridged two political cultures, lived two languages, and straddled two literary eras" (ibid.: 51). He was taken captive by the English for twenty-five years and produced a large amount of lyric poetry in French and English. Though formerly his translations were not considered to have been written by the same person, scholarship is now more and more demonstrating his double heritage, which lead him to self-translate in different ways.

By the seventeenth century, Latin had lost influence to the vernaculars, and French was becoming the new lingua franca, though as a lingua franca it remained the language of the learned. Even in France, the illiterate did not speak French, but dialects. It was common, in those times, to translate between French and other vernaculars. Moreover, there existed a general practice of using French translations of classics for retranslation into other vernaculars, which gained such momentum at this time, that it persisted up until the nineteenth century. In addition, several courts took up residence in France during exile, e.g., the English court during civil war. In France, more so than in other European countries, there existed the principle of *la belle infidèle*, "the unfaithful literary translation whose literary beauties seduce the reader into foregoing mere accuracy, in preference to elegance and nobility of style" (ibid.: 86-87). And expatriates

such as Thomas Hobbes, upon returning to England from Paris, believed translation should enrich the national literature and language rather than promote³ a certain author.

With the colonization of the Americas and other areas, translation from Latin also occurred into local vernaculars in those parts of the world. "During the expansion of political states and their overseas empires, translation was widely promoted to advance the nation, both by enriching the national language with new words, and by educating ever more people through the study of translated classical texts and contemporary texts from other vernaculars." (ibid.: 91).

The exiling of different groups, such as the Huguenots from France in 1686 and a large number of Jesuits from Spain in 1767, impacted translation practices and the book market, as well as increasing the amount of literature that was transported from one country to another, as those in exile translated literature from their new country into their mother tongue. Furthermore, legal printing matters, such as in France, where the printers had permanent proprietary rights over all the books they printed, led to a number of writers translating their works and sending them to be printed abroad.

Throughout the eighteenth century, self-translation slowly lost its importance, though it by no means became non-existent. During this time, the Venetian dramatist Carlo Goldoni, for example, translated his play *Le Bourru bienfaisant* into Italian as *Il Burbero di bon cuore*, making sure that the translation conformed to the Italian style. Other fields saw self-translation practices as well. In the field of medicine, for example, Santoyo

mentions a Scotsman of this era, John Brown, who translated the medical book *Elementa Medicinae* from Latin into English.⁴

The beginning of the nineteenth century was marked by a rise in national identity. The idea increasingly became “one nation, one language” (Schleiermacher). Such Germans as Herder, Humboldt and Schleiermacher were fundamental in making the monolingual writer the ideal, which led to a sharp decrease in bilingual writing. The mainstream thinking centered around such ideas as 'the change of language meant a change in perspective' and 'a writer was not capable of writing well in a language other than his mother tongue.' During the twentieth century, however, there was a great increase in bilingual writing, in part because of the two world wars, which led to great exoduses, and because of decolonization. Furthermore, the lines of unique literary traditions had by this time been so far altered, that recent writers do not have to comply with strict norms in each language, as was the case in the past.

“Modern bilingual writers, utterly free to transpose a text as they wish, seem to hew to only one common translative standard, and that standard is stylistic. However variously applied in each case, it entails transposition of the writer's unique idiolect.” (ibid.: 166).

2.2. The Present Situation

The situation during the twentieth century and at the beginning of the twenty-first is no less surprising. The most common names in self-

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⁴ “Autotraducciones: Una perspectiva histórica.” in *Meta: Translator's Journal*, vol. 50, n° 3, 2005, pp. 858-867.

translation are Samuel Beckett (English and French), Vladimir Nabokov (Russian and English) and Julian Green (English and French), all three of whom are discussed in some detail as case studies in Hokenson and Munson's book. In Spain alone, as Santoyo points out in his article "Blank Spaces in the History of Translation," "over two hundred writers are nowadays translating their works from Catalan, Basque, or Galician into Castilian [...]"⁵ Given Spain's linguistic make-up, with the official Castilian spoken across the whole nation, while the other official languages are only spoken in certain areas, it seems logical that those authors writing in a regional language would translate themselves, being bilingual, in order to reach a wider readership. There are, however, many more writers in languages that are much less associated with self-translation than Spanish or French, who translate themselves. Santoyo mentions countries such as Turkey (Talât Sait Halman), Denmark (the famous Karen Blixen), Pakistan and India (Miatreya Devi, Raja Rao, Vijayan), and Kyrgyzstan, whose best known novelist, Chyngyz Aitmatov, wrote novels both in Russian and Kyrgyz and translated them into the other.⁶ One case that particularly stands out during the twentieth century is that of Rabindranath Tagore, who translated his own poems from Bengali to English – earning himself a Nobel Prize in literature – but ultimately regretted having done so. He felt that thereby he did injustice to himself. (Hokenson & Munson 2007: 170).

The field of self-translation raises many questions, such as – what directionality of languages do writers, or perhaps one particular writer, use, when translating: always the same direction or in both? Is it a one time

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⁵ Santoyo, Julio César. 2006. "Blank Spaces in the History of Translation." In: Georges L. Bastin / Paula F. Bandia (Hgg.): *Charting the Future of Translation History. Current Discourses and Methodology*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, p. 24.

⁶ Santoyo, Julio César. "Autotraducciones: Una perspectiva histórica." *Meta: Translator's Journal*, vol.50, nº3, 2005, pp. 858-867

occurrence, or a repeated one, leading to a body of work in two languages? What motivated the writer to choose a second language, was it a forced choice or an intentional one? This dissertation will attempt to answer these questions. A study of my chosen subject, namely Nancy Huston, and three of her self-translated novels, will raise many more specific questions, which I hope to answer through the analyses of these novels by Nancy Huston.

III

Theoretical Framework

After having given this short overview of self-translation throughout history, it is time to focus on the topic of my work by formulating a brief theoretical framework.

To begin with, it is perhaps useful to give a definition of 'translation.'

”Translation: a written or spoken rendering of the meaning of a word or text in another language.”⁷

What is important to keep in mind when reading the Oxford definition above is that not only is the transfer from source text (ST) in language L1 to target text (TT) in L2 important, but also the fact that the source text is written by an author (A) and translated by a translator (T). This can be visually exemplified with the following diagram:

$$A \rightarrow \text{ST in } L_1 \rightarrow T \rightarrow \text{TT in } L_2$$

As far back as Cicero (106-43 BC) debate has existed as to whether a translation should be literal/faithful/word-for-word – there exist several designations for this idea – or free/sense-for-sense. Such Latin poets as Cicero and Horace (65-8 BC) condemned word-for-word translation and advocated a free translation, sometimes called imitation. Their translations from Greek were meant for their contemporary Roman citizens and consequently adapted to them.

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⁷ Oxford University Press online dictionary at: <http://english.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/translation>.

A few centuries later, Jerome (347-420 AD), translator of the *Vulgate*, which ultimately became the definitive and officially-promulgated Latin version of the Bible in the Roman Catholic Church, attacked literal translation as well. He coined the term 'sense-for-sense' translation. Though initially he chose word-for-word translation whenever the Holy Scriptures were involved, he eventually came to advocate free translation. Similarly, Martin Luther, in his Bible translation into German in the sixteenth century, generally used a loose translation based on how the people spoke, and which was able to be understood by the people.

In France, as the history of self-translation shows, *Les Belles Infidèles* had appeared by the seventeenth century. There was a general sentiment in France that foreign texts, particularly those related to poetry and literature, could not be rendered in another language. Thus, translators adapted the Greek and Latin texts to fit the tastes of the times, thereby creating *une belle traduction*. It must be added, at this point, that not everyone in France embraced *Les Belles Infidèles*.

Inasmuch as France dominated seventeenth- and eighteenth-century continental Europe in such different aspects as politics, the sciences and the arts, many French intellectuals and translators believed in the inherent superiority of their language and culture. For a long time, French literary models were imitated, and German translators often used French intermediary texts, rather than the original source texts in English, Latin and other languages. During the eighteenth century, however, the French models came to be resented, and gradually were replaced by ideas requiring that the mentalities of different nations reflected in the peculiarities of their respective languages should be respected and the principle that a translation must not violate the 'thoughts' of the original or deviate from its source in

any way. It was Schleiermacher (1768-1834), who later formulated and advocated the 'foreignizing strategy,' which “sent the reader abroad.”⁸ He may have wanted to embrace the foreign, but his tactic might also have been a way to oppose France's cultural dominion and promote German literature.

“In the twentieth century, this Romantic foreignizing conception of translation has been picked up and passed on by a succession of brilliant theorists, from Walter Benjamin (1892-1940, “The Task of the Translator,” 1923), through Martin Heidegger (1889-1976, *The Principle of Ground*, 1957), to George Steiner (*After Babel, Invisibility*, 1995), and others. Like most of their Romantic precursors, these later theorists typically dualize translation and assign overtly moral charges to the two choices: either you domesticate the SL [source language] text, cravenly assimilate it to the flat denatured ordinary language of the TL [target language] culture, or you foreignize it, retain some of its alterity through literalism, and so heroically resist the flattening pressure of commodity capitalism.”⁹

Even today, the issue is not fully resolved. As recently as 1985, Theo Hermans wrote: “From the point of view of the target literature, all translation implies a degree of manipulation of the source text for a certain purpose.”¹⁰ And only a year ago, Gideon Toury wrote: “Translation is always a political act.”¹¹ Certainly, as Julio César Santoyo points out in his discourse “Traducción: ¿Manipulación o transformación necesaria?”,

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⁸ Venuti, Lawrence. 1995. *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. London & New York: Routledge.

⁹ Robinson, Douglas. “Literal translation” (p. 127) in Baker, Mona (ed.). 1989. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*. London and New York: Routledge.

¹⁰ Hermans, Theo (ed.). 1985. *The Manipulation of Literature: Studies in Literary Translation*. London & Sydney: Croom Helm.

¹¹ Toury, Gideon. 2010. “Some Recent (and More Recent) Myths in Translation Studies: An Essay on the Present and Future of the Discipline” (p. 166) in Muñoz-Calvo, Micaela & Buesa-Gomez, Carmen (eds.), *Translation and Cultural Identity: Selected Essays on Translation and Cross-Cultural Communication*, Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 156-171.

transformation in translation is necessary. If I may quote Santoyo in Spanish (p. 11): “La manipulación busca dirigir el texto traducido hacia metas y objetivos distintos de los del original; la transformación, no: la transformación, sobre todo cuando es necesaria, busca una mayor cercanía del nuevo texto al lector meta, mayor que la que la lectura del propio original podría ofrecerle; busca que el lector meta sienta el texto tan suyo como si leyera el original.”

Having said all this, it is necessary, though, to take into consideration the case of self-translation, for the very notions that have been mentioned previously do not apply in the same way to self-translation.

To begin with, if we resort to a diagram again, it would take on the form:

$$A \rightarrow \text{ST in } L_1 \rightarrow A \rightarrow \text{TT in } L_2$$

The one significant difference here is that the author is writer and translator at the same time. Ultimately, he has all the freedom in the world to take the liberties he wishes to. And nobody can criticize him for it – not the author (since he is one and the same person), not the public, nor other translators. Each self-translator is free to translate as he pleases.

When considering the phenomenon of self-translation – as we have seen, more prevalent than generally recognized – it must also be said that, given the freedom of self-translation, there is not one norm to speak of. Every self-translator is a world unto himself. A few examples should suffice to illustrate this point. Suso de Toro, a writer from Galicia, translates his own novels from Galician to Castilian. In his novel

Ambulancia, he felt it was a shame that he had 'killed off' the inspector and decided that the translation into Castilian was a great opportunity to bring him back to life. As a second example I chose Beckett, the most famous of self-translators. His self-translation process was not always the same, and often the lapse of time between the original and its translation had an influence on the extent of discrepancy between the two. The more time elapsed between the original and the translation, the greater the changes. The novel *Mercier and Camier*, for example, lost about 12% in volume when it was translated from French to English.¹² (The French was published in 1946, its English translation in 1974). Both examples illustrate that the self-translator is able to 'get away with' things that the translator is not.

Another example I wish to cite here relates to cultural aspects, regarding which the self-translator has to make a choice. Carme Riera, who translates her own work from Catalan to Castilian Spanish, decided to change all the cultural references in her novel *La novel·la experimental*. References to the literary world of Catalunya became references to the world of Castilian literature. When the main character mentions the Catalan writer Espriu in the Catalan version, he mentions Cervantes in the Spanish one. The 'Premi Prudenci' becomes the Planeta Prize, known to all Spaniards. And on the list goes. The famous self-translator Nabokov proceeded similarly in a translation of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* into Russian. The main character Alice, with a very English name, became Ania, a diminutive of the common Russian name Anna. When Alice, in chapter two, loses her self-confidence and wonders if she has become 'Ada' or 'Mabel,' Ania in Nabokov's version worries about turning into 'Ada' or 'Assia.' Nabokov also treated the complex references to Victorian England

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¹² Connor, Steven in his article "Traduttore, Traditore: Samuel Beckett's Translation of *Mercier et Camier*." http://www.english.fsu.edu/jobs/num1112/027_CONNOR.PDF (5 October 2011)

and the many plays on words in this way, in order for the readers, who were children in this case, to understand.

Riera and Nabokov have proceeded in an similar fashion. There is, however, one big difference: Nabokov's translation is daring – it is well-done and acceptable within the realm of translation of children's books – whereas Riera's translation neither needs justification nor does it depend on acceptance, simply because it is a self-translation.

Self-translation and the existence of two versions of the same novel throw up another point, however, which relates to which of the two versions is chosen by further translators for translation into a third language. In the case of Tagore, for example, it was the English version that led to his fame world-wide. There are two main reasons for the choice of translating the English version: certainly, English is much more accessible as a language than Bengali is. Furthermore, this English version won the Nobel Prize for literature. It has been widely documented, though, that the Bengali and English versions are quite different. According to Hokenson and Munson, the Bengali version is much superior, while the English version is characterized by a somewhat stiff Edwardian style.

Though sometimes the language pair – an uncommon one coupled with a common language, such as English or French – will make the choice for translation self-evident, at other times the mere fact that the translation was done by the author himself will cause the first version to fall into oblivion to some respect, as was the case with Tagore, whose first version did not go beyond his country.

What becomes clear through all these examples is that every self-

translator must be seen as an individual case. Since there is liberty to change or remain faithful, each self-translator may apply his own rules, procedures, etc., and revise these very same procedures in the next self-translation. It is in this light that I have chosen Nancy Huston, the self-translator, in order to find out how she functions with regard to self-translation. Pertinent questions regarding her directionality in self-translation and the frequency with which she self-translates have already been raised. But I also hope to demonstrate that Huston uses self-translation as a tool. In this respect, it is important to be aware of how she 'stumbled upon' self-translation. Furthermore, the question regarding the lapse of time between the original and translation must be answered. Is it also important to verify if her proclamation “Je tiens à ce que les deux versions soient identiques dans la mesure du possible,”¹³ is true or not. In the case of Nancy Huston, must one speak of 'domestication' or 'foreignization?' But above all, the fundamental question regarding Huston is: Is there a pattern? Can cases be established? Is she systematic in her self-translation? Does she follow a certain methodology? By answering all these questions I hope to provide a clear picture of who Nancy Huston, the self-translator, is.

*

To start my examination of Nancy Huston's work, a detailed biography and bibliography will be provided. The main body of my work will comprise the analyses of the three novels *Plainsong/Cantiques des plaines* (PS/CP), *Slow Emergencies/La virevolte* (SE/VV), and *L'empreinte de l'ange/The Mark of the Angel* (EA/MA). Each of these three sections

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¹³ Yi, Mi-Kyung. 2001. “Épreuves de l'étranger : entretien avec Nancy Huston réalisé par Mi-Kyung YI.” *Horizons philosophiques*, vol. 12, n° 1, pp. 1-16.

starts with the specific bibliographical references for the original novels and the novels cited, continues with a brief summary of the novel, followed by an in-depth analysis. Finally, each section closes with the conclusions that can be drawn from the analysis. In the final conclusions of my work I hope to point out the patterns that can be established for Nancy Huston concerning her self-translation.

IV

Nancy Huston

Nancy Huston is an extremely multifaceted writer. She has written novels, essays, articles, but also children's books and a novel for teenagers, movie scripts and plays. Furthermore, she is an accomplished musician and has dabbled in acting, as well as having been a lecturer and the co-founder of a magazine. More light will be shed on these aspects both in the biography and in the bibliography later in this chapter. It is important to note, however, that Huston is one of those writers whose personal history not only has a profound influence on her writing career as such, but also permeates most of her writing in a very tangible way, both fiction and non-fiction, and must therefore be explained in detail.

4.1. Biography of Nancy Huston

Nancy Louise Huston was born in Calgary, Alberta, Canada on September 16, 1953, to James Palmer Huston, a mathematician and physicist, and Mary Louise Engels, a clinical psychologist. Where exactly her ancestors came from is not generally known, but in *Losing North* she describes herself as “a Calgarian proud of her Irish stock” (Huston 2002b: 94). Furthermore, she describes her family as a religious one. “Mon grand-père paternel était pasteur, pour commencer; la sœur de mon père était missionnaire au Népal, et ces deux parangons de la vertu chrétienne pesaient lourdement sur mon père.”¹⁴ Which Protestant denomination they

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¹⁴ <http://perso.orange.fr/mondalire/Huston.htm> (7 June 2007)

belonged to is unclear, but Huston indicated her mother was from a different one than her father. “Donc, quand ils se sont mariés, ils ont fait une sorte de «compromis»: la cérémonie s’est tenue à la très libérale et moderniste église unitarienne, et c’est là que, au fil des ans, leurs trois enfants ont été baptisés.”¹⁵ The Unitarian Church’s biggest distinction from other Protestant denominations is that it does not believe in the Trinity but rather in “the oneness of God.”¹⁶ In other words, Jesus was not divine but a great man and a prophet of God, perhaps even a supernatural being, but not God himself and he is not prayed to. Generally speaking, the Unitarian church is considered as quite liberal. Huston herself considered her mother to be unbelieving. “Ma mère était protestante elle aussi, mécréante depuis longtemps, je crois.”¹⁷ Religion certainly is very present in her works, whether the characters are leaning towards or away from it. Back in 2000 she wrote the preface to a publication in French of *L’Évangile selon Saint Matthieu*. In *Dolce Agonia*, for example, the narrator is God himself, and one of her more recent publication is a translation of one of André Comte-Sponville’s works called *Little Book of Atheist Spirituality*.

In the essay “Déracinement du savoir, un parcours en six étapes” (Huston 2004b: 13-14) she describes her parents in the following way: “Les sciences pures c’est à mon père qu’elles appartenaient: aussi loin qu’il m’en souviens, mon père a partagé avec moi ses passions de physiciens et de mathématicien...”

“Ma mère, pour sa part, était portée sur les arts: c’était une bonne pianiste, une grande lectrice, amateur de théâtre, de ballet, d’opéra...”

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¹⁵ <http://perso.orange.fr/mondalire/Huston.htm> (7 June 2007)

¹⁶ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/unitarianism/ataglance/glance.shtml> (12 March 2008)

¹⁷ <http://perso.orange.fr/mondalire/Huston.htm> (10 June 2007)

“Pour autant, il serait trop facile de dire que ma mère a fabriqué l'hémisphère droit de mon cerveau et mon père, l'hémisphère gauche, et que mon propre sentiment d'être douloureusement partagée entre théorie et fiction reflète mon refus de choisir entre ces deux êtres-là, qui se sont séparés quand j'ai eu six ans. Non: le fait est que ma mère est dotée d'une intelligence plutôt froide et d'un caractère rationnel, efficace, terre-à-terre, alors que mon père est un grand émotif, un homme tourmenté par des doutes et des interrogations spirituels...” (Huston 2004b: 13-14).

When Huston was six years old, her mother abruptly left the home to form a new family. This traumatic event has been explicitly dealt with in *La virevolte*, *Prodige: polyphonie*, *Nord perdu*, and *Fault Lines*, but also in articles and essays such as “Journal de la Création” or “La pas trop proche.” “Le lien que j’avais, petite, avec ma mère était un lien d’absence, exclusivement nourri d’imaginaire et d’évocations à travers ses lettres, ses mots... Cela ne m’intéressait pas d’avoir des relations civiles avec ma mère. Je n’ai commencé à mesurer la perte que lorsque je suis devenue mère. Comment a-t-elle pu couper le lien avec trois enfants: mon frère, ma sœur et moi? C’est devenu de plus en plus opaque; en tout cas, c’est une chose qui ne se répare pas.”¹⁸ It was her father, along with a second wife, who took care of the three children. “Dans une interversion parfaite du schéma de la psychanalyse classique, le mère partie au loin, joignable exclusivement par lettres, est devenue symbole (liée à l’écriture) alors que le père, très présent dans la vie de tous les jours, relevait plutôt de l’ordre du réel.” (ibid.: 15).

“C’est pour cela que je suis devenue écrivain, parce qu’il avait dans ma vie quelque chose d’incompréhensible qui requérait un immense et

¹⁸ http://www.lexpress.fr/culture/livre/nancy-huston_804287.html

perpétuel effort d'imagination pour tenter de le comprendre. Dans *La virevolte*, je me suis efforcée de me mettre à la place d'une mère qui abandonne ses enfants. Écrire permet de tout voir en face.”¹⁹

She considers herself to have had “une enfance instable, marquée par des déménagements fréquents.”²⁰ During the time her parents were married they moved 18 times, finally divorcing in 1959, when she was six years old. In 1968, at the age of fifteen, her family moved to the USA, to the town of Wilton in New Hampshire. “Cela a changé ma vie. Jusqu'alors, j'étais très obsédée par mon physique, par les apparences. Je me suis trouvée plongée dans le monde hippie, et cela m'a beaucoup détendue.”²¹ She took her first literature courses there, “à proprement parler... On a appris que la littérature parlait de mort, de sexe, de folie, de peur, de nous et que, pour peu qu'on aborde la page (blanche ou imprimée) avec toutes nos forces vivantes, elle était à notre portée.” (ibid.). When she was fifteen, shortly after her move to the US, she started an affair with her creative writing teacher, ten years her senior. The relationship was serious, and they even got engaged, but she would eventually break the engagement off after three years. She graduated from high school in 1970, when she was only seventeen. She had skipped from first into second grade because her intelligence was above average.

During her high school years she had a French teacher from Alsace, who not only taught the class French, but also introduced the students to French culture, song and cuisine. The French language brought with it “une étrangeté rassurante”²² and both in her heart and mind has replaced the

¹⁹ http://www.lexpress.fr/culture/livre/nancy-huston_804287.html (3 June 2007)

²⁰ ibid.

²¹ <http://www.lire.fr/portrait.asp/idC=34634/idTC=5/idR=201/idG=> (3 March 2007)

²² ibid.

German language, which she learned as a child. In her article “La pas trop proche” printed in *La pensée de midi*, she stated: “Toutes les mères sont étrangères.” There is, of course, an intended pun in the French word *étrangères*: her mother is not 'foreign,' as the word literally means, but 'estranged.' According to this article, the person she learned German from was the woman her father later married, i.e., her stepmother. “La deuxième [mère] donc. Mère, aussi: par nous appelée “mère,” elle aussi. Etrangère, aussi. Maîtrisant bien – mais bien seulement, non à la perfection – notre langue maternelle. M’en apprenant une autre. La sienne. Débarquant avec, dans ses bagages, dans sa mémoire, l’Europe: une autre; non l’Espagne mais l’Allemagne; non le flamenco mais les valse de Strauss, non le rouge et le noir mais le vert et le gris, non les mantilles et les poignards mais les tasses en porcelaine et les couverts en argent, non les rêves fous de liberté mais la piété catholique et l’optimisme – du jamais vu, tout cela, du jamais prévu non plus – et également, dans ses bagages secrets et invisibles de petite fille allemande devenue épouse de Canadien, et mère du jour au lendemain de trois enfants étrangers, la volonté de vivre après, malgré et contre le souvenir d’une guerre mondial. Mère étrangère, oui, très, s’installant avec grâce à la place de la mère, à table, dans la cuisine, dans le lit du père, se faisant passer pour la mère, oh! douce, très douce imposture! Gentille, preste et rieuse usurpation! Mais tout de même: mensonges, ravages et destructions, tabous et interdits de tous les jours.” Altogether she spent four months there and learnt fluent German in that span of time. “I latched onto the German language like a life buoy and I learned to speak it fluently in four months - I liked myself much better with the protection of the mask, this veneer of the foreigner.”²³ The German language acquired as a child was, over time, replaced by French. Eventually it would become as strong as her English, for she considers herself bilingual, although there are

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²³ http://www.booksincanada.com/article_view.asp?id=3118 (17 August 2011)

“bilinguals and bilinguals.” (Huston 2002b: 40). “False bilinguals (the category to which I belong)” (ibid.) are different for her from the “true bilinguals” (ibid.: 41), whose linguistic performance in both languages is non-problematic. The false bilingual, on the other hand, has not had contact with the language in childhood, and so the newly acquired language is much more emotionless.

Two years lie between her finishing high school and entering college. She spent the first year in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where at age seventeen she worked at Harvard as a medical secretary in a psychiatric clinic. She transcribed tape recordings for two eccentric intellectuals, one a sociologist and the other a psychoanalyst. At this time she became suicidal, feeling painfully humiliated that she should have to do these jobs. Furthermore, her fiancé was absent at the time. She got free therapy at the clinic and improved. Following that year she moved to New York, trying to make money in order to be able to study at university. She worked as a temporary secretary on the 58th floor of the Empire State Building, practicing the piano after work every day for a year at the Julliard School of Music. She left her fiancé for another man, whom she moved in with. This is presumably the first husband she refers to in *Losing North*: “...I’ve had three very different mothers-in-law... Three more or less elderly women in whose presence I maintained a respectful silence – and who, because I was living with their sons, welcomed me into their homes and treated me with the kindness and hospitality reserved for close members of the family.

“The first, a gruff, overweight lady whose sole vocation in life was that of a Jewish mother, lived in a cushy, well-appointed home in the West-

Bronx, New York. ... In turn, I enthused about [her] *gefiltefish*...” (ibid.: 77-78). This lady was a Russian Jew born in New York. (“La pas trop proche”). Further on in *Losing North* she wrote: “that cramped apartment on the ground floor of a dilapidated building on 196th Street in the Bronx, where for two years I battled roaches and depression while listening to the complaints of the fat Jewish ladies as they paused to rest on my doorstep on their way home from shopping, talking in loud voices just beyond the door, so that as I sat hunched at the living-room table, trying to force my brain to follow the intricate abstract reasonings of Freud and Aristotle, I was continually pulled back to their *kvetching* about bunions, ungrateful sons and *gefiltefish*.” (ibid.: 92-93). Daniel Homel, in “Once abroad, always abroad,” wrote that in her youth she studied theater in New York and frequented the Borscht Belt resorts with her Jewish boyfriend (Homel 1996). She may not have actually married this Jewish boyfriend but nevertheless referred to his mother as her mother-in-law, since she lived with him and in all other respects was his wife.

Huston next went on to study. Among other things, she took a course on Canada's west coast, called “Literature of the absurd” (Beckett, Camus, Ionesco), in the Bronx a course on Thérèse Desqueyoux and Tartarin de Tarascon, and finally, “dans une petite fac chic et chère de la banlieue huppée de New York, un cours intitulé “La Psychologie de la créativité” (lectures de Freud, Jung et autres Simone de Beauvoir) et un atelier d'écriture au cours duquel j'appris – enfin! il était temps! - l'angoisse de la page blanche, le “blocage de l'écrivain,” la rivalité, l'impuissance, la rage et la jalousie littéraires, et le désir (absurde, évidemment, pour une jeune fille de dix-neuf ans) d'être Écrivain avec un grand E, d'écrire tout de suite un chef-d'œuvre...” (Huston 2004b: 16). She had, in fact, signed up for a degree in creative writing at Sarah Lawrence College in New York. “Oui,

j'appris, en somme, à ne plus oser écrire du tout, et à vouloir, à défaut d'écrire, mourir.” (ibid.: 16).

Sarah Lawrence College is located in southern Westchester County, New York, in the City of Yonkers, bordering on Bronxville, 15 miles north of New York City. Sarah Lawrence has been co-ed since 1968, a date shortly prior to her entry. She enrolled at the college in 1972, and, according to the current Associate Director of Alumni Relations, Courtney de Kanter, graduated from Sarah Lawrence College.

Sarah Lawrence was the first college in the US to incorporate into its curriculum the ideas and ideals of progressive education. Like other liberal arts colleges, it believes in exposing students to the intellectual and artistic traditions—and the challenges to those traditions—to which people turn in order to make sense of life. However, the focus is on an individual's meeting and absorbing great ideas, ideas to be used in one's life and not just admired from afar.

The college's academic structure combines small seminar classes with individual student-faculty conferences and tutorials. Students take courses from at least three of the following four areas: History and the Social Sciences, Humanities, Natural Sciences and Mathematics, and Creative and Performing Arts. Students receive written evaluations; grades are recorded for transcript purposes only.

Among its notable alumni it also numbers:

- Brian DePalma, film director
- Rahm Emanuel, member of Congress
- W. Ian Lipkin, professor of epidemiology, neurology and pathology,

Columbia University; Principal Investigator and Scientific Director,
Northeast Biodefense Center

- Meredith Monk, performance artist, composer, singer, director
- Ann Patchett, novelist
- Barbara Walters, broadcast journalist
- Joanne Woodward, Oscar-winning actress

At Sarah Lawrence she was given the opportunity of spending a year of her studies in Paris. She arrived in Paris in 1973 for her year abroad, but never left Paris again, making it her permanent home. She did eventually graduate from Sarah Lawrence, though, receiving her B.A. in 1975. Upon arriving in Paris, she commented, her new friends found her aspirations as a fiction writer somewhat hilarious. They told her that theories were the thing. “J’étais heureuse, très heureuse même, d’apprendre que tous mes malheurs découlaient du régime capitaliste dans lequel j’avais vécu jusqu’alors, et que, dans le monde nouveau, ne m’étant pas trop compromise avec l’ennemi de classe, je pourrais partager les joies du prolétariat au pouvoir. Je m’attelai donc à de nouvelles lectures : finis les haïku japonais, Shakespeare, France et Whitman; à toute vitesse, il fallait ingurgiter tout Marx et Engels, mais aussi Foucault et Althusser, ainsi que Derrida et Barthes, Metz et Kristeva, Deleuze et Guattari, Jacques Lacan...” (Huston 2004: 17). In the same year, 1975, she was accepted to Roland Barthes' “petit séminaire.” “...en l'espace de deux ans j'étais devenue une véritable “intello de gauche” parisienne, c'est à dire une femme dotée d'une tête et d'un sexe avec rien entre les deux, une femme qui savait parler et faire l'amour parce que ces activités étaient (chacune à sa manière) révolutionnaires, mais qui s'insurgeait contre le couple et surtout contre les enfants, la famille était réactionnaire, l'Église aussi, le roman aussi...” (ibid.: 19). She describes her relationship with Barthes in the following

way: “...même s'il vomissait le familialisme, Barthes a sûrement été pour moi à certains égards un deuxième père” (ibid.). She decided to translate some of Barthes' work. His *mythologie* “Billy Graham au Vél d'Hiv” was published in English in the *New Yorker* literary magazine in 1976. In the following year, 1977, she obtained a Master's Degree from the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, where she wrote a thesis on swear words, under the supervision of Roland Barthes, later published as *Dire et interdire: Éléments de jurologie*, related to taboos and transgressions in language. During this time she also attended the so-called seminar lectures Jacques Lacan held on a weekly basis. Both Barthes and Lacan were influential figures for the French nation and for Huston as an individual. Barthes, her supervisor, was a social theorist, philosopher and semiologist. He strongly influenced Huston with regard to novel writing. “Barthes saw the notion of the author, or authorial authority, in the criticism of literary text as the forced projection of an ultimate meaning of the text. By imagining intended meaning of a piece of literature one could infer an ultimate explanation for it. But Barthes points out that the great proliferation of meaning in language and the unknowable state of the author's mind makes any such ultimate realization impossible. As such, the whole notion of the ‘knowable text’ acts as little more than another delusion of Western bourgeois culture. Indeed, the idea of giving a book or poem an ultimate end coincides with the notion of making it consumable, something that can be used up and replaced in a capitalist market.”²⁴ Huston herself put it in the following terms: “The important thing at the time, for us *Barthésiens*, was to prove that we were clever, lucid and theory-savvy. We were so well trained at spotting the 'myths' and political assumptions hidden behind every statement, and so blithely convinced of the absence of *any* connection between language and the world – that the

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²⁴ <http://www.larousse.fr/encyclopedie/personnage/Barthes/107706> (12 March 2007)

credulousness required of novelists was beyond our reach... Yes, whatever we say, writing fiction requires – no, *is* – an act of faith.” (Huston 2002b: 36-37).

Lacan, on the other hand, was a French psychoanalyst, psychiatrist, and doctor, who made important contributions to the psychoanalytic movement. Lacan's ideas centered on Freudian concepts such as the unconscious, the castration complex, the ego, focusing on identifications, and the centrality of language to subjectivity. His work was interdisciplinary, drawing on linguistics, philosophy, mathematics, among others. Although a controversial and divisive figure, Lacan is widely read in critical theory, literary studies, and twentieth-century French philosophy, as well as in the living practice of clinical psychoanalysis.

The École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), is linked to the “Ministère chargé de l'Éducation Nationale, de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche.” Its aim is “formation à la recherche par la recherche.”²⁵ The students complete either a master's degree or a doctorate. The main areas of research are history, sociology, economics, anthropology, demographics, geography, archeology, psychology, linguistics, philosophy, law, and mathematics.

Once settled in Paris, “elle s'éprend d'un Français, puis, lorsqu'elle n'est plus amoureuse, entre au MLF.”²⁶ This might possibly be the second husband she refers to in *Losing North*: “The second [mother-in-law], a retired schoolteacher who had been active all her life in the Socialist Party, lived in a grim little allotment on the outskirts of the city of Bourges in

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²⁵ <http://www.ehess.fr/fr/> (10 June 2007)

²⁶ <http://www.lire.fr/portrait.asp/idC=34634/idTC=5/idR=201/idG=32> (12 March 2007)

central France... In turn, I enthused about ...[her] *boudin blanc*...” (ibid.: 77-78). In an interview with *The Independent* at the beginning of 2008 she said: “I fell in love. Obtained my degree. Fell out of love. By 1976 I had reached a point of no return,”²⁷ thereby establishing a time frame of a few years, in which a marriage or a live-in situation may very well have taken place. The MLF, which she now embraced and which embraced her as well, so to speak, stands for Mouvement de Libération des Femmes, a French feminist group. A strong feminist movement had emerged in the aftermath of May '68, with the creation of the MLF, allegedly by Antoinette Fouquette, Monique Wittig and Josiane Chanel in 1968. The name itself was given by the press, in reference to the Women's Lib movement in the USA. In the framework of the cultural and social changes occurring during the Fifth Republic — more and more women beginning to work — they advocated the right to autonomy from their husbands, to contraception and to abortion, in the middle of which Huston got caught up with the movement. The 1980s were quieter, as women could vote in most Western countries and the issues of divorce, contraception and abortion had been voted on by most Western governments. After 1995 and the Conference of Beijing, promoted by the UN to investigate the conditions of women in the world, there was a resurgence when French mothers went on strike, with those fathers backing the feminist cause taking care of the children. Since 2003, the French movement 'Ni putes ni soumises' has taken up the feminist cause. Feminism has played an important part in Huston's readings and writings, with Simone de Beauvoir and Annie Leclerc being only two examples of feminists she has read and also written about. And as late as 2007 she participated in a book whose proceeds go to 'Ni putes ni soumises,' namely *Mixité(s)*. “Mixité sociale, raciale, sexuelle. Sur ce thème, cheval de bataille de l'association “Ni putes ni soumises,” ce recueil

²⁷ <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/biography—nancy-huston-a-view-from-both-sides> (20 June 2008)

de nouvelles présente neuf textes dans lesquels les auteurs livrent une vision de la lutte pour la mixité.”²⁸ Nevertheless, she proclaimed that when it came to writing, “she intends to steer clear of what she calls “feminist fiction.” She says, “I think people like Jane Smiley are really spoiling their fiction by injecting feminism into it.” For Nancy Huston, literature as instruction is deadly, both as literature and as instruction.” (Homel 1996).

Feminism has thus stayed with her, but was not all she experienced during that time. “Autant je ne regrette en rien mon engagement féministe, autant je suis critique à l’égard de mon gauchisme. J’ai participé à des actions que je réprouve, aujourd’hui, violemment. Quand je lis un livre comme *Le portail* de François Bizot, qui parle des précises du génocide au Cambodge, j’ai honte d’avoir défilé dans les rues de Paris en 1975 en scandant stupidement: “Hô, Hô, Hô Chi Minh!” Comme autres gauchistes irresponsables, j’ai contribué indirectement au maintien des régimes communistes dans le monde – et donc à la souffrance et à la mort de beaucoup de mes semblables. Je n’oublie jamais à quel point il est aisé d’avoir des idées, des opinions et j’ai décidé de ne m’occuper que de ce qui me concerne. J’ai défilé au côté des sans-papiers; je descendrai de la même façon dans la rue si le droit à l’avortement demain était menacé. Mais je ne signerai pas de pétitions concernant le conflit israélo-palestinien. J’ai un avis, bien sûr, mais je ne trouve pas que mon avis soit pertinent.”²⁹

It was at this time and under the influence of the MLF that she started writing. She wrote for women’s magazines such as *Sorcières* (of which she was one of the co-founders), *Les Cahiers du GRIF*, *Les Temps modernes* or *Histoires d’Elles*. She mostly wrote summaries of books, reports, and texts

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²⁸ <http://www.amazon.fr/Mixités-Nancy-Huston/> (20 June 2008)

²⁹ http://www.lexpress.fr/culture/livre/nancy-huston_804287.html (7 June 2007)

of her reflections. She met several female writers, of whom she has said: “Comme l’ont fait les hommes pendant des siècles, nous avons pris un plaisir fou à travailler ensemble, tout en essayant de diminuer la quantité de violence, de coercition et de connerie dans le monde: est-ce si dérangeant vraiment?”³⁰

Her first writings for the above-mentioned magazines were such articles as “Jouer au papa et à l’amant,” and “Dire et interdire: éléments de jurologie.” In 1979 she also contributed to a Norwegian magazine called *Camera Obscura*, a journal of feminism and film theory. This magazine has devoted itself to providing feminist perspectives on film, television, and visual media. Finally, in 1981, she published her first novel, written in French, titled *Les Variations Goldberg*, for which she was awarded the Contrepoint prize in the same year. The Contrepoint prize was created in 1971 by a panel of young novelists and journalists. Each year, one or two young novelists writing in French are awarded this prize. *Les Variations Goldberg* was also shortlisted for the Femina prize, one of France's most prestigious literary prizes.

Nancy Huston herself describes the novel *Les Variations Goldberg* as follows: “Si tu invitais trente personnes chez toi, des êtres que tu as aimés et que tu aimes, pour t’écouter jouer au clavecin, pendant une heure et demie, *Les Variations Goldberg* de Bach, et si ce concert se déroulait comme un songe d’une nuit d’été, c’est-à-dire si toi, Liliane, tu parvenais à faire vibrer ces trente personnes comme autant de Variations, chacune à un diapason différent — (il te faudrait pour cela osciller entre le souvenir et la spéculation ; il te faudrait surtout maîtriser tes peurs) — peut-être alors tous tes fragments de musique s’animent-ils enfin dans une même coulée, et

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³⁰ <http://perso.orange.fr/mondalire/Huston.htm> June 2007

cela s'appellerait *Les Variations Goldberg*, romance.”³¹ It is, as such, a narrative suite linked to the structure of the *Goldberg Variations* by Johann Sebastian Bach. She wrote this book in Italy, while she held a scholarship in Urbino. The idea came to her while listening to Bach's piece on the radio – though she had already played it herself – an image of a concert hall full of people for whom a pianist is playing Bach's *Goldberg Variations*. Looking back (in an interview conducted by *El País*), she describes it as a nice book, somewhat Cartesian, but written with the head. Now that she is a mother, she believes herself to be a better novelist, because children put you at the heart of things, and then novels come from the heart.

Before making writing a full-time career, however, she took on some other jobs, mostly related to teaching. She taught at the Chamber of Commerce in Paris from 1976-1978. At the end of this period she started working for the Ministry of France in Paris, continuing until 1983. Subsequently she was a course instructor until 1985 in semiology for Sarah Lawrence College in Paris. Starting also in 1983 but continuing until 1993, she became a course instructor at Columbia University in Paris, where she taught 'feminist theory,' with which she does not mean “une idéologie, une doctrine, une perspective dogmatique et “politiquement correct.” Je me servais plutôt de ce que j'avais appris chez Barthes & Cie pour leur faire découvrir une kyrielle d'auteurs : Sade, Bataille, Duras, Cixous, Irigaray, Kristeva, etc.” (Huston 2004b: 24). In 1990 she was visiting professor in the French department at the University of Massachusetts, an experience she repeated in the Romance Language department at Harvard in the spring of 1994. Meanwhile, from 1992-1993, she was a creative writing teacher at the American University in Paris. She has also been a guest lecturer at Yale University, Princeton University, Columbia University, the University of

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³¹ <http://www.amazon.fr/Variations-Goldberg-Nancy-Huston/dp/2742701826> (10 March 2008)

Chicago, Université de Montréal and other institutions in Europe and North America, though the dates are unclear.

With her writing career under way, it must be said that the French language was essential in helping her find her literary voice, though it was not until Barthes died in 1980 that she was able to write her first novel. “C’est Romain Gary, qui, par sa magie, sa capacité d’enchantement, son inventivité, son refus de la réalité brute, m’a libérée de Barthes, Sarraute et de Robbe-Grillet. Quand je suis arrivée à Paris, je disais à qui voulait l’entendre que j’avais envie d’écrire. Mais l’époque n’était pas à la littérature considérée comme une activité de luxe. Il fallait tout comprendre, lire Marx, Lacan, et soutenir la révolution. Comme j’étais assez ignorante et conformiste, je me suis plongée avec entrain dans l’étude du structuralisme, de la psychanalyse et de la linguistique. On peut se demander ce qui serait arrivé si la classe ouvrière avait pris le pouvoir: aurait-on continué à lire Marcel Mauss ou bien serions-nous partis aux champs?... Bref, après avoir passé une quantité de temps ahurissante à lire Marx et Althusser, c’est le mouvement des femmes qui m’a ramenée à l’écriture. J’ai écrit mes tous premiers textes pour des journaux de femmes... Là, pour la première fois, grâce à l’amitié et à l’enthousiasme qui régnaient dans ces groupes, l’écriture est devenue pour moi un bonheur au lieu d’un douloureux défi. Mais il a fallu que Roland Barthes meure en 1980 pour que je saute le pas et écrive mon premier roman. Comme si mon surmoi théorique avait disparu avec lui. La joie absolue de dire je à la place de quelqu’un d’autre, j’ai découverte à ce moment-là.”³² She has often compared herself to Romain Gary, a French writer and film maker, born in Lithuania as Roman Kacew, who also wrote under the pseudonym of Émile Ajar. Like Gary, Huston feels she has played many roles, from hippie in

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³² http://www.lexpress.fr/culture/livre/nancy-huston_804287.html (3 March 2007)

New Hampshire to member of a reading committee of radio plays on French National Radio in the late 80s, to creative writing teacher and best-selling novelist. Furthermore, they both wrote in French, which was not their first language. She would later write several articles and a book on him.

Apart from the appearance of her first novel, another important event took place in 1981: she married her third husband, Tzvetan Todorov, a Franco-Bulgarian philosopher, historian, and theorist. They had met at the University of Vincennes, where he was teaching at the time. “Lui exilé de l’Est; elle, exilée de l’Ouest.”³³ Todorov was born on March 1, 1939 in Sofia. He has lived in France since 1963, writing books and essays about literary theory, thought history and culture theory. He has published around 21 books and received several awards. He is also an Officer of the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. He was instrumental in defining the 'fantastic,' a literary term that describes a quality of other literary genres, and in some cases is used as a genre in and of itself. About her husband she says: “Nous sommes nos premiers lecteurs, et c’est très bien parce que nous ne faisons pas les mêmes fautes de français.”³⁴

The Ordre des Arts et des Lettres was established in France in 1957 by the Minister of Culture and later confirmed as part of l’Ordre National du Mérite by President Charles de Gaulle in 1963. Its aim is to recognise significant contributions to the arts, literature, or the propagation of these fields. Foreigners can also receive this honour. Huston, like her husband, has also become a member.

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³³ <http://perso.orange.fr/mondalire/Huston.htm> (10 June 2007)

³⁴ http://www.lexpress.fr/culture/livre/nancy-huston_804287.html (3 March 2007)

After her breakthrough with *Les Variations Goldberg*, Huston published *Mosaïque de la pornographie: Marie-Thérèse et les autres* in 1982. She wrote this book while she was pregnant with her first child, a daughter called Léa Tina, born the same year. About this book she writes in “Déracinement du savoir, un parcours en six étapes”: “Dans nul autre livre... je n'ai mis à profit de façon aussi systématique mon savoir en matière de théorie littéraire. Décorticage d'un genre, dans ses formes “basses” et “élevées,” masculines et féminines, avec analyse narratologique impitoyable des points de vue, des contenus implicites, des identifications sollicitées, etc. Le livre fut un flop total.” (ibid.: 23). Her next publication appeared in 1984, *À l'amour comme à la guerre*, a compilation of her correspondence with Sam Kinser. The next year she published the novel *Histoire d'Omayya*, “qui arpente l'esprit affolé, tourmenté, d'une jeune femme victime d'un viol” (ibid.: 24). Of that time period she writes: “Menacée, sans doute, par le réel irréfutable de la maternité, prise malgré moi, peut-être, par la même peur d'engloutissement que ma propre mère, je déploie tout au long de cette période une activité frénétique et volontariste; j'écris des essais, multiplie les cours et les conférences ; en 1983, je dirige, au Centre international des études sémiologiques à Urbino (Italie), un colloque sur Les Femmes et les signes. Certes, je m'y amuse (j'écris une pièce de théâtre où s'affrontent diverses approches théoriques de *Pierre: ou les ambiguïtés* de Herman Melville), mais enfin, pour m'amuser ainsi, je délaisse quinze jours ma fillette âgée de dix mois!” (ibid.: 24).

In 1985 she wrote the article “Matrix of War: Mothers and Heroes,” published in the magazine *Poetics Today*. In 1986, during the time of the publication of *Lettres parisiennes: autopsie de l'exile*, her correspondence with Leïla Sebbar, an expatriate from Algeria living in Paris, she became ill. “Myélite aiguë d'origine inconnue. Jambes engourdis. Je ne sais plus

marcher sans tituber. Rien ne «marche» plus. Temps de réflexion. Temps de bilan. Pour moi, cette maladie neurologique sera inextricablement liée à ma prise de conscience de l'exile. Je la vis comme une mise en garde : Tu as gelé tes racines, ta langue, ton enfance... Un romancier sans enfance ne peut rien faire de valable. Tu te trompes de chemin.” (ibid.: 25).

Only two years after the French *Histoire d'Omayya*, in 1987, she published the first translation of her own work, *The Story of Omayya*, though it would not be until the translation of *Plainsong* into *Cantique des plaines* that she would recognize the advantages of translating her own work. *The Story of Omayya* is often erroneously cited as not having been translated into English. The same year, i.e., 1987, her article “Pièges de la gemellite: Sartre/Beauvoir et Plath/Hughes” was published in the magazine *Liberté*. This year also saw the beginnings of *Trois fois septembre*. With respect to this novel she wrote: “Dès 1987, *Trois fois septembre* esquisse un retour vers les origines et vers la langue anglaise. Le livre incarne une position linguistique presque perverse. Écrit par une anglophone en français, il est constitué des lettres et journaux intimes d'une jeune Américaine, en principe écrits donc en anglais mais «traduits» par la meilleure amie de celle-ci, une Française, au fur et à mesure qu'elle les lit à voix haute à sa mère. L'écriture de *Trois fois septembre* me plonge dans l'insomnie, et les somnifères me conduisent au bord de l'effondrement mental... Le livre n'est pas bon; mon éditeur le rejette.” (ibid.: 26).

The following year, in 1988, her second child by Todorov, a boy called Alexandre Lorne but generally referred to as Sasha, was born. She recorded her thoughts and feelings about this second pregnancy, as well as about maternity, procreation and creation at large in an essay that was published

in book form as *Journal de la Création* in 1990. "...exploration de ce que j'appelais à l'époque le *mind-body problem*, c'est à la fois un journal de ma grossesse, une tentative pour comprendre la crise de 86-87, et une étude de la répartition des rôles corps/esprit chez une dizaine de couples d'écrivains célèbres. Le livre paraît en 1990, et marque pour moi une rupture." (ibid.: 26).

Finally, in 1989, *Trois fois septembre* came out. So far this has been the only novel whose translation Huston has not published. She refers to it as *Thrice September* in *Losing North* (Huston 2002b: 84). However – perhaps because even she considers it a bad book – the English translation has never been published. In same year 1989, "Castor and Poulou: The Trials of Twinship" was published in *L'Esprit Créateur*.

In 1992 she wrote her first story for children: *Véra veut la vérité*, in collaboration with her daughter Léa, aged ten at the time. This book, as well as their second book written together in 1993 and called *Dora demande des détails*, is meant to teach children about becoming autonomous and being different. The article "Literature in Post-War France" was printed in the magazine *Raritan* in 1992.

Her first novel written in English, rather than in French, was *Plainsong* (1993), which she started in 1989. "J'avais l'impression d'avoir atteint une sorte de limite avec cette langue, d'avancer masquée. Je pensais que l'on ne pouvait pas éternellement se couper de ses racines, de son enfance, de ses émotions. J'ai compris que si je continuais à refuser tout cela, je ne publierais jamais de grand livre."³⁵ In the interview with *Elle*

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³⁵ http://www.lexpress.fr/culture/livre/nancy-huston_804287.html (3 March 2007)

from 2006 she said: “j’avais commencé à écrire en français et je m’aimais plus en français qu’en anglais. J’étais suicidaire en anglais. En français, c’était comme si je n’avais pas de passé, je n’étais plus sans cesse ramenée au fait que ma mère m’a abandonnée quand j’étais enfant. Et puis, il y a vingt ans, en 1986, j’ai eu une sorte de crise, je me suis dit que je ne pouvais plus faire semblant de ne pas avoir de racines, il fallait que je retrouve les émotions de mon enfance et donc que j’écrive en anglais. Depuis, j’écris en anglais ou en français. Puis je traduis dans l’autre langue.” The novel was refused by ‘Anglo-Saxon’ publishers, and as a result, she felt obliged to translate it into French, realizing in the process that the translation was better than the original. “Depuis, elle utilise cette technique de double écriture.”³⁶ But it would take three years, from the time of finishing the novel in 1990, until 1993, to finally find a publisher for either the English or the French version. “La mort dans l’âme, je commence à écrire (en anglais, de nouveau) *La virevolte*.” (2004b: 27).

Though bibliographical dates indicate that she had already translated *Histoire d’Omayya* from French to English at this point, the novel often stated as her first translated novel and the one which was crucial in starting her self-translation on a regular basis, was the afore-mentioned *Cantique des plaines*. It was refused by her regular publisher Seuil, and others. In her own words: “Je n’ai eu aucun problème pour publier mes premiers manuscrits. C’est devenu difficile plus tard, lorsqu’ils étaient meilleurs. C’est étonnant, non?”³⁷ Finally, her work was accepted by Actes Sud, also a French publisher, based in Arles. “...alors qu’il s’agit de mon dixième livre, ma vraie vie d’écrivain démarre à ce moment, car en France et au Québec j’ai trouvé des éditeurs qui ont confiance en moi.” (ibid.: 28). Published in

³⁶ http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nancy_Huston (10 March 2007)

³⁷ <http://www.lire.fr/portrait.asp/idC=34634/idTC=5/idR=201/idG=32> (2 March 2007)

1993, the same novel received the Canadian Governor's Award for Fiction in French for *Cantique des plaines* in the category “nouvelles et romans français,” causing some controversy among the Quebec literati, as she is not a French-Canadian. The argument was that she was “ni Québécoise ni francophone”³⁸, and furthermore, the original English version had not even made the shortlist for the same award for English language fiction. Her response to that was: “Je revendique le fait d’être l’auteur des deux versions, c’est tout.”³⁹ In a letter to the Conseil des Arts du Canada, she explained that “le *Cantique des plaines* n’est pas qu’une simple traduction de *Plainsong*; c’est une deuxième version originelle du même livre.”⁴⁰ Though the award was not revoked, six years later the Conseil des arts refused to let *The Mark of the Angel* be admitted to the Governor General's Literary Awards. It was considered a “version réécrite en anglais” of *L’empreinte de l’ange*. The Governor General’s Literary Awards were created in 1937 by Governor General Lord Tweedsmuir (better known by his pseudonym, John Buchan, author of *The Thirty-Nine Steps*). There are now seven categories in French and English: fiction, non-fiction, poetry, drama, children’s literature (text), children’s literature (illustration), and translation. A prize of \$250 was not introduced until 1951, but has now risen to \$25,000. Prizes for works written in French were only added in 1959, when the Canada Council for Arts assumed responsibility for funding, administering and adjudicating the awards. Apart from the monetary prize, the 14 winners are also presented with leather-bound copies of their winning books. Publishers of winning books receive \$3,000 for promotional purposes.

Other works the same year, apart from *Dora demande des détails*,

³⁸ <http://www.livresse.com/Auteurs/huston-nancy-010266.shtml> (30 November 2007)

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

include an article on Romain Gary entitled “Gary: Last Judgment Questionnaire” in the magazine *Brick*. Gary, another “corps étranger dans la littérature française,” as she called him in *Le tombeau de Romain Gary*, had a great impact on Huston. Between 1993 and 1995 she read all his novels, thirty-one in total, and his only essay “Pour Sganarelle.” He reaffirmed her faith in the novel. Her book *Le tombeau de Romain Gary* (1995) pays homage to this author.

Furthermore, that year a compilation of unpublished articles in collaboration with Leïla Sebbar was published as *Une enfance d’ailleurs. 17 écrivains racontent*.

In 1994, her next novel, *La virevolte*, was published. The English version, *Slow Emergencies*, was not published until two years later, but, as we have seen previously, Huston states she wrote the English version first. She received the Louis Hémon prize for this book in French and considers it to be, up until that point, the only “récit pur.” (ibid.: 29).

The Louis-Hémon prize is a Canadian literary prize. It is awarded by the Académie de Languedoc to “un écrivain canadien de langue française”⁴¹. There seems to be no distinction between an English-Canadian writer writing in French and a French-Canadian writing in his/her mother tongue, seeing that Huston has also won the award.

Her first collection of essays, *Désires et Réalités: textes choisis, 1978-1994*, appeared in 1995. She also wrote the essay “Pour un patriotisme de l’ambiguïté: notes autour d’un voyage aux sources,” which was published

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⁴¹ <http://www.forum.umontreal.ca/numeros/1998-1999/Forum99-05-10/enbref.html> (20 June 2008)

in Quebec. Other publications include the article “Beauty’s Secret” in *Harper’s Magazine* and a series of literary essays about Romain Gary. She said of Gary: “Même en temps qu’écrivain je suis divisée, comme Romain Gary, entre deux langues, le français et l’anglais. Mais là où Gary faisait des versions différentes pour des publics différents, je tiens au contraire à ce que mon texte soit rigoureusement le même dans les deux langues. Je traduis moi-même mes romans. Pour en écrire un, il me faut un an, pour le traduire, un an aussi. J’améliore le premier texte grâce au second.”⁴² In 1995 she also won the Canada-Suisse prize for *Cantiques des plaines*.

The Canada-Suisse literary prize was created in 1981 by the Conseil des Arts du Canada and the Fondation Pro Helvetia. Alternately, a Swiss writer is judged by a Canadian jury, and a Canadian writer by a Swiss jury.

The following year, 1996, *Instruments des ténèbres* came out. This novel is unique within the body of Huston's works, because she alternately wrote one chapter in English – the story of a writer in the United States – and one in French – the real story of twins in seventeenth-century Le Berry. After the novel was completed, she translated each chapter into the other language. It was not her intention to write for a bilingual readership, but it was a “a sort of challenge, a gauntlet I threw down myself, to say let's play the game and enjoy it instead of worrying about it, accept this duality, the bilingualism, and the fact that you're different people.”⁴³

For *Instruments des ténèbres* she won the Goncourt des lycéens prize that same autumn as well as the prize Prix du Livre Inter. It was also

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⁴² http://www.lexpress.fr/culture/livre/nancy-huston_804287.html (3 March 2007)

⁴³ Shread, Carolyn. 1998. “An Interview with Nancy Huston.” *Sites: The Journal of 20th-Century Contemporary French Studies*. 2.2 (Fall), pp. 246-252.

shortlisted for the Femina prize and the Governor General's Award.

The Goncourt prize was established in 1903, as prescribed by French writer Edmond de Goncourt's testament, which stated: "Je nomme pour exécuter testamentaire mon ami Alphonse Daudet, à la charge pour lui de constituer dans l'année de mon décès, à perpétuité, une société littéraire."⁴⁴ It is thus the oldest French award, as well as the most famous, but also the most contested. The jury is made up of ten members, who meet once a month. The winner only receives a symbolic check of 10 Euros, but is assured that the book will sell at least 300 000 copies. The Goncourt des lycéens prize, on the other hand, was established in 1988 and is made up of a panel of *lycéens*, i.e., high school students. About 1500 students, between the ages of 15 and 18, from 55 high schools all over France debate about and choose their favorite novel from among about a dozen. The reading list of books given to these students is made up of the authors shortlisted for the Goncourt prize of that year.

The prize Prix du Livre Inter was created in 1975 by Paul-Louis Mignon and is one of the highest-paying prizes in the world, as it proclaims. Its jury is made up of 24 radio listeners of France Inter representing the 24 regions of France.

The same year, she also published the translation of her first novel as *The Goldberg Variations*, and also *Slow Emergencies*, i.e., the English version of *La virevolte*. In addition, a book called *Comfort me with Apples* by Joe Fiorito was released, in which she is mentioned as an author as well. The book is a collection of essays on food and gastronomy, interspersed with recipes.

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⁴⁴ <http://www.academie-goncourt.fr/?article=1229173897> (5 October 2011)

The translation of her most recent French novel, *Instruments des ténèbres*, appeared the following year as *Instruments of Darkness*. Other works that appeared in 1997 were *In Deo*, a radio drama in French which Richard Séguin, a Canadian author, composer and singer, would set to music two years later, and a book for children called *Les Souliers d'Or*.

Huston's next novel, *L'empreinte de l'ange*, appeared in 1998. In that same year she was nominated for the Governor General's Award in the category French language fiction for this novel. *L'empreinte de l'ange* was written entirely in French again. "J'ai même eu beaucoup de peine à le traduire en anglais,"⁴⁵ she has said of *L'empreinte de l'ange*. She considers this book to be unusual with respect to the way the story came into existence. "J'avais un autre projet, lorsque cette histoire m'est tombée dessus. Comme si j'en avais vu le film, en cinq secondes. C'était une sorte de synopsis dont je connaissais la fin avant même de l'avoir commencé."⁴⁶ It won her the prize Grand Prix des lectrices de *Elle* in 1999.

The Grand Prix des lectrices de *Elle* was established in 1970. The editors of the magazine make their first choice of books, favoring especially first works, those of young authors and new publishers, while excluding works that have already been awarded such prizes as the Goncourt, Femina, Médicis or Interallié. Then, every month, a panel of readers of *Elle* magazine selects their finalists, which will be read by the other juries for the process of choosing the winner.

Huston also co-wrote the script, along with Yves Angelo, for *Voleur*

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⁴⁵ Shread, Carolyn. 1998. "An Interview with Nancy Huston." *Sites: The Journal of 20th-Century Contemporary French Studies*. 2.2 (Fall), pp. 246-252.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*

de vie (Stolen Life), which was released in 1998. The film received two nominations, one for best film (*meilleur film francophone*) for the Golden Bayard Award at the Namur International Festival of French-speaking Film, the other for Yves Angelo for the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival, presumably as best director.

The next year, 1999, her translation of the previous year's *L'empreinte de l'ange, The Mark of the Angel*, earned her a nomination for the Governor General's Award for translation. This year also saw the publication of a new novel, *Prodige: Polyphonie*, as well as the collection of essays *Nord Perdu: Suivi de Douze France*, in which she expounds her views on expatriation. She also translated the works of other authors: *My tailor is rich* by Ethel Gorham was translated from English to French with the title remaining the same, and *Ghosts* by Eva Figes was translated from the original English into French as *Spectres*.

Huston tried her hand at cinema a second time, though this time with more involvement. In 1999, an award-winning Canadian movie (a Canadian/Swiss/French production) was released, with the title *Emporte-moi*, and *Set Me Free or Let Me Be Free* in English. Huston was one of the three scriptwriters, along with Léa Pool, also the director, and Isabelle Raynault. Furthermore, Huston played a secondary role in the film as the teacher that the main character, Hanna, has a crush on. The film won the Toronto Film Critics Association Award for 'Best Canadian Film' of 1999 and Pool won Genie nominations for 'Best Director' and 'Best screenplay.' It also received the Swiss Film Prize and the Special Prize of the Ecumenical Jury at the Berlin International Film Festival. Furthermore, it has been honored at international film festivals in the United States, Italy,

Belgium, Bosnia, and Spain.

In addition, in 1999 a number of writers, including Huston, contributed to a children's book published by Pocket – sole en si (Solidarité Enfants Sida). The proceeds of this book of short stories for children go to Solidarité Enfants Sida, an organization that helps children who have contracted AIDS, and their families.

The following year, in 2000, Huston published *Limbes = Limbo: un hommage à Samuel Beckett*, the only book until now which contains the two versions, English and French, side by side. “Nancy Huston, écrivain bilingue comme Beckett et frôlant constamment comme lui l’aporie de l’entre-deux-langues, rend ici un hommage désopilant au maître de l’Absurde, tout en explorant la nature arbitraire de notre «identité».”⁴⁷ Though in the printed version the two languages are side by side, the original, called simply *Limbes*, mixed the two and “maps Huston’s switches between languages, and provides a first-person stream of consciousness testimony of the bilingual writer’s mind, at turns led more by form than content, and at others vice versa.”⁴⁸

The same year she also published the translation of *Prodige*, called *Podigy: a Novella*, and wrote the preface for a publication of *L’Évangile selon Saint Matthieu*. She translated another book which was not her own but that of a Swedish friend, Göran Tundström: *Un prosateur à New York*. Furthermore, she was invited by Aleksandra Kroh to speak about her relationship with the French language, her language of writing but not her

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⁴⁷ <http://www.actes-sud.fr/ficheisbn.php?isbn=9782742730483> (15 September 2008)

⁴⁸ Danby, Nicola. 2004. “The Space between: Self-translator Nancy Huston’s *Limbes/Limbo*.” *La linguistique*. 2004/1, Vol. 40, pp. 83-96.

mother tongue. The interviews with a total of seven authors were published as *L'Aventure du bilinguisme*.

2001 was a year marked by quite a few publications and collaborations. *Dolce Agonia* was printed both in English and in French, under the titles *Dolce Agonia: a Novel*, and *Dolce Agonia: Roman*, respectively. Huston also published the translation of the collection of essays *Nord Perdu: Suivi de Douze France*, entitled *Losing North: Musings on Land, Tongue and Self*. Two more art-related works appeared: *Tu es mon amour depuis tant d'années*, in which she collaborated with Rachid Koraïchi, who made drawings to which Huston wrote short texts, and *Visage de l'Aube*, in this instance with photographs by Valérie Winckler, and texts by Huston. The subject of the latter is childbirth in art. Her fourth translated work of another was published, *Splendeur (et misères) de la maternité* by Jane Lazarre. She translated the original English *The Mother Knot* into French.

In 2002 the co-operation between Huston and Valérie Grail produced a musical based on *La virevolte*, called *Angela et Marina: Tragicomédie musicale*. “Passionnée par les thèmes qu’explorait Nancy Huston dans *La virevolte*, notamment celui du rapport entre maternité et création, le metteur en scène Valérie Grail a proposé à la romancière d’en faire une pièce.

“Ensemble, les deux femmes ont élaboré cette «tragicomédie musicale»: l’histoire d’une soirée violente et drôle au cours de laquelle les deux sœurs adultes, Angela (vingt-huit ans, comédienne) et Marina (vingt-cinq ans, étudiante), marquées de façon différente par l’abandon de leur mère danseuse, confrontent pour la première fois les souvenirs liés à cette

absence et les traces qu'elle a laissé en elles.”⁴⁹

That same year, 2002, she won the Odyssée prize for *Dolce agonia: Roman* and wrote the preface to a translation of Kate Chopin's *A Night in Acadia* called *Une nuit en Acadie*.

The Odyssée prize is a Quebecois literary prize. It was created in order to recognize outstanding work by French-speaking writers and professionals related to the publishing industry in America. It has only been awarded once so far, with Huston winning in the category of fiction.

In 2003 her novel *Instruments des ténèbres* was shortlisted for the Femina prize, as well as the Governor General's Award and it won the Goncourt des lycéens prize. She published the original novel *Une adoration* and its translation *An Adoration* that same year. Though completely out of her general line of work, she co-wrote *Des duos et des couples: Jean Arp et Sophie Taeuber; Hans Bellmer et Unica Zürn, André Breton et Jacqueline Lamba* with her husband Tzvetan Todorov and Jacques Busse; it is the printed catalogue for an exhibition in Aix-en-Provence at the Galerie d'art-espace.

Music has always played a central role in Huston's life. “Je décide toujours de commencer ma journée en perdant un peu de temps et je joue du piano ou du clavecin. Rameau, Couperin, Bach, Schubert. Plus tard, la musique reste présente, mais sur disque cette fois. J'écoute avec des boules Quies. Cela me donne la sensation qu'elle vient de très loin. J'aime le

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⁴⁹ <http://www.decitre.fr/livres/Angela-et-Marina.aspx/9782742740819> (15 September 2008)

classique, le jazz, le blues.”⁵⁰ The piano was the instrument of her English-speaking world, so to speak. She associates the harpsichord, on the other hand, with French. “It so happens that I became fluent in French at almost exactly the same time as I discovered the harpsichord (1971). And that, two years later, when I abandoned my mother tongue, I also abandoned the piano. A strange and secret paradigm has come to form and deform my thinking about these things for the past quarter of a century. I see *English and the piano* as motherly instruments: emotional, romantic, manipulative, sentimental and crude. In both, variations in dynamics are emphasized, exaggerated, imposed, flagrantly and unavoidably expressed. *French and the harpsichord*, on the other hand, are neutral, intellectual instruments. They require control, restraint and delicate mastery; their expressivity is infinitely more subtle, discreet and refined. Speaking French or playing the harpsichord, there are never any violent surprises or explosions.” (Huston 2002b: 50). Some five years later in an interview with *The Independent* early in the year 2008 she would say: “I like English better now. The two languages switched places in my brain. French has become for me the language of exchanges with my tax adviser, my children’s teachers. I became disgruntled with the French and the harpsichord at the same time. When I was young I wanted cold, intellectual instruments. Now I’ve gone back to the piano, because I’m strong enough to accept emotions.”⁵¹ In 2003 she released a book/music CD called *Pérégrinations Goldberg*, in which Huston read nine chapters out of the 32 included in the novel *Les Variations Goldberg*, while two musicians played the serpent and the harpsichord, taking up Bach and improvising on his variations, all the while talking to and interacting with her.

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⁵⁰ http://www.lexpress.fr/culture/livre/nancy-huston_804287.html (3 March 2007)

⁵¹ <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/biography—nancy-huston-a-view-from-both-sides> (25 March 2008)

In 2003 she also contributed an essay and a novella to two collections: *Lives in Translation: Bilingual Writers on Identity and Creativity*, edited by Isabelle de Courtivron, and *Nouvelles pour la liberté*, published for Amnesty International. In the latter, 17 authors, including Huston, offer their own personal and literary views on liberty in the form of a novella. In addition, she contributed to Rachid Koraïchi's *La coupe (Les sept dormants)* in honor of seven monks killed in Tibhirine.

In 2004 Huston published a collection of essays called *Âmes et corps: Textes choisis 1981-2003*. A second collection was published as *Désirs et réalités* the following year. The book *Professeurs de désespoir*, also from 2004, contains a series of essays on famous literati whom she considers *néantistes*, such as Schopenhauer, Beckett, and Milan Kundera. Her next experience with the theater was an adaptation for the stage of *Limbes/Limbo*, by dance-theatre artists Lin Snelling and Catherine Claude.

Longings and Belongings, published in 2005, constitutes a collection of 24 English essays, written over a time-span of just over twenty years, from 1981-2002. Many of these articles may be found in French in *Âmes et corps* and *Désirs et réalités*. The same year she was invested as Officer of the Order of Canada. The Order of Canada was established in 1967 to recognize outstanding achievement and service in various fields of human endeavor. It is Canada's highest honor for lifetime achievement. Within the same year she also became an Officer of the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in France, as mentioned previously.

In addition, in 2005, Huston and her husband Todorov together contributed the text for *Le chant du bocage* (2005), a collection of

photographs by Jean-Jacques Cournut. “*Le Chant du bocage* est un livre qui mêle images et texte pour essayer de comprendre l’esprit du bocage, ce paysage caractéristique d’une bonne partie de la France, fait d’arbres isolés ou rangés en haies, de ruisseaux et d’étangs, de meules de paille et de barrières séparant les champs, de brumes et de lumières subtiles, de chemins et de maisons isolées. Les auteurs du texte, Nancy Huston et Tzvetan Todorov, décrivent leur expérience d’étrangers venus vivre en France, découvrant progressivement les séductions du bocage et des individus qui l’habitent. Le photographe Jean-Jacques Cournut capte à travers ses images l’identité de ce pays à la fois commun et secret.”⁵²

Her next novel, *Lignes de faille*, appeared in 2006. It was awarded the Femina and Roman France Télévisions prizes. The Femina prize is one of France's most prestigious literary prizes, having been established in 1904 by 22 writers for the magazine *La Vie Heureuse*, who wanted a literary prize that reflects female sensibilities. The prize can go to a man or woman, but is decided each year by an exclusively female jury. The Roman France Télévisions prize is awarded by a jury made up of 25 television viewers.

In June of the same year she also received an honorary degree from McGill University in Montreal, along with 16 other famous people, honored thus for their outstanding achievements. Among her peers were Christopher Plummer, the actor, (he was named a doctor of letters in recognition of his fifty-year career on the classical stage and in major motion pictures), and violinist Ida Haendel. This year also saw the death of her close friend Annie Leclerc, about whom she would write an essay the following year called “*Passions d’Annie Leclerc*,” and who had profoundly influenced Huston and her writings. She was a feminist who, though

⁵² <http://www.actes-sud.fr/ficheisbn.php?isbn=9782742756704> (20 June 2008)

forgotten today, caused quite a stir in 1974 with her book *Paroles de femme*, especially among the feminists who were *beauvoiriennes*. Leclerc wrote that the world was in need of the knowledge of women, and if they became equal to men they should nevertheless not forget what they had accomplished: the preservation and perpetuation of life. This was not so much a call back to the stove but a call to let the values associated with the home return. This was totally in contrast with Simone de Beauvoir. As Huston explains, “Quand on relit *Le deuxième sexe*, on est étonné de voir le dégoût qu’elle avait pour le corps de la femme, notamment dans ce qu’il a de plus spécifique – les règles, le sexe, l’accouchement. C’est dommage de voir une femme éminemment intelligente, d’un immense talent, être allergique à tel point à la maternité. D’ailleurs, lorsque ses amies étaient enceintes, elle refusait carrément de les voir...”⁵³ For Huston, Leclerc was a mentor and a friend, after whose death she was moved to write the essay about her. “Je voulais reconnaître une dette. Je trouvais que c’était très injuste que je sois lue et elle non, alors que je n’aurais pas écrit sans elle. En fait, j’aurais sans doute écrit des livres, mais pas les mêmes. Sans elle, je n’aurais peut-être pas eu d’enfant... C’est quand même incroyable.”⁵⁴

In June of 2007 Huston won the prize Prix des lecteurs Radio-Canada 2007 for *Lignes de faille*, simultaneous with Daniel Poliquin for *La Kermesse*. The jury for this award is comprised of 12 members from the different regions of Canada. This year they chose Nancy Huston “en raison des thèmes universels de la famille et des enfants traités dans le roman, de son accessibilité et de son originalité dans la façon de raconter les histoires par la voix d’enfants.”⁵⁵

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⁵³ <http://www.cyberpresse.ca/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20071028> (4 June 2007)

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

⁵⁵ <http://www.radio-canada.ca/prixlitteraires/francais/index.shtml> (10 March 2008)

Just a year after the original *Lignes de faille*, its English translation *Fault Lines* was published. Furthermore, she prefaced a book by Annie Leclerc called *L'amour selon Mme Rênal* and also published the article "Finding freedom in a foreign idiom" in *Victorian Writer*. The above-mentioned *Mixité(s)* appeared this year, too. She translated a second work by Göran Tunström from Swedish to French together with Lena Grumbach – it is a book of poetry titled *Chants de jalousie*. In addition, she was awarded the title "Docteur honoris causa" by the University of Liège.

2008 started off with the publication of her translation of *The Little Book of Atheist Spirituality*, originally penned in French by André Comte-Sponville. She was short-listed for the UK's Orange Broadband Prize for literature for *Fault Lines* but did not end up as the finalist. Her latest collection of essays came out, *L'espèce fabulatrice*, dealing with the relation between mankind and fiction. She translated it into English as *The Tale-Tellers: a Short-Story of Humankind*, published in the same year. In addition, she published a book with her son, Sasha, called *Mascarade*, a collection of contemporary plays for children to read, study and re-enact. Another art-related book called *Lisières* was published in 2008. The story Huston tells was inspired by photographs taken by the Romanian photographer Mihai Manguileu.

In the same year, the French publisher Actes Sud, which has taken Huston's novels 'under its wings,' so to speak, produced a series of short clips for French television, broadcast on France Première. The series was called *L'Objet de...* followed by the name of the artist in question. In the space of approximately two minutes, each artist speaks about an object that is dear and important to them, in the case of Nancy Huston a stone given to

her by a Quebecois writer-friend and which is called 'angel' because of its shape. Most interviewees are French writers, a few are artists, but the majority are not world famous outside the francophone world.

Huston was asked to write a play in French about *Jocasta*, the mother of Oedipus, by Gisèle Sallin, director of the Théâtre des Oses in Fribourg, Switzerland. It premiered in Geneva in November 2009, and was published by Actes Sud/Leméac the same year. The following year the English translation was published as *Jocasta Regina*. In essence, it looks at the story of Oedipus from his mother-turned-wife's point of view.

At the time *Jocaste Reine* was playing, Huston was about to finish her twelfth novel, *Infrarouge*. Published in French in 2010, it will be published in English as *Infrared* in 2012. This story of a reporter/photographer on holiday with her father and stepmother presents an in-depth analysis of the relations between men and women.

This year has seen the publication of *Poser nue*, which contains drawings by Guy Oberson and essays by Huston on the relationships between men and women, women and bodies, and men and women's bodies. Her book called *Démons quotidiens*, to be published at the end of this year, contains drawings as well, this time by the American Ralph Petty, and essays by Huston. In Huston's own words: “Évoquer ce qui fait le quotidien de ma vie, de nos vies à tous, tisser l'écheveau de l'intime et du politique, tel est le pari de ce livre.” (Huston, 2011c, blurb). This year Huston has also published a book in French called *Ultraviolet*, which is advertised as her first novel for teenagers. It tells the story of a 12-year-old girl in 1936, during the great depression in Canada, who tries to come to

terms with her emotions and change from childhood to adolescence by writing a diary.

All in all, Nancy Huston is a multifaceted person: two cultures, two languages, two instruments; philosophy, semiology, feminism; best-sellers and awards; extensive reading – to name a few, Simone de Beauvoir and Virginia Woolf, Rainer Maria Rilke, Marina Tsvetaïeva, and Charles Kenneth Williams - but also such authors as T.S. Eliot, a Catholic, who wrote a number of religious books including *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*; marriage to another foreigner and motherhood in a foreign country; a “home” (my quotation marks) in Paris between the Bastille and the Marais overlooking Rue Saint-Antoine, and the more rural le Berry, a region situated halfway between Orléans and Limoges.

Nevertheless, “[l]ike most expatriates, she lives *around*, but not necessarily *with*, the inhabitants of the country, and doesn’t always admire the products of their culture (outside of red wine and goat cheese, of course). Her world is populated by wanderers like herself, as it would be anywhere. “I don’t really live in France; I live in an imaginary country, and I don’t have to put up with it very much.” ” (Homel 1996). As for identity and belonging: “I have hit upon the perfect inscription for my tombstone. *Once abroad, always abroad.*” (ibid. from “Beauty’s Secret”)

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Plainsong

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⁵⁶ All images: <http://www.amazon.ca> and <http://www.amazon.co.uk>

Plainsong

The first set of books I will analyze is *Plainsong/Cantique des plaines*, her first novel to be written in English. Following the bibliographical details for the versions I have used, a brief summary of the novel will be given. The actual analysis, a side-by-side reading of the two versions, will shed light onto Huston's methodology when translating by establishing cases. From those, conclusions will be drawn regarding Huston's translating.

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5.2. Summary

The narrator Paula, at the death of her grandfather Paddon, inherits his manuscript. As a child she had promised to finish his grandiose dream of writing a philosophical book about time, but instead, she pieces the little she knows about him together and fills the empty spaces with imagination to tell his story. His father, John Sterling, a poor Irishman, had gone to Canada with his brother Jake in hopes of finding gold, but the climate was too brutal. They settled for farming. When John's first wife died in child birth, he went to South Africa to fight the Boers, then returned to Alberta to start a horse and cattle ranch further south. There he met Mildred from England and married her. They had two children, Paddon born 1900, and Elizabeth. Though John tried to make Paddon into a 'real' man, i.e., a cowboy and bronco-buster, Paddon showed little interest, and had an allergy to horses. He preferred books and the piano. After high school he escaped his home to study in Edmonton, where he eventually started his graduate studies and his thesis on the notion of time. When his father died in 1925, he went home to help his mother, and fell in love with a sixteen-year-old Swedish milk maid. They had a shotgun wedding and he got a job at a Calgary high school teaching history, to support their three children: Frankie, Ruthie and Johnny. After some years he felt the need to finish his book and took a sabbatical, eventually falling into depression, alongside the economic depression in Canada. He was moody and would hit the children. Around 1937, when Johnny was five years old, he met Miranda, an Indian artist, at the shops. They started an affair, which lasted until she died in 1950. She brought life back into him, made him laugh, taught him about Indian life and how the white man had taken over all they possessed. He could talk to her, whereas his wife Karen eschewed all serious conversation

unrelated to religion. Ruthie knew about his love affair; Frankie ended up hating his father for it. Frankie and Ruthie later went to Toronto, where Frankie married an expatriate from Haiti, and had twins who were able to work magic. Ruthie had two children by different men, a boy called Michael and the narrator Paula. The grandchildren all spent time with Paddon and loved him. Paddon died when he was almost 100. He loved his native Alberta, the wide open plains, and “the song, the single singing line of notes, the one long lovely modulated plaintive melody, the endless rippling golden unadulterated *Plainsong*.” (Huston 1993a: 154).

5.3. Analysis

A superficial reading of the two novels gives the reader the impression that the two are exactly the same. A close, side-by-side reading, however, reveals a number of differences that I have grouped into different categories. Some are evidently related to the process of translation itself – cultural issues, for example, are often hard to translate and require certain strategies – but Huston, as a self-translator, also makes use of other approaches when passing from source text to target text.

1. Conversion

As general rule, Huston converts distances in order for the reader to have a true appreciation of them. Similar to the tourist who does not quite grasp distances on the other side of the Atlantic, the reader will find it difficult without conversion.

<i>Plainson</i>	<i>Cantiques des plaines</i>	actual distance
a scant eighty miles away (p. 8)	à cent vingt kilomè- tres à peine (p. 13)	128.75 km
It was six miles south of Gleichen (p. 85)	celle-ci était située à dix kilomètres de Gleichen (p. 98)	9.965 km
sitting there twenty-five hundred miles away in Montreal (p. 107)	à Montréal... à 3 500 kilomètres de distance (p. 122)	4023.37 km
twenty four hundred miles (p. 12)	quatre mille kilomè- tres (p. 18)	3862.43 km
soil drifts were ten feet high (p. 40)	des tas hauts de trois mètres (p. 48)	3.048 m
17 million acres of prairie land (p. 9)	trente cinq mille hectares (p. 13)	6,879,656 H

The distances are only approximate rather than exact, thereby helping the text flow better, e.g., 2400 miles become 4000 km, rather than the exact 3862.43 km. Nevertheless, the distance between Edmonton and Montreal in kilometers differs substantially from the actual conversion of 2500 miles. The Google route planner by road indicates there are 3589 km, or 2230 miles between Edmonton and Montreal. The number of kilometers used by Huston is therefore more accurate than the miles, so perhaps she decided to rectify the error in the distance specified. (It must be noted at this point, that the third column of the table uses American conventions concerning the writing of decimal numbers.)

*

Weight measures have also been more or less accurately converted.

a pound of lard (p. 40)	une livre de saindoux (p. 48)
the fifty-pound hockey-playing result of their drunken embrace (p. 175)	lourde de vingt-deux kilos et déjà excellent joueur de hockey – de leur étreinte avinée (p. 195)

The word 'pound' translates as *livre*, though the units are not exactly the same. For the purpose of the novel, however, the concept of the pound is more important than the exactness of the actual weight.

*

Floor numbers have been converted from the North American to the European system.

to hide your father on the second floor (p. 180)	pour cacher ton père au premier étage (p. 201)

In Europe, including England, the floor that is at ground level is called 'ground floor,' or *rez-de-chaussee* in French, and the 'first floor,' and *le premier étage* respectively refer to one floor above the ground. In North America, however, the floor at ground level is referred to as the 'first floor,' thus making every subsequent floor one number higher than in Europe.

Houses 'out West' in those days probably only had two floors – as is demonstrated by the fact that Crowfoot, when he traveled to Montreal, was

shocked by the highrises. It would therefore be necessary for the change of floor numbers to be made, so as not to add an extra floor to the house.

2. Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing can be used for different purposes when the target language lacks a specific term or expression.

In this example the paraphrase is used to avoid confusion.

Mildred was a ranch wife, one of those no-nonsense ladies from England who responded to the appeal for members of the fairer sex to come and join the go-West-young-men when they started getting lonely after a few years of roughing it on the frontier . (p. 11)	Mildred était une <i>ranch wife</i> : une de ces dames sans chichis venues d'Angleterre en réponse à l'appel lancé aux membres du beau sexe, les invitant à venir rejoindre les messieurs dans l'Ouest parce que ceux-ci, au bout de quelques années de vie à la dure dans le Nouveau Monde , s'étaient mis à souffrir de la solitude. (p. 17)

The literal translation of 'frontier' is *frontière*, which bears the same meaning as the English word – but it also means 'border,' which could cause confusion. The term *Nouveau Monde* will be interpreted as the territory that is just short of wilderness and unsettled land.

*

Paraphrasing explains invented words.

Plough through the hellchill (p. 13)	défoncer des arpens de neige à l'infini (p. 19)

As I have been unable to find the word 'hellchill' anywhere, I must conclude that it is a word invented by Huston – perhaps in opposition to 'hellfire' (“the fire, hence punishment, of hell”⁵⁷), in other words, the punishment of northern Canada. The extract above continues by mentioning Dawson City in the same sentence, a city located in the Yukon, and which holds the record for the coldest temperature recorded in North America, namely -63° C on February 3, 1947.

*

The next example relates to the university system, which is very different in France.

By the time you began graduate school (p. 25)	Au bout de quatre ans d'université, alors que tu entamais ton dernier cycle d'études (p. 31)

Most degrees in North America are 4-year-degrees, referred to as undergraduate degrees. Anything beyond is considered graduate studies. In France, on the other hand, there are different *cycles*, after each of which one receives a diploma. Graduate studies would be equivalent to the highest possible *cycle*. Since diplomas are rewarded more frequently than at North American universities, it is necessary to specify either 'four years' or *la maîtrise*.

---

⁵⁷ Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language. 1960. Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company.

*

Compound nouns are a common occurrence in English, but not so in French.

your board-and-brick book-case (p. 34)	ta bibliothèque faite de planches et de briques (p. 41)

It is very easy to form compound nouns in English. As this is not the case in French, rephrasing is necessary.

*

Local terminology, which is limited to a specific region, can be translated by paraphrasing.

It was a day in February, a day of Chinook. (p. 130)	c'était un jour de février, un jour de chinook, c'est-à-dire de vent-qui- mange-la-neige (p. 147)

The Chinook refers to a warm wind that is able to melt a foot of snow in one day, but its name was originally that of an Indian tribe. The name is not generally known in Europe, where a wind of this type is called 'foehn.' Huston has opted here to use the Canadian word of Indian origin and give its meaning in a paraphrase by means of a literal translation of the Indian word.

The national anthem of a country is generally only known to its citizens.

wearily bowing your head as the Lord's Prayer and O Canada , now prerecorded, were piped in over the loudspeaker (p. 195)	baissant la tête d'un air las tandis que le <i>Notre Père</i> et l'hymne national , préenregistrés désormais, étaient diffusés par haut-parleur (p. 217)

For the Canadian, the name of the national anthem is sufficient to understand what is meant, but to the French reader, it is more important to understand that the song in question is the national anthem rather than what it is actually named.

3. Approximation

Approximation is a term I have coined in this context to refer to translations that are close in meaning but not exact. Mona Baker, in her book *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation*, explains different translation strategies used by professional translators, among them omission and rephrasing. The strategy which she mentions first is “using a more general word (or subordinate)” (pp. 26-42). Huston also applies this strategy, which will be analyzed in the section entitled 'Less Precision.' However, Huston also does the opposite, i.e., she uses a more specific term or expression in her translation compared to the original novel, which I will examine first.

A. More Precision

In the cases where more precision or a certain refinement is achieved, this is done very often to clarify an aspect of the novel, e.g., who is speaking or what is being spoken about.

*

ok so now it's mine. Now the responsibility is mine. (p. 5)	d'accord, tu m'as légué ces pages et maintenant il est à moi ton livre , la responsabilité est toute à moi. (p. 10)

'It' in this case refers to the pages of Paddon's unfinished book that he has willed Paula. The reference for the pronoun is at the beginning of the paragraph, whereas this phrase occurs at the end of it, when the reader may well be confused as to what it makes reference to. In that sense, the French is much clearer.

*

One day, you explained, Scarlatti's cat marched delicately across the keyboard (p. 6)	Un jour, Paula , dis-tu, le chat de Scarlatti a traversé délicatement le clavier du clavecin (p. 10)

The added name Paula acts as a reminder of who Paddon is talking to.

*

Jake stayed ... at his side (p. 14)	son frère Jake est resté ... à ses côtés (p. 19)

In this case 'his brother' is a reminder of who Jake is – he is not one of the main characters and might be easy to forget.

*

My father's people , said Miranda, moved to the reserve after more than half of them had starved to death, but they were still determined to stop the CPR surveyors. (p. 47)	Les Blackfeet , dit Miranda, ont accepté aller dans la réserve après que la moitié d'entre eux avaient crevé de faim, mais ils étaient encore fermement décidés à arrêter les arpenteurs du Canadian Pacific Railway. (p. 55)

In the previous paragraph Miranda establishes that she belongs to the Blackfoot tribe. The English expression is therefore valid – assuming the reader remembers a paragraph back. The French expression used is also valid – one need not remember what Miranda (a new character in the book at this point) said, though it might not be as clear as in the English expression that she includes herself in the group. On the other hand, she is speaking about a time long before her birth and can consequently take a more distant stance. Either solution, therefore, is justifiable, with neither outweighing the other.

*

But why did your father hate him? Don't you see? (p. 56)	Mais pourquoi ton père lui en voulait-il? demandas-tu . Tu ne vois pas? dit Miranda . (p. 65)

The novel is written in the 'stream of consciousness' style, in which it is sometimes hard to recognize when the action takes place or who the speaker is. In the French novel, the added pronouns and names make it much easier to identify the speakers.

*

I was just ten when they trampled him (p. 122)	Je n'avais que dix ans quand on a écrabouillé mon père (p. 138)

The reference to her father is found in the previous paragraph, in other words not immediately before. Thus, the sentence becomes clearer, when the pronoun is replaced by a noun.

*

In the following examples, Huston added some detail that is completely absent from the English version.

the men's hair is grey or white (p. 3)	les cheveux des hommes si tant est qu'ils en aient sont gris ou blancs (pp. 7-8)

In English, the presence of the men's hair is taken for granted, so to speak, when in fact being bald is also a possibility, as seen in the French novel.

*

the colours are navy blue or black or brown (p. 3)	les couleurs de prédilection étant le bleu marine le noir et le marron (p. 8)

At the funeral, all the women are wearing the same colors. The French text makes it clear that this is a choice, rather than a necessity of some kind, e.g., there being no other colors available, or etiquette prescribing dark colors at a funeral.

*

You dropped the borrowed books through the return slot (p. 37)	Tu rendis les livres à la bibliothèque sans les avoir ouverts (p. 43)

The story goes from returning borrowed library books to returning unread library books, which is a decided difference, and makes a stronger point relating to the context: Paddon has asked for a year off from work to finish his book, though money is scarce, but is unable to get anything productive done – not even the reading of the books borrowed from the library.

*

she stood at one end of the little row of crosses she planted off in a corner of the reservation (p. 119)	elle s'est tenue toute une journée debout devant la petite rangée de croix qu'elle avait plantées dans un coin de la réserve (p. 135)

Miranda is telling Paddon the story of her parents. Her father was not working and one baby after another died, either of hunger or illness and even of the cold. It is not overly remarkable that Miranda's mother should have stood by the graves of the children she has buried. It is exceptional, however, that she stood there “toute une journée,” after which she “swore her husband would never come to her again” (p. 119). This element is important to the story of Miranda's parents.

*

Clorinde always slipped a stringent list of dietary do's and don'ts into their suitcase, though the the true reason for these would not come to light until a decade later, so Karen spent the better part of the day in the kitchen diligently preparing the only dishes they would condescend to touch. (pp. 171-172)	Clorinde glissait toujours une liste de conseils stricts en matière de régime, prétextant des allergies alors que la vrai raison était tout autre et ne devait éclater au grand jour qu'une décennie plus tard, de sorte que Karen passait le plus clair de son temps à la cuisine à concocter consciencieusement les rares mets que daignaient consommer les jumelles. (p. 192)

Frankie marries a woman of Haitian origin and they have twin girls. In this extract Huston is foreshadowing that there is more to the twins than at

first meets the eye. In fact, they are able to perform magic and actually apply it on their own father by paralyzing him temporarily when, at Paddon's 80th birthday party, he is about to announce that Paddon was unfaithful to Karen with an Indian woman for many years. Frankie's wife Clorinde, though openly as rational and level-headed as Frankie, secretly takes her mother's advice about what they should and should not eat to improve their magical powers. The English extract is unsatisfactory as such, because it seems odd that Karen would spend her all her time cooking special food for the twins – during their summers spent in Alberta – just because they are picky eaters. The French novel, however, gives a satisfactory answer to this mystery – allergies are a simple but effective ruse – and contains a second element of foreshadowing by using such words as *concocter* and *mets*.

*

In the following cases there has been a certain refinement of something implied, though not directly stated in the English novel.

you lived in ranchlands southwest of Calgary (p. 11)	tu habitais un ranch au sud ouest de Calgary (p. 16)

It seems that the area around Calgary is generally referred to as 'ranchlands.' In the French, however, it is specified that Paddon's family lived on a ranch. This only becomes clear in English in the following paragraph, when Paddon's mother is referred to as a 'ranch wife.'

*

the prairies had been made empty – land, land, come and get it (p. 12)	on avait réussi à vider les prairies et maintenant on cherchait à les remplir – Des terres, des terres, venez acheter des terres (p. 17)

It is implied in English that the emptied land needed to be filled, but it is spelled out in the French.

*

it was against their better judgment that a few of them [Indians], under the influence of fear or alcohol, grudgingly agreed to accompany them. (p. 14)	ce n'est qu'à contrecœur que, sous l'effet de la menace ou de l'alcool, certains d'entre eux [les Indiens] avaient accepté d'accompagner les orpailleurs. (p. 20)

The term 'fear' in the English text is too general to be understood immediately as 'menace' or 'threat,' making the French sentence much clearer and more forceful.

*

Mildred saw to it that the sheets on the living-room sofa were changed once a week (p. 180)	Mildred l'a installé sur le canapé du salon , où elle lui changeait des draps une fois par semaine (p. 201)

The implication that Mildred no longer shares a bed with her husband

in this sentence is subtle, yet present. The reader can more than surmise, from the context, that it was Mildred's initiative: “otherwise she paid him no attention whatsoever” (p.180). In the French novel, Huston spells it out, perhaps more so than necessary.

*

these perverse people could not stop dancing and smiling and joking and fooling around no matter how miserable they were! (p. 152)	nonobstant leur misère infinie, ces gens pervers n'arrêtaient pas de danser et de sourire, de blaguer et de forniquer! (p. 170)

Elizabeth, Paddon's sister and a missionary to Haiti, sends home vivid accounts of the natives' behavior in her letters to the family. The term 'fooling around' can take on the meaning of 'acting in a joking, frivolous or teasing way' or, chiefly North American, 'engaging in casual, extramarital sexual activity.'⁵⁸ The English sentence, can therefore be interpreted in two ways, whereas the French is blunt and to the point.

*

In some cases, there is a shift in meaning.

Your mother arrived a year later, tall and tough and healthy; if she'd been frail and feminine she doubtless would not have needed to travel to the ends of the earth to find herself a mate. (p. 15)	Ta mère arriva un an plus tard, balèze et baraquée, sans doute que si elle avait été fragile et féminine elle n'aurait pas eu besoin de voyager au bout du monde pour se dégoter un mari. (p. 21)

⁵⁸ both the Oxford Dictionary online at <http://oxforddictionaries.com/>

Mildred went out West to find herself a mate, John Sterling. In those days the norm among respectable people was to get married, which explains the shift to 'husband.'

*

pouring her good love into you like milk, like **medicine**, never stopping to wonder if she had made a mistake in soldering her destiny to yours (p. 93)

versant en toi son bon amour comme du lait, comme une **potion**, sans jamais se demander si elle s'était trompée en soudant son destin au tien (p. 107)

Paula supposes that Ruthie, who had met Miranda, eventually told Frankie about the relationship between her and Paddon. Frankie turned against his father as a result and saw everything his mother did as perfect, as becomes clear in the quote above. Changing the word 'medicine' to 'potion' in French is perhaps an ironic touch, since 'potion' is more likely associated with Miranda, the Indians, and their medicine doctors, than with an Anglo-Saxon environment.

*

Some changes take place because they refer to cultural aspects:

Strong and free, you guys. Don't you forget it. *Fortis et Liber*. Motto of the province of Alberta. (p. 50)

Our true North strong and free, les mecs. Ne l'oubliez jamais. *Fortis et Liber*. Devise de la province d'Alberta. (p. 58)

'Our true North strong and free' is part of the Canadian national anthem 'O Canada.' "The line 'Our True North strong and free' is based on Alfred Tennyson's⁵⁹ description of Canada as "that True North whereof we lately heard."⁶⁰ It is recognizable for the Canadian, no matter it's length. Though the French reader may not associate it with the national anthem, the reference of 'North' to Canada is obvious, and the phrase will be seen as a slogan, song or poem relating to Canada.

*

you went out to Sal's Saloon that night where the big gruff foul-mouthed gamblers sat around drinking ginger ale (p. 72)	tu allas ce soir-là au saloon du quartier où les gros joueurs bourrus et orduriers tapaient le carton en buvant du Canada Dry (p. 83)

Sal is possibly the short from of Salvatore. The name of the saloon does not really make a difference, but there is a repetition of S-A-L that makes it a catchy name. The French reader might wonder about the significance of Sal, which is why Huston substituted it by *du quartier*. Ginger ale, on the other hand, is a soft drink known all over North America. It was supposedly invented by an American apothecary and surgeon and became the most popular drink in the US between 1860 and 1930. Despite its name, the drink sold today is merely a carbonated soft drink flavored with ginger. It is not known as 'ginger ale' in France, but the brand name Canada Dry, created by John McLaughlin in Toronto in 1904, is the most famous brand of ginger ale in France. Hence, the switch from a general

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⁵⁹ from Alfred Tennyson's epic poem *The Idylls of the King*:

"And that true North, whereof we lately heard
A strain to shame us, 'Keep to yourselves;
So loyal is so costly! Friends- your love is but a burden: loose the bond and go!"

⁶⁰ <http://www.thewhig.com/ArticleDisplay.aspx?e=2478076&archive=true>

name to a brand name in French.

*

with his fancy heated apartment in New York City (p. 108)	son appartement chic et chauffé à Manhattan (p. 122)

In North America the distinction is made between New York, the state, and New York City, the city of New York, which comprises five boroughs. The most famous abroad is Manhattan, the other four being Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx and Staten Island. Though Brooklyn and the Bronx are also known, many Europeans do not realize that they belong to the city of New York, nor do people generally realize that New York is both the name of a city and of a state, whose capital is Albany. To avoid any confusion it is therefore a simple transition to speak about Manhattan in the French novel, albeit limiting the actual location of the apartment, a detail of little importance.

*

the bottom fell out of the stock market (p. 113)	la bourse de Wall Street dégringola dans le vide (p. 128)

Any North American who hears of the Great Depression will associate it with the Wall Street crash in 1929. It is not necessary to mention the name of the stock market for this association to be made. As this is not necessarily the case in France, 'Wall Street' was added for the benefit of the French reader.

Frankie and Ruthie went East (p. 129)	le départ de Frankie et de Ruthie pour Toronto (p. 146)

The four largest cities in Canada are Toronto, Montreal, Calgary, and Ottawa, the capital. For a Canadian, going East without any other specification most probably means Toronto or Ottawa, since going to Montreal implies being able to speak French. For the European who knows little about Canada's geography it is helpful for the city to be named.

The case of abbreviations

The CPR, generally known to Canadians as such to mean Canadian Pacific Railway, does not need spelling out in English, but would not be recognized by a Frenchman. Huston has translated the abbreviation in different ways.

hopped a CP freight (p. 13)	sauté ensuite dans un train de marchandises du Canadian Pacific (p. 18)
just one year after the CPR line was connected up coast to coast (p. 47)	un an à peine après l'achèvement de la voie ferrée . (p. 55)
determined to stop the CPR surveyors (p. 47)	décidés à arrêter les arpenteurs du Canadian Pacific Railway (p. 55)
The CPR was so grateful (p. 48)	Le CPR était tellement reconnaissant (p. 56)

a hilarious comedy about the Canadian Pacific Railway (p. 48)	une pièce de théâtre hilarante au sujet du CPR (p. 57)

Though the usual mention of the railway in the English novel is the CP or CPR, only the last instance is 'Canadian Pacific Railway.' In the French version, however, it is translated by the full name, a generic term for railway, the full name, and then the abbreviation – which, at this point, might or might not be clear to the French reader. I am inclined to think the latter to be true.

*

Other abbreviations that are not repeated in the novel are simply given in English within the French text in their full form, in order to make the meaning clear.

my usual source of inspiration is last night's AP dispatches. (p. 51)	ma source d'inspiration habituelle, ce sont les dépêches de l' Associated Press tombées pendant la nuit... (p. 59)
YWCA brochures (p. 211)	dépliants de la Young Women's Christian Association (p. 234)

Both organizations are known well enough world wide so that paraphrasing or an explanation are not necessary.

B. Less Precision

the younger older woman Ruthie (p. 5)	la plus jeune vieille femme (p. 9)

At Paddon's funeral “[t]he two elderly women embrace while the younger older woman Ruthie waits for them to stop” (pp. 4-5). The reference to Ruthie is rather strangely worded and becomes obscure in French when the name is left out. There is no apparent reason why Huston should have omitted the name.

*

she had run away from the mission school at age thirteen and been brought back in handcuffs after scratching and biting the truant officers (pp. 89-90)	elle s'était enfuie de l'école de la mission à l'âge de treize ans, mais des hommes de Calgary étaient venus la rechercher... et Miranda les avait griffés et mordus (p. 103)

The 'truant officers' refer to officials who investigate repeated truancy. There is no such 'profession' in France, though one could resort to a paraphrase such as '*personne chargée de combattre l'absentéisme*.' Huston has opted to use the phrase “des hommes de Calgary,” leaving the French reader to make his own assumptions about what kind of officer is meant.

*

after completing grade four at the age of sixteen (p. 90)	à l'âge de seize ans n'ayant achevé que le cours élémentaire (p. 91)

Grade four in North American is the fourth year of elementary or primary school. The children in this grade are around nine years old. Children usually start school with a year of Kindergarten, after which comes 'first' all the way through 'twelfth grade.' In France, on the other hand, primary school has one naming system, and secondary school another. In primary school, there is CP (*cours préparatoire*), CE1 and CE 2 (*cours élémentaires*), CM1 and CM2 (*cours moyens*), after which the grades are 6^{ème}, 5^{ème}, etc., and after 1^{ère} the last year is called *terminale*. The exact equivalent of 4th grade is therefore CM1. The expression Huston uses is not precise but there are several reasons why this is a good equivalent. Firstly, what is important is that it was only a very basic grade which she reached. Secondly, the time when Miranda was a small girl is a very different time period from today, so at that point in time the names of the school years may have been completely different in France. And finally, the outcome of both versions is that Miranda was to a large extent illiterate.

*

the huskies dying in their tracks (p. 108)	les chiens qui périssaient de froid en pleine marche (p. 122)

In French, it is common to call the husky *husky sibérien*. It is possible, so as not to cause confusion relating to location, that Huston chose to use the generic word *chien*.

*

The first few years of married life were bliss for Paddon and Karen.

and now you felt proud as hell to be sitting in your own kitchen in your own home playing a game your mother had frowned upon, staying up past midnight without having to worry about studying for exams or preparing your thesis or bothering the landlady (p. 110)	tu... étais ravi maintenant de pouvoir s'asseoir dans ta propre cuisine dans ta propre maison, et jouer à un jeu que ta mère avait blâmé, et te mettre au lit après minuit sans avoir à te soucier des examens à préparer ni de ta thèse ni de ta voisine du dessous (p. 125)

This shift in meaning could be related to the fact that in France, particularly in cities, it is not very common for the landlord or landlady to live in the same building. A search at the online Larousse reveals that there are three translations for landlady: *propriétaire* (i.e., owner), *logeuse* (a person who rents out furnished rooms) and *patronne* (in a guesthouse). Perhaps none of these were clear enough for Huston, and so she opted to simply use the word 'neighbor.'

*

Finally he didn't come back for seven days . (p. 120)	Enfin, six ou sept jours se sont écoulés sans qu'il revienne à la maison. (p. 136)

The change from '7 days' to '6 or 7 days' is a subtle one, but it gives Miranda's story about her father's disappearance more the sound of oral tradition.

*

the ordinary horrible story of a young Indian girl coming of age	l'histoire atroce et ordinaire d'une jeune fille indienne se faisant

and being raped by the Hudson's Bay Company factor (p. 160)	déflorer par l'intendant de la Compagnie de la baie d'Hudson (p. 179)

In this example there is a shift in register but also in meaning – though both refer to a sexual act, the first is against the person's will, whereas the second may very well be agreed to by the female, though it implies it is her first time.

As for the register, the second is very literary, using the image of a flower.

*

Miranda's ancestor Crowfoot (her father's great-uncle) traveled on the train to Montreal.

the look on his face when he posed to have his picture taken here in Montreal, the tension around his mouth, the defeat in his eyes, the shock of discovering white people living layered on top of each other all the way to the sky, streaming in and out of buildings, driving up and down paved streets (p. 191)	l'expression sur son visage quand on l'a pris en photo ici à Montréal, cette tension autour de sa bouche, cette défaite dans les yeux, ce choc de voir les hommes blancs vivant super-posés dans leurs grosses bâtisses en pierre, sillonnant les rues pavées dans leurs maisons roulants (pp. 212-213)

Crowfoot could not believe what he saw: masses of people, highrises, cars, etc. To emphasize the strangeness of it all, Huston chose to transform cars, implied in the English, into 'houses on wheels,' because Crowfoot would never have seen them before.

4. Inconsistencies

I will apply the term 'inconsistencies' to situations in which Huston translates words, but also expressions, in more than one way.

*

The word 'world' can be used in several, somewhat abstract ways.

and [you] taught me to hear the different melodies playing in the names of your world (p. 6)	tu m'as enseigné les différentes voix qui chantaient dans les noms de ton pays (p. 11)
this woman's world (p. 42)	l'univers de cette femme (p. 50)
reflecting that brawn would forever win out over brain in these parts of the world (p. 197)	le muscle l'emporterait toujours sur les muses dans cette partie du monde (p. 219)

Pays is not a direct translation of 'world,' but it captures very well the idea that Paddon was living in 'his own little world.' In the second case, however, the woman is Miranda and he is discovering her 'big world,' the world she lives in – not only fantasizes about – rendered appropriately, because bigger, as *l'univers*. The third case is a literal meaning, referring to Alberta, translated by the word a bilingual dictionary will give: *monde*.

*

In two instances, the same slogan is used twice in English.

the go-West-young-men (p. 11)	les messieurs dans l'ouest (p. 17)
Go West young man ... Go West (p. 49)	<i>Go West Young Man ... Va donc dans l'ouest</i> (p. 57)

This expression is an allusion to the famous phrase either directly coined or simply made famous by Horace Greeley (1811–1872). He was an American newspaper editor, a founder of the Liberal Republican Party, a reformer, and a politician. His *New York Tribune* was America's most influential newspaper from the 1840s to the 1870s. Greeley supported liberal policies towards settlers; in a July 13, 1865 editorial, he famously advised: “Go West, young man, go West and grow up with the country.”⁶¹ Some sources say that the civil servants in Washington were unhappy at prices and the cost of living, so he advised them to go West. In any case, the West, not having been settled yet, held promises of land to own and money to make in farming, and Jake and John Sterling belong to those who had gone out West to try their luck. The French translations here are not identical – the first is a compound referring to a person and not the invitation it was first used as. The second time it is the actual invitation, and it remains in English, because it can be easily understood as a type of slogan, with the first two words being repeated later on and translated into French to make the meaning clearer.

*

At times, Huston uses numbers rather randomly.

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⁶¹ http://www.gold-eagle.com/editorials_04/chuhran020204.html (16 September 2011)

what they meant by God was a dozen different things (p. 16)	encore que ce mot signifiât pour eux trente-six choses différentes (p. 21)
Every answer raises a dozen new questions. (p. 39)	Chaque réponse soulève une nuée de questions nouvelles. (p. 46)
you still have not exchanged more than a dozen words (p. 42)	vous n'avez toujours pas échangé plus de dix mots (p. 50)
You were a dozen different men, (p. 149)	Toi, tu étais douze hommes différents (p. 167)

A dozen is *une douzaine* in French, or plain old *douze*. It is obvious, though, from the wealth of numbers used, that 'a dozen' is not necessarily twelve, in fact the number itself is not of importance.

*

On several occasions, money is mentioned.

lightbulbs cost three cents apiece (p. 35)	les ampoules coûtaient trois sous pièce (p. 42)
a revolting mixture of rye, red ink and tobacco juice at fifty cents a glass (p. 26)	un mélange infect de whisky, d'encre rouge et de jus de tabac à cinquante cents le verre (p. 33)
despite household expenses entered into a ledger to the penny (p. 149)	en dépit de l'inscription maniaque dans un grand livre de toutes vos dépenses au centime près (p. 167)
counted out the nickels and coppers from your change-purses (p. 42)	extrayant de vos portemonnaie avec des doigts engourdis et rouges les pièces de cinq sous et les pennies (p. 50)

Remembered how that morning Ruthie had asked you for two cents for a stamp (p. 158)	Il te revint que le matin même Ruthie t'avait quémadé des sous pour acheter un timbre (p. 177)

Until the beginning of the 20th century, the *sou* was a name for the 5 *centimes* coin. The term has remained part of everyday language to mean 'money,' in the sense that 'dough' is used in English. The Canadian dollar has 100 cents, which are called *sous* by the French-Canadians. 'Coppers,' on the other hand, is an informal name for 1p and 2p coins belonging to the Sterling pound. There seems to be, therefore, very little rhyme or reason to the use of coins here, indicating that the actual amount of money is of no real consequence.

*

In the following case, Huston uses the same idiomatic expression in English in two different ways in French.

each nook and cranny of this cavernous subject (p. 37)	les niches et fissures sans nombre de ce sujet caverneux. (p. 43)
to eliminate dust and food and grease and hair and other telltale traces of non-spiritual existence from its every nook and cranny (p. 211)	éliminer la poussière et la nourriture et la matière grasse et les cheveux et toute autre trace d'existence non spirituelle de tous les coins et recoins (p. 234)

The online Larousse translates 'nook' as *coin*, *recoin* and the expression 'in every nook and cranny' as *dans le moindre recoin*. Huston invented her own idiomatic expression, so to speak, in the second case,

which uses an element of repetition. In the first case, the English expression is used in a more figurative sense, and Huston has opted to find two words which might apply to the brain.

*

In various parts of the novel reference is made to the temperature. Instead of quoting the sentences, I will set up a table relating the temperatures.

English novel in °F	French novel in °C	actual equivalent in °C⁶²
thirty below (p. 40)	moins vingt (p. 48)	-34,44
fifteen below (p. 83)	moins vingt (p. 95)	-26,11
twenty-below weather (p. 130)	les températures grotesquement basses (p. 147)	-28,88
down to zero (p. 131)	jusqu'à moins vingt (p. 148)	-17,77
over a hundred (p. 160)	au-dessus de cinquante degrés (p. 178)	37,77

It seems curious that Huston should consistently put the temperature at -20 °C in the French novel, and then exaggerate the positive number so much. The most likely explanation is that for the average French person

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⁶² Formula from F to C: (F-32) x 5/9

-20°C is lower temperature than what is usually experienced in France. Therefore, distinction between -20°C and -30°C would be irrelevant. To those accustomed to such a climate, however, a difference of 10 degrees might be the deciding factor for or against braving the elements. In terms of heat, in southern Alberta summer temperatures usually reach around 100°F. In the story, Paddon gets his full-time job at school back, because one teacher has a stroke when the summer temperatures rise “over a hundred for the fifth year in a row” (p. 160). Huston may have felt the need to raise the temperature, in order to speak of a real 'heat wave.' One might also consider this a correction in that sense.

*

In the following example Huston chose to use a two different animals in the novels in order to avoid confusion.

farmers were eating gophers (p. 40)	les fermiers devaient manger des écureuils (p. 48)

The translation for 'gopher' is *gaufre*. As the gopher is an animal native to North America, the French reader might not know of the existence of an animal of that name. Since *gaufre* is a homonym, it would seem quite normal to the French reader that people should eat 'waffles.' To avoid such confusion, Huston chose to change the gopher into a squirrel. Though they are not from the same family, they are both small rodents, with the advantage of the squirrel being known in France.

your father made a valiant effort to turn you into what he thought of as a man, namely a bronco-buster ... the reputation of a new bronco-buster who had just arrived in the area (p. 105)	ton père entreprit de te transformer en ce qu'il considérait comme un homme, à savoir une star de rodéo (p. 119) ... la réputation d'un dompteur nouvellement débarqué dans la région (p. 120)
it was the end of your career as a bronco-buster (p. 144)	ce moment marquait la fin de ta carrière de cow-boy (p. 161)

The Bronco Buster is a sculpture made of bronze and copyrighted in 1895 by American artist Frederic Remington. It portrays a rugged Western frontier cowboy character fighting to stay aboard a rearing, plunging bronco, with a stirrup swinging free, a quirt in one hand and a fistful of mane and reins in the other. The online Merriam-Webster defines bronco buster as 'one who breaks wild horses to the saddle,' the first known use being from 1887. John Sterling, who ran a ranch, was set on having his son Paddon become a bronco-buster. But Paddon had an allergy to horses – they made him sneeze – and showed more interest in the piano and reading. There is no translation for bronco-buster on the online Larousse nor at WordReference, and Huston has opted to use a variety of translations to suit her purpose. The first two refer to the taming of animals, but the last one is 'merely' a cowboy, i.e., someone who works with horses but does not necessarily tame them. In this context, the terms are fully adequate, because Paddon will never have anything to do with horses, no matter in what form.

*

you walked down Eighth Avenue (p. 114)	tu descendais la Neuvième Avenue (p. 130)

There is no apparent reason for this change. 9th Avenue, however, seems to be part of central Calgary – where Paddon taught high school history – and is not too far from Downtown East Village and the Calgary Stampede.

she read aloud to you from <i>Pilgrim's Progress</i> (p. 18)	elle t'a lu à voix haute un chapitre du <i>Voyage du chrétien</i> (p. 23)

Pilgrim's Progress, by John Bunyan, from the year 1678, is a Christian allegory and considered one of the most significant works of English religious literature. The French title of the book is *Le voyage du pèlerin*. Since the book is most likely not very known in France, Huston's choice of altering the title gives more meaning to it, without having to add a description.

*

her father was pure Blackfoot , great-nephew of the great Chief Crowfoot himself (p. 47)	Son père était un Blackfoot pur, petit-neveu du grand Crowfoot lui- même (p. 55)
My uncle Bluefeather (p. 87)	Mon oncle Plume-Bleu (pp. 100- 101)
a handsome young Blood by the name of Tom Three-Persons (p. 142)	un beau jeune Blood du nom de Tom Three-Persons (p. 159)

Falling Star ... Shining Star (p. 90)	Étoile-Filante ... Étoile-Scintillante (p. 103)

As mentioned before, most names are used unchanged. Crowfoot is a name found frequently in Alberta, as several places were named after the great Chief. His tribe is called *pieds noirs* in French, but as this could cause confusion with the *pieds noirs* from Algeria, keeping the English name is a simple solution. The Blood tribe also keeps its English name, although it can be called *la tribu du sang* in French. There are, however, two persons' names that have been translated, namely Miranda's uncle's and Miranda's own names. The former seems more obscure in reason, but the latter ties in with the story when Miranda says her name was given to her because of the twinkle in her eye, but changed because as a teenager she became clumsy.

*

Oh Jesus, you answered, slamming the door . (p. 183)	Bordel de Dieu répondis-tu, te jetant dans le fauteuil . (p. 205)

During the time when Paddon still believed he would write a book and was becoming increasingly depressed about not getting anything worthwhile on paper, Karen consistently treated him in a loving and caring way. But when she kissed him and asked if he wanted to march in the United Married Men's Parade, Paddon slammed the door to emphasize his disgust, yet only throws himself into an armchair in the translation. Perhaps Huston considered swearing to be enough, and slamming the door in her face, too strong.

then spinning around the room with him beneath the sparkling chandeliers (p. 225)	puis danse avec lui sous les lustres scintillants un quadrille et une square-dance, une polka et un two-step et une valse (p. 250)

The change from 'spinning around' to naming five different dances expresses the length of time Mildred and John spent dancing together the night they met at a ball more clearly, leading to the romping in a snowbank that was the making of Paddon.

5. No change

In this extract there are two items that have been left unchanged.

wipe their shoes carefully on Welcome mats purchased through Eaton's mail-order catalogue (p. 5)	ils... essuient méticuleusement leurs chaussures sur le paillason Welcome acheté par correspondance dans le catalogue Eaton's (p. 9)

Welcome mats often read 'welcome' on them, even in non-English-speaking countries, including France. It is therefore not necessary to translate the word. Moreover, if they are seldom sold with a French *bienvenu*, it would be confusing to find it in the novel. As for Eaton's mail-order catalog, the company's website points out that: "Mail order catalogues have been available in Canada since the 1880s. For years, they were eagerly awaited and much-needed by the people living in our

country's isolated regions. So beloved was the Eaton's catalogue, for example, that it became affectionately known by many nicknames: the Bible, the Prairie Bible, the Homesteaders' Bible, the Farmers' Bible, the Wishing Book, the Wish Book, the Want book and simply, the Book.”⁶³ It is such an integral part of Canadian culture, that it would be difficult to simply replace it with a French equivalent, such as La Redoute. On the other hand, *acheté par correspondance* makes it clear what kind of company Eaton's is.⁶⁴

*

In the next extract, Huston uses the English term 'ranch wife' in English, but with italics.

Mildred was a ranch wife (p. 11)	Mildred était <i>ranch wife</i> (p. 17)

The term 'ranch' is used in French as such, and is defined by the online Larousse as: “En Amérique, en Afrique, exploitation agricole spécialisée dans l'élevage extensif du bétail.” It is therefore unquestionably associated with Canada, among others, though not France. 'Wife,' on the other hand, is not generally used in French. It is possible, though, that Huston considered this a fixed term, which evokes a series of ideas and images that a simple translation would not convey. It is very telling that during my research on the Internet I came across a blog called 'kdw horses broken w ranch,' which has a post called “Ranch Wife 101 guidelines.” Purely for the sake of illustration I will cite guideline number 4, which demonstrates its

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⁶³ www.collectionscanada.gc.ca

⁶⁴ <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/mailorder/index-e.html>

humorous, tongue-in-cheek style:

“4. He will always expect you to quickly be able to find one stray in a four-section brush-covered pasture, but he will never be able to find the mayonnaise jar in four-square feet of refrigerator.”⁶⁵

*

The next sample relates to names.

Mr. Sterling (p. 32)	Mr Sterling (p. 38)

The title has been kept, though the dot has been omitted. Generally speaking, the names have not been changed at all.

*

Newspaper names remain the same as well.

shake open <i>The Calgary Herald</i> and lose yourself in other people's bad news. (p. 35)	ouvrir d'une petite secousse <i>le Calgary Herald</i> et te perdre dans les mauvaises nouvelles des autres. (p. 41)
Johnny who was seven by this time came up to the kitchen table and started showing off his reading skills by sounding out the blaring glaring headlines of the <i>Herald</i> . (p. 164)	Johnny qui avait sept ans maintenant vint près de toi à la table de la cuisine et se mit à déchiffrer avec fierté les titres géants du <i>Calgary Herald</i> . (p. 183)

⁶⁵ <http://kdwhorsesbrokenwrench.blogspot.com/2007/05/ranch-wife-101-guidelines.html> (25 July 2011)

It is clear from the context that the *Calgary Herald* is a newspaper – the news and headlines are mentioned – so even a French speaker who does not know that a number of newspapers in English-speaking countries are called 'Herald' – *International Herald Tribune* being probably the most famous, but also *Boston Herald*, *Scotland Herald*, or *NZ Herald* - will understand.

*

In the following extract Huston uses a word from cosmetics.

was it really the same woman I met as a child and had decided had been made cold from decades of nightly cold-cream application (p. 74)	elle était devenue froide a force de se mettre du cold-cream sur les joues chaque soir pendant des décennies? (p. 86)

The term 'cold-cream' is defined by the online Larousse as 'cérat parfumé à la rose, utilisé en dermatologie' and is also called *cérat de Galien* named after its inventor, a physician in second century Greece. Bioderma, a French website which gives skin-related tips, calls it “le cold-cream, ou cérat cosmétique.”⁶⁶

Though used in cosmetics in France, the term is not generally known by the French public. Because of the wordplay relating to the cold feeling of the cream on the skin and Karen being a cold person, it warranted using the somewhat unknown English term. As Bioderma puts it, “Le terme de

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⁶⁶ <http://www.bioderma.com/fr/nc/les-conseils-dermatologiques/pediatric/qu-est-ce-qu-un-cold-cream.html> (12 August 2011)

'crème froide' est dû au fait que les premiers cold cream provoquait une sensation de froid lorsqu'ils étaient appliqués sur la peau," and one can assume that the French reader will understand the literal meaning of the name 'cold-cream.'

*

Unlike Eaton's mail-order, Singer is a company known worldwide.

sitting down at the Singer right after breakfast (p. 83)	Elle s'asseyait devant la Singer immédiatement après le petit déjeuner (p. 95)

The company has its own website in France, www.singerfrance.com, and there are 150 shops in France. It is therefore a logical conclusion to use the company name, though a younger generation might not know it, as the art of sewing is slowly dying out.

*

The next extract is related to a military corps.

Haiti happened to be occupied at the time by the U.S. Marines (p.113)	Haïti était occupée à l'époque par les U.S. Marines (p. 128)

'U.S. Marines' has been retained as is, particularly since 'marines' is also a term used in French.

*

The names of music pieces remain the same.

silly piano duets like <i>Chopsticks</i> and <i>In the Mood</i> (p. 174)	au piano des duos comme <i>Chopsticks</i> et <i>In the Mood</i> (p. 194)

Chopsticks is a simple music piece (waltz) for the piano, often played with two fingers only, known in a large number of countries, though France does not count among them.⁶⁷ *In the Mood* probably refers to the big band hit composed by Glenn Miller. Though the songs might not be known in France, the important thing would be to understand they are music pieces, of which there is obviously no doubt.

*

There is one more expression used in English in the French novel.

they... took their <i>funny money</i> to the empty stores (p. 183)	à dépenser leur <i>funny money</i> dans les magasins vides (p. 204)

'Funny money' is used to describe Monopoly money, play money or money not worth anything. Sometimes companies would arrange a truck system in which employees were paid in commodities or some currency substitute (referred to as script), rather than with standard money. The employees were limited in choice as to how they spent their earnings—generally to the benefit of the employer. As an example, script might be usable only for the purchase of goods at a 'company store' where prices are

⁶⁷ <http://www.answers.com/topic/chopsticks-music>

set artificially high. Often workers had little or no opportunity to choose other work arrangements, and could easily become so indebted to their employers that they are unable to leave the system legally.⁶⁸ The popular song “Sixteen Tons” dramatizes this scenario, with the narrator telling Saint Peter (who would welcome him to Heaven upon his death) ‘...I can’t go; I owe my soul to the company store.’

Huston makes allusion to the truck system and company store and also uses the song “Sixteen Tons” in the novel.

*

When, in the novel, King Edward VIII's abdication from the throne in 1936 is mentioned, after which he was sent off to an unknown destination with Wallis Simpson at his side, someone – be it the narrator Paula or the main character Paddon – wondered where they would end up:

perhaps his cherished EP ranch near Calgary (p. 44)	peut-être son cher ranch EP près de Calgary? (p. 52)

For Canadians of an older generation, and particularly those from Alberta, the EP ranch is probably a household name. EP stands for Edward Prince, who bought the ranch when he was still the Prince of Wales, and remained its owner until 1962. According to a website maintained by the government of Alberta,⁶⁹ “[u]nder his direction, the ranch was developed as a model for the promotion of breeding excellence. Breeding livestock, most

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⁶⁸ <http://wirtschaftslexikon.gabler.de/Archiv/85261/trucksystem-v6.html> (12 August 2010)

⁶⁹ <https://hermis.alberta.ca/ARHP/Details.aspx?DeptID=1&ObjectID=4665-0891> (25 August 2011)

notably Shorthorn cattle, Dartmoor ponies, Shropshire sheep, and Clydesdale horses, were imported from Edward's breeding farms in his Duchy of Cornwall in the United Kingdom. His stock diversion initiatives proved unprofitable, resulting in the sale of the livestock in the 1930's. Edward maintained a personal interest in the ranch for the period that he owned it. He visited on several occasions in the 1920's, while Prince of Wales, and, after his abdication, as Duke of Windsor in the 1940's and 1950's while accompanied by his wife Wallis, the Duchess.” Canada continues to have very close ties to the UK – though legally independent of the British parliament since 1982, it is still a constitutional monarchy with Queen Elizabeth II as its head of state. As a reader, I personally found the name 'EP ranch' somewhat disconcerting with its enigmatic initials. The fact that 'EP' stands for Edward Prince would not be generally known by the French reader. Since it is clear that Edward owned a ranch near Calgary, Huston must not have found it necessary to elaborate on the name of the ranch, as it has little to do with the story.

*

For those readers unread in geographical terms, the expression 'badlands' has no particular meaning.

Looking at aerial photos of the badlands (p. 82)	A regarder les photos aériennes des bad-lands (p. 94)

It may therefore come as a surprise to find the same word, only with a hyphen, in the French novel – when in fact 'badlands' is a geographical term. According to the Oxford online dictionary, it refers to 'extensive tracts

of heavily eroded, uncultivable land with little vegetation,' and according to the Merriam-Webster online, it is a 'region marked by intricate erosional sculpturing, scanty vegetation, and fantastically formed hills' – not unlike the Medulas in Spain, though the latter are man-made and the former generally refer to areas formed by nature. Originally French-Canadian trappers called this kind of land “les mauvaises terres à traverser,”⁷⁰ though the term found in the Larousse is the one Huston used, with a hyphen in French.

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Because of Paddon's bad economic situation, the family was dependent on welfare, in the British sense, for a long time.

And you went on relief, Paddon. You went down to the municipal office once a week and collected your ten dollars' worth of **pogey coffee** for yourself and Karen, **pogey shoes and hope** for your children – everything was an **ersatz**. (p. 117)

En attendant, tu avais besoin de l'aide publique. Oui, Paddon, tu descendais chaque semaine au bureau municipal et recevais des bons pour une contre-valeur de dix dollars, et avec eux tu pouvais acheter du **faux café** pour toi-même et Karen et des **fausses chaussures** et du faux espoir pour vos enfants. Tout était de **l'ersatz**. (p. 132)

'Pogey' is Canadian slang and refers to relief received from the government. Here it is used as a modifier. 'Pogey coffee' is easily understandable as '*faux café*,' such as substitute coffee made of different roasted grains like barley and chicory. This type of substitute coffee was common in war times, when real coffee was scarce. 'Pogey shoes,'

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⁷⁰ http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/badl/sec1.htm (25 August 2011)

however, must be understood as shoes obtained through charity or government relief, in other words, second-hand shoes. The French translation in that sense is harder to comprehend but necessary in order to tie in with '*du faux espoir*,' where the repetition of *faux* makes it clearer to the reader that the hope was false, too. '*Ersatz*,' on the other hand, which is German and means substitute, is used as such (but not capitalized) in English and French.

6. Omission

In PS there are more omissions than in the other two novels analyzed.

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The first instance is found right at the beginning of the book.

becoming one with the mattress, the floor, the earth (p.1)	jusqu'à ne plus faire qu'un avec le matelas, avec la terre (p. 5)

Both floor and earth can be translated by *terre*. 'On the floor' is *par terre*, and 'the earth' is *la terre*. Omitting the first of the two English words is an easy way around a lengthy paraphrase that would not necessarily improve the sentence and is not necessary to understand its meaning.

*

In the second instance, Miranda is telling Paddon how the missionaries came to convert her tribe but eventually gave up, because the Indians were not seriously converted, they only did what was expected of them – by both groups, the Catholics and the Methodists – in order to obtain benefits, such as free tobacco. Miranda sums it up in the following way:

We're just too ornery for them. (p. 87)	---- (p. 100)

According to the Oxford online dictionary, 'ornery' is an informal North American term, meaning 'bad-tempered or difficult to deal with.' Miranda would have meant it in the second way. The online Larousse translates it as '*obstiné, entêté*.' Certainly Huston could have said: 'C'est que nous sommes trop obstinés pour eux.' But maybe she feared it would imply that Miranda had a negative view of herself and her tribe, an opinion which she does not generally express in the novel.

*

Once Miranda becomes ill, she has trouble remembering.

she too became embarrassed even before she began to recognize details from the story and realized you had told it before and interrupted you angrily (p. 95)	ton trouble la troublait, et elle finit par t'interrompre d'une voix vexée (p. 109)

Whether or not she realizes that she has heard the story before is not of much importance to the story, because Miranda eventually deteriorates to such a degree, that she understands very little of what is going on around her. However, the French sentence – “ton trouble la troublait” – is much more elegant than the long-winded English one.

*

In this part of the book, John, Paddon's father, is trying to turn him into a man – he believes he is turning into a sissy. So he has him 'hang' with the cowboys who work at the farm and whose topics of conversation are rather limited.

the names of a few whores they knew out by Nose Creek (p. 105)	---- (p. 120)

One could surmise that either John and the cowboys or Huston might think the topic of whores is not adequate conversation material for a boy who has just hit puberty, which would be a reason to exclude it in the translated novel. But neither scenario seems likely. Another possibility is that the other topics mentioned are more closely related to cowboy life, such as the weather, a new bronco-buster in the area, cattle brought in, etc., whereas the omitted topic is unrelated to work.

*

you'd helped him pile his belonging into a Bennett buggy (p. 115)	tu l'avais même aidé à entasser ses affaires (p. 130)

The Bennett buggy is very peculiar to Canada (and the US, where it was known as a 'Hoover wagon'). The term was used during the Great Depression to denote a car whose engine and windows had been taken out and which was pulled by a horse, named after the Prime Minister of Canada from 1930-1935, Richard Bennett.

*

The next instance of omission occurs with relation to Elizabeth, missionary in Haiti, who writes letters home relating what happens there.

twelve thousand Haitian agricultural workers in the Dominican Republic had just been massacred at the command of President Trujillo for not knowing how to pronounce the word <i>parsley</i> (p. 124)	douze mille ouvriers agricoles haïtiens venaient d'être massacrés en République dominicaine sur l'ordre du président Trujillo et... (p. 140)

The English text is actually slightly confusing, if you do not know the 'Parsley Massacre,' which took place in the Dominican Republic in 1937. My own impression was, that the Haitians had been asked to pronounce 'parsley' in English, whereas Trujillo used the word as a shibboleth to distinguish between Haitians and Dominicans. Those who could not say it in Spanish were considered to be Haitians and subsequently executed. This was a move towards ethnic cleansing, in order to ensure a strict division between the two countries and to establish an authoritarian regime. Perhaps aware of the difficulty arising in using 'parsely' in the language of the novel, Huston decided to leave it out.

*

Towards the middle of the novel the reader learns about Dawn, Miranda's daughter, then a young adult.

working as a secretary in her father's oil company (p. 128)	employée dans la compagnie pétrolière de son père (p. 145)

In both versions she works for her father's oil company, but in the French novel the profession is omitted. There is no obvious reason why this detail should be removed. On the other hand, Dawn is a very minor character, and this detail does not influence the story in any way.

*

Frankie, Paddon's son, is described as an adult in the following way:

a man devoted to his mother faithful to his wife (p. 171)	tout dévouement et loyauté en tant que mari (p. 191)

Frankie wants to be the opposite of his father, who let his family down – Paddon could not earn enough money to support the family properly, he beat his children, and he ended up having cheated on his wife with Miranda for many years. Again, there is no evident reason why this detail should not be included in the translation. One possible explanation might be the distance between Frankie and his mother – he lives in Toronto, practically on the other side of the country from his mother, who is still in Alberta. The contact is probably minimal, mostly by phone. It is therefore more

important to focus on the family members surrounding Frankie. Moreover, a devotion too strong to the mother might imply a lack of independence.

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Towards the end of the book the reader learns more about the relationship between Paula and Paddon while Paula was a child, after he had retired in '65. She used to spend the month of July in summer out West with her grandparents. The big event was the Stampede, which she would start saving for in January. Then Paula narrates: “The only summer I missed was '67” (pp. 197-198). All in all there are three paragraphs relating to this summer, which relate a trip Paula took with her mother Ruthie to Montreal to see the Centennial Exposition and World's Fair. Paddon sends Ruthie a note, about which Paula writes:

“I remember the note because Ruthie was shaken as she read it, I watched her face turn from pink to white to grey and it was the only time she ever criticized you in front of me – Sometimes it really does seem, she said with a slight tight sigh, that he takes pleasure in spoiling other people's fun, bringing them down to his level of hopelessness and gloom.

“But maybe you were just missing me Paddon, maybe what you were really bitter about was my absence?”

The omission (in the French novel on page 220) does not change the storyline in any way, as it simply adds detail to the relationship between Ruthie and Paddon. On the other hand, both Ruthie's and Paddon's reactions may have been exaggerated – knowing Paddon as she did, Ruthie

should have shrugged off his note, for example – and Huston simply left out these three short paragraphs.

7. Correction

There are several corrections in *PS*.

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In the following two extracts, which refer to the same trip that the brothers John and Jack Sterling made to find gold when they first arrived out West, the months and seasons have been changed.

when in February supplies started running out... in March men started shooting beaver... in April the Indian guides announced ... (p. 14)	au mois de mars , quand les vivres vinrent à manquer ... au mois d' avril , les hommes se mirent à tirer des castors ... au mois de mai , les guides indiens annoncèrent ... (p. 20)
slide southward towards spring (p. 15)	en glissant vers le sud et vers l'été (p. 20)

The Yukon is the westernmost territory in Canada, and borders on Alaska. In February the days start getting noticeably warmer, with spring in full swing the months of March, April and May. Summer months are late May to September. Since April is part of spring, the second quote does not seem logical. In French, however, the first quote speaks of the spring

months and the second one of summer, starting at the end of May, making the sequence logical.

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The next extract relates to Paddon's days as a student at university.

Too brash, scrawled your professor on the back of the last page, gleefully awarding you a C . One cannot radically transform the terms of the author's discussion and then expect to receive a passing mark for one's comprehension of the author. (p. 24)	Trop prétentieux, gribouilla le professeur au dos de la dernière page en t'infligeant une note exécration . On ne peut pas radicalement transformer les termes mêmes dans lesquels se développent les arguments de l'auteur et s'attendre ensuite à recevoir une bonne note pour la compréhension de l'auteur en question. (p. 31)

There is evidently a problem here with the marks. The grade C in North America is not considered a good mark, but it certainly is a passing mark. From the context it is understood that both the 'C' and the 'passing mark' refer to the same paper written by Paddon, which makes the passage incongruous. Huston has remedied this by simply talking about 'une note exécration' and 'une bonne note,' without specifying what they are – thus avoiding the problem of passing or failing altogether.

*

The next three examples refer to the use of the second and third person with respect to Paddon.

the single and conspicuous exception is Paddon's sister Elizabeth (p. 4)	l'unique mais voyante exception étant ta sœur Elizabeth (p. 8)
Your dreams could wait, you told yourself (p. 110)	Mes rêves peuvent attendre, te disais-tu (p. 125)
You were substitute living, too. Filling in for someone who was absent. This wasn't the real thing, you kept telling yourself. The real thing would begin some day. When the real person came back. (p. 117)	Cela te paraissait approprié. Tu vivais une vie de remplacement aussi. Suppléant quelqu'un d'absent. Ta vraie vie ne pouvait ressembler à cela. Elle commencerait un jour. Quand ton vrai moi reviendrait. (p. 132)

The 'stream of consciousness' that Huston uses is an 'interior monologue' that takes place between Paula and her deceased grandfather Paddon. It is therefore natural that any reference to Paddon should be in the second person, which was a change performed in the first of this group of examples. In the second one, Paddon (referred to as 'you') is talking to himself, in which case he should use 'my' rather than 'your,' a correction that was made in the French again. In the third example, Paddon's thoughts referring to himself are suddenly made reference to in the third person, which is somewhat confusing. It is no longer clear who 'the real person,' namely Paddon, is. In the French, however, the third person is eliminated and the first and second persons, 'ton vrai moi,' are used, clarifying the train of thought.

*

In the next example, Paddon is included in the list of those saying grace, but in the French version he is absent.

immediately after you and Mildred and Elizabeth had sung grace. (p. 144)	dès que Mildred et Elizabeth avaient fini de chanter le bénédicité. (p. 161)

I have chosen to put this incidence in the sections of corrections rather than omissions because it seems somewhat incongruous, given Paddon's relationship to religion, to be saying grace. Early on the reader learns “you were dragged off to church every Sunday morning” (p. 19) and later: “As for God around that time in your life ... well, Paddon, you didn't understand Him and there was no love lost between you” (p. 108). The novel does not follow a chronological order, so that it is often difficult to estimate at what age a particular story takes place. It seems, however, that in the extract mentioned above, either Paddon would have been forced to sing grace or he would have chosen not to sing – the option which Huston chose in the French version.

*

The next extract relates to the duration of Karen's pregnancies.

Her pregnancies, ... they lasted the right amount of time (p. 111)	ses grossesses ... elles durèrent exactement neuf mois (p. 126)

The English expression used by Huston sounds somewhat stilted and almost gives the impression one might choose how long a pregnancy will take. The French, on the other hand, has a more natural ring to it.

8. Wordplay in translation

There are several instances where there is a play on words. Puns obviously do not usually have an equivalence in the target language. Huston, in some cases, overcomes this problem, and at other times fairly ignores it.

an amber -skinned stranger stinging ember eyes into her (p. 8)	un inconnu à la peau ambrée qui la brûlerait de ses yeux ardents (pp. 8-9)

This is a case of paronomasia, where the similar sound of 'amber' and 'ember' but the difference in meaning of the two is played upon. In the French translation the first word remains, but the second is simply translated in terms of meaning, but not in terms of sound.

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he'd spent six months in South Africa shooting at Boers, which for the longest time you thought meant wild pigs (p. 17)	il avait passé six mois en Afrique du Sud à tirer contre les Boers, et pendant de longues années tu croyais qu'il s'agissait de sangliers (p. 23)

This pun plays upon the similarity in sound of 'Boers,' descendants of Dutch-speaking settlers in Southern Africa, and the word for wild pig, which is 'wild boar.' The pun is all the more amusing, because Paddon thoroughly misunderstood what his father had gone to do in South Africa. This pun was completely ignored by Huston to the point where the French extract does not make much sense – why should a child confuse Boers with

sangliers? Perhaps it is simply meant to imply a child's innocence. It is unfortunate that the pun was 'lost in translation,' because it was one of the few instances that made me laugh out loud while reading the novel.

*

some say Cough Child some say Calf Child (p. 56)	Certains disent Enfant-qui-tousse , d'autres Enfant-Secousse (p. 65)

Cough Child was a Stoney Indian who had followed the Great Spirit's call and thereafter was able to heal people. Paddon wants to know why he was called Cough Child, but Miranda only knows that it was either 'Cough Child' or 'Calf Child.' In translating, Huston literally translated the first name, but then chose something similar sounding as the alternative. These translations work very well, since the actual meaning of the names is not important, but similarity in sound is.

*

I'll be really mad if you can't behold yourself ....because she had said behold yourself instead of behave yourself . (p. 60)	si tu ne peux pas bien te tenir .... au lieu de dire bien te tenir , elle avait dit bien te soutenir (p. 69)

In the original, the mistake Miranda makes in speaking forms part of the dialog, and is subsequently explained. In the translation, however, the correct expression is used, and then the mistake explained afterward. The similarity between the word Miranda meant and the word she used is well-crafted in both novels. The change in the way of explaining has little influence on the incident itself.

*

she was having a shotgun wedding at age sixteen... her father made a point of not brandishing his shotgun too threateningly (p. 75)	elle se mariait par nécessité à l'âge de seize ans ... son père fit bien attention à contenir sa colère (p. 86)

'A shotgun wedding' is an American colloquialism that refers to a forced wedding because of an unplanned pregnancy. The image behind the expression is the father of the girl threatening the future father of the baby with a shotgun to make sure the wedding transpires. Huston translated the meaning of 'shotgun' (i.e., threat) by 'anger,' which works well in the context.

*

For Paddon's eightieth birthday they have a big party with all the family members. The following extract is part of the guest list.

your daughter-in-law your son-outlaw (Ruthie's new boyfriend) (p. 208)	ta bru, ton faux gendre (le nouveau petit ami de Ruthie) (p. 231)

The pun in this example is related to invention of the contrary of 'in-law' and the actual meaning of 'outlaw,' namely a person who has no legal protection and could therefore be persecuted or killed by others. The term is applied to Ruthie's boyfriend (in other words, he is not her husband), though it is unclear if Paula or Paddon or anyone else came up with the term. Huston simply translates it as 'fake,' whereby the pun is lost.

9. Repetition

Huston uses repetition as a dramatic device throughout the novel.

a falling away a draining and receding and lightening and melting and sliding away of the world (p. 1)	le monde se met à tomber lentement à s'écouler à s'éloigner à s'alléger à fonder et à couler (p. 5)

In English six verbs describe how Paula imagines Paddon's death. What they have most in common is the -ing form. In French there are also six verbs, all in the infinitive form ending in -er, so there is a certain similarity to the eye. It is interesting to note, though, the French word for the verb 'melt' is *fondre*, not *fonder* – the latter of which means to found. It is highly likely that Huston changed the order of the last two letters purposely, in order to continue the pattern of assonance – taking for granted that the French reader will understand that the meaning is 'melt' and not 'found.'

*

having locked their car doors and their garage doors they unlock their front doors or their side doors (p. 5)	refermant à clef les portières de la voiture et les portes du garage , ils rouvrent à clef la porte de la maison (p. 9)

The word doors is repeated four times in a space of 18 words. With English being a language that likes to be balanced, there are two doors that are locked and two doors that are unlocked. In French there are only three doors and the balance is no longer intact.

it can hold – hold – hold (p. 9)	de tenir ou de retenir (p. 14)

Instead of a repetition of the same word three times, Huston uses the prefix re- to express repetition in French, which conveys the same idea but is no longer a device.

10. Poetic Devices

PS is replete with two types of poetic devices, which give the prose a playful poetic patina. One is alliteration, the use of the same letter at the beginning of several words. The other is assonance, for which vowel sounds are repeated to create internal rhyming within a phrase or a sentence. This device is somewhat vague in English, but has a more precise counterpart in French called *paronomase*, but which does not have the same meaning as the English 'paronomasia.' The former refers to words that are similar in sound but different in meaning and which occur within the same sentence. The latter can refer to similar sounding words but always implies a pun used for humorous or rhetorical effect.

Huston uses the two poetic devices interchangeably, resulting in the following cases:

English	French
1. alliteration	alliteration
2. alliteration	assonance
3. assonance	alliteration
4. assonance	assonance
5. either	<i>not present</i>
6. <i>not present</i>	either

Some examples for each case will suffice in order to get a feel for how Huston uses them.

Case one : alliteration – alliteration

pinching pennies (p. 5)	surveiller des sous (p. 9)
tall and tough and healthy (p. 15)	balèze et baraquée (p. 21)
raunchy ranch men (p. 73)	vulgaires vachers (p. 84)
cloying constraints of Christianity (p. 88)	des contraintes collantes du christianisme (p. 101)
reflecting that brawn would forever win out over brain in these parts of the world (p. 197)	le muscle l'emporterait toujours sur les muses dans cette partie du monde (p. 219)

Case two: alliteration – assonance

this thrumming throbbing machine (p. 25)	cette machine bibrante et vivante (p. 31)
teeming and thronging with movement (p. 147)	un tel grouillement , un tel brouillonnement de gestes (p. 165)
You longed to rant and rave at your sister (p. 153)	Tu aurais voulu t'emporter et tempêter contre ta sœur (p. 171)

Case three: assonance – alliteration

a mask of lumpy bumpy wet white mush (p. 19)	au fond du masque de bouillie blanche (p. 24)
the humiliation of their stroking and joking and lapping and lipping you (pp. 26-27)	l'humiliation de leurs langues et de leurs lèvres te taquinant et te titillant (p. 33)
your prattling tattle-tale of a sister (p. 106)	ta sœur jalouse et jacasseuse (p. 121)
the rough gruff bear (p. 174)	son gros ours bougon et bourru (p. 194)

Case four: assonance – assonance

clearly the salient feature here, clearly the invasive aggressive derisive divisive factor here was space (p. 175)	le trait saillant ici, le facteur incompressible incontournable et incoercible ici était l'espace (p. 195)

there's no two-timing treaty (p. 192)	un de vos traités traîtres (p. 213)

Case five: either – *not present*

the women go once a fortnight to have theirs crimped and primped into arrested blue waves (p. 3)	les femmes se les font crêper tous les quinze jours en de jolies vaguelettes figées (p. 8)
This land is my land at long last . (p. 9)	Cette contrée est donc à moi, enfin. (p.13)
an out-and-out orgy of guzzle and gamble and grab (p. 13)	une véritable orgie de jeu et d'ivrognerie et de bagarres (p. 19)
you paid to dance and dally with the dames (p. 14)	payer pour danser et pour caresser les dames (p. 19)

Case six : *not present* – either

your grunts and snarls (p. 78)	tes grognements et grondements (p. 90)
There was a grunt (p. 118)	Il n'y eut pour toute réponse qu'un bruit bas et bref (p. 133)

5.4. Conclusions

Plainsong is unique within Huston's complete body of works for several reasons. First and foremost, it is the first novel she wrote in English rather than French. Though only published in 1993, she had started it in 1989 and finished it by 1990. “J'avais l'impression d'avoir atteint une sorte de limite avec cette langue, d'avancer masquée. Je pensais que l'on ne pouvait pas éternellement se couper de ses racines, de son enfance, de ses émotions. J'ai compris que si je continuais à refuser tout cela, je ne publierais jamais de grand livre.”⁷¹ In the interview with *Elle* from 2006 she said: “J'avais commencé à écrire en français et je m'aimais plus en français qu'en anglais. J'étais suicidaire en anglais. En français, c'était comme si je n'avais pas de passé, je n'étais plus sans cesse ramenée au fait que ma mère m'a abandonnée quand j'étais enfant. Et puis, il y a vingt ans, en 1986, j'ai eu une sorte de crise, je me suis dit que je ne pouvais plus faire semblant de ne pas avoir de racines, il fallait que je retrouve les émotions de mon enfance et donc que j'écrive en anglais. Depuis, j'écris en anglais ou en français.”

The novel was refused by ‘Anglo-Saxon’ publishers, and as a result, she felt obliged to translate it into French. But it would take three years, from the time of finishing the novel in 1990 until 1993, to finally find a publisher for either the English or the French version. The interesting point is that she realized in the process that the translation was better than the original. Since then, she writes a book in one language – usually in the language of the country where the story takes place, i.e., French for a novel set in France, and English for one set in Canada or the US – and then translates it. Oftentimes publication does not take place until both versions

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⁷¹ <http://www.lire.fr/portrait.asp?idC=34634/idTC=5/idR=201/idG=32> (11 March 2007)

have been completed.

Huston received the Canadian Governor's Award for Fiction in French for *Cantique des plaines* in the category “nouvelles et romans français,” causing some controversy among the Quebec literati, as she is not a French-Canadian. The argument was that she was “ni Québécoise ni francophone”⁷², and furthermore, the original English version had not even make the shortlist for the same award for English language fiction. Her response to that was: “Je revendique le fait d’être l’auteur des deux versions, c’est tout.”⁷³ In a letter to the Conseil des Arts du Canada, she explained that “*Cantique des plaines* n’est pas qu’une simple traduction de *Plainsong*; c’est une deuxième version originelle du même livre.”⁷⁴ Though the award was not revoked, six years later the Conseil des arts refused to let *The Mark of the Angel* be admitted to the Gouverneur général prize. It was considered a “version réécrite en anglais” of *L’empreinte de l’ange*.

Her translations are, then, a second original version of the same book. But she also professes, that “je tiens ... à que mon texte soit rigoureusement le même dans les deux langues”⁷⁵ and in an interview in 2001 “je tiens à que les deux versions soient identiques dans la mesure du possible.”⁷⁶ In terms of the actual story, it is literally the same story in both languages. The omission of three paragraphs in *CP*, however, does not at all correspond to Huston's proclamations. She considers herself and her translations closer to Beckett, whose translations she claims are identical even at a sentence level, as opposed to Romain Gary, who omits entire

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⁷² <http://www.livresse.com/Auteurs/huston-nancy-010266.shtml> (2 November 2007)

⁷³ *ibid.*

⁷⁴ <http://www.livresse.com/Auteurs/huston-nancy-010266.shtml> (2 November 2007)

⁷⁵ <http://www.lire.fr/portrait.asp/idC=34634/idTC=5/idR=201/idG=32> (11 March 2007)

⁷⁶ *ibid.*

chapters and adds others. In other words, this is highly unusual for her. In the same interview with Mi-Kyung Yi from 2001 she speaks about putting her novels to the test:

- do the two versions tell the same story?
- do they both speak of the same characters?
- do they evoke the same emotions?

As mentioned before, the answer to the first question is yes.

The second question Huston poses concerns the characters. In both novels the characters remain the same. Paula, the narrator, however, is somewhat less credible in the French novel. She eventually becomes a journalist and moves to Montreal. Following the analysis of Gilles Mossière (2007), the translation of *PS* was made with a French readership in mind. As a consequence, some of the colloquial vocabulary used by Huston in French is strictly French and not understood by French-Canadians. Some examples Mossière gives are *balèze et barquée*, *se dégoter un mari*, and *tailler une bavette*. Paula lives in French-Canada but does not use French-Canadian language, making her somewhat unbelievable to a French-Canadian readership. What is most astounding is that the book won the Gouverneur général prize in Quebec, even though she had not had a French-Canadian reader in mind.

The question concerning emotions is perhaps a different issue. Superficially speaking, the answer is yes, since the omission of three paragraphs does not imply a change in the overall novel. There is, however,

one important element in the novel which is a topic onto itself, namely the songs. In *PS* Huston uses a number of popular songs and hymns to move the story along and to comment on the action. They evoke emotions and cultural connotations in English that are 'lost in translation.' Huston translated all of the songs herself and generally was able to keep the content and even a poetic quality, but not the melody, which in many cases is unknown to the French reader, except for the occasional hymn.⁷⁷

Another element, which relates to the emotions it evokes, is the Calgary Stampede. Calgary's identity is tied to this event. It is known as the 'Stampede City,' but also carries the informal nickname of 'Cowtown' and the local Canadian Football League team is known as the 'Stampeders.' The city takes on a party atmosphere during Stampede: office buildings and storefronts are painted in cowboy themes, residents don western wear and events held across the city include hundreds of pancake breakfasts and barbecues, rodeos, chuck wagon races, and even an Indian village, where "visitors step back in time to share in authentic Plains Indians' cultural practices"⁷⁸. It is evidently closely tied to Calgary's history and identity. In the novel, Huston tells how Paddon was taken to the first Stampede by his father, only to end in his father giving up on him, as a 'sissy' with an allergy to horses. Huston's description of the Stampede is several pages long (*PS* pp. 137-143), describing the different groups of people taking part in the procession, as well as events such as the rodeo. The vocabulary is very evocative of the cowboy scene: chuckwagons, stagecoaches, bull-whackers, mule-skinners, cowpunches, bronco-busters, etc. As Gilles Mossière has pointed out in his article "Lecture(s): exclusion et altérité

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⁷⁷ For a detailed analysis of the songs in *PS*, see: Senior, Nancy. 2001. 'Whose song, whose land? Translation and appropriation in Nancy Huston's *Plainson/Cantiques des plaines*.' *Meta*, XLVI, 4.

⁷⁸ <http://www.visitcalgary.com/things-to-do/arts-attraction/attractions/calgary-stampede> (15 August 2011)

dans *Cantiques des plaines*”⁷⁹, the translated novel is not quite as successful in conjuring up these images. “Si Nancy Huston arrive remarquablement bien à rendre en français l’ambiance du Stampede, tâche peu évidente, elle ne peut toutefois éviter certaines difficultés: pour des Français ou des Canadiens français ... ? Ces mots ne rendent pas vraiment la saveur «western», mais plutôt un mélange de cirque («dompteurs de taureaux»), d’abattoir («égorcheurs de mulets») et de corrida («aiguillonneurs de vaches»), alors que si nous nous tournons vers le texte anglais de *Plainsong*, nous sommes tout de suite dans l’univers des cow-boys.” (Mossière 2007: 96). This by no means implies the novel is unreadable to the French reader, but there is an element of the strange that the English reader does not have to deal with.

When considering *PS* and its translation it is also important to take into account its poetic devices. In her article “Festins Fragiles”⁸⁰ Huston says: “De même, la révision d’un texte littéraire – phase infiniment longue et ardue que celle de son écriture – relève pour moi d’une écoute exigeante de son rythme, de sa poésie. J’aime la répétition et j’aime la non-répétition. Tantôt je pratique l’allitération à l’excès, tantôt je l’évite comme la peste. Je tiens à ce que chaque phrase participe, de par sa phonétique et sa ponctuation, au chant de l’ensemble. Je lis et relis...; trichant, parfois (notamment quand je me traduis) sur le sens exacte d’un mot si j’ai «besoin» de deux syllabes à cet endroit au lieu de trois.” (p. 40 in *Âmes et corps*). As outlined in my analysis of *PS*, the literary devices Huston uses are the pun, repetition, and alliteration.

Most of the puns (which are not very numerous) are translated in

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⁷⁹ <http://id.erudit.org/iderudit/019335ar> (25 August 2011)

⁸⁰ in: *Liberté*, n° 216, vol. 36, n° 6, décembre 1994

meaning but not in terms of form, in other words, they are no longer puns. In the case of 'Cough Child' and 'Calf Child' the pun was kept but the meaning necessarily changed, in order to give sense to Miranda's words. Though one might lament the loss of puns, there is really only one occasion when this loss leads to a loss of meaning, namely in the story of John Sterling fighting the Boers – or wild pigs. Other than this case, there is nothing amiss without the puns in the French version of the novel.

Huston uses different types of repetition as a dramatic device throughout the novel – repeating the same word, using a long series of synonyms or related words, or repeating similar ideas. Mostly these repetitions are retained in French, though she might prefer to use the prefix 're-' to emphasize the repetition of a verb rather than actually repeating it, or shorten a list of synonyms.

A very dominant feature in this novel is the one I have called 'poetic devices,' and which comprises alliteration and assonance. I have grouped the two together, because when switching from English to French she uses them inconsistently. At times she uses alliteration in English and alliteration in French. The same is true for assonance. At other times she switches from one to the other when translating. If there is no satisfactory translation, she does not use the poetic device in French or adds it where the English does not have one. It is unlikely that a case by case count-up would shed light on anything new. Huston is more interested in the sound of the language and therefore uses it to her advantage where possible, without sacrificing the overall storyline by insisting on poetic devices being absolutely identical in the two versions.

Considering the overall novel it must be said that Huston has a tendency to be more specific in the translated novel. To name just a few examples from my main analysis, in the English novel Mildred changes the sheets on the sofa, but in French she writes that Mildred installed John on the sofa. Rather than just going east, Frankie and Ruthie go to Toronto in the French novel. Or the expression 'fool around,' which can be used quite innocently or more strongly, becomes the unequivocal 'forniquer' in French.

Huston states about this novel and its success in *Losing North*: “To my surprise, in fact, the books I perceived as 'French' often appealed to Canadian readers, and, conversely, my cowboys-and-Indians novel sold much better in France – never underestimate the power of exoticism!” (Huston 2002b: 38-39).

VI

Slow Emergencies

VI

Slow Emergencies

The second set of books to be analyzed is *Slow Emergencies* and *La virevolte*. This book was originally written in English, since it takes place in the United States. It is also a topic which has very much to do with Huston's English-speaking childhood and the abandonment of the family by her mother.

Though the publishing date of the French novel is prior to the English one, Huston has repeatedly said that it was first written in English.

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6.2. Summary

Lin is a dancer. When only three years old her mother died of a brain hemorrhage – at the young age of 21. Lin believes it was the result of having been beaten by her parents. Lin never experienced love as a child, and by the time she reached high school, she tried to live as close to death as possible. She found a friend, Rachel, who felt similarly. They tried to achieve perfection – Rachel in philosophy, Lin in dancing – and worked themselves to exhaustion. They smoked because it was bad for them, ate little, and shared the philosophy: “Succeed in everything, believe in nothing.” (p. 13). Lin betrays this when she marries Derek Lhomond, a fellow professor of Rachel's, and bears two children.

The first child is Angela. Everything regarding Angela is amazing: the pregnancy Lin goes through, every new thing Angela learns to do, each word she learns to say. At a dinner party Lin and Derek throw, Lin meets Sean Farrell, an Irish poet, and falls in love with him. Their relationship remains platonic, however. He tells her she should not be in this little university town, there are greater things for her out there. Later, when Sean and Rachel meet, it is love at first sight for both of them.

Lin and Derek's second baby, Marina, weighs like a stone in her belly, is a screamer, and turns into a manipulator. Lin continues dancing. When a new dance comes to her mind, she feels it growing inside her. But she realizes how far away she is when she dances – her family life does not exist while she is dancing. Finally she leaves the family to direct a dancing troupe in Mexico City. The girls are four and seven.

Derek has a very hard time of it. After a year Rachel comes to live with them, later they marry. Marina calls her 'mommy,' and wants to know all about her relatives who were gassed in Birkenau. Marina has compulsions – she counts everything, and punishes herself if the number of steps to school is not the same as the day before. At university she studies 'Shoah,' the Hebrew word for Holocaust, i.e., the genocide of 6 million Jews during World War II. Angela, meanwhile, who has always wanted to be like her mother and is quite gifted at ballet, ultimately becomes a stand-up comedian and has a baby, Gabriel, by her married lover.

Throughout their childhood, Angela and Marina see Lin from time to time, visiting her at different places where she is to perform, be it in Paris, Rome or elsewhere. Lin does not tell them about her hip problem, nor about the French doctor who made a mistake when operating, as a result of which she can no longer dance but only choreograph. All five, that is to say Derek and Rachel, Angela and Miranda, and Lin, meet up at Sean Farrell's funeral – he has died of lung cancer. Rachel still loves him, but they were destroying each other when they lived together. The tie between Lin and Rachel is still strong, stronger than the ones to her daughters perhaps.

6.3. Analysis

1. Conversion

All the names remain the same.

You'll be back on the stage in no time, Mrs. Lhomond , the nurse says one day ... (p. 6)	- Vous serez sur les planches en un rien de temps, madame Lhomond , lui dit l'infirmière un jour ... (p. 11)

The titles, however, are translated, so as not to interrupt the flow of the French text.

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Derek and Lin are at the park.

there would have been no gurgling BillyBob Junior sitting in that perambulator (p. 8)	il n'y aurait pas eu de lardon en train de glouglouter dans ce landau. (p. 13)

'BillyBob Junior' is a quirky, rhythmic name that sounds “comedically Beverly Hillbilly-ish” – according to answers.com.⁸¹ Derek uses it to make fun of the other parents at the playground, somewhat deprecatingly. Rather than choose a name with similar associations in French, Huston chose the word *lardon*, meaning 'kid,' used in a familiar context. There is no change of meaning, but the element of Derek and Lin feeling superior to all other parents is missing.

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Lin is reading to little Angela.

⁸¹ http://wiki.answers.com/Q/Why_do_school_age_children_admire_the_name_Billy_Bob_Joe_Bob_Junior_so_much (10 August 2011)

And she pricked her finger on the spinning wheel and fell into a deep, deep sleep. The time has come, the walrus said, to speak of many things. I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down. Hang your clothes on the hickory bush, but don't go near the water. And this was scarcely odd because they'd eaten every one. How much wood would woodchuck chuck if a wood-chuck could chuck wood? The goblins will get you if you don't watch out! (p. 35)	Et elle se piqua le doigt sur le rouet et tomba dans un profond sommeil. Je te tiens, tu me tiens, par la barbichette. Alors je soufflerai, et je pousserai, et ta maison va s'écrouler. Trempe ton pain dans la soupe. Piano panier piano panier: Oh, mère-grand, comme tu as de grandes dents. (p. 39)

In this paragraph there is a series of sentences taken from different fairy-tales and songs, perhaps to give a sense of time going by. The following paragraph, not included here, has Lin reading one particular story, the “Three Little Pigs,” to Angela. The French in the extract above is not an exact translation and obviously includes fewer items, as it is much shorter. But the main idea remains in the conversion. In English the text contains a line from “Sleeping Beauty,” a poem from the book *Through the Looking-Glass* by Lewis Carroll, the “Three Little Pigs,” the nursery rhyme “Here We Go Round the Mulberrybush,” *Through the Looking-Glass*, a tongue-twister and a line from the poem “Little Orphan Annie” by Whitcomb Riley. In French, on the other hand, we find “Sleeping Beauty,” a French nursery rhyme, the “Three Little Pigs,” another French nursery rhyme, a French tongue-twister, and “Little Red Riding Hood.” Overall, though shorter, the effect is the same.

*

When they decide to have a second child, Derek says he does not care if it is a girl or a boy, he just wants “more of what we've already got” (p. 40).

More potties in the bathroom and more plastic ducks in the bathtub and more boxes of Honeysmacks spilled all over the kitchen floor. (p. 40)	Plus de pots dans les toilettes et plus de canards en caoutchouc dans la baignoire et plus de miel-pops renversés sur le sol de la cuisine (p. 44)

Huston has chosen one brand of Kellogg's cereal in English and a different one in French. 'Honeysmacks' are called simply 'Smacks' in French. Perhaps the French use of miel in the name 'miel-pops' helps the flow of the text by adding an extra syllable, or it might simply be more popular than 'Honeysmacks.'

*

Once again, inches are converted to centimeters.

It is fully two inches long. (p. 42)	près de cinq centimètres (p. 46)

Lin, while dancing, got a splinter in her foot. It is very long, so that understanding the length is important.

*

Then she polishes every shoe and boot in the house, excavating them from second-floor closets and abandoned trunks. (p. 60)	Ensuite, fouillant les placards et les vieilles malles du premier étage , elle déterre toutes les chaussures et tous les souliers de la famille et se met à les cirer... (p. 64)

As previously mentioned, the floor numbers are one off in Europe, because the ground floor is 'floor zero,' so to speak.

*

When Lin lived at home, her father often had his buddies over for card games and drinks.

The name of the game is High and low! Pregnant threes! One-eyed jacks! How would you gentlemen feel about a seven-card stud with follow-the-lady wild ? Come on, ante up, ante up, how many do you want? I'll stay pat, Joe ... (p. 98)	Que diriez-vous d'un petit high and low ? Valets borgnes! Le p'tit dans l'trou! Cette fois-ci ce sera un stud à sept cartes, Suivez-la-dame frimé! Allez, allez qu'est-ce que t'attends pour pisser? Combien de cartes il te faut? Rien du tout pour moi, Joe, ... (p. 99)

This paragraph is a list of drinking games ('High and Low,' which is more commonly called 'High or Low'), card games ('Pregnant threes' is a type of poker game) and expressions related to card games ('One-eyed jacks' is a nickname for the jack of spades and the jack of hearts). The French paragraph is not a literal translation. *Valets borgnes*, which might possibly be 'Jack-the-lad' in English, a magic trick done with jacks, is a

loose translation of 'Pregnant threes,' a con game where one bets on one of three cards face down. The cards are moved around at a fast pace and the better must choose the jack of hearts, for example, in order to win the bet pot. A 'stud,' on the other hand, which is a type of poker, is used in both languages. Though not literal, the French paragraph is also studded with card games and playing terms.

*

Conversion is also used for terms related to education.

That summer, the summer following Angela's graduation and Marina's sophomore year at high school, the girls met Lin in Berlin. (p. 159)	Cet été là, lorsqu'Angela vient de finir son bac et Marina sa seconde au lycée, elles retrouvent Lin à Berlin. (p. 155)

Converting terms related to education gives the text a more familiar ring, and is also more easily understood by the French readership. *Finir son bac* is much more common than graduation and *seconde* is precisely the same year at school as 'sophomore year.' A sophomore in high school, upon finishing that year, will go through junior and finally senior year. In French schools, as mentioned in the analysis of *PS*, the years in secondary school are counted backwards starting with *sixième*, going all the way up to *première*, and ending with the last year called *terminal*. In other words, after finishing *seconde*, a student has two more years to complete, as does the sophomore in the United States.

2. Paraphrasing

The beginning of the novel tells about Angela's birth and how it changed Lin's life.

A person behaving like a real live baby and daughtering her . (p. 3)	Un être qui se comporte comme un vrai bébé vivant qui serait sa fille . (p.9)

It seems that Huston has used an invented word. 'Daughtering' is not actually found in the dictionary. But it can be found on the Internet in relationship to the term 'mothering,' which relates to raising children, caring for them, providing for their needs. In contrast, therefore, 'daughtering' would mean 'being a taken care of by a parent or parent-like figure, becoming the center of attention for that person, depending on that person completely for some time and then gradually becoming independent.' This is a very personal definition, since each person has a unique relationship with their children. It is an expression that is not immediately understood in the English novel, and therefore problematic. At the same time, it might cause the reader to stop and think, leading to a more active reading experience. In the French, however, this invented expression has been substituted for by a relative clause that leaves no doubt in the mind of the French reader.

*

Rachel has come over to the Lhomonds' to talk over her relationship with Sean. Derek serves highballs, a beverage based on a liquor, such as whiskey, to which water or a carbonated beverage such as ginger ale is

added, and which is then served in a tall glass.

Derek serves highballs for the three of them next to the fireplace. (p. 69)	Derek leur verse à boire à tous les trois, près de la cheminée. (p. 73)

The Larousse online does not give a translation for the drink but rather a definition of what it is. Huston could have chosen a drink that is typical in France or else one that is known both in the US and France, but decided to simply paraphrase it as 'serves something to drink.'

*

The relationship between Angela and Marina is very strong. In the end, it is what keeps Marina going. Angela is truly the older sister to Marina.

Angela has taught Marina everything she knows about arithmetic . (p. 135)	Angela a appris à sa petite sœur les quatre opérations fondamentales . (p. 134)

Rather than translating 'arithmetic' as *arithmétique*, Huston has opted to paraphrase the idea, to emphasize the importance of Angela as a teacher – even the 'fundamentals of mathematics' are received from her. Throughout the end of the novel the pair form a unit unto themselves.

3. Approximation

This is the opening sentence of the novel:

That body is out of her . (p. 3)	Ce corps est sorti d'elle . (p. 9)

There is, needless to say, no context at this point. And frankly, the sentence is not easily understood. The expression 'something is out' might be used for a child's loose tooth that is about to come out, or even a baby right after its birth. There is, however, no reference to a baby here, and by adding 'of her' for emphasis, the expression is distorted. The French, on the other hand, is quite easy to understand. Literally, the French sentence means: 'that body came out of her,' though not satisfactory in English either. One would, perhaps, have to resort to a negative way of putting it, such as 'that body is no longer inside of her' to make it clear to the English reader what is being said.

*

Lin does not give up dancing until she is seven months pregnant with Angela and, after her birth – even before she has left the hospital – she starts stretching her body in the exercise room of the hospital.

getting reaccustomed to being the only person in her body. (p. 6)	se réhabituant à l'idée d'être la seule personne dans son corps. (p. 11)

In the translation of this sentence there is a slight shift. The English refers to a physical state in which the body slowly becomes fully functional

as before – no more fatigue when walking up the steps, no more energy being drained into forming a new miniature creature, leaving the pregnant woman with little strenght for anything else. The French sentence, on the other hand, also refers to the emotional state of the pregnant woman. Some women literally revel in the state of pregnancy, and there is no denying that it is a privilege for a woman to be the pro-creator.

A. More Precision

With Angela, Derek and Lin do all the things new parents do, such as going to the park, and they are also, like any new parents, very much aware of other parents and children around them.

Lin points . (p. 7)	D'un geste de la tête , Lin montre une famille . (p. 12)

There are two obvious changes here. In the English text she points, which implies the index finger – and is considered somewhat rude – whereas in the French she uses her head, a more subtle way of indicating something to someone. Furthermore, in the English novel she merely points and it is not until the next paragraph that it becomes clear she is referring to a mother, her baby, and the father. The French states this simply and elegantly, making the scene clearer.

*

One of the dancers in Lin's troupe is Susie, a young black dancer, who is very good.

She is ... almost a little girl you could walk past in a slum without a glance (p. 19)	presque une adolescente maigri-chonne qu'on croiserait à Harlem sans lui accorder un regard (p. 24)

In this instance there is a very free translation that a translator, other than the author herself, would not dare to use. In English, she uses the word 'slum,' and in the other language she uses 'Harlem.' Harlem is an area in New York City that today is associated with African-Americans, poverty and lack of education. The black population started coming to the area of Harlem as early as 1904, when a black real estate entrepreneur sold to blacks. During the 1920s, as more African-Americans arrived from the south, the whites started leaving. In other areas of the city black tenants were not accepted, so by the 40s, the rents for blacks in Harlem were actually higher, despite worse housing conditions, because landlords were taking advantage of their inability to find apartments elsewhere. As recently as 1995, the black population in Harlem was 87.6 %, down to 69.3% in 2006, whereas during that same time period the white population grew from 1.5% to 6.6%. Outside of the US, Harlem is notoriously famous for its crime and poverty. Since the story of *SE* takes place somewhere in New York state or New England, Huston went from 'slum' to 'Harlem,' which ties in with the dancer's being black, but which would be strongly condemned if done by an independent translator. This shift would be considered politically incorrect.

*

Angela is at that inquisitive stage where questions are asked about everything and anything. She wants to know if she will die, and if her

mother will die.

A wonderful play on which the curtain is bound to fall. (p. 27)	Une merveilleuse comédie , sur laquelle le rideau tombera un jour ou l'autre. (p. 32)

Huston likens Lin's conversation with Angela about death to a play. But in the French version, a shift takes place. The mere play becomes a comedy – all the more macabre, since the dialogue revolves around whether people have to die or not.

*

When a new dance is forming in Lin's mind, her body reacts with aches and pains all over. Huston relates these to obstacles that have to be overcome, like in fairy-tales.

the way fairy-tale heroines fight to overcome combs that shoot up into forests and scarves that lengthen into rushing rivers. (p. 36)	comme Baba Yaga lutte pour venir à bout des peignes transformés en forêt ou des écharpes que s'allongent en fleuves torrentiels. (p. 39)

The general word 'fairy-tale heroines' in English becomes more specific in French, namely 'Baby Yaga,' a witch-like character from Slavic fairy-tales. Baba Yaga is sometimes shown as an antagonist, and sometimes as a source of guidance; there are stories in which she helps people with their quests, and stories in which she kidnaps children and threatens to eat them. Seeking out her aid is usually portrayed as a dangerous act. An emphasis is placed on the need for preparation, purity of spirit, but also

basic politeness⁸². Though Baba Yaga is not generally known in Western Europe, the character makes appearances in a very large number of books and films, including *Shreck Forever After*, which has recently been very popular with children.

*

When Lin practices with Emile, one plays the drums, which dictate the moves of the other. The dancer ends up in a trance-like state. According to Emile, the glory of the dance goes to beauty, not the dancer.

Just the opposite of a boxing champion waving his fat gloves in the air. (p. 38)	C'est le contraire du champion de boxe qui lève les bras en l'air – j'ai gagné ! je suis le meilleur ! (p. 41)

In the French text there are two new sentences, which add emphasis to the fact that the boxer focuses all the praise on himself, unlike the dancer who effaces himself.

*

Sean Ferrell, the poet, ends up capturing both Lin's and Rachel's heart.

Sean's background is poor, Catholic and harsh (p. 39)	Sean vient d'un milieu pauvre, catholique, et violent (p. 42)

According to the Oxford Online Dictionary, 'harsh' means 'cruel or

---

⁸² <http://www.oldrussia.net/baba.html> (30 November 2011)

severe.' The English reader will most likely interpret this as a physical environment, in which there was no proper heating, the child was often subject to the elements, and possibly not properly taken care of. The French text, more strongly, speaks about violence, either domestic or in the streets.

*

Lin tries to teach Angela to defend herself at the playground.

no one has the right to kick you around... we'll come (p. 44)	Personne n'a le droit de te traiter comme ça ! ... papa et moi viendrons... (p. 48)

She promises that 'we'll come.' More forcefully for the child, in French she says 'Daddy and I will come.'

*

Lin is home alone when she kills a cricket – which, when tossed into the fire, revives. Life and death are taking on more meaning to her with respect to her children.

Then a cricket is in the corner of her eye, scraping slowly across the living-room floor . (62)	Soudain, du coin de l'œil, elle voit un criquet qui traverse lentement le salon en raclant le parquet (p. 66)

This sentence has gone from two to four clauses. The first part becomes clearer, since the cricket is not actually 'in' the corner of her eye, but 'seen out of' the corner of her eye, which would be more appropriate in

English, too. In the second English clause word compounding eliminates the need for a separate clause. In French, however, a separate clause is necessary, in which the floor is specified as being made of wood, once again making the French novel more specific in detail.

*

When Lin was still living at home with her father Joe and her stepmother Bess, she would practice ballet long after they had gone to bed, all the while ignoring any pain it produced.

The next morning, she would wash the blood from her toes and hobble off to school. (p. 68)	Le matin, elle lavait le sang séché sur ses orteils et partait à l'école en boitillant comme une petite vieille . (p. 71)

'Hobble' is defined by the Oxford online dictionary as 'walk in an awkward way, typically due to pain from injury.' Though it is often used with reference to elderly people, that is by no means the only application. In French, however, her walk is directly compared to that of a little old lady, thereby strengthening the image.

*

Derek's parents, Sidney and Violet, are visiting Lin and Derek.

She lowers her voice to a hoarse whisper. (p. 80)	... dans un chuchotement rauque pour que son mari ne l'entende pas . (p. 83)

In the next paragraph in the English novels it becomes clear why Violet felt the need to whisper – she tells Lin that she was never in love with her husband but that she married him to escape her mother and that she does not wish him to hear this. In the French novel, this becomes immediately clear when it is stated at the end of the sentence.

*

Lin and Derek have had an argument and their love-making that evening is somewhat violent.

she cannot breathe, she wants to spoil his pleasure, how dare he (p. 83)	elle ne peut pas respirer; elle déteste cet homme , elle a envie de lui gâcher son plaisir; comment ose-t-il lui faire ça à elle (p. 86)

Once more, the French text is made stronger by the added thought 'she hates that man.'

*

Shortly after Lin has decided to pursue her career as a dancer and choreographer of a troupe away from her children, she is haunted by images of her children, the children she abandoned.

The second she hears a baby crying panic seizes her. (p. 115)	Dès qu'elle entend un bébé qui pleure, c'est l'épouvante – elle voudrait arracher ces bébés aux bas de leur mère et les presser contre son sein, leur caresser le

	crâne, leur faire des baisers dans le cou – (p. 115)

A large amount of text – at least compared to what is standard for Huston – has been added here. It emphasizes that despite the decision to leave, it has been very hard for Lin, and that any baby will remind her of her own, and reawaken the desire in her to hold a baby close.

*

Now that she has left, Derek finds it hard to enter the top floor, which was converted into a dance studio for Lin.

The two of them bending over the architect's drawings (p. 117)	Lin et lui-même , étudiant les dessins de l'architecte (p. 116)

For the sake of clarity, perhaps, the French speaks of 'Lin et lui-même,' though this specification is not necessary for an understanding of the text.

*

Lin and her company are in Paris to dance.

Walking down the Boulevard Saint-Germain, (p. 123)	Lin se promène sous les ormes le long du boulevard Saint-Germain. C'est une journée d'automne, resplendissante. (p. 121)

There are two added elements in the French text – the elm trees Lin walks under, and the season and weather at the time. As so often before, these additions do not constitute essential elements to the story, but simply add detail.

*

Though Marina is very small when Lin leaves the family, she seems to sense what has happened and behaves horribly, perhaps to punish someone.

Marina shreds her sister's school-books. (p. 124)	Marina déchiquette les manuels scolaires de sa grande sœur . (p. 123)

As if to remind the reader of the age difference, the French novel reads 'big sister' rather than 'sister.' The change does not have any type of implication for the storyline, but it shows how Huston once again uses the liberty of self-translation.

*

Derek drives to his parents' with the girls in order to spend part of their first Christmas vacation without their mother with them.

He decides to drive downstate with them. (p. 126)	Il décide de les amener dans le New Jersey (p. 125)
Once a month or so, they drive upstate together to visit Derek and Rachel. (p. 173)	Environ une fois par mois, elles rendent visite à Derek et Rachel. (p. 168)

Throughout the novel it remains unclear where exactly the “piddly little college town,” as Sean Farrell calls it (p. 39), is located. Angela later lives and works in New York City. Marina studies close enough to Angela to be able to spend weekends there – maybe Huston was thinking of Sarah Lawrence College, her own alma mater, located only 15 miles north of New York City. 'Upstate' is a term frequently used to refer to northern New York, as opposed to New York City. These two terms have come into usage to clarify whether a person is referring to the city or the state of New York. It is not, however, a term generally applied in all states to distinguish the northern from the southern part. Answers.com mentions this appellation as being used in California, Delaware, Maine and New York only. Downstate, on the other hand, though existent when referring to New York, is quite unusual. In addition, downstate New York does not include New Jersey, although parts of New Jersey are close enough for people living there to commute to New York City on a daily basis. In any case, the locations in *SE* are not very specific and used quite freely by Huston.

*

Around the same time when Marina switches to calling Rachel Mommy, she refuses to call Lin so.

In Rome the following summer, she obstinately calls Lin Lin; remains sullen and withdrawn throughout the week they spend together. (p. 147)	À Rome l'été suivant, elle appelle Lin obstinément par son prénom, trouve mille petite manières de la blesser, demeure maussade et renfrognée tout au long de la semaine qu'elles passent ensemble. (p. 145)

In the first part of the sentence, Huston eliminated the repetitive 'Lin' by using a paraphrase. It would have worked just as well in English. On top of that, in the French novel Huston added a phrase indicating that Marina was not just uncommunicative, but actually tried to hurt her 'in a thousand little ways,' giving more emphasis to the destructive relationship.

*

Finally, the children are old enough to go to bed by themselves and do not need help or comforting.

no running upstairs in response to their One Last Hug anymore (p. 151)	ni qu'on remonte cinq fois les marches en réponse à leur Papa ! Rachel ! encore un bisou ! un seul et puis c'est tout (p. 149)

The French novel is much more precise, indicating how many times they have to run up to tuck them in, that they call out 'Papa! Rachel!' etc.

B. Less Precision

In some instances, though far less numerous, the English novel is more precise than the French one.

*

As mentioned previously, both Lin and Rachel lost their mothers while very young and consequently had no real mother figure in their lives.

their fathers did not care (p. 13)	leurs pères étaient occupés ailleurs (p. 18)

In the English novel, the fathers 'did not care' – a very strong expression. In the French, on the other hand, the fathers were 'busy elsewhere' – too busy working to earn a living, perhaps, or too busy working to understand what an impact this neglect might have on their daughters. No matter the reason, the outcome was the same – borderline suicidal women – but the English novel is much stronger in expressing this.

*

Derek and Lin decide to throw a party at their house, to which they invite some of Derek's colleagues. Lin feels strangely out of place.

Fire glints off whiskey glasses and earrings and watches, the intellectuals are standing there and talking and nodding, creatures so used to feigning poise that these odd angular postures, thumb hooked round belt loop or wrist planted on hip, have become second nature to them. (p. 30)	Les reflets du feu scintillent sur des verres de whisky, des boucles d'oreilles, des bracelets-montres ; les invités se tiennent là devant la cheminée à bavarder en hochant la tête ; ils sont tellement habitués à feindre la décontraction que ces positions bizarres du corps, le pouce accroché dans la ceinture ou le poignet planté sur la hanche, leur sont comme une deuxième nature. (p. 35)

The 'intellectuals' from the English novel turn into 'guests' in the French novel. Perhaps Huston considered that the description of the characters implied enough about the guests without having to call them 'intellectuals.'

*

Before Lin even knows who Sean Farrell is, the two of them are bonding, so to speak, in silence at the party Derek and Lin give.

But Sean lays his fingers on her lips (p. 32)	Mais l'homme lui pose un doigt sur les lèvres, (p. 37)

Using the name 'Sean' in this context seems almost too personal, whereas *l'homme* is much more impersonal, creating a stark contrast between the impersonal naming and the intimate action of putting his fingers on her lips.

*

Sean goes and watches Lin rehearse and perform, which is something Derek does not do. After one of the shows they have a drink at a bar, and he tells her she is not meant to be there.

How can you go on playing the professor's wife in a piddly little college town – don't you know your gift will be throttled here? (p. 39)	Comment pouvez-vous continuer à jouer l'épouse du professeur dans une petite ville universitaire? Vous ne savez pas que votre don sera étouffé ici? (p. 42)

He thinks she is meant for better things, only to be found in a bigger city. 'Piddly,' sightly less common than 'piddling,' is defined in the Oxford online dictionary as 'pathetically trivial, trifling.' As Sean's character and eventual relationship with Rachel emerge, it becomes clear that he would

be the type of person to make such a comment about the town he himself lives in – as Lin remarks: “Whereas your gift, I gather, simply thrives on backwoods provincialism, she says, so breathless with rage her voice is scarcely audible.” (p. 40). By omitting the little word 'piddly' in French, the degrading character of Sean's remark is left out, too.

*

Lin watches her children as they grow, like any mother.

Looking is what confers existence on their daughters' drawings, colorings, mudpies, Lego constructions, choice of clothing, efforts at ballet . (p. 67)	C'est leur regard, le regard de Lin et de Derek, qui confère une existence à tout ce que font leurs filles: dessins, coloriages, pâtes de sable, constructions de Lego, déguisements, acrobaties . (p. 70)

In this extract a curious but plausible generalization has taken place. In English, Huston writes: “efforts at ballet.” This is correct for Angela, who starts ballet lessons at a young age and shows talent. Marina, however, is too young to be much of a ballerina. It is feasible that she would have tried to copy her elder sister, but at the age of approximately three she would not have been very graceful – hence *acrobaties* in French.

*

After Lin leaves, Derek is solely responsible for the girls.

When he picks up the girls at school, they whoosh across the room or down the hall or down	Quand il va chercher les filles à l'école, elles s'élancent vers lui en criant.... à ces moments-là, et

the steps toward him , faces ablaze with joy... These are the only moments at which Derek feels his body. (p. 117)	seulement alors, il supporte son corps. (p. 116)

There are two changes here. In the first sentence, the somewhat awkward repetition of “down the hall or down the steps” has been eliminated and simply stated as “elles s’élancent vers lui.” Secondly, in English he feels his body only at these times – it is numb otherwise – whereas in French there is an implication that he continuously feels his body, but it only ever has meaning or is acceptable when his daughters jump into his arms. Now that Lin is gone his body seems superfluous otherwise. This sentiment, though expressed differently, is present in both texts.

*

After Rachel has moved in with him, Derek decides to throw a party.

He and Rachel spend an entire Saturday shopping and cooking for it (p. 131)	Lui et Rachel passent la journée à faire les courses et la cuisine (p. 130)

It is of no consequence whatsoever if the day they prepare and cook for the party is a Saturday or just any unspecified day – but taking into account the lessons I have learnt from my first-year college course 'Principles of Writing 101,' using specific details makes a text more interesting. Therefore, specifying the day of the week as is done in English is the better option.

*

Rachel, Lin's best friend, who is now part of the family, asks Derek about her.

Does Lin write to you sometimes? (p. 135)	Elle vous écrit parfois? (p. 135)

Though either question works in the novel, it might be more realistic to have Rachel avoid the name, as though it were taboo. Psychologically one tends to think that by not naming the person the pain will be lighter.

*

Bagels, which are of Jewish origin, are very popular in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia, where there are large Jewish populations.

What do you remember about Lin? asks Angela one Sunday morning in a midtown delicatessen , her pink lips brimming with bagels and cream cheese (p. 168)	– Quels sont tes souvenirs de Lin? demande Angela un dimanche matin dans un café du centre-ville, les lèvres roses maculées de fromage blanc . (p. 163)

Bagels are called *baguets* in Montreal, but are possibly not very well known in France. They are translated as *petit pain en couronne* by the online Larousse. Though they may be found in French supermarkets, they are not common, in contrast to the United States or Quebec. Typically, a bagel is eaten with cream cheese, which is translated by the Larousse as *fromage frais*. Nowadays the brand name Philadelphia by Kraft is known

worldwide, though Philadelphia has only been marketed in France since April of this year. Huston has chosen to omit the bagel with cream cheese and use *fromage blanc* as a substitute, as it is of a similar creamy consistency and may therefore also get smeared on one's lips.

*

The following extract refers to a time when the girls are no longer at home and Derek and Rachel have long since been married.

the girls are hurt to see their father and stepmother imitating the most conventional signs of middle age (p. 173)	les filles sont dépitées de voir leur parents imiter les signes les plus conventionnels de l'âge mûr (p. 168)

Marina seems to have a strong affinity to Rachel, and whereas she very much rejects Lin, she probably considers Rachel more of a mother than Lin. Angela, on the other hand, has a lot more memories of Lin, since she was already six years old when Lin left the family. Even so, at this point, as an adult, Angela most probably considers Rachel a mother more than a step-mother, since Lin is absent most of the time.

*

When Sean dies of cancer, Lin returns to the little university town where she used to live, to show support to Rachel. Rachel never stopped loving Sean, but they would have slowly destroyed each other. Derek, on the other hand, never stopped loving Lin. Despite that, Rachel and Derek have a loving and caring relationship with each other.

That evening the five of them get drunk together, as Gabriel sleeps	Ce soir-là ils boivent ensemble tous les cinq, et Gabriel dort du sommeil des justes
It's a family reunion! says Derek at eleven, when they finish the first bottle . (p. 194)	– C'est une réunion de famille! déclare Derek vers onze heures, à la fin de la deuxième bouteille . (p. 187)

Lin has brought some vodka from Moscow, where she was on tour. The English 'they get drunk' is toned down to *ils boivent*. This is incongruent, however, with the increase in the number of bottles – from the 'first,' implying more, to 'the end of the second' – at which point they must surely be getting drunk.

4. Inconsistencies

There are relatively few indicators in *SE* to allow the reader to closely follow the time line of the novel. The time references that are found are often related to people's ages, and Huston is not very consistent in their usage.

Lin's [mother] had been whisked off to heaven by a brain hemorrhage when she was barely three (p. 13)	Celle de Lin, terrassée par une hémorragie cérébrale à l'âge de vingt et un ans , ... quand sa fille était encore toute petite , (p. 18)
Lin knows that her mother's name was Marilyn and that she was a runaway. She had fled home at age	Lin sait que sa mère s'appelait Marilyn et que c'était une fugueuse. Elle s'était sauvée de la maison à

seventeen because her parents bashed her regularly over the head with frying pans and golf clubs and hunting rifles. She had stolen a car ... and looked around for a service station. Joe, who happened to be working the pumps that day, had been struck by her wild eyes. Two weeks later she was pregnant, and four years later she was dead.	l'age de dix-sept ans parce que ses parents l'assommaient régulièrement avec des poêles à frire et ces cannes de golf et des fusils de chasse. Elle avait volé une voiture ... elle s'était mise à la recherche d'une station-service. Joe, qui se trouvait par hasard aux pompes ce jour-là, avait été médusé par ses yeux sauvages. Quinze jours plus tard elle était enceinte et quatre ans plus tard elle était morte.
... She has never tried to find her maternal grandparents, whom she holds responsible for the hemorrhage of Marilyn's twenty-one-year-old brain. (pp. 24-25)	... Elle n'avait jamais cherché à trouver ses grands-parents maternels, qu'elle tient responsables de l'hémorragie survenue dans le cerveau de sa mère âgée de vingt et un ans. (p. 30)
If she died when I was three I must have called her Mommy a thousand times. (p. 27)	Si elle est morte quand j'avais deux ans, j'ai dû l'appeler maman des milliers de fois. (p. 32)

On two occasions, it is mentioned specifically that Lin's mother Marilyn died at the age of twenty-one. In the account of Marilyn's life, she leaves home at seventeen, becomes pregnant shortly thereafter, and dies four years later. Taking into account the nine months of pregnancy, Lin would have been three years old when she died. In the English novel, the age three is mentioned twice. In the French novel the first reference to age is simply 'toute petite,' but in the second instance there is a blatant mistake, namely that Lin suddenly thinks she was two when her mother died. The average reader might not notice the error, since the reference to the age of two occurs on a separate page, but Huston may have done it on purpose to indicate that the loss happened at a very young age and that ultimately it

does not make much difference if it was at two or at three.

*

Before Marina's birth, Lin takes Angela to a museum.

Do you know where mommy is? Angela asks the museum attendant.	– Où elle est ma maman?
Sure, she's right over there he says, pointing at Lin. (p. 24)	– Mais elle est là, dit la gardienne du musée , en montrant Lin du doigt. (p. 29)

Angela repeats this dialog three times with the museum attendant, after which she always runs to hide her face in her mother's skirt. Though the episode is the same, the museum attendant is converted from man to woman. Reasoning that a female attendant would be more patient with a little child who keeps repeating herself is rather weak, but there seems to be no particularly plausible explanation.

*

Once again the term 'cold cream' is used, as is the case in *PS*.

Can I have some cold cream , too?	– Je peux mettre de la crème , moi aussi?
Sure.	– Bien sûr
Can I have some more?	– Je peux en mettre encore?
Okay, but just a little.	– D'accord, mais seulement un peu.

Angela plunges her whole hand into the Nivea jar. (p. 56)	Angela plonge toute la main dans la boîte de Nivea . (p. 60)

Since there is no play on words involved – in *PS* Paula thought all the cold cream had made her grandmother a cold person – the simple solution is to refer to cream in general, and then switch to a brand name famous on both sides of the ocean. Though actually a German brand, since its internationalization in the 1980s it has become known worldwide.

*

Lin is having coffee with her Spanish seamstress in Geneva, when the latter starts telling of how her son died.

Last summer ... riding his bicycle ... quiet street ... drunken driver ... sixty miles an hour ... rammed ... skull split ... (p. 127)	... faisait la bicyclette ... rue si calme ... trois heures de l'après- midi ... voiture déboulé ... soixante à l'heure ... ivre mort ... percuté ... crâne fendu ... (p. 126)

This extract is an excellent example of Huston's translating process – the essential story is the same and will evoke the same emotions, namely sadness, perhaps rage at the injustice of a young person's death at the hands of a drunk driver, and yet the actual translation is not very exact. In one case it is summer, in the other 3 pm. Sixty miles becomes sixty kilometers an hour. Some elements differ, therefore. In addition, they are no longer in the same order, something which Huston will sacrifice so as to achieve a certain sound and flow.

Angela is at the hospital for the birth of her baby.

You're doing fine, says the doctor. ... Push, says the doctor. (pp. 185-186)	– Très bien, dit l'obstétricienne. ... – Poussez, dit le médecin. (pp. 180-181)

A doctor – or *le médecin* – is obviously a general term that encompasses all doctors. In the United States it is typical to have an obstetrician present at birth. Whether the change in French is something like a correction or simply of so little importance that Huston did not worry about it is hard to tell. The biggest change, though, is that the English text seems to refer only to one person, whereas the French version seems to refer to two different people, the first a woman and the second a man.

5. No Change

At the party when Lin and Sean meet for the first time, reference is made to a poem.

Lin's and this stranger's silence, is full and pulsates with dark promise – they raise their glasses - Drink to me only – they are making love together, there at the table ... (p. 31)	... le silence de Lin et de cet inconnu se remplit et se met à vibrer de sombres promesses, ils lèvent leurs verres – Drink to me only –, ils sont en train de faire l'amour là, à table, ... (p. 36)

The poem in question is *To Celia* by Ben Jonson. The extract is part of the first and most famous line, which reads in its complete form:

“Drink to me only with thine eyes.”

It is quite fitting, since Sean Farrell is a poet himself. There does not seem to be an official translation into French of the poem. The half-line in English would probably not be recognized by the French readership, but a quick search in Google references the poem and its author as well as YouTube videos of the song that was later written using the poem. It has been sung by such famous people as Johnny Cash, Aretha Franklin and Mary O'Hara. Though the actual reference may be obscure to French readers, the song may well be recognized by them.

*

Lin and Rachel are window-shopping, when they run into Sean, and the relationship between Rachel and him takes off.

One day, window-shopping on Main Street with Rachel, she runs into him. (p. 43)	Et puis un jour, faisant du lèche-vitrine avec Rachel sur Main Street , elle le croise. (p. 46)

Main Street is usually, as its name implies, the main street of a town. Perhaps to keep the feel of an American town, the name was kept the same in French. The literal meaning – and the translation found on the online Larousse – is *rue principale*, but there is a second translation, in a more figurative sense and specifically related to the US, which is *les petits*

commerçants. To a large degree shopping in the US takes place at malls. It is considered quaint, however, when a small town has a main street in the center with small shops flanking it. They are often gift shops or boutiques or specialty shops of some type. For those readers who do not understand much English, the assumption would simply be that 'Main Street' is the name of the street without any particular connotations attached to it.

*

When it turns out Marina is a wailer, Doctor Spock's self-help book is taken off the shelf.

Let them cry half an hour, says Doctor Spock. (p. 59)	Laissez-les pleurer une demi-heure, dit le docteur Spock. (p. 63)

Dr. Benjamin Spock was an American pediatrician, whose book *Baby and Child Care*, published in 1946, is considered by some as one of the biggest best-sellers of all times. It has been translated into more than thirty languages, and is now in its sixth edition. It was somewhat revolutionary at the time, because Spock wrote how to take care of a child from a psychoanalytical point of view. Even today, many households, including my own, have the book as a reference, because it deals with all topics, from diaper rashes to when to see a doctor. The French title is *L'art d'être parents*. All that is needed is for the doctor's name to be mentioned for parents to know what is being made reference to.

6. Omission

During the first party Derek and Lin give, the following conversation is omitted in the French novel:

“What will you have to drink? Derek is asking someone.

“Straight vodka, the man says.

“I'll have straight orange juice, please – a female voice.

“Fine, fine, chortles the man. That way you get the screw and I get the driver.” (pp. 30-31)

This passage contains a pun that would not easily translate. The unnamed man speaking is referring to the drink called 'a screwdriver,' which is vodka mixed with orange juice. 'Screw' is also a vulgar form of referring to the act of sexual intercourse, whereas 'driver' in this case might loosely be interpreted as the male organ.

*

There is a series of incidents described in the novel to illustrate Marina's character.

Don't talk with your mouth full, Derek tells Marina. Marina spits a large, half-masticated piece of sausage onto her plate and goes on talking. (p. 71)	– Ne parle pas la bouche pleine, dit Derek. Marina recrache dans son assiette un gros bout de saucisse à demi mastiqué. (p. 74)

This instance shows how Marina uses a rule given to her by her father for her own good – instead of finishing her mouth-full and then speaking,

she spits her food out and continues talking, thereby obeying her father and yet defying him. The omission in the French novel does not make this subtle point.

*

Sean and Rachel's relationship is a stormy one at best – in fact, they end up separating, though they love each other.

Once I asked him very timidly .... he gave me the sweetest little twisted smile ... I don't know. (p. 75)	Une fois je lui ai demandé .... il m'a répondu avec un petit air malicieux: ... je.....n'en.....sais rien. (p. 78)

It is somewhat incongruent with Rachel's character to ask something timidly, and in fact, in the French novel the phrase is no longer present.

*

'Gravy' is a very important part of the Anglo-Saxon cuisine. It is made by taking the left-over juices from cooking meat and thickening them.

Derek is in the kitchen, making them Sunday roast beef and green beans and mashed potatoes with gravy (p. 80)	Derek leur prépare du rosbif et des haricots verts et de la purée de pommes de terre pour le déjeuner dominical (p. 83)
Could I have a little more gravy please? (p. 81)	Je pourrais avoir un peu plus de sauce ? (p. 84)

The translation given by the online Larousse is *sauce (au jus de*

viande), a paraphrase which is not generally used. In the first instance when gravy is used, Huston simply omitted it in French. In the second one, Sidney is trying to divert attention from Violet and Lin's argument back to the food, so he asks for gravy. As it is impossible to avoid a translation here, Huston has used the more general term *sauce*, which is acceptable but not precise. On the other hand, in direct speech, no one would ask for *sauce au jus de viande*.

7. Correction

During a rehearsal, Lin is at the drums, while Emile dances.

She taps softly, watches Emile's body like a twisting melting candle with its **flame of hair** and tries to capture it with her fingertips. (p. 38)

Elle tapote doucement, cherchant à capter dans ses mains le corps d'Emile qui se tord, avec sa **flamme de ses cheveux roux**, comme une bougie en train de se fondre. (p. 41)

A flame is associated with the color red, but the reader must interpret here. One might surmise that the word 'red' was accidentally omitted, as 'a flame of red hair' is quite a common expression. Huston has corrected this error in the French novel.

*

Marina, as mentioned earlier, was a difficult baby almost from the day she was conceived.

Five in the February morning, holding this baby wrapped in a patchwork quilt (p. 49)	à sept heures du matin, à bercer ce bébé enveloppé d'un patchwork (p. 53)

She needed constant attention, even during the early morning hours. In the two novels, however, the time is not the same. In the English novel, it is five am in February. At the beginning of the paragraph, dawn is mentioned. As established previously, the location of the small university town is either New York state or New Jersey. Both of these options are too far north for dawn to break at five am in winter. Seven am is therefore a much more likely time for it.

*

As mentioned previously, Derek drives to his parents' with the girls in order to spend part of their first Christmas vacation without their mother there.

He decides to drive downstate with them and spend part of the Christmas vacation with Sidney and Violet, though he knows his parents' house will be more restful than his own. (p. 126)	Il décide de les amener dans le New Jersey pendant les derniers jours des vacances, même s'il se doute que la maison de ses parents ne sera guère plus reposante que la sienne. (p. 125)

There is a contradiction in the English sentence. For the opposition to make sense, the clause that follows would have to be negative, as it is in French. There are only two explanations – either it was a typo, of which there are several in the English novel, or it was an error that went unnoticed until the translation.

*

Even a decade after Lin has left her children, she will be reminded of her children at any given moment.

The child is three . By now Marina is thirteen . (p. 156)	Elle a quatre ans. Marina en a presque quatorze maintenant. (p. 152)

Once again, the time sequence in the novel is somewhat hard to follow. It does look like an error correction in this case, though, because Lin would remember Marina the way she was when she left – namely, four years old.

*

When Angela and Marina go to visit Lin in Berlin, Marina, who is fifteen, disappears. The police finally find her at five in the morning, when she asks the following question:

I was taking a walk, don't people have the right to go for a walk in the country? (p. 160)	Je ne faisais que me promener, on n'a pas le droit de se promener dans ce pays? (p. 156)

The English question gives the impression that Marina has been walking in the countryside. This is unlikely, considering how big Berlin is and that Lin, on tour as usual, would be staying in a hotel near the city center and the theater where she is performing. In the French novel, the question has been revised to read 'this country,' referring to Germany, a

country where one of the people's favorite pastime is walking.

*

Marina spends her week burying herself in her studies, and then spends the weekend with Angela, in other words she only has contact with one human being. Angela, whose boyfriends are so numerous that Marina does not even bother to keep track of their names, decides it is time for Marina to go on a date.

The surprise rings the doorbell an hour later. (p. 176)	la surprise sonne à la porte quelques instants plus tard (p. 171)

It seems unrealistic that someone, Angela in this case, would promise a surprise that Marina would have to wait an hour for, and that Marina would not force her to let the cat out of the bag earlier. The seconds between the announcement and the door bell in the French novel are much more plausible.

*

As mentioned previously, at the end of the novel, Derek, his ex-wife and his new wife, as well as the two girls drink together after Sean Farrell's funeral.

at around eleven, when they finish the first bottle (p. 194)	vers onze heures, à la fin de la deuxième bouteille . (p. 187)

As they walk at dusk in February, they decide to have a drink together.

Considering that they are most probably in upstate New York, 11 pm would be approximately 5.5 or 6 hours after sundown. It is a more likely scenario that they would be finishing a second bottle at that point.

8. Wordplay in Translation

Shortly after Angela's birth Lin and Rachel are talking about how Lin feels, and what motherhood means to her.

And making up their own [faces] ...	Maquillant et remaquillant leur pauvre tronche. (p. 20)
Yeah, making themselves up – from scratch. (p. 15)	

There is a pun here in English, relating to the double meaning of making up – which is 'putting on make up,' the meaning it takes on in the first sentence, and 'inventing something,' in this case inventing themselves from scratch, as though most women create a whole new identity when they become mothers. Lin, on the other hand, feels that she is still the same. The second meaning of make up is lost in the French translation, because *se maquiller* has only one meaning.

*

When Angela is little, she has problems pronouncing certain words, particularly longer ones, just like any child.

Are you having the concrack-tions ? says Angela (p. 46)	Tu as tes concractions ? (p. 51)

Since the word 'contractions' is the same in both languages, Huston has used the same play on words to express Angela's baby talk.

*

Angela is simply named Angela, but Marina's choice of name is explained.

They call her Marina because of the Russian poetess . (p. 48)	Ils l'appellent Marina pour l'océan et pour la poétesse russe . (p. 52)

In English there is only one reason – a Russian poetess, most probably Marina Tsvetaeva, who lived from 1892 until she committed suicide in 1941. Some of her work has been translated into English, among others by Vladimir Nabokov, who translated at least one of her poems. But in French the association with the name is double: the poetess and the sea. The French word *marina* has the same meaning as the English word 'marina,' which is a special harbor meant for pleasure yachts and small boats. So, the association could have been used in English, but was added in the French text as it was translated.

*

Several times in the novel Huston – or the narrator – makes reference to Isidora, a dancer. This Isidora in question is the dancer Isidora Duncan,

whose full name was Angela Isidora Duncan, quite possibly the inspiration for the name Angela, Lin's first daughter.

I **cannot bear** them again (p. 52)

Je **ne peux pas** les **supporter**, les **porter** à nouveau (p. 57)

Isidora's life was rather tragic in that she lost her two children to a car accident and later died when the long scarf, such as those she loved to wear, was entangled in the rear axle of the convertible she was traveling in, thereby breaking her neck. When she spoke of her children after their death, she used the words from the quote above. The English reader will think of the verb as referring to bearing children. In Huston's translation, however, there is a second meaning she has translated, where 'can't bear' means 'not to be able to put up with something anymore.' The pun, perhaps unnoticed in English, is translated into French, though not in form of a play on words.

*

When Lin starts directing the dance company in Mexico, she is ready to take over the world. One of the places is Paris.

We'll teach this city a lesson. Paris is froth, so we shall all be glasses of champagne. A spoof on the Folies Bergères. Upside-down **can-can dancers**. **Can openers**. Cartwheels with missing spokes. Scissor-kicking legs turned into corkscrews, bottles explode, corks go flying, liquid spews, champagne spills all over the floor. (p. 123)

Nous donnerons à cette ville une leçon qu'elle n'oubliera pas des sitôt. Paris c'est de la mousse donc nous serons tous des verres de champagne. Des **ouvre-bouteilles**. Des roues pleines de bâtons. Une parodie des Folies-Bergère, dansant **le french cancan** la tête en bas. Les jambes exécutent des battements de ciseaux puis se transforment en tire-

	bouchons, les bouteilles explosent, les bouchons volent, le champagne gicle et se répand sur le sol. (p. 121)

The English paragraphs seems like an exercise in word associations: froth – champagne – Folies-Bergère – cancan – can openers – cartwheels – spokes – etc., regrettably ending with champagne spilled all over the floor. The important element, though, is the similarity in sound of cancan dance and can-opener, which leads one's thoughts to a round disk, in turn resembling the cartwheel. Since this important element is missing in the French text, Huston has made up the same list, though somewhat willy-nilly, making it seem a hodge-podge of items that are basically unrelated.

*

Marina has asked Angela to be careful on one of her many dates. Angela answers:

Condoms are the first step on the path to condominiums , baby. (p. 165)	Les capotes sont le premier pas su le chemin des décapotables . (p. 160)

The wordplay is evident, 'condom' being the first six letters of 'condominiums.' In French, the wordplay is nicely repeated by using an informal word for condom, *la capote*, and then finding a word which sounds similar – in this case the two syllables in the middle are almost identical – and which is associated with wealth: the convertible car.

*

Angela and Marina are spending the weekend together again, trying to understand the adult world. Their conclusion is:

Well, die and let live , that's my motto, sighs Marina with an exaggerated shrug. (p. 172)	Enfin, soupire Marina avec un haussement d'épaules exagéré. Là où il y a de la mort, il y a de l'espoir. (p. 167)

Once again, the pun is very nicely translated. Marina plays on the expression 'live and let live,' meaning one should be tolerant of others so they will be tolerant of oneself. Marina has a similar penchant for death as do both her mothers – especially Rachel, who tries to commit suicide at one point – and substitutes 'die' for 'live' with the first verb. In French, the saying is about hope existing – in the original, if there is life, there is hope – and again 'life' is substituted for with 'death.'

*

While giving birth to little baby Gabriel, Angela's thoughts run wild, and among other things they turn to her own mother.

rows of grinning teeth, teeth, death mother death mother death death death (p. 186)	autant de dents – des dents maman – ça mord ! sa mort ! (p. 181)

In English, Huston uses repetition to communicate the anguish and pain during childbirth. In French, she uses an excellent play on words,

because *ça mord* (it bites) and *sa mort* (her death) are homophones.

9. Repetition

In *SE*, as in *PS*, Huston makes use of repetition. Sometimes the repetition is repeated word for word in French, other times it is rendered by an expression that implies repetition without actually making use of the device. It will suffice to give just a few examples.

*

Exact repetition found in both texts:

Angela wakes and they rock her stroller gently, kissing and kissing (p. 8)	Angela se réveille et ils bercent doucement sa poussette tout en s'embrassant , en s'embrassant (p. 13)

*

In the next case there is repetition in English but an expression suggesting repetition in French:

Sometimes when she sits and bends, forward forward downward , ... (p. 6)	elle se penche en avant, de plus en plus loin en avant, (p. 11)

In English there is also an element of assonance between 'forward' and 'downward,' with the second part of the compound being the same.

*

I will add a second example here, in which a repetition is translated by an expression suggesting repetition, but when a different word is repeated in English, the same first expression is repeated in French.

... undo the snap buttons of her pajamas, pop pop pop all six of them, ... and do up the snap buttons again, all six of them click click click (pp. 8-9)	... défaire les six boutons-pression l'un après l'autre , ... et refermer les six boutons-pression l'un après l'autre (p. 13)

In English, Huston uses onomatopoeia to represent the opening and closing of the snap buttons, but in French this is not the case.

*

In one instance, Huston changes the repetition patterns.

She is trembling, trembling (p. 41)	Elle tremble, elle tremble (p. 45)

Rather than repeating only the verb, here a present participle in English, she repeats the subject and the verb twice to give an otherwise very short sentence more weight.

*

In the following example there is repetition in English, whereas an idiomatic expression is used in the French version of the novel.

the real Marina is screaming, screaming (p. 49)	la vraie Marina hurle à s'en faire éclater les poumons (p. 53)

The repetition in English could be interpreted in terms of length or in terms of strength. The French, however, is more related to the force with which she screams.

*

In the last example the repeated sentence in English is substituted for with a completely different sentence in French.

Forget it , says Lin. Please. Forget it . (p. 90)	– Laisse tomber , dit Lin. Je t'en prie. Je n'ai rien dit . (p. 92)

The repetition in English makes the sentence very forceful. In French, however, it sounds much more conciliatory, considering that Rachel and Lin have just had an argument.

10. Poetic Devices

Though not as frequently as in *PS*, Huston uses the same poetic devices in *SE*.

Case one : alliteration – alliteration

Back between the musky morning sheets (p. 33)	De retour entre les draps moites et musqués (p. 37)
my real mother was blond and blithe and beautiful (p. 46)	ma vraie mère était blonde , espiègle et belle (p. 50)
Stuttering stubborn substance. (p. 46)	substance stupide et obstinée (p. 51)
She looks both sheepish and serene (p. 89)	Son expressions est à la fois penaude et paisible (p. 91)

Case two: alliteration – assonance

Angela's big eyes follow every twitch and twinkle of the face above her. (p. 6)	Les grands yeux d'Angela suivent chaque frémissement, chaque pétilllement du visage au-dessus d'elle. (p. 11)

Case three : assonance – alliteration

undressed by the snug smug right	déshabillé par le droit douillette-

(p. 5)	ment au chaud. (p. 11)
his tongue is following the soft ridges of her left ear downward and inward (p. 21)	sa langue suit en descendant les crêtes et les creux de son oreille gauche (p. 26)
one little, brittle shard (p. 32)	un minuscule fragment friable (p. 37)
rickety persnickety machines (p. 115)	ces fillettes remuantes et respirantes (p. 57)
these same bodies are, always, painless and partless (p. 155)	machines branlantes tintinnabulantes (p. 114)
these clamoring clambering girls (p. 53)	ces mêmes corps morcelés deviennent toujours, comme par magie, indolores et intègres (p. 151)

Case four: assonance – assonance

his chubby grubby offspring (p. 7)	son bout de chou dodu (p. 12)
keening, whining, whinnying (p. 40)	avec des glapissements et des gémissements des hennissements (p. 44)

Case five: either – nothing

her fingers are butterflies, flitting and fluttering (p. 149)	ses doigts sont des papillons, ils volent, ils volent (p. 147)

Case six : nothing – either

drenched and quacking (p. 40)	trempée et tressillante (p. 44)
The ugly dawns, yes the stark bleak dawns of winter. (p. 49)	Les aurores hideuses, ou ces aubes tristes et transies de l'hiver. (p. 53)

11. The Narrative Mode

SE is unique among the three novels of my main corpus, because its narrative mode is different from the other two novels of my corpus. The first thing that strikes the eye is that there are no quotation marks for direct speech in the English version.

Come on, let's go take a bath, says Derek.	– Viens, on va prendre le bain, dit Derek.
No, I don't want to.	– Non, j'ai pas envie.
Come on, it'll be a really nice bath.	– Si, si, viens, ce sera un bain très agréable.
Okay.	– D'accord.
Okay?	– D'accord?
I'll just take the nice but I don't want the bath. (p. 29)	– Je prendrai juste l'agréable, pas le bain. (34)

Derek is trying to convince Angela to take a bath. Though only Derek's name is mentioned, the context makes it clear that the second

person is Angela. What is noteworthy, though, is that the English, without its quotation marks, puts a certain strain on the reader to mentally switch back and forth between narrative and 'conversation mode,' while in the French novel Huston has reverted to French norms for direct speech – the dash. The French novel, in that way, loses some of its quality of 'stream of consciousness.'

*

Though the novel is not, strictly speaking, 'stream of consciousness' ('stream of consciousness' tends to be first person narrative and conveys a character's thoughts), there is a certain 'stream of consciousness' quality to it. This is created by the lack of punctuation mentioned above, as well as an imperceptible drifting between reality and dream-world, which can be found in the novel at times.

Derek throws Marina into the air but this time she escapes his grasp, her feet go through the roof and her body speeds skyward, tumbling madly amidst the clouds, head over heels until it is out of sight -	Derek balance Marina vers le haut mais cette fois-ci elle lui échappe, ses pieds traversent le plafond et son corps fend les airs en un série de culbutes, tournoyant de plus en plus vite, disparaissant enfin au milieu des nuages...
Lin slams the newspaper down on her lap. This has to stop. Something has got to stop. (pp. 77-78)	Lin baisse violemment son journal. Il faut que ça s'arrête. Quelque chose doit absolument s'arrêter. (p. 81)

Derek is throwing Marina into the air, as many fathers do, but suddenly the situation becomes quite fantastic and somewhat confusing to the reader. Then Lin slams down her newspaper – the situation is not real,

but perhaps symptomatic of how Lin feels toward her family: things are continuously getting out of hand, until she decides to get up one day and leave the family. The French translation expresses the same idea, though the actual translation is quite free regarding Marina's flight through the air.

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Huston also uses unfinished sentences as a stylistic device. The following two extracts, which can be found on the opposite page, are presented one on top of the other, rather than side-by-side, so the format will be the same as in the novels I am citing:

They have been given an entire gymnasium for their rehearsals, a wonderful space

but to get to there every afternoon, they must walk through a playground

a playground with children playing in it

little Spanish-speaking boys and girls

their mothers or nannies, dark haired and heavy thighed, sit knitting and muttering near them on benches

Isn't there another entrance to the gymnasium? Lin asks the man who has found this space for her. But the answer is no. There is not. (p. 115)

On leur a donné tout un gymnase pour les répétitions. C'est un espace idéal

mais pour s'y rendre, chaque après-midi, ils doivent traverser une aire de jeu

une aire de jeu remplie de petits enfants

de petits enfants qui batifolent et se chamaillent en espagnol

près d'eux sur des bancs se tiennent leur mères et leurs nourrices, des femmes aux cheveux noirs et aux cuisses lourdes, tricotant et papotant ensemble

--- N'y aurait-il pas une autre entrée au gymnase? demande Lin à l'homme qui leur a trouvé cet espace. Mais la réponse est non. Non, il n'y en a pas. (p. 114)

Lin has recently left her family and finds it hard to bear the sight of children – they remind her too much of her own.

As is immediately evident to the eye, Huston uses the same page layout in the two versions. The only difference is that there is a period at the end of the first French sentence, where there is a comma in English. As mentioned above, the French novel also includes a dash to identify direct speech. The rest of the two extracts are exactly identical with respect to the absence of punctuation, which brings an absence of capital letters with it, and the use of sentence fragments.

In her article “Festins Fragiles?”⁸³ Huston likens the writing of *SE* to a sculptor chiseling a sculpture out of marble. The artist must remove chip after chip to create a figure. Similarly, the sentences in the novel seem to have been sculpted, leaving only the core. It is possible, that the rupture in a child's life created by the mother's abandonment – be it the Lhomond children or Nancy Huston – is to be expressed physically on the page. The discontinuity this dramatic incident creates is conveyed by means of sentence fragments and the absence of punctuation, jarringly out of synch with accepted conventions.

6.4. Conclusions

Plainsong, as we have seen, took Huston back to her roots, her native tongue, her homeland. At the same time, it was the first novel for which she

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⁸³ in: *Liberté*, n° 216, vol. 36, n° 6, décembre 1994.

could not find a publisher, resulting in the translation into French. “1990-1993. Total silence for three years. Impossible to find a publisher, either for *Plainsong* or for its French translation, *Cantique des plaines*. With my soul in my shoes (*la mort dans l'âme* in the French version of the same article), I began a new novel, again in English: *Slow Emergencies*.”⁸⁴ She considers it, writing in 2001, to be “the only one of my novels to be ‘pure story’”⁸⁵ (or *récit pur*, as she puts it in French). In effect, there is no narrator intervening and giving commentaries as in *Mark of the Angel*, nor is there a first person narrator inventing a story around a few facts, as in *Plainsong*.

“C’est pour cela que je suis devenue écrivain, parce qu’il avait dans ma vie quelque chose d’incompréhensible qui requérait un immense et perpétuel effort d’imagination pour tenter de le comprendre. Dans *La virevolte*, je me suis efforcée de me mettre à la place d’une mère qui abandonne ses enfants. Écrire permet de tout voir en face.”⁸⁶

Whereas in *Plainsong* she felt she needed to return to her language and cultural roots by writing in English about Canada, in *Slow Emergencies* she faced her childhood trauma of having been abandoned by her mother. It is also her opinion, that “the literary machine only jerks into motion if there is a minimum of friction, anxiety, misery, some little grain of sand to crunch, grind, jam the cogs.”⁸⁷ At the same time, she says: “it’s not that Lin is a model mother or anything, but that you could bring readers to understand how someone could leave their children.”⁸⁸ Though it deals

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⁸⁴ “Knowledge uprooted,” in *Longings and Belongings*, p.344

⁸⁵ *ibid.* pp. 345-346.

⁸⁶ http://www.lexpress.fr/culture/livre/nancy-huston_804287.html (3 March 2007)

⁸⁷ “The Decline of the ‘identity?’” in *Longing and Belongings*, p. 326.

⁸⁸ Shread, Carolyn. 2001. “Interview with Nancy Huston.” *The Journal of 20th-Century Contemporary French Studies*. 2.2 (Fall), pp. 246-252.

with the theme of abandonment, it is very little related to what happened in her own family. She insists in the same interview, furthermore, that “the novel is basically not immoral but amoral and has to be, that's the contradiction between motherhood and novelists, a mother has to be a moral person, and a novelist has to suspend his or her judgment, and just go with it, and maybe transgress a lot of rules.”

Once again, the novel will be put to the test:

- do the two versions tell the same story?
- do they both speak of the same characters?
- do they evoke the same emotions?

The two versions tell exactly the same story. It is the story of a woman who loves her two daughters and her husband, but who cannot give up her passion for dancing. After a long struggle, she finally gives in – art has captured her. But it is not mere bliss after she leaves the family to dance in Mexico. She misses her children. And each new dance is like giving birth again. Huston herself writes: “I did try and construct it like a piece of choreography, but I thought of it more as something that was very densely curled up, closed at the beginning around the character of Lin, then sweeping in ever-widening circles.”⁸⁹

The characters are also the same in both novels. Lin at first feels superior to other parents, believing she will not make the same mistakes. Then she starts struggling more and more with the everyday drudgery of bringing up two children, all the while feeling a call to dance. Finally,

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⁸⁹ http://www.booksincanada.com/article_view.asp?id=3118 (15 September 2011)

though she chooses her career over her children, they are always present in her mind. Derek, on the other hand, only becomes a full character once Lin has left and he has to deal with the feeling of abandonment, as well as the immense task of being mother and father at the same time. Rachel is presented in both novels as the childhood friend, who marries Derek more out of deep friendship with him than out of love, and who becomes a substitute mother for Marina. In both novels, Angela is the easy baby and Marina is the difficult one.

The emotions of both novels relate to the abandonment of the family. In both languages she is able to convey, though at times somewhat sketchily, how Lin struggles. The first time she is invited to work elsewhere, Lin rejects the offer without even consulting Derek. But Marina's clinging becomes an obsession, and she notices that when she is working, she forgets that her family actually exists. For her, this demonstrates how strong the call is, to which she eventually responds. But once 'liberated' to dance, she realizes that she will never be free of her family – other children remind her of hers, she mentions them to her lovers, etc.

According to Yanina Gotsulky in the *San Francisco Writers Workshop*: “After much struggle to remain 'normal' and to conform to the diktats of society, Lin surrenders to her beckoning destiny. This is the theme of *Slow Emergencies*: we do not choose art - it chooses us. Fighting the honour of the gods is lethal. The only way to survive is to heed the calling. However there is no blissful surrender into a carefree romp with the muses... Yes, Lin does make a choice, but not between career and family, as some critics have noted. She chooses life over death.

“This book analyzes the effects of such a choice without apologizing for it. The society at large does not understand artists... We glimpse the great artist in sporadic tortured-blissful flashes. Inspiration exists on the periphery of Humanity, which is awed, dazzled and frightened by the distant, unfamiliar landscapes of Art. Except this artist happens to be a woman. And when the artist is a woman, humanity also condemns: “In these postfeminist times, it's a daring choice to write with tenderness about a woman who abandons her babies for her art,” was one of the first reviews of the book I read. Was the critic reproaching the writer or the protagonist?”⁹⁰

Similar to *PS*, it becomes clear that Huston uses the translation process to add detail to the novel: a crying baby makes her panic, but in the French version, she is ready to snatch the baby from its mother in order to hold it close; Marina decides not to call her 'mother' anymore but 'Lin,' whereas her French counterpart finds 'a thousand little ways to hurt her,' etc. Conversely, at times Huston also removes detail: the 'intellectuals' drinking whiskey at their parties simply become 'guests;' the girls' 'efforts at ballet' turn into 'acrobatics.' None of the essence is lost, though detail sometimes is.

There are relatively few inconsistencies in the novels, but those related to the time sequence of the novel and the characters' ages are surprising. In the original novel, Lin loses her mother at the age of three – in the translation at the age of two. Only a self-translator would dare to take such liberties – perhaps only to express that it was at such a very young age that a child is not able to retain the memory of a lost parent.

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⁹⁰ http://www.sanfranciscowritersworkshop.com/html/huston_-_slow_emergencies.html (12 July 2011)

The only major omission in *SE* is a paragraph that contains a pun, which uses the drink called 'screwdriver' – vodka mixed with orange juice – to make a play on words with sexual allusions. The two people speaking at the party are not named, so that the pun only says something about the type of people invited without referring to anyone who has any significance in the novel. The omission, whereby the difficult translation of the pun is avoided, does not change the story in any way.

In *SE* there are other puns, on the other hand, which were translated into French very well, notably the 'condom/condominium' and 'capotes/décapotables' pairs. It is done with the liberty of the self-translator, but in a clever way. Angela's baby talk, 'concracktions/ *concractions*,' also works well, because of the similarity between English and French. Only the paragraph about Paris and the Folies Bergère with its word associations loses its train of thought in French and becomes somewhat muddled. This is regrettable, though not of any great consequence.

Once again, in *SE* Huston uses repetition and the poetic devices alliteration and assonance for sound and rhythm in both novels. The conclusions are identical to those in *PS*: Huston uses them to her benefit, but at the same time she is not a slave to them.

The narrative mode Nancy Huston uses in *SE* is very peculiar to this novel. Concerning the writing of the novel Huston says: “*La virevolte ... est fait de fragments, d'échardes, d'éclats de verre. Style/stylo/stylo/stylo. Instruments coupants. Livre taillé, tailladé, dans la pierre, la chair. Scalpel, bistouri, ciseau. On commence avec un immense bloc de marbre et on finit avec un enchaînement hoquetant de cailloux, osselets dansants. Style*

auquel je suis parvenue on par accumulation mais par coupes. Et recoupes. Mutilations. Pages brûlées, littéralement, et effacées en même temps de la mémoire de l'ordinateur. Puis regrettées amèrement

“phrases inachevées, laissées en suspens”⁹¹

As I have mentioned in my analysis, there seems to be a connection between the discontinuity that Huston experienced in her own life after her mother left – a foreign stepmother in the family, constant moves, the change from Canada to the US at the age of fifteen, etc. – and the physical appearance of the text: sentence fragments, absence of punctuation, and therefore, absence of capital letters. There is a quality of 'stream of consciousness' present in the novel, that at times makes it hard to follow the story line. The reader must switch between narrative mode and direct speech, distinguish between 'reality' and 'fiction' within the novel, and finish sentences for the author. This sensation is not quite as strong in French, mainly because the indicators for direct speech are retained.

Huston commented in the interview with Nancy Wigston: “That book was hard to write, but it's been really rich in sequella. The novel I just finished uses some of the same characters - something I've never done before. And I'm currently working on a musical comedy based on [Lin's daughters] Angela and Marina in New York.”⁹²

“Millions of details... come from my own experience but nothing really structurally similar. Even *Slow Emergencies*, which is about a mother who leaves her daughters, is very little about what happened in my own

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⁹¹ “Festins fragiles” in *Âmes et corps*, p. 41, in this formatting

⁹² http://www.booksincanada.com/article_view.asp?id=3118 (15 September 2011)

family, although it explores the theme of abandonment. I wish my mother had left in such a glorious way.”⁹³

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⁹³ *ibid.*

VII

The Mark of the Angel

VII

The Mark of the Angel

The Mark of the Angel is perhaps the most international of Huston's novels. The action takes place in Paris, but the main characters are German and Hungarian, whose pasts in their native countries are often recalled. The Algerian war of that time period also plays an important role.

This novel was originally written in French and then translated into English.

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7.2. Summary

May 1957: A young twenty-year-old German woman called Saffie arrives in Paris and finds employment as a maid with Raphael Lepage, a promising flutist. He finds her silent passive manner irresistible, and, despite her troubled character, proposes to her after only one month of acquaintance. They are married in June and have a baby boy called Emil, in January, albeit undesired by Saffie – she was unsuccessful in trying to get rid of it with a clothes hanger. Saffie remains aloof, until one day, when the baby is two-and-a-half months old, Raphael sends her to have his flute repaired by a Jewish Hungarian. Both the Hungarian András and Saffie fall in love at first sight and start a love affair which includes Emil, to form a little family. Raphael perceives her happiness and believes her wounds are healing, never suspecting a thing. Little by little Saffie tells András her story – the rape by the Russians, the father who worked for Bayer, a company that obtained prisoners from Auschwitz to do experiments on, the mother who committed suicide. András is silent, unwilling to hate Saffie but appalled that she only sees her own suffering. He has become a Marxist and is ready to fight for the Algerians, whose situation both in France and Algeria is getting worse and worse. He is active in their underground organizations. Then, when Emil is six, Raphael, upon returning home by taxi, sees András holding Emil's hippie parka, which Raphael had brought back for him from the US – and his world breaks down. He decides to take Emil on a train trip to visit his own mother in order to speak to him alone. Since the boy will not answer his questions concerning Saffie and András, he holds him over the tracks while the train is traveling at full speed and in an instant of relaxation loses hold of the child. Emil dies upon hitting the tracks. Saffie disappears and is never heard of again.

7.3. Analysis

1. Conversion

Right at the beginning of the story, Raphael, in the French novel, lives '**au deuxième étage**' (*EA* p. 12), whereas in the English novel, he lives '**on the third floor**' (*MA* p.4). Similarly, it is '**sixième étage**' (*EA* p. 19) for Saffie's apartment in French, but '**the seventh floor**' (*MA* p. 11) in English. As is customary with Huston, the floor numbers have been adjusted in the translation.

There are also issues relating to weight. France uses the metric system, whereas Canada uses the imperial system. When Mme Trala-Lepage remembers the war, she is reminded of the rationing of '**1 kg** de pommes de terre, par personne et par quinze jours.' (p. 39). This is translated to '**2 pounds** of potatoes per person per fortnight.' (p. 32). Though only approximate (the American pound translates to 0.453 kg), the translation is a close enough conversion to justify rounding it up, so as not to sound artificial in the English novel. It must be noted, though, that the next sentence continues with: '**Cinquante grammes** de beurre par mois.' (p. 39) and '**Fifty grams** of butter a month.' The quantity in grams – also noteworthy here is the American spelling – has not been translated into an approximate '2 ounces,' which would be the common measurement in North America. This is related to the fact that the nutrition information on food labels shows fat, sodium, cholesterol, and more, in grams.

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At the birth of Saffie and Raphael's child, on the other hand, the baby's weight has been converted again, for the reader's convenience and better understanding.

L'enfant pèse moins de deux kilos . (p. 67)	He weighs less than four pounds . (p. 59)

The weight of a baby at birth is very important, indicating in part the health and survival chances of the baby. It would therefore be helpful to the English reader to understand that Saffie's baby is not only premature but also underweight – so much so that he needs to be placed in an incubator. Saffie has been 'absent,' that is apathetic and listless from the beginning of the story, showing little interest in her surroundings. She does not desire motherhood – and even tries to rid herself of the unborn at one point, albeit unsuccessfully – and when the birth process sets in, the doctors have to perform a Cesarean, because she will not push. The baby survives thanks to oxygen, transfusions and the incubator. It is therefore important that the reader understand and have a feeling for the baby's weight.

*

Another category of numbers that has been converted, relates to distance. As an introduction, I will give a few examples:

un chapeau noir, rond et plat, d'un diamètre impressionnant (soixante centimètres peu ou prou) (p. 29)	a round, flat, inordinately wide black hat (something like two feet across) (p. 21)

Ensuite, s'avisant que l'une de ses valises était juste assez large (soixante-cinq centimètres) pour y glisser le chapeau, elle avait décidé de ne pas restituer à l'école son élégant uniforme. (p. 30)	Then, noticing that one of her suitcases was just wide enough (twenty-six inches) for the black hat, she'd decided not to give her elegant uniform back to the school. (p. 22)
la détresse de Saffie s'insinue sous les fentes des portes et infecte chaque centimètre carré de l'appartement rue de Seine... (p. 59)	Saffie's misery seeps through the cracks beneath the doors, infecting every square inch of the Rue de Seine apartment... (p. 52)
un objet ou une personne à plusieurs mètres de distance peut soudain lui paraître anormalement près... (p. 84)	An object or a person standing several yards away from her can suddenly loom up huge and blurry, ... (p. 77)

Of these four samples, the first two are specific in number, the other two, general. What is interesting to note is the conversion of 60 cm to 2 ft, but 65 cm to 26 in. This might be due to the fact that the first is only an approximate number, but the second an exact one. As such, 26 inches sounds more precise than 'something like two feet across.' The last two examples are not really comparable in their conversions if one wants to be precise to the millimeter, but they help the general flow of the English text.

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Time references have been converted from the French 24-hour-system to the English 12-hour system.

Treize heures trente. (p. 97-98)	It's only one-thirty. (p. 91)

In English, the 24-hour system is mostly reserved for the military, so that using it would sound awkward.

*

One aspect that makes it so 'French' is the fact that, generally speaking, the names have been retained. There are some small differences, such as the spelling of **Raphaël**, which is Anglicized as **Raphael**. Saffie, however, the German protagonist's name, remains the same. Emil is actually registered by his father as Emile, the French way, but Saffie thinks of him as Emil, German style, and that is what he is referred to throughout both novels.

*

The case is different in the following extract:

le patron, M. Longuecuisse il s'appelait, sans blague, le salopard ... (p. 52)	the boss... Mr. Longlegs , his name was, believe it or not... (pp. 44-45)

This is the only translated name. There is obviously an element of the ridiculous in this name, that would be missed had there been no translation. Mr. Longlegs was the boss at a chemical factory, the Wonder Batteries factory of Saint Ouen, where the *conciierge*, Mademoiselle Blanche, had previously worked. He used to 'favor' the new young female employees and would take one or the other on a weekend trip to Bordeaux with him, which often resulted in an unwanted pregnancy.

Since his name has been translated, the title is in English, too: it is 'Mr.' rather than 'Monsieur,' as with the other names in the novel.

In addition, in the extract the little word *le salopard* has been omitted in the English novel. It means 'the swine,' making reference to his sexual activity with young, unwilling women. The paragraph is following Mademoiselle Blanche's train of thought back to her past, and there seems to be no apparent reason why this judgmental remark should be left out of her interior monologue.

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In chapter 9, there is a second instance in which a name is translated. This time it is the name of András, which is translated in no other part of the novel.

« András » en hongrois est un nom fort, cinglant même, avec l'accent tonique sur la première syllabe, le <i>r</i> roulé sur le palais et non dans la gorge, le <i>s</i> prononcé <i>ch</i> ; notre « André » est bien insipide par comparaison. (p. 108)	The Hungarian “András” is a harsh, powerful name, with the accent on the first syllable, the <i>r</i> rolled on the palate rather than in the throat, the <i>s</i> pronounced <i>sh</i> ... Our “ Andrew ” is quite insipid by contrast. (p. 101)

Though Huston uses some French words where English ones would work, and adds the occasional German word, here we find that to emphasize the difference in sound of the Hungarian 'András' and its translation, she uses *André* in the French and 'Andrew' in the English version, clearly having the target reader in mind.

*

Madame Trala-Lepage's somewhat pompous-sounding name has not been translated, but 'Trala,' which is reminiscent of 'tra-la-la,' is commonly used in diverse languages to denote singing without any particular words. The aspect of the ridiculous is not lost upon the English reader, even though the name is not translated.

2. Paraphrasing

There is one particular reference to a date, which is the 14th of July.

Tiens! ils avaient oublié, c'est le 14 Juillet . (p. 164).	Ah yes, they'd forgotten – it's Bastille Day . (p. 161)

The 14th of July is a national holiday in France, known both as *le 14 juillet* or *le jour de la Bastille*. The former term is used in the French text, but translated as ‘Bastille Day,’ a term that evokes historical references, which the date might not as readily, as dates from history lessons are more easily forgotten than events.

*

There is another cultural allusion with respect to a French law.

prostituées et travestis de l'hôtel borgne du numéro 34 (géré par	prostitutes and transvestites from the brothel down the street at n° 34

l'épouse d'un policier en flagrante transgression de la loi Marthe Richard) (p. 144)	(run by a policeman's wife in flagrant defiance of the 1946 no-tolerance law) (p. 139)

The French name, *la loi Marthe Richard*, is named after the French politician who lobbied for the closing of brothels. The brothels in France had been made legal in 1804, to ensure both protection from the police and a certain amount of hygiene. Ironically, Marthe Richard had been a prostitute until she married a rich industrialist and turned *bourgeois*. Some of her many occupations, apart from being a politician, include spying and writing erotic fiction.

The name Marthe Richard will be completely unknown to the majority of English readers, which is why Huston has used the expression 'no tolerance law.' It is questionable whether this phrase would be understood by English readers, if it were not for the context. One of the many French expressions which refer to a brothel is *maison de tolérance*, which seems to be the origin of Huston's English phrase.

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Saffie lui sert une salade niçoise (p. 35)	At lunchtime, Saffie serves him an egg-and-tuna-fish salad (p. 28)

A *salade niçoise* is a salad that is typical of and receives its name from the city of Nice in the south of France. It was first mentioned in the magazine *L'Art culinaire* in 1893. It contains hard-boiled eggs, more likely anchovies than tuna fish, lettuce, tomatoes, and onions. The salad, which

has become world famous, is generally called by its French name or else translated as 'Niçoise Salad.' Huston, on the other hand, chose to translate it as 'egg-and-tuna-fish salad' – which is not incorrect, but certainly not very accurate. One possible explanation might be that the term 'egg-and-tuna-fish salad' is more general, and less 'French' so to speak. At this point in the novel Saffie has only been in France for a month and therefore cannot be expected to know, after such a short stay, something so typically French.

*

By contrast, when Saffie serves Raphael a *gratin dauphinois*, Huston spells it in English as “**gratin Dauphinois**” (pp. 207/207). One could argue that gratin Dauphinois is more well-known (in terms of hits in English in Google, the gratin gets 75,900 and salade Niçoise gets slightly fewer at 73,800). A second point in support of this is that at this moment in the story, towards the end of the book, Saffie has been in France for some years and has surely become acquainted with a number of French dishes.

*

devant la porte de M. Lepage. ... Mais il est là, monsieur Lepage ! (p. 12)	in front of Monsieur Lepage's door. ... But – he's at home, Monsieur Lepage! (p. 4)
c'était quand même par la faute des Allemands que Mme de Trala-Lepage s'était retrouvée veuve à quarante ans... (p.16)	it was still the Germans' fault that Madame Trala-Lepage had found herself widowed at the age of forty... (p. 8)
Mlle Blanche , en revanche, présente un malheur. (p. 51)	Only Mademoiselle Blanche has a foreboding of disaster. (p. 43)

Though titles are retained in the English version, they are 'spelled out,' so as to help the reader recognize them – the terms *Monsieur*, *Madame* and *Mademoiselle* are certainly widely known; however, their abbreviations quite likely are not.

*

Similarly, abbreviations are usually written in their full form, rather than abbreviated.

il avait quinze ans et rêvait que de rejoindre les rangs roman-tiques des FFI ... (p. 17)	he was fifteen and longed to be part of the romantic ranks of the Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur ... (p. 9)
Au cours de ce même été, l'été 1960, à Paris, à Lyon et à Dijon, de Gaulle laissera guillotiner huit Algériens membres du FLN . (p. 166)	In the cities of Paris, Lyon, and Dijon, in the course of this same summer of 1960, Charles de Gaulle will allow eight National Liberation Front fighters to be beheaded by the guillotine. (p. 163).

In the first example the French is retained, in the second case the term has been translated. One possible explanation is that the FLN was a group specially formed to gain independence from France for Algeria, whereas the FFI was a name given to the resistance fighters once they were regrouped as light infantry units after France was no longer considered occupied. The 'National Liberation Front' is certainly a term known in its translated form abroad, while the other term is not.

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There is an instance, however, in which this trend is reversed.

Les militants du Front de libération nationale , ...du Mouvement national algérien (p. 104)	the FLN fighters ... rival MNA fighters (p. 98)

One can only surmise that 'MNA,' 'FLN' and 'National Liberation Front' are somewhat meaningless to the English reader, whereas these terms evoke strong emotions for the French reader, who has studied the Algerian war and who knows what part these fighters played in it. It is therefore not as important in English as in the French text.

*

In other cases, the abbreviation has been omitted altogether and the idea paraphrased.

l'interrupteur ne marche pas. Encore une grève à l'EDF ! (p. 111)	the light switches aren't working. Another power strike ! (p. 104)

EDF is the national electricity company, its abbreviation standing for *Électricité de France*. Though the words of the full name may be understood by English readers, the concept of EDF as the national electricity company might not be so readily understood, which is why Huston opted for the paraphrase 'power strike.' This is a translation which demonstrates the liberty of the self-translator, albeit elegantly done.

As András and Saffie are getting to know each other, Saffie corrects András's French twice because he confuses the genders of nouns. Since English does not have genders, Huston resorts to paraphrasing.

– C'est un il , dit Saffie.	“It's a boy,” Saffie says.
– Et l'autre... C'est un <i>il</i> aussi?...	“And the other one...” says András... “ It's a boy also? ” ...
– Une flûte , dit-elle...	“ Flute is feminine in French ,” she says...
– Oh! c'est pas la peine. J'arrive pas avec les genres, en français. Pourquoi une flûte et un table , il y a pas de sens.	“Oh, never mind. It's no use, I can never learn the genders. Why a flute should be like a woman and a table like a man , I can't understand.”
– Une table , dit Saffie... (p. 95)	“No, table is feminine, too ,” says Saffie... (p. 89)

In French, Huston plays with pronouns (*il*) and articles (*un*, *une*). In English, she uses different approaches. First, speaking about Emil, she says “It's a boy,” though 'It's a *he*.' would have worked as well. However, “It's a boy.” ties in much better with András subsequent remark. Saffie speaks about the flute being feminine, whereas András makes a comparison: “a flute should be like a woman and a table like a man” to express feminine and masculine.

chez un brocanteur dans le onzième. (p. 111)	”in the eleventh arrondissement. In a... a shop of old junk. ” (p. 105)

Here we find several strategies – one is the rephrasing of the word *brocanteur*, which has no translation into English and can therefore only be rendered by rephrasing. A second, due to the fact that the French text has a descriptive paragraph, is partly rendered as direct speech in English. Huston thereby uses it to express the lack of vocabulary and somewhat crude language characteristic of András, a foreigner in France. Thirdly, the expression *dans le onzième*, so common in Paris and other major French cities such as Lyon and Marseilles, would be incomprehensible in English, stated as 'in the eleventh.' Huston has given the full expression, namely 'the eleventh *arrondissement*,' which has no translation as such in English, but which will be understood by Francophiles and those who have traveled to Paris or other big French cities.

3. Approximation

In the first example, the amount is the same, but the unit is different, probably because the two are very similar in value (1 yard = 0.9144m). This example also fits into the category of conversion, but I have chosen to include it here, to show that oftentimes the exact quantity or amount of something is not the most important aspect for Huston.

ils entendent, depuis le Carrefour de l'Odéon à cent cinquante mètres de chez eux, la vacarme d'un embouteillage monstre (p. 56)	when they hear the din of a monstrous traffic jam coming from the Odéon intersection a hundred and fifty yards away (p. 49)

The exact calculation would yield $150 \text{ yd} = 137.16 \text{ m}$. Since the yard is just under a meter, it is an easy and logical step for the self-translator to keep the numerical value and simply change the unit of measurement. As mentioned earlier, such approximations help the flow of the text.

A. More Precision

There are numerous examples where the translation becomes more precise.

Ce n'était pas pour lui déplaire . (p. 14)	This was actually an asset , as far as he was concerned. (p. 6)

When Saffie called about the job offer as a maid, Raphael recognized she had an accent. The French sentence is an understatement – he did not dislike the fact – whereas in English it is 'an asset,' a much stronger way of putting it.

*

Elle prend place dans un fauteuil au salon, en face de lui sur le canapé. (p. 15)	In the living room, he sits down on the couch and motions for her to take a seat in the armchair across

	from him. She obeys, wordlessly. (p. 7)

Saffie has just rung the doorbell in order to apply for the job as a maid which Raphael announced in the newspaper. She follows him into the living room and then takes a seat opposite him. Huston has expanded the English text to show the boss/future employee relationship better – he motions for her to sit down. Moreover, the English extract foreshadows Saffie's silent character and wordless obedience.

*

Les fonctionnaires allemands étant plus efficaces que les fonctionnaires français, elle obtient son document dans la semaine. (p. 45)	German civil servants being more efficient than their French counterparts, she receives the document within forty-eight hours. (p. 38)

To reduce the processing time to 48 hours makes the German civil servants more efficient yet, a point to be emphasized.

*

The second example relates to the French who lived in Algeria.

Ils ignorent tout de Camus, n'ont pas lu une ligne de ses romans, ne savent même pas que c'est un Français d'Algérie. (p. 56)	They know nothing of Camus, haven't read a line of his books, aren't even aware that he's a pied noir – a Frenchman born in Algeria. (p. 49)

The Oxford Dictionaries online defines *pied noir* as 'a person of European origin who lived in Algeria during French rule, especially one who returned to Europe after Algeria was granted independence.' This term, 'black foot,' is derived from the typical Western-style black leather shoes worn by the first colonists. It is, of course, the term generally used by the French themselves. The question arises why Huston would not have used it in the French text, only to use it in the English one, where it calls for some rephrasing. The Larousse online defines the term more generally as a Frenchman living in North Africa until its independence. It would therefore have been necessary in the French text to specify that Camus lived in Algeria, because *pied noir* would have been too general.

*

Raphaël n'a pas le droit de le tenir . (p. 68)	Raphael doesn't have the right to take him in his arms . (p. 61)

'Tenir' can certainly mean 'to hold something/someone in your arms,' but Huston could have been as specific as in English by saying '*le tenir dans ses bras*.'

*

une messe de minuit. (p. 63)	midnight Mass at Notre Dame (p. 55)

The mass in the original text could be anywhere, whereas in the translation the actual church is mentioned – the Cathedral of Notre Dame itself.

*

Et Saffie, elle lave. Elle lave. (p. 64)	And Saffie... well, Saffie does the housework. Unrelentingly. (p. 57)

In the source text she is involved in a specific task, which is repeated for emphasis, whereas in the English text she is doing 'the housework.' She is now married to Raphael and no longer a maid, but since she does not have a job, she does the domestic chores herself. Her obsession with the housework – washing in particular – is more clearly expressed in the English as tasks to be done. It is her way of dealing with her internal life (ghosts from the past, so to speak), or a way of forgetting them. Though done obsessively, they form part of her daily routine – which the French *elle lave* does not convey. Rather, it expresses a fixation, whereas the English text shows Saffie as using the tasks at hand to forget.

*

Pourvu que... se dit-il. Pourvu que. (p. 65)	Dear God... he says to himself. Dear God, please... (p. 58)

Raphael has just dropped off Saffie, in labor pains, at the hospital. *Pourvu que* might be translated as 'Let's hope things turn out well.' He has seen the pain on Saffie's face before being whisked away and, by invoking God, even though he does not seem to have a penchant for the religious the rest of the time, makes a much stronger expression of his own anguish.

*

Ils ont failli ne pas réussir à le sauver . (p. 69)	They've just barely managed to save him from Limbo . (p. 61)

The Merriam Webster defines limbo as: 'in some Christian theologies, a region bordering upon hell, the abode after death of unbaptized children and righteous people who lived before Jesus.' Though the French text implies that the baby, underweight at birth, is saved from death, the English text explicitly mentions Limbo, giving it more emphasis.

*

After Saffie and the baby arrive at home again, Raphael is trying to convince himself that

la belle vie (p. 70)	a happily married life (p. 63)

will begin – a term that can encompass marital felicity, but also financial ease and a successful career. He does achieve the latter two, but not the first, which is the only one translated in the English text. Once again a vague term becomes more precise in the translation.

*

Bientôt... (p. 73)	Towards the middle of February (p. 65)

The baby is born towards the end of January. The chapter following this extract starts with “A month has gone by.” (p. 62), which means it would be the end of February. Immediately after, there is a jump back in time – back to the hospital, Saffie's release and then the baby's release a fortnight later (i.e., towards the middle of February then). Raphael watches Saffie, and how passive she is towards the baby, though it is hard to know how much time elapses. Then comes the reference to mid-February, when Raphael takes up his music again. Would that be shortly after the baby has arrived at home or is there a mistake in the calculations? The more precise time reference in English, as opposed to the French, is, in fact, somewhat confusing.

*

D'accord, vas-y! (p. 169)	Okay... On your mark, get set, go! (p. 167)

When Emil is almost three, Saffie is finally happy – she has a perfect little family life with Emil and András, while Raphael is out and about becoming more and more famous. At this point, she and Emil throw her one remnant of childhood into the river, to see if it will swim: the leg of what had once been her poodle. *Vas-y* simply means: 'Go ahead!' It gives her utterance an offhand tone. On the other hand, 'On your mark, get set, go!' is usually used for races, and gives a more official ring to it.

*

Dietrich dans la scandaleuse de Berlin. (p. 201)	Marlene Dietrich in <i>A Foreign Affair</i> . (p. 202)

In this instance, the actress' full name is essential as readers on the other side of the Atlantic would not understand who is being made reference to. In Europe, however, Dietrich was generally very well known during that time period. Furthermore, the title of the movie starring Marlene Dietrich is not set apart visually in French, not even by the customary capitalization of the first word of the title. In English, however, the italics clearly denote a title.

*

–Tu as vu chez toi ?	“Did you see what's going on in your city ?”
– Chez moi ?	“ My city ?”
Saffie pense à la rue Seine et se demande ce qu'András peut bien vouloir dire. (p. 177)	Saffie has no idea what he means. They live in the same city. (p. 175)

In this example, the name of the street is not very significant to the English reader, or might even be confusing, since it carries the name of the biggest and most famous river in Paris. Huston has amplified the sentence by turning a reference of the street where Saffie lives into a reference of the city where she lives. But it works well, and is also clearer and more explicit

to the reader than the street name would be.

*

À Alger des soldats nerveux tirent sur la foule , faisant cent morts et mille cinq cents blessés. (p. 170)	They riot in Algiers and set upon the Muslims ; the Muslims demonstrate in protest and clash violently with French soldiers. (p. 169)

In this extract the number is left out but the difference between the French and the Algerians – not only regarding nationality but also religion – has been added. Did Huston feel that those 'on the other side of the Atlantic' needed to be filled in on these details?

B. Less Precision

At the beginning of the story, Raphael explains his timetable to Saffie as:

le petit déjeuner et le courrier à 8 h 45 , le thé à 17 heures (p. 18).	his mail and breakfast at nine in the morning and his tea at five in the afternoon... (p. 10).

There is a difference of fifteen minutes. Using 'nine in the morning.... and five in the afternoon' is more in line with English grammar rules, however, which call for balance to make it more pleasing to the ear. At the same time, this 'liberty' does not change the actual story in any way.

*

In this category we find several references to the Algerian war.

Des dizaines de milliers de harkis, probablement entre cent et cent cinquante mille, sont tués pour faits de collaboration. (p. 197)	Thousands of harkis, probably as many as 150,000, are killed for having collaborated with the French. (p.197)
cinq à dix milles Français sont massacrés. (p. 197)	several thousand French people are slaughtered in the melee. (p. 197)

If the French text is imprecise about the numbers, the English novel is even more so. Ultimately, though, the reader will not be the worse off for it.

*

– Cet enfant est un demi-Boche, un petit SS ! (p. 163)	This child is half-Boche, a baby Nazi . (p.161)

Saffie and András are returning to Paris by Metro after an outing with Emil, when the woman sitting across from Saffie comments on how sweet Emil looks, sleeping in her arms. Saffie is annoyed and tells the woman the child is half German, using the derogatory terminology common at the time. However, Huston goes from calling Emil a *petit SS* to a 'baby Nazi.' Both terms are understood in the respective languages, but 'SS' is more specific than 'Nazi,' since the SS, the *Schutzstaffel*, though originally instituted to protect Hitler, later became the group that was supposed to constitute and 'breed' a sort of aristocracy of the Nazi regime for Europe. A

Nazi, on the other hand, was a term used for any member belonging to the governing party of the Third Reich.

4. Inconsistencies

In the following example, the French expression *les toilettes à la turque* is translated in two different ways in the English novel.

les toilettes à la turque (pp. 23 and 31)	“Turkish-style toilets” (p. 16) “squat down toilets” (p. 23)

Both are valid translations, though the second one is more explicit. The choice may have been determined by the importance the toilets take at that moment in the novel, and their repetition within a single page. In the first instance, Raphael has just employed Saffie as a maid and is showing her the maid's room, on the 7th floor where she will be sleeping, as well as the Turkish-style toilets she will be sharing with the rest of the tenants. On the other hand, the second time toilets come up, Saffie is cleaning them because she finds them repulsive. In this paragraph, they are referenced by using: '*toilettes/toilets*,' '*pissotières/pissotières*,' and in the next paragraph, '*toilettes à la turque/squat-down toilets*.' Saffie's opinion is that “Germans will never understand how the French manage to combine the sublime with the ignoble, philosophy and pissotières, the most scintillating spiritual creations and the most revolting bodily waste.” (*MA* p. 23). At this point, the implication of the 'squat-down toilets' – the filth and disgust in general,

particularly when having to share them with strangers – is most important here, and Huston has gone from a name associated with a country to an explicit denomination.

*

Another example is Huston's translation of *tisane*.

quelques biscottes sans beurre et une tisane sans sucre (p. 53)	butterless crackers and sugarless tea . (p. 53)
Revient un peu plus tard avec une tisane au miel. (p. 168)	Returns, a while later, with a cup of herbal tea and honey (p. 165)

She translates *tisane* alternately as 'tea' – which a native English speaker would understand as 'black tea' – and 'herbal tea,' which is the actual meaning of *tisane*. The translation 'tea' occurs in a situation where Saffie decides what to have out of her own volition, so to speak. In the second case, however, it is András who brings her a cup of herbal tea with honey to calm her down after she has told him about her father's job during the war. The type of tea is more important here than in the first case.

*

The street, Rue du Roi de Sicile, is first mentioned in chapter 8, when Raphael sends Saffie to have his flute repaired, and she meets András for the first time. In the French text, the street is not repeated in chapter 12 (52 pages later). Perhaps it is famous enough to be remembered. In the English text, however, the street name (written in French) reappears on p. 144, just

before the reader learns what nickname Emil has received from the inhabitants of András's street: *Prince-de-Sicile* in French, but translated once as the *Prince de Sicile* (p. 140, a few lines below the street name) and another time as the **Prince of Sicily** in chapter 14 (p. 169). It is quite plausible that Huston decided to reinsert the name of the street – it would be much harder for an English speaker to remember the address Raphael gives Saffie the first time – particularly since the two instances are far apart in the novel, thereby justifying the inclusion. As for the nickname given to Emil, the French one makes the connection to the street name very clear, but the next usage is far enough away in the novel so that the reader would have forgotten the original name, while still close enough in sound and looks so as not to surprise anyone.

*

In chapter 7 there is a flashback to the summer of 1952, when Saffie's French teacher at high school decides to be her particular friend.

M. Ferrat ou plutôt Julien s'était fait un point d'honneur de ne rien omettre; l'adolescent avait eu droit à la Nuit de cristal, aux vieux juifs sommés de baisser leur pantalon dans la rue ... (p. 76)	Monsieur Ferrat or rather Julien made it a point of honor to be as thorough as possible; the nubile girl learned all there was to know about Krystallnacht, elderly Jewish men forced to lower their trousers in the street (p. 69)

He gives her private history lessons, so to speak, realizing that, in her home, what the Nazis had done to the Jews had not been spoken of. One of these lessons deals with the night of 9th - 10th November 1938, known as *la Nuit de cristal* in French, the term used by Huston. In English, the term is

the 'Night of Broken Glass.' However, Huston decides to use the German term, *Reichskristallnacht*, also known in English though to a lesser degree, but spells it incorrectly as *Krystallnacht*. One possible reason for using the German is that it gives more authenticity to Saffie as a German.

*

Another instance of inconsistency, and a very curious one at that, occurs when Huston translates the number of Algerians who died during the war.

La guerre a coûté la vie à trente mille Français et à près d'un million d'Algériens quand les accords d'Evian, en mars 1962, entérinent enfin l'indépendance de l'ancienne colonie. (p. 196)	When the Evian Agreements finally ratify the former colony's independence in March of 1962, the war has cost the lives of thirty thousand Frenchmen and over three hundred thousand Algeri-ans . (p. 197)

Officially, the French government proclaimed that between 300,000 and 460,000 Algerians had died, whereas the Algerian government set the number at 1 million. Thus, Huston uses the official Algerian version in the French text, but the official French version in the English text. One can only surmise about the reasons behind this: further research may have led her to 'correct' the number, or perhaps the wish to 'shake up' the French reader, whose history it is, motivated the change. There is no knowing.

5. No Change

In a few cases, Huston has chosen not to make changes at all.

Ils exigent que l'on présente des photographies de telles dimensions précisément, ni un millimètre de plus ni un de moins (p. 43)	They insist that one present original, notarized documents, along with photographs of certain specified dimensions, neither a millimeter more nor a millimeter less (p. 35)

The millimeter is a very small unit. In the imperial system, the smallest unit is the inch, which corresponds to 2.54 cm. Any smaller length is a fraction of the inch, such as a quarter of an inch, an eighth, and even a sixteenth of an inch. The millimeter, as such, is nicer-sounding.

*

There are quite a few music pieces in the novel, mostly pieces that Raphael, a renowned musician, plays. In general, the names of music pieces have been translated into the title used in English. To illustrate: Debussy's piece *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* (EA p. 45) is rendered as *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* (MA p. 37), and *Bourdon* by Rimski-Korsakov (EA p. 54) is translated as *Flight of the Bumblebee* (MA p. 46), in keeping with the generally accepted usage in the English-speaking music world.

However, there is one piece whose name has not been translated, remaining in the original French, namely Marin Marais's *Folies d'Espagne*

(*EA* p. 11/*MA* p.4). There seems to be a general tendency in the world of music to use Marais's original French titles for his compositions.

*

Apart from music pieces, reference is also made to two children's songs, which would have formed part of Emil's childhood under 'normal' circumstances, and which are left in the original language.

Il n'a appris à chanter ni <i>Le Bon Roi Dagobert</i> ni <i>Alle meine Entchen</i> . (p. 199)	He's learned to sing neither <i>Le Bon Roi Dagobert</i> nor <i>Alle meine Entchen</i> . (p. 199)

A translation would not necessarily be helpful, as most children's songs are unique to a country and unknown elsewhere, and choosing an equivalence from the target culture would mean the loss of the cultural element. Under other circumstances, Emil would have inherited two cultures: the French from his father and the German from his mother. As it is, Saffie does not want to sing and Raphael is too busy being a famous musician to sing children's songs to his son.

*

The names of newspapers mentioned in the novel, most of them of worldwide fame, are not translated except for the article, which is sometimes left as such, and at other times added as 'the.'

Ni dans ce monde-là, où l'air ruisselle et tremble de nuances	Neither here where the air rippled and streamed with sonorous shades,

sonores, no dans celui-ci, où de jeunes femmes répondent à son annonce dans <i>Le Figaro</i> . (p. 13)	nor there, where young women answered his advertisements in the Figaro . (p. 5)
Raphaël achète bien <i>Le Monde</i> chaque soir, comme son père avant lui achetait <i>Le Temps</i> (p. 56)	Although Raphael buys <i>Le Monde</i> every day, just as his father used to buy <i>Le Temps</i> ... (p. 48)

Though *Le Temps* is not as famous as *Le Figaro* or *Le Monde*, it is clear from the context that it refers to the name of a newspaper. The inconsistency concerning the definite article may have been a typo.

*

There is a slew of foreign words, which are neither French nor English and have generally been left as such.

From the Italian:

Miracle économique et <i>tutti quanti</i> (p. 30)	Economic miracle and <i>tutti quanti</i> (p. 22)

'Tutti quanti' is a commonly-used expression in French and means 'each and all' or 'all and sundry' according to the online dictionary WordReference. It is not, however, an expression commonly used by English speakers, and is therefore not readily understood by the English readership.

*

From the Arabic:

nombre de jeunes appelés français ont appris bon gré mal gré à torturer les fellaghas (p. 55)	a large number of French conscripts in Algeria have been taught (more or less against their will) how to torture fellaghas (p. 48)

Fellagha means bandit and the term was used to refer to a group of armed militants affiliated with anti-colonial movements in French North Africa, particularly in Algeria.

*

From the German:

elle n'a pas dit un mot depuis qu'il a interrompu son Spiel . (95)	she hasn't said a word since he interrupted her spiel . (88)

The French uses a capital letter at the beginning of *Spiel*, whereas the English does not. In this particular case, French respects the original spelling – all nouns are capitalized in German – whereas English applies English grammar rules.

*

In the following example, the case is different.

Et le président des États-Unis, ce même Dwight Eisenhower dont les forces armées ont écrasé la Wehrmacht en 1945 (p. 56)	And the American president – yes, the selfsame Dwight Eisenhower whose armed forces crushed the Wehrmacht in 1945 (p. 48)

'Wehrmacht' is the German word for its army – literally 'power of defense' – and is used as a name rather than a common noun. The term is widely known within historical contexts and is often used in texts dealing with World War II.

*

There are also some French words that have not been translated.

Cette coprésence chez les Français du sublime et de l'ignoble, de la philosophie et des pissotières , des créations spirituelles les plus brillantes et des déchets corporels les plus immondes... (pp. 30-31)	how the French manage to combine the sublime and the ignoble, philosophy and pissotières , the most scintillating spiritual creations and the most revolting bodily waste. (p. 23)

The online Larousse indicates that the translation for *pissotières* is 'public urinals' but that the French word is acceptable in English as well, whereas Oxford Dictionaries online only provides a definition of *pissoir*, meaning 'public urinal.'

*

Ne se lève pas pour les accompagner jusqu'à la porte cochère . (p. 135)	Doesn't accompany them to the porte cochère . (p. 131).

Porte cochère is translated by the online Larousse dictionary as 'carriage entrance' or may be used as such. Its usage is not, however, widely spread.

*

In addition, there are a few English words in the French text that obviously do not pose any kind of trouble in the English text. For example, the title of a Beatles song, popular at the time all over the western world, is given in English as *She loves you, yeah, yeah, yeah* in both texts. There is, nevertheless, an episode from Saffie's childhood in Germany, where English is used – spoken by an American soldier – and where English within an English novel becomes somewhat confusing.

Il porte l'uniforme kaki du diable mais sale, déchiré et maculé de sang, c'est lui qui a essayé de les tuer la nuit dernière, ... il tend un bras vers elle et la dévisage de ses yeux blancs exorbités, maintenant elle entend sa voix aussi, répétant le même mot encore et encore, «**Water !**» dit-il. «**Water ! Water !**» - c'est le mot de sa magie noire, le mot pour la mort de son peuple à elle, «**Please little girl! Please get me some water !**» (p. 87)

He's dressed in the devil's khaki uniform but it's all filthy and torn and bloodstained, he's the one that tried to murder them in the middle of the night... he's stretching out an arm toward her, his black eyes are bulging, staring at her, and now she can hear his voice as well, repeating the same alien word over and over, “**Water!**” he croaks. “**Water! Water!**” - the word of his black magic, the word for the death of her people – “**Please, little girl! Please get me some water!**” (p. 80)

It is not clear at this point that the pilot is talking in English, a language that young Saffie does not understand. The only indication the reader receives is the word 'alien,' which he has to interpret as 'foreign.'

6. Omission

Altogether there are six instances of omission in the whole of the book, of which one, *le salopard*, has been mentioned previously, and none of which affect the overall story line. In most cases they are a result of linguistic or cultural barriers.

*

The first omission, from chapter 1, is the following:

Son accent n'est pas grotesque. Elle ne dit pas <i>ch</i> à la place de <i>j</i>. (p.12)	Her accent is by no means grotesque. (p. 4)

The particularity of a German speaking French would not translate very well into English, nor would it be of much importance to the English reader. Rather than finding an equivalent (which would pose its own problem: should it be rendered as a German accent in English? Or as a French accent in English?), the simple and straightforward solution has been to omit the detail.

*

The second instance of omission relates to an idiomatic expression.

— Ça ira? demande-t-il à Saffie, ses yeux réitérant la question que pose sa voix.	“Will you be all right?” he asks Saffie, his eyes reiterating the question.

— Mais oui.	“Of course.”
Elle a appris à dire <i>mais oui</i>, <i>mais non</i> comme une Française. On ne peut utiliser <i>aber</i> de cette manière.	
— Voici le numéro de mon hôtel... (p.73)	“Here’s the phone number of my hotel... “ (p. 65)

The idiomatic use of *mais oui*, *mais non* would not translate easily. Certainly 'but,' the translation of both *mais* by itself and the German *aber*, is inappropriate here. 'Why, certainly' or 'why, of course,' and 'No!' (emphatically) or 'Not at all!' respectively could be used as translations, but the second sentence would still have to be translated or remain as is with the German *aber*, not necessarily understood by the English reader. Nor can the French reader be expected to understand German. However, the particular difficulties of a German learning French are not essential to the story. Huston’s solution was to omit this detail on Saffie’s learning of idiomatic expressions using *mais*.

*

The next omission is related to the fact that in French there are two forms of the pronoun ‘you’, similar to the ‘you’ and ‘thou’ formerly used in English.

– Tu ne sais pas?	“You don’t know?”
– Non, dit Saffi, ravie de cette intimité accidentelle.	“No,” says Saffie, her heart thumping inexplicably.

– Et Budapest, vous savez? Inopinément, András est revenu au vous. (p. 96)	“And Budapest, you know?” says András. (p. 89)

Again, rather than explaining the formal/informal pronoun, which would be possible but somewhat stilted, the sentence has simply been left out. Furthermore, Saffie's delight at this 'accidental intimacy' is lost in translation, so to speak, as a result of the lack in English of distinguishing *vous* from *tu*. It is replaced by 'her heart thumping inexplicably,' a turn of phrase that calls for no further explanation.

*

In opposition to the previous omission of pronouns, however, the following must be noted. The subsequent conversation occurred several chapters earlier in the novel.

– ... je voudrais te tire « tu ». Après un court silence, elle répond, à voix basse elle aussi : – D'accord. Et moi ? – Oh ! oui, je voudrais que tu me dises « tu », aussi. Bien sûr. – « Tu », dit Saffie, sans sourire, comme pour goûter le mot sur sa langue. (p. 38)	“I want to use tu when I speak to you.” After a brief silence, she replies, also in a whisper, “And me too?” “Oh, yes! Yes, of course, you too.” “Tu,” says Saffie slowly, as if to taste the expression on her tongue. (p. 30)

This time, Huston has consciously used *tu* in the English text, with the assumption that the English reader will understand its meaning.

In English-speaking countries most people study either French, Spanish or German as a first foreign language, all three of which use *vous* and *tu* or their equivalent, and therefore the reader would be familiar with the concept of addressing people in different ways depending on the degree of formality.

There is, however, a difference between this extract and the previous one. The former is the first conversation between András and Saffie the day they meet and it revolves around where the two of them come from and what their backgrounds are. András accidentally uses the pronouns incorrectly without actually noticing, and they are part of complete sentences, i.e., the pronouns accompany the conjugated verbs. In the second case, however, the *tu* is used as a separate entity, not attached to a verb, and it signifies 'the act of using *tu*' as opposed to 'using *vous*.' In other words, Raphael is suggesting an intimacy that would be considered completely inappropriate by his mother, after only one month of knowing each other and the relationship being that of employer and maid. Huston could not have opted to omit the *tu*, because it would have meant omitting the entire paragraph. Since there is no real equivalence in English ('thou' being so outdated, it would seem Biblical), she chose to keep the French word in italics.

*

In a third situation Huston has solved the problem of a pronoun in yet

another way, namely, by paraphrasing:

– Tu viens pour Noël, bien sûr? reprends Hortense.... (p. 60)	“ You'll be coming down for Christmas, of course?” Hortense goes on. ...
– C'est à dire... Oh! Maman, ce serait formidable si on pouvait venir...	“Er, well... Oh, Mother, it'd be so nice if we could come down –”
– Je n'ai pas dit vous . ... J'ai dit tu . (p. 61)	I'm not inviting both of you . ... I'm inviting you .”(p. 53)

In this case, the problem arises because 'you' in English is both singular and plural, whereas the French uses *tu* for the singular and *vous* for the plural in an informal situation such as this, where Hortense is speaking to Raphael on the phone. In French, Huston used italics to emphasize the difference between *vous* and *tu* when Raphael seems to have misunderstood the first invitation for Christmas extended to him using *tu*. Raphael answers using *on*, an impersonal pronoun which can substitute *we*, or *nous* in this case. In English only *you* and *we* can be used, making Hortense's initial invitation ambiguous. She then reverts to *both of you* and *you* in italics to emphasize that only he is meant.

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The fourth example of omission occurs twice:

c'était quand même par la faute des Allemands que Mme de Trala-Lepage s'était retrouvée veuve à quarante ans... (p.16)	it was still the Germans' fault that Madame Trala-Lepage had found herself widowed at the age of forty... (p. 8)

au deuxième étage de son quasi-château en Bourgogne, Hortense de Trala-Lepage fond en sanglots. (p. 41)	on the third floor of her quasi-castle in Burgundy, Hortense Trala-Lepage bursts into tears. (p. 33)

In both examples, the French *de*, formerly denoting aristocracy, though today simply part of some surnames, has been omitted in the English text. The significance of *de* in the French text is not related to nobility in any way, but rather creates a pompous, self-important-sounding name. It perfectly suits the character of Hortense, Raphael's mother, who has a very clear understanding of which class she and her family belong to. The English name has been reduced to 'Madame Trala-Lepage' or 'Hortense Trala-Lepage' because reading 'Trala-Lepage' or 'de Trala-Lepage' would not make much difference to the English reader, or even confuse them by seeming to imply she is actually of aristocratic descent.

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In the last example of omission, a number is completely omitted.

Dans le quartier du Marais, les quelques milliers d'ashkénazes ayant échappé à la déportation sont bientôt submergés par les flots de nouveaux arrivants séfarades. (p. 197)	In the Marais district, the Ashkenazis who escaped deportation are rapidly submerged by waves of newly-arriving Sephardim. (p. 198)

This omission does not change the meaning of the paragraph in any way, nor would such an imprecise number as 'several thousand' improve the

English text. The Ashkenazis are those Jews considered to have originated in the Western part of Germany, along the Rhine from Alsace to the Rheinland. The numbers of those having escaped would have been relatively small on the scale of the Holocaust. As many large cities in Europe had Jewish neighborhoods of several thousand Jews, it may have seemed unnecessary to Huston to include such an imprecise number.

7. Correction

There is one occasion where a mistake was made, which Huston subsequently corrected in the translation.

Dix-huit heures trente! alors que Raphaël doit partir pour son concert à dix-huit heures – ce n’est pas vrai ! Elle lutte contre la panique montante, refuse d’admettre que quatre heures aient pu ainsi s’engouffrer dans le néant, regarde sa propre montre...	Six-thirty! And Raphael was supposed to leave for his concert at six – it’s just not possible! Fighting against her rising panic, refusing to accept that five hours can thus have dropped into the void, she consults her own wristwatch... and almost falls to the floor in relief.
Le soulagement la fait presque tomber par terre. Treize heures trente. (pp. 97-98)	It’s only one-thirty. (p. 91)

The time span from one-thirty to six-thirty was erroneously given as four hours in French, but then corrected to five hours in English.

8. Wordplay in Translation

There are two instances in *MA* where there is a play on words.

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When Saffie first starts working for Raphael, she is unsure of a word and confuses it with another. In the original, the two words begin with the same four letters and therefore have a similar sound to them.

— Avez-vous, dit-elle, un... un... ? Le geste vient suppléer au mot manquant : il sort d'un tiroir un tablier propre et le lui passe... — Tablier, murmure-t-il. Ça s'appelle un tablier. — Oui, dit Saffie. Tablier. Je pensais tableau. Tablier. J'étais confondue. (pp. 25-26)	S : "Have you a ..." she says. "A ? ... " She gestures to make up for the missing word. Raphael takes a clean apron from the drawer and hands it to her... "Apron," he murmurs. "It's called an apron." "Yes," says Saffie. "Apron. I was thinking napkin. Apron. I was confusing." (p. 18)

In the French version, Saffie confuses two words that sound similar to the foreigner, but which come from completely different spheres. *Tablier*, the 'apron,' is from the world of cooking, and *tableau*, meaning 'a painting,' belongs to the world of art. In the English version, however, Huston chose two objects that are within the realm of the kitchen and of a similar composition (both are made of cloth), and though they do not actually sound the same, three of the five letters in 'apron' are repeated in 'napkin.'

This is of no avail to the story, since this incidence merely demonstrates that Saffie's command of the French language is still somewhat shaky.

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After Saffie and Raphael have agreed to get married, Huston adds a commentary about the similarity between the two words *mairie* and *marié* in the following way:

Le mot même de « mairie », ce matin, ressemble à une anagramme de « marié ». (p. 45)	This morning, the very word “ mairie ” (town hall), looks like an anagram of “married.” (p. 37)

The English word 'married' is quite similar to the French word, and so it has simply been translated, but since *mairie* and 'town hall' are very different, and the idea of the anagram would be completely lost on the reader, she has used the French word in quotes with its English translation in parenthesis.

9. Saffie's Language

In *MA* there is no use of poetic devices or repetition, which are so present in *PS* and *SE*. There is, however, one element which I would like to highlight, namely the difference in Saffie's language in the two novels. I have established that she lacked some vocabulary, having only learnt French at school in Germany. However, the development of her French, as

she learns by living in the country and interacting in the language, is not the same in the two novels.

German, as many learners will profess, is a complex and difficult language to learn. Probably the one single aspect that is simple in the German language is its use of tenses. The present tense, for example, is generally used to express, in English, the present simple, the present continuous, the future with 'will' and the 'going to' future.

The amount of dialog pertaining to Saffie is relatively limited. She is generally silent and does not use superfluous words. She is also tormented by what she experienced in Germany as a child during the war and comes across as rather aloof as a result. The reader learns more about her story from the narrator than from Saffie. There is, however, a tendency for her to use the present simple in many of her utterances, even though, as time passes, her French should be improving.

Je les cherches maintenant? (p. 19)	I go get them now? (p. 11)

In French, the present works, but the English should be: 'Should I get them now?'

*

Tu m'as dit tu enterres ta vie de garçon, alors je porte le deuil pour elle! (p. 43)	You tell me you bury your bachelorhood, so I wear mourning for it! (p. 35)

In this extract, the first verb is in the past tense, *passé composé*, correctly so, but in the present tense in English. The correct form would be, of course, 'You told me.' The second verb, in both languages in the present tense, should be in the conditional tense, both in French and in English, i.e., *tu enterrais* and 'you would bury' respectively. The third verb, again in the present in both extracts, is correct in French, but should be 'I'm wearing,' present continuous, in correct English.

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Je fais ton café? (p. 58)	I make you some coffee? (p. 51)

Both sentences are in the present tense, though the English is not a literal translation of the French 'your coffee,' as it has become '...you some coffee.' The French, though awkward, is acceptable. More typical would be: 'Je te fais un café?' In English, on the other hand, the present tense, representing a habit, is unacceptable. Possible translations are 'Should I make you a coffee?' or 'Would you like me to make you a coffee?' However, a literal translation from German – 'Soll ich dir einen Kaffee machen?' – is much more similar to the English structure using 'should' than the one Huston used.

7.4. Conclusions

In one of the numerous interviews Huston has given, namely the one with Mi-Kyung Yi, she speaks about the autobiographical elements of *MA*. One element is the loss of her mother when she departed and the remarriage of her father. Though she feels her parents did what they thought best, she identifies with Emil, who is thrown off the train at the age of six – the same age she was when her mother left. This little boy is caught up in the middle of a *menage à trois*, in which he clearly considers András as his father – he is the one who spends time with him and teaches him things. But nobody has ever asked him his opinion. Huston is Emil but remarks that she did not see this until after writing the novel.

The other autobiographical aspect is the international character of the novel. *PS* takes place in Canada with mostly Canadian characters, either natives, immigrants or their offspring. *MA*, on the other hand, is about a German woman, her French husband, her Hungarian-Jewish lover, her half German–half French son, the Algerians fighting for independence, the Russians that raped her as a girl, etc. In the same interview with Mi-Kyung Yi she tells of the identity crisis she went through after the success in France of her novel *Instruments des ténèbres*, or *Instruments of Darkness*. “Je ne voulais pas être un écrivain français; je ne suis pas – je ne peux pas être – un écrivain canadien, je n'ai jamais écrit un mot au Canada. C'est là que j'ai compris que je faisais partie d'un groupe d'écrivains divisés.” *MA* reflects this crisis, with its different nationalities and religions and the underlying question “qui s'identifie à qui?”⁹⁴ In an interview with Catherine Argand she said: “Je sollicite les lecteurs pour qu'ils s'identifient à la

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⁹⁴ Yi, Mi-Kyung. 2001. “Épreuves de l'étranger : entretien avec Nancy Huston réalisé par Mi-Kyung Yi.” *Horizons philosophiques*, vol. 12, n° 1, 2001, p. 1-16.

douleur des personnages de plusieurs pays différents.”⁹⁵

As far as placing the novel within Huston's body of works is concerned, the novel is posterior to both *Plainsong* and *Slow Emergencies*, and at this point she has already translated four of her own novels. Since she sees translation as a way of improving the original, she usually finishes both versions before either or both go to print. “Je traduis moi-même mes romans. Pour en écrire un, il me faut un an, pour le traduire, un an aussi. J’améliore le premier texte grâce au second.” (Argand 2001). With respect to *PS*, there are fewer omissions or corrections. Unlike *PS*, there are no actual sentences or paragraphs missing, merely fragments – such as when the question of *tu* or *vous* arises in French, which does not apply in English.

There are only two puns in the novel, which are both translated, one by using other confusing words for Saffie from the world of cooking, and the other by including the French word *mairie* so that the play on words with 'married' is not lost.

In this novel Huston does not use poetic devices in the way she does in *PS* and *ES*. It is noteworthy, though, that there is a change in the language that Saffie uses. Saffie learnt some French in high school in Germany. When she arrives in Paris she is able to communicate but does not understand idiomatic expressions. Over the course of the novel, whose main actions spans close to seven years, Saffie's language improves in the French novel, but in the English novel, she does not seem to learn how to use tenses very well.

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⁹⁵ Argand, Catherine. March 2001. ‘Nancy Huston.’ *Lire*. http://www.lexpress.fr/culture/livre/nancy-huston_804287.html (11 March 2007)

There is also a trend towards more precision in this translation. A large number of expressions and phrases become more explicit in the translation: Dietrich becomes Marlene Dietrich, *une messe à minuit* becomes 'midnight mass at Notre Dame,' and *bientôt* 'the middle of February.' Though the story remains the same, the details have become more precise in a large number of instances.

Putting the novel to the test again in summary:

- do the two versions tell the same story?
- do they both speak of the same characters?
- do they evoke the same emotions?

The two versions tell the same story. There have been no omissions of paragraphs or chapters and there is no alteration whatsoever of the story.

Both novels speak of the same characters. None are left out, and the foreigners are foreigners. But as mentioned previously, Saffie's language does not evolve in the same way. Though it is a natural process to improve and perfect the language of a foreign country where one is living, it also implies that adaptation to the foreign culture is taking place. Though Saffie adapts in many ways – by using the language, walking around and getting to know certain parts of Paris, going shopping at the market – it is only an outer, an exterior adaptation. Inside her, she is still suffering and re-living the horrors she endured most of her life. The English text, in which she seems to improve her French relatively little, makes her seem more aloof and introspective and conveys more of the person who is oblivious to her

surroundings that she is.

The emotions are, if not the same, at least very similar. Saffie is in her own little world, suffering from what happened to her in her childhood. András, on the other hand, has suffered in the past and wants to be active in the present to help avoid further injustices in the world. Raphael is happily oblivious, moved only by his music and success, until he learns of his betrayal, causing his world to break down in an instant. Emil only becomes a character to identify with at the end of the novel, when he is obliged to voice his opinion and chooses András over Raphael. The peoples that are part of the novel – Jews, Algerians, the French – are sometimes numbered in one language but not the other, or in the case of the Algerians who fell during the Algerian war, the number is more than three times higher in French than in English: one million as opposed to three hundred thousand. This discrepancy is, of course, only noticeable if one has read the two novels. And the fact still remains that many more Algerians lost their lives than Frenchmen – the casualties on the French side were around thirty thousand. The resulting emotional effect will therefore not differ much, despite the change in numbers.

PS was a return to her roots for Huston, and using the English language afresh resulted in a new emotion for her. *SE*, on the other hand, was similar to fashioning a statue out of marble by chiseling away bit by bit. In her article “Déracinement du savoir,” found in *Âmes et corps*, she writes about *MA*: “*L’empreinte de l’ange* (écrit en français) est émaillé d’interventions directes de l’auteur/narrateur, une voix qui demeure présente pour «tenir compagnie» au lecteur pendant sa descente aux enfers.” (p. 29).

VIII

Conclusions

Nancy Huston is such a complex person/writer, that one dissertation alone is not likely to do her justice. But with my work, I have certainly gleaned a substantial amount of information regarding Nancy Huston, as a person and as a self-translator, which could be the basis for further in-depth analyses, articles, etc.

At the beginning of this paper, some general questions were raised regarding self-translation. It is now time to give concrete answers to them with respect to Nancy Huston. The first question concerned the directionality of languages. In Huston's case, the translation occurs in both directions. As has been noted previously, the language choice is 'dictated' by the setting of the novel. *Plainsong* and *Slow Emergencies*, which take place in Canada and the United States respectively, were written in English and then translated into French. With *Mark of the Angel* it was the other way around.

It must be remembered, though, that *Instruments of Darkness* was written with alternate paragraphs in English and in French. There are two stories, developed alternately. First there is Nadia, a writer living in contemporary USA. She is writing the *Scordatura Notebook*, which basically is a diary. In the end it turns out she is trying to come to terms with the abortion she had undergone when she was young. The chapters concerning Nadia's story were written in English. The alternating chapters tell the story of a pair of twins in eighteenth-century France. Nadia is

researching their lives and calls it the 'Resurrection Sonata.' Their story is told in French. After Huston had finished the book, she translated each chapter into the other language. Huston claims, that if you are an observant reader, you can tell which are the translations. It was a one-time occurrence – “a gauntlet I threw down myself” – to demonstrate to herself that duality and bilingualism are acceptable.⁹⁶

The second question raised is related to the frequency of self-translation. Nancy Huston has translated all of her novels, though *Thrice September* has not been published. Furthermore, there is a large number of articles she has translated. For example, *Longings and Belongings* comprises twenty articles altogether, seventeen of which I am also in possession of in French, the original language for most of them. In other words, Huston's body of work is to a large extent bilingual, though by no means completely so. As becomes clear in Huston's bibliography, found in chapter 3, it is the section of fiction which is almost in its entirety present in both languages.

The third question broached the topic of what motivated the language choice and whether it was forced or intentional. It has become clear, that Huston chose French when she decided to stay in France after her year abroad. She is also very open about the fact that initially it was easier for her to write in French, because the French language was void of emotions. “*French had nothing to do with my intimate, inner life. In French I could say, quite calmly and even with a certain indifference, things it would have impossible for me to reveal or even think about in my mother tongue.*”⁹⁷ She began with articles, wrote her first novel in 1981 – *Les Variations*

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⁹⁶ Shread, Carolyn. 1998. “An Interview with Nancy Huston.” *Sites: The Journal of 20th Century Contemporary French Studies*. 2.2 (Fall), pp. 246-252.

⁹⁷ “Knowledge Uprooted: A Journey in Six Stages” in *Longings and Belongings*, p. 342.

Goldberg in French – and thus slowly found her literary voice. But in 1986, after having written nine books in French, Huston fell seriously ill. It was acute myelitis, which kept her tied to her bed for some time – a time she used for reflection. While not being able to move her legs, her thoughts turned to her roots. And it dawned on her that “a novelist without a childhood can write nothing valid.”⁹⁸ Around that time she also wrote a long report for French radio about the Haitian diaspora. She was almost envious of the nostalgia they felt for their home country. The outcome of these different events was *Plainsong*, taking her back to her roots in Alberta. With no one willing to publish it, she translated it into French – and realized, that it improved the book. Somewhat tongue-in-cheek she later wrote in *Longings and Belongings*: “A confession: in putting *this* book together, I forgot that “Singing the Plains” had been originally written in English, so I translated it from the French translation “Les Prairies à Paris.” When I compared the two versions, it turned out that the twice-translated text was superior to the original. I find this rather frightening. Maybe if I translated my books back and forth fifty or sixty times they'd get *really* good!” (Huston 2005a: 345).

Even so, “depuis *Cantique des plaines*, je fais toujours une version originale, ensuite la traduction qui m'aide à réviser.”⁹⁹ The book is translated before the original version even goes to the publisher. As the unknown author of the French Nancy Huston page on Wikipedia puts it, “depuis elle utilise cette technique de double écriture.” It is in that sense that Huston uses translation as a tool – verifying the original through the lens of the translation.

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⁹⁸ Huston 2005a: 342.

⁹⁹ “Épreuves de l'étranger : entretien avec Nancy Huston réalisé par Mi-Kyung YI.” *Horizons philosophiques*, vol. 12, n° 1, 2001, p. 1-16.

After having verified repeatedly that Huston's statements regarding fidelity are correct – in essence, the reader in one language can expect to be partaking of the same storyline, characters, and emotions as the novel in the other language – it is necessary to analyze to what degree she remains faithful to the original, and in how far she takes the liberties of the self-translator.

In all three novels of my main corpus, certain elements have been converted. Most consistently converted are distances, temperatures, weight, and floor numbers. This would fit in with a domestication strategy, because it allows the reader to have an appreciation for these elements without having to look them up or calculate them, or simply to pass them by as foreign.

Paraphrasing is a strategy used by translators in general, out of necessity when the exact word does not exist in a language, or out of volition when a concept, though existent, needs further explanation. Huston uses it, for example, when she has invented a term in one language: 'hellchill/*neige à l'infini*' (*PS* p. 13/*CP* p. 19). Cultural aspects, such as *le 14 juillet* and *la loi Marthe Richard* become 'Bastille Day' and 'the 1946 no-tolerance law,' respectively (*EA* pp. 164 and 144/*MA* pp.161 and 139 respectively). One cannot, however, speak of a systematic strategy. For examples, in *MA* the *salade niçoise* becomes an 'egg-and-tuna-fish salad,' but the *gratin dauphinois* remains a 'gratin Dauphinois.' (*EA* pp. 35 and 207/*MA* 28 and 207 respectively). Similar examples are found in *PS*, where the 'Chinook' is paraphrased in French, but the 'gopher' is translated by a different animal which is more common in France. In other words, Huston uses paraphrasing according to her own criteria. And though at times the

paraphrasing is part of a domestication strategy, at other times she has chosen to use other strategies or to foreignize the text to some extent.

Approximation, as I have called it, is very revealing concerning Huston's translations. As I have subdivided this case into 'More' and 'Less Precision,' it becomes evident that Huston uses translation to add detail to the novel. Sometimes the detail is irrelevant – in *SE* Lin walks down the Boulevard St. Germain (p. 123), but in the translation she walks beneath the elm trees on a beautiful fall day (p. 121) – but in other instances, the detail makes the passage much clearer. In *PS* there are many examples, where a pronoun is replaced by a noun, thereby clarifying who or what is meant. In *SE*, places receive concrete names – 'downstate' becomes 'New Jersey,' 'a slum' turns into 'Harlem.' Only in *MA* is this trend less evident, where many numbers are imprecise and they are often omitted altogether in the translation novel; e.g., the number of different groups killed during World War II, but also during the Algerian war.

Despite Huston's faithfulness in translating the story, characters and emotions, there are instances where a certain inconsistency creeps into her translations. At times this is due to the fact that one word in one language may have various translations in another. But there are numerous occasions, where one and the same idiomatic expression or term is translated by Huston in more than one way. Such is the case for 'nook and cranny' in *PS*, *niches et fissure* in one translation but *coins et recoins* in the next. In *SE*, the doctor, which in English one would think is only one person, becomes *l'obstétricienne* and *le médecin* in French. In *MA*, *les toilettes à la turque* are alternately 'Turkish-style toilets' and 'squat-down toilets.' The most amazing phenomenon, though, are Huston's

inconsistencies regarding numbers. To name a few examples, in *PS*, 'a dozen' is only translated as 'twelve' in one of four instances. Quite hilarious, when regrouped in a table, is the fact that the varying temperatures of the Canadian winter are all translated as *moins vingt* in French, and once as *grotesquement basses* for variation. In *SE*, the ages at which things occur are translated without precision, so that there is an error of calculation in the French novel concerning Lin's age when her mother died. In *MA*, as mentioned previously, the numbers related to peoples is sometimes translated, sometimes not, and in the case of the Algerian casualties, the number changes from 1 million (the official Algerian number) to 300,000 (the official French number). In other words, in these instances Huston takes advantage of the liberty of the self-translator to the fullest, without worrying about preciseness.

Several elements in the novels have not been changed. Among them are the titles of people, though the abbreviated form in one language may be full in the other – *Mlle* becomes *Mademoiselle* in the English version, etc. Others include all types of foreign words, such as 'ranch wife' and 'cold-cream' in *PS*, 'Drink to me only' and 'Main Street' in *SE*, and 'tutti quanti' and 'Wehrmacht' in *MA*. There is no particular identifiable pattern here, and at times Huston expects the reader to have a vast amount of background knowledge, without which there is an element of foreignization.

True to her word that she wants the novels to tell the same story in the two versions, there are relatively few omissions, and certainly none that change the actual plot. The biggest omission is found in *PS*, when Paddon writes Ruthie a somewhat nasty note that takes the fun out of her holidays.

It is unclear why this omission was made. The other omissions in all three novels, however, are often related to puns and cultural references. In *PS*, the 'Bennett buggy' is omitted. In *SE*, the pun concerning the drink called 'screwdriver' is left out. In *MA*, some of the linguistic aspects, such as *tu* and *vous*, are simply omitted when possible. Surely the independent translator would not dare to do this, but these omissions on Huston's behalf do not constitute a change to the story or the characters.

Since Huston uses translation as a tool to improve the original, she also takes advantage of the process to correct mistakes in the first version. In *PS* there were problems concerning the timing of John and Jack's trip to find gold, for example. Furthermore, the 'C' for Paddon's paper at university, which was a passing mark and therefore incongruous with the context, became *une note exécration* and *une bonne note* respectively, so that the sentence made sense. Similarly, the sentence in *SE* regarding Derek's holiday at his parents, which made little sense in the original, was corrected, as well as some other minor mistakes. In *MA*, the miscalculation of hours was corrected.

Puns are notoriously difficult to translate. Huston at times omits puns altogether – the aforementioned 'screwdriver' pun, for example. At other times she ignores them, with which I mean that a pun might be translated without the resulting translation actually being a pun. Generally this works, for example when 'an **amber**-skinned stranger stinging **ember** eyes into her' becomes *un inconnu à la peau ambrée qui la brûlerait de ses yeux ardents* (*PS* p. 8 / *CP* pp. 8-9). As mentioned before, there are times when this lack of attention to the pun makes the translation awkward. This happens in *PS* when the 'Boers/wild pigs' is translated as '*Boers/sangliers*',

and in *SE*, when the word association between can-can and can-opener is lost. In *MA*, on the other hand, Huston resorted to using the original word and a translation in parentheses in order to make the pun apparent to the reader. The question arises, why she did not use this technique in the two previously-mentioned cases of a problematic character.

On the other hand, there are several puns that Huston translated successfully and elegantly. In *PS* one might mention 'Cough Child/Calf Child' versus *Enfant-qui-tousse/Enfant-secousse*, in *SE* the 'condoms/condominiums' and *capotes/décapotables* pairs, and in *MA* *tablier/tableau* as opposed to 'apron/napkin.'

As Huston has said herself, at times she overdoes the poetic devices, but at other times she eschews them as far as possible. In *MA* there are no particular poetic devices to speak of. In the other two novels, she uses them in a similar fashion in the original and the translated novel. That is to say, if present, they will be used in both versions. Nevertheless, the usage will be dictated by the particular situation and the flow of the text, rather than rigorous use of the same poetic devices in the same places.

Other devices will also be repeated. For example, the 'stream of consciousness' quality, though toned down in *VV*, is still present, and the sentence fragments are present in both. The form of the text has basically remained the same. The greatest difference, perhaps, is to be found in Saffie's use of language, which seems to improve in the original novel but stays the same in the translation.

Summing up, I might say that Nancy Huston stays faithful to her word

by telling the same story in translation – a self-imposed rule – but that she nevertheless takes the liberty of the self-translator to improve, correct, and add detail to the translation. She is well aware of this, and sees it as a tool. She has not spoken of a conscious intention of increasing her readership – as a matter of fact, her popularity in France is matched in no other place, not even Canada – and she certainly does not have a bilingual speaker in mind. Her general strategy is that of domestication by bringing the text to the reader, but there are numerous elements that constitute foreignization, so that one must speak of a middle ground. Domestication outweighs foreignization, though the foreign element is by no means eliminated completely.

I would like to close by quoting Nancy Huston from the interview with Mi-Kyung Yi (2001:11):

MK.Y. : “Quelle figure métaphorique pourriez-vous prendre pour caractériser vos aller-retour entre les deux langues dans votre travail d'écriture et de traduction?”

N.H. : “Je ne sais pas. Je trouve surtout que c'est un travail long et fatigant. Sur le plan psychanalytique, je dirais que c'était comme si je faisais Palier-retour entre mon père et ma mère, avec le sentiment qu'au fond, si seulement ils voulaient bien s'écouter, ils verraient qu'ils disent la même chose. Autant je trouve ce travail fastidieux, autant quand j'en suis à la deuxième version, je constate que c'est le même livre, j'éprouve une immense satisfaction. Quand j'entends la musique de la langue d'arrivée, quand ça commence à produire l'effet recherché, c'est gratifiant, alors que le chemin qui y conduit est sans aucun intérêt.”

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X

Textual Appendix

In the following appendix the reader will find the first chapter of each novel of my main corpus presented side-by-side with its translation. On the left side the original is shown, and on the right side the translation. This parallel presentation will allow the reader to draw their own conclusions regarding the interpretation of the original and the rendering of the translation, which may or may not coincide with the author's choices.

10.1. *Plainsong*

And here is how I visualize the moment of your death: a falling away a draining and receding and lightening and melting and sliding of the world like the gradual disappearance of snow in the forest, or like colours slowly spilling outside the frame and leaving nothing on the canvas, while in the meantime your limbs grew numb and leaden, becoming one with the mattress, the floor, the earth, even your rage turning to froth and its millions of bubbles bursting as your mind sank deeper and deeper into matter ... I see a long highway curving across the plain and the sun beating down on it, beating you down into the asphalt, the crushed rock and tar – you're part of that road now Paddon, that endless grey ribbon of an idea about going somewhere – lying flat yes flattened at last into the plain from which you'd struggled to arise – a faintly perceptible scar on its surface. Finally the draining and falling and spilling away reached your face, the weight pushed against your features dragging them downward and the very last thing registered by your brain before it succumbed to the bulldozer of asphalt numbness was Grandma's voice whispering *Forgive us our trespasses*.

Then nothing.

I could not, would not attend your funeral, I preferred to sit here all these miles away and close my eyes and try to see ... *Hit the road, Jack* ... Yes my darling Grandad after all these years – you were pretty much as old as the century, and this century is about as old as a century can get – you've finally hit the road. No last will and testament, Mother informed me over the telephone, since your earthly possessions were scarcely worth a

10.1. *Cantiques de plaines*

Et voici comment je m'imagine ton agonie : le monde se met à tomber lentement à s'écouler à s'éloigner à s'alléger à fondre et à couler, comme lorsque la neige s'en va tout doucement de la forêt, ou comme une peinture dont les formes glisseraient peu à peu hors du cadre pour ne rien laisser sur la toile, et pendant ce temps tes membres s'alourdissent et s'engourdissent jusqu'à ne plus faire qu'un avec le matelas, avec la terre, jusqu'à ce que ta rage elle-même devienne de l'écume dont les millions de bulles éclatent à mesure que tu t'enfonces dans la matière... Je vois une route qui traverse la plaine en une courbe infinie et le soleil qui l'écrase, qui t'écrase toi contre l'asphalte, la pierre pulvérisée et le goudron – oui désormais tu fais partie de cette route, Paddon, ce long ruban gris suggérant qu'il serait peut-être possible d'aller quelque part –, tu es aplati enfin sur cette plaine, une cicatrice à peine perceptible à sa surface. L'écoulement et la chute et le glissement remontent jusqu'à ton visage, le poids s'appuie sur tes traits, les tirant vers le bas, et la toute dernière chose qu'enregistre ton cerveau avant de succomber au bulldozer de la torpeur asphaltée, c'est la voix de Mamie en train de chuchoter *Pardonne-nous nos offenses*.

Et puis rien.

Je ne pouvais, ne voulais pas assister à ton enterrement ; j'ai préféré rester assise ici à des milliers de kilomètres et chercher à tout voir – *Hit the road, Jack, and don't you come back no more no more Hit the road, Jack, and don't you come back no more...* Oui mon cher Papie, après tout ce temps – tu avais à peu près l'âge du siècle et ce siècle est à peu près aussi âgé qu'un siècle peut l'être – tu as pris la route enfin. Pas de testament, pas

passing mention. Grandma will probably keep your piano as it makes an excellent display case for her knick-knacks cut-glass decanters and English porcelain statues of red-lipped children hugging dogs, their hair tousled by the wind, but she will no doubt give your clothing away to the Salvation Army – that's the proper thing to do – fold up her deceased husband's thick flannel shirts and his long underwear gone off-white from manic washing and the two or three pairs of pants that held his poor sad genitals for so many useless years and stack them in a cardboard box and donate them to charity, perhaps next year she will recognize them on a drunken Indian lying in a stinking heap over on Eighth Avenue and feel a little glow of goodness at the centre of her heart...

O breather into man of breath O holder of the keys of death O giver of the life within Save us from death the death of sin That body soul and spirit be For ever living unto thee – May he rest in peace. The hymn-book is snapped shut by hairy plump white hands and the skinny straggle of mourners stands there glancing around and hesitating, wondering if they may move now, no not yet, not yet, yes now, their feet begin to shift, they are shod with synthetic boots or plastic galoshes or leatherette sensible shoes, they move away stiff and stodgy from the edge of the abyss. All I can see for now are the hands and the feet... It is barely spring a chilly morning in early spring, early spring in these latitudes is late in the month of April, clumps of snow are still banked against some of the gravestones and the ground must have been hard to dig but now the grave has been emptied of hard mud and filled with Paddon and hard mud and now it is over. I can't quite see the faces yet but I'm beginning to see the clothes, dark in honour of the occasion and purchased on the sole basis of the fact they don't need ironing. The bodies: many of them are overweight, impeded

trace de tes dernières volontés, Maman m'a informée au téléphone : il est vrai que tes biens ici-bas méritaient à peine mention. Mamie gardera sans doute ton piano parce qu'il sert de présentoir pour ses bibelots – carafes en cristal taillé, statuettes en faïence anglaise d'enfants aux lèvres rouges et aux cheveux ébouriffés par le vent qui serrent leur chien contre eux –, mais elle donnera tous tes habits à l'Armée du Salut, c'est la chose à faire dans ces cas-là, plier les chemises en flanelle épaisse de son défunt mari et ses caleçons devenus jaunâtres à force de lavage maniaque et les deux ou trois pantalons qui ont dissimulé pendant tant d'années ses pauvres organes inutiles – les empiler dans une boîte en carton et les donner à une œuvre de bienfaisance, de sorte que l'an prochain peut-être, les reconnaissant sur le corps d'un Indien ivre recroquevillé en un tas puant sur la Huitième Avenue, elle sera réchauffée par une petite flamme de bonté tout au fond de son cœur...

O Toi qui par Ton souffle divin As donné le leur aux humains, Toi qui tiens les clefs du trépas Et dispenses la vie ici-bas, Ne nous laisse pas mourir Par le péché qui fait périr, Que notre âme notre corps notre esprit Gardent toujours en Toi leur vie – Que son âme repose en paix. Deux mains blanches potelées et poilues referment avec un claquement le livre de cantiques, les membres du cortège maigrelet se tiennent debout à jeter des coups d'œil à la ronde et à hésiter, se demandant s'ils ont oui ou non le droit de bouger déjà, non pas encore, oui maintenant ça va, et leurs pieds se mettent à remuer, ils sont chaussés de bottes synthétiques ou de caoutchoucs ou de chaussures pour pieds sensibles en similicuir à talons plats, ils s'éloignent lourds et raides du bord de l'abîme. Les mains et les pieds sont tout ce que je peux voir pour le moment... C'est le printemps mais à peine, une matinée frileuse de tout début printemps, dans ces

by unsightly rolls of flesh around the waist and knees and ankles, those that are not overweight are collapsed inwards hunched or shrivelled – sad bodies on the whole with awkward arms, hands shaking one another flaccidly and falling back to sides, heads and tongues wagging dutifully though there is nothing much to say, basically there is never anything much to say but especially in this case given the fact that Paddon was nigh on ninety and all of us have to go someday and indeed most of us have gone already and all we can do is hope that God sees fit to call us back to His side as peacefully as he did Paddon, and well my dear we should be going shouldn't we it wouldn't do to catch cold would it.

The heads move back and forth or up and down making the jowls jiggle slightly and if I concentrate very hard I can distinguish blue veins through the reddish pink skin, the women are wearing little or no make-up and their stockings are thick beige rayon rather than sheer risqué nylon, their gloves are sensible also and they never get mislaid, everyone virtually without exception is wearing glasses, the men's hair is grey or white and the women's is pale blue, the men cut theirs short and part it neatly on one side if they have anything left to part, the women go once a fortnight to have theirs crimped and primped into arrested blue waves, their purses tend to match their shoes, the colours are navy blue or black or brown because these go well with everything and don't show dirt as quickly as lighter tones, their coats are warm, selected to endure through one after another of these harsh everlasting winters. No one laughs of course but then neither does anyone shed tears – these people have spent their lives scouring spontaneity *from* their souls, the single and conspicuous exception is Paddon's sister Elizabeth, kneeling in the mud and snow at the foot of the grave, passionately moving her lips with eyes closed and tears streaming

latitudes le printemps ne débute que vers la fin du mois d'avril, contre certaines pierres tombales se tassent encore des mottes de neige et la terre n'a pas dû être facile à creuser mais voilà, la tombe a été vidée de sa boue dure et puis remplie de Paddon et de boue dure et maintenant c'est terminé. Je ne vois pas encore les visages mais je commence à voir les habits, sombres pour l'occasion et faits de tissus qui n'ont pas besoin de repassage. Parmi les corps, bon nombre ont des kilos en trop, des bourrelets de chair disgracieuse qui leur enserrant la taille les genoux et les chevilles, et ceux qui ne sont pas trop gros se voûtent ou se ratatinent, s'effondrent sur eux-mêmes – ce sont des corps tristes dans l'ensemble avec des bras maladroits, des mains qui se serrent mollement les unes les autres avant de retomber à leurs côtés, des têtes et des langues qui s'agitent parce qu'il faut bien dire quelque chose alors qu'il n'y a pas grand-chose à dire, au fond il n'y a jamais grand-chose à dire mais là en particulier, vu que Paddon n'avait pas loin de quatre-vingt-dix ans et que tous on doit partir un jour ou l'autre et du reste la plupart d'entre nous sont déjà partis et tout ce que l'on peut faire c'est espérer que Dieu trouvera bon de nous rappeler près de Lui aussi paisiblement qu'Il l'a fait pour Paddon, et voilà ma chérie on devrait peut-être rentrer maintenant, il ne s'agit pas de s'enrhumer n'est-ce pas ?

Les têtes s'agitent, oui, de gauche à droite ou de haut en bas, faisant trembler légèrement les bajoues et si je me concentre très fort je peux distinguer les veinules bleues à travers la peau rose-rouge. Les femmes se fardent peu ou pas et leurs bas sont en rayonne beige épaisse plutôt qu'en nylon transparent osé, leurs gants aussi sont raisonnables et elles ne les égarent jamais, tout le monde sans exception porte des lunettes, les cheveux des hommes si tant est qu'ils en aient sont gris ou blancs et ceux des femmes bleu pâle, les hommes qui en ont se les font couper très court et y

down her cheeks, crossing herself ecstatically again and again but then everyone knows she's an eccentric, too many years in the tropics and a Catholic to boot, the minister is already unlocking his car door and the mourners are murmuring that they really should be getting home too, though most of them are elderly and long retired except your own children of course who aren't that young anymore themselves, and as for your widow Karen she is bravely holding her head up standing tall and straight next to her tall straight daughter my mother Ruthie and murmuring the Lord's Prayer for the millionth time in her life between lips whitened blue by the cold; she is just now getting to the part about *Lead us not into temptation*.

Ah but wouldn't it be terrific I can't help thinking if this grey and grimly smiling lady could allow herself to be led into temptation for a change – what would it be? A rhumba a tango a cha-cha-cha a glass of Cuban rum an amber-skinned stranger stinging ember eyes into her? What is she worried about now that she's almost home free what could possibly happen to her at eighty-odd what is the temptation? Cheating at bridge? Wearing the same cotton drawers three days in a row because she didn't feel like washing them after two? Stealing an extra can of dog food from the supermarket for her fox terrier? Elizabeth gets to her feet at last, crosses herself one more time *in the name of the Father the Son and the Holy Ghost Amen* and, cheeks glistening with joyful tears and overcoat dripping with slush, rejoins Karen her sister-in-law. The two elderly women embrace while the younger older woman Ruthie waits for them to stop. Then they all drive away smoothly in their heated expensive cars – these are not rich people but they have taken the art of pinching pennies seriously for decades and know how essential it is to have a good car hereabouts so they buy a

dessinent soigneusement une raie sur le côté, les femmes se les font crêper tous les quinze jours en de jolies vaguelettes figées, leurs sacs à main sont assortis peu ou prou à leurs chaussures, les couleurs de prédilection étant le bleu marine le noir et le marron qui vont bien avec tout et ne se salissent pas aussi rapidement que les tons plus clairs, leurs manteaux sont chauds, choisis pour tenir plusieurs de ces hivers cruels et interminables. Personne ne rit bien sûr mais personne ne verse de larmes non plus : ces êtres ont passé leur vie à récurer de leur âme toute trace de spontanéité, l'unique mais voyante exception étant ta sœur Elizabeth qui, agenouillée au pied du tombeau dans la neige boueuse, les yeux fermés et les joues baignées de larmes, remue passionnément les lèvres en faisant le signe de la croix encore et encore mais tout le monde sait que c'est une excentrique, trop d'années passées sous les tropiques et qui plus est une catholique. Le pasteur est déjà en train de glisser sa clef dans la portière de sa voiture et les membres du cortège répètent à voix basse qu'ils devraient vraiment rentrer eux aussi, bien que pour la plupart ils soient âgés et à la retraite depuis longtemps, sauf bien sûr tes propres enfants qui eux-mêmes ne sont plus si jeunes que ça, et quant à ta veuve Karen je la vois qui lève courageusement la tête, se tient raide et droite près de sa fille raide et droite ma mère Ruthie et murmure le *Notre Père* pour la millionième fois de sa vie entre des lèvres bleutées par le froid ; en ce moment précis elle arrive à la phrase *Ne nous induis pas en tentation*.

Ah mais comme ce serait formidable, je ne peux pas m'empêcher de penser, si cette grande dame grise au sourire résolu pouvait se laisser induire en tentation pour une fois : qu'est-ce que ça serait ? une rumba un tango un cha-cha-cha un verre de rhum cubain un inconnu à la peau ambrée qui la brûlerait de ses yeux ardents... Que diable redoute-t-elle, maintenant

one every two or three years in more or less the same hues as the ladies' shoes and for the same reasons – back to their medium-sized houses whose mortgages are now fully paid off so they don't have to worry about *that* anymore, and having locked their car doors and their garage doors they unlock their front doors or their side doors and remove their rubber boots or galoshes if they were wearing them or, if not, wipe their shoes carefully on Welcome mats purchased through the Eaton's mail-order catalogue and sit down on upholstered chesterfields with doilies on the arms and backs and look calmly at the television or speak politely to one other or turn the pages of a magazine while they wait for it to be time for lunch.

Grandma mailed me a thick outspilling envelope labelled firmly in her hand *P's Book* and filled with ancient pages written in your hand, your many hands, some rollicking others wretched and others weary – oh Paddon I can still see those hands of yours, thick strong fingers tamping tobacco or playing piano, amazingly nimble despite age and arthritis, making tunes appear and go hitting sideways into other tunes, teaching me how to put my thumb under my second and third fingers quick as a wink, twisting pipe-cleaners into animals, chucking me under the chin good night – okay so now it's mine. Now the responsibility is mine.

No, I haven't forgotten my promise. You must have thought I had. I know you remembered it to the end, though two decades have gone by without our so much as alluding to it once.

Why me, Grandad?

Even when I was tiny you stood me between your thighs and took my

qu'elle est presque arrivée au but ? Que pourrait-il bien lui arriver à quatre-vingts et des poussières ? Quelle serait la tentation ? tricher au bridge ? new porter la même culotte trois jours de suite au lieu de deux ? voler au supermarché une boîte de nourriture pour son fox-terrier ? Elizabeth se remet debout enfin, fait une dernière fois le signe de la croix *au nom du Père du Fils et du Saint-Esprit Amen* et, les joues brillant de larmes joyeuses et son pardessus taché de gadoue, traverse la pelouse grise pour rejoindre Karen sa belle-sœur. Tandis que les deux vieilles femmes s'étreignent, la plus jeune vieille femme attend qu'elles aient fini. Ensuite tout le monde s'en va, roulant doucement dans des voitures chauffées et coûteuses – ces gens ne sont pas riches mais depuis des décennies ils prennent au sérieux l'art de surveiller leurs sous et ils savent à quel point il est essentiel d'avoir une bonne voiture dans ces parages alors ils en achètent une neuve tous les deux ou trois ans, dans les mêmes couleurs à peu près que les chaussures des dames et pour les mêmes raisons – vers des maisons de taille moyenne dont l'emprunt est désormais entièrement remboursé (au moins ils n'ont plus à se faire de soucis pour *cela* !) – et, refermant à clef les portières de la voiture et les portes du garage, ils rouvrent à clef la porte de la maison et ôtent leurs bottes ou leurs caoutchoucs s'ils en portaient et sinon essuient méticuleusement leurs chaussures sur le paillason Welcome acheté par correspondance dans le catalogue Eaton's et s'installent sur leur canapé capitonné avec des napperons sur les bras et le dossier et regardent calmement la télévision ou se parlent poliment tout en tournant les pages d'un magazine en attendant qu'il soit l'heure de déjeuner.

Mamie m'a fait parvenir une grosse enveloppe encombrante sur laquelle est griffonné de sa main ferme LIVRE DE P., enveloppe bourrée de vieilles pages noircies de ta main à toi, tes nombreuses mains, certaines

questions seriously, talked to me of shooting stars and hobgoblins, explained the newspaper to me from current events to cartoons, looked at me with your sad eyes and laughed at every single one of my jokes.

When I was six you lifted me next to you on the piano bench and told me about Scarlatti's cat. One day, you explained, Scarlatti's cat marched delicately across the keyboard, setting its paws down precisely and at random, every five semitones or so, and the composer made a fugue of the melody thus produced. That, you told me, is love.

Listen – one note after the other, going up. Slow strange solitary notes. A lot of flats. A lot of black notes. One, one, one, one, one, one – going up. Listen – in an inimitably minor key. You walked across the keyboard of the century, Paddon, trying to watch where you were going, and you failed. Listen to the notes. Black and white notes played out virtually at random. But a lot of flats. A lot of accidentals. You kept on waiting for Scarlatti to intervene, didn't you? You couldn't believe there was no Scarlatti, there would never be any Scarlatti. You would rather have smashed the piano to smithereens than accept the idea that no Scarlatti would come, ever, to build a fugue around your mournful melody. All you managed to do was bloody up some of the notes.

When I was eight you took an atlas down from the shelf, opened it to the map of Alberta and taught me to hear the different melodies playing in the names of your world, a structure which had been shakily erected on three unequal columns.

exubérantes d'autres pitoyables et d'autres lasses – oh Paddon je les vois encore, tes mains, les doigts trapus et forts en train de tasser le tabac ou de jouer du piano, étonnamment agiles en dépit de l'âge et de l'arthrite, faisant apparaître des airs qui dansaient follement et se heurtaient contre d'autres airs, m'apprenant à glisser le pouce par-dessous l'index en un clin d'œil, tor-dant des cure-pipes pour les transformer en animaux, me tapotant sous le menton en guise de bonsoir – d'accord, tu m'as légué ces pages et maintenant il est à moi ton livre, la responsabilité est toute à moi.

Non, je n'ai pas oublié ma promesse. Tu as dû penser que si. Je sais que toi tu t'en es souvenu jusqu'à la fin, bien que deux décennies se soient écoulées sans qu'on en ait reparlé une seule fois.

Pourquoi moi, grand-père ?

Toute petite déjà, tu m'installais debout entre tes cuisses, me parlais d'étoiles filantes et de lutins, m'expliquais le contenu du journal depuis l'actualité jusqu'aux bandes dessinées, prenais mes questions au sérieux, me regardais de tes yeux tristes et riais à toutes mes blagues sans exception.

Quand j'avais six ans, me hissant à tes côtés sur le banc du piano, tu m'as raconté l'histoire du chat de Scarlatti. Un jour, Paula, dis-tu, le chat de Scarlatti a traversé délicatement le clavier du clavecin, posant ses pattes de façon à la fois précise et aléatoire, tous les cinq demi-tons environ, et le musicien a composé une fugue avec la mélodie ainsi produite. Voilà, conclus-tu : ça c'est l'amour.

Tawatinaw	Belly River	Lac La Nonne
Nemiskam	Grassy Lake	Vegreville
Wetaskiwin	Winnifred	Bellevue
Athabasca	Bad Heart	Balzac
Chipewyan	Heath	Lac La Biche
Otauwau River	Drumheller	Brousseau
Keoma	Iron Springs	Quatre Fourches
Waskatenau	Entwistle	Lacombe
Ponoka	Lesser Slave Lake	Joussard
Kapasiwin River	Saddle	Embarras Portage
	Fort McMurray	Grande Prairie
	Enchant	Rivière Qui Barre
	Entrance	
	Entice	
	Bindloss	
	Dunvegan	
	Swan Hills	
	Peace River	
	Iddesleigh	
	Sedalia	
	Fawcett	
	Driftpile	
	Hotchkiss	
	Mirror	
	Crooked Creek	
	Killam	
	Hardisty	
	Pollockville	
	Didsbury	

It went on and on. Some of the names set me dreaming. Peace River, Enchant. Peace River, Enchant. Oh... I remember too how much you despised that song *This Land Is Your Land*, how you refused to allow it to be sung within your earshot. The time I came home from summer camp with those words on my lips was the one and only time you aimed your ire at me – such beautiful words I thought – we'd been singing them in harmony night after night around the campfire then all the way back to Calgary on the bus – *As I was walking that ribbon of highway saw above*

Ecoute : une note après l'autre, en montant. Des notes lentes, étranges et solitaires. Beaucoup de bémols. Beaucoup de touches noires. Un, un, un, un, un, un – en montant. Ecoute – dans une tonalité irrévocablement mineure. Tu as traversé le clavier de ce siècle, Paddon, en cherchant à regarder où tu mettais les pieds, et tu as échoué. Écoute les notes. Des touches noires et blanches, frappées presque au hasard. Mais beaucoup de bémols, beaucoup d'altérations. Tu t'attendais toujours, n'est-ce pas, à ce qu'un Scarlatti intervienne. Tu n'arrivais pas à croire qu'il n'y avait pas et n'y aurait jamais de Scarlatti. Tu aurais préféré fracasser le clavier plutôt que d'admettre qu'aucun Scarlatti ne viendrait jamais construire une fugue autour de ton air mélancolique. Tu n'as réussi qu'à ensanglanter quelques touches.

Quand j'avais huit ans, tu as pris un atlas sur l'étagère du haut et, l'ouvrant à la carte de l'Alberta, tu m'as enseigné les différentes voix qui chantaient dans les noms de ton pays, cet édifice bancal qu'on avait échafaudé sur trois piliers inégaux.

Tawatinaw	Belly River	Lac La Nonne
Nemiskam	Grassy Lake	Vegreville
Wetaskiwin	Winnifred	Bellevue
Athabasca	Bad Heart	Balzac
Chipewyan	Heath	Lac La Biche
Otauwau River	Drumheller	Brousseau
Keoma	Iron Springs	Quatre Fourches
Waskatenau	Entwistle	Lacombe
Ponoka	Lesser Slave Lake	Joussard
Kapasiwin	Saddle	Embarras Portage
	Fort McMurray	Grande Pairie
	Enchant	Rivière Qui Barre
	Entrance	
	Entice	
	Bindloss ¹⁰⁰	

¹⁰⁰ column abbreviated

me that endless skyway I saw below me that golden valley This land was made for you and me – and hearing me you harrumphed and muttered something like Cut the fucking crap, and Grandma pulled you away and shushed and fussed and said Paddon for Heaven's sake she can't be expected to understand, it's just a song she learned at camp, and meanwhile, filthy from a week of learning to follow trails through the woods and recognize stars and bird-calls and sleep in a tent, a week of pretending to be an Indian in my group of rosy-cheeked blue-uniformed blonde-pigtailed Girl Guides called the Sarcees, I had gone up to my room and thrown myself fully dressed on the sparkling white coverlet and cried myself to sleep.

And yet Paddon, incomprehensibly to me coming from the East, you loved this land, loved its emptiness its hugeness its open flatness the exciting biting cold the white snow in sun that hurt your eyes the forthright way the air attacked your cheekbones chin and fingers, the merciless summer sun that made the train-tracks flash and the air above the wheatfields shimmer the purple storm-clouds piled on the horizon trying to look like mountains while the real mountains sat there, inimitable, a scant eighty miles away. Alberta and Montana, you told me, were arbitrarily different names for what had always been the same place, and the feverish staking-out of the forty-ninth parallel, followed by a pompous marquis' dedication of seventeen million acres of prairie land to some priggish Victorian princess who had never left the British Isles, did not change the true soul of the place one whit: this was Big Sky country.

Hit the Road Jack – You never did manage to hit the road, Paddon. Never once left the confines of your province. And now your own bones

Il y en avait d'autres, bien d'autres encore. Ces noms me laissaient rêveuse. Peace River, Enchant. Peace River, Enchant. Ah !... je me souviens aussi comme tu détestais la chanson *Cette contrée est à toi*, comme tu refusais qu'on la chante en ta présence ; le jour où je suis rentrée de colonie avec ces paroles sur les lèvres a été le seul jour où tu as braqué ton courroux contre moi. De si belles paroles, pourtant, pensais-je : on les avait chantées à plusieurs voix, chaque soir autour du feu de camp et ensuite dans le car qui nous ramenait à Calgary – *Par-dessus ce ruban de route Je vois à l'infini la céleste voûte A mes pieds la vallée dorée Pour toi, pour moi, Dieu fit cette contrée* – mais à m'entendre tu t'es mis à grogner et à grommeler quelque chose comme Qu'est-ce que c'est que cette merde et Mamie a dû t'entraîner dans la pièce à côté en disant Chut et flûte et pour l'amour de Dieu Paddon, comment veux-tu qu'elle comprenne, ce n'est qu'une chanson qu'elle a apprise au camp ; pendant ce temps, noire de saleté après une semaine passée à suivre des pistes dans la forêt et à apprendre à reconnaître les étoiles et les chants d'oiseaux et à dormir sous une tente, une semaine passée à faire l'Indienne avec les autres scoutesses de mon groupe nommé les Sarcis, des filles aux joues rosées et à l'uniforme bleu et aux couettes blondes, j'étais montée dans ma chambre me jeter tout habillée sur la courtépointe d'un blanc éblouissant et pleurer toutes les larmes de mon corps.

Et pourtant Paddon, toi tu l'aimais, cette contrée ! De façon incompréhensible pour moi venant de l'Est, tu aimais son énormité, ses étendues vides et plates, son ouverture absolue au ciel, le froid mordant et stimulant de ses hivers, sa neige dont la blancheur te faisait mal aux yeux, la franchise avec laquelle son vent attaquait tes pommettes et ton menton et tes doigts, son impitoyable soleil d'été qui faisait étinceler les rails du

are in the Alberta ground.

This land is my land at long last.

chemin de fer et trembler l'air au-dessus des champs de blé, ses orageux nuages violets qui s'entassaient à l'horizon en cherchant à se faire prendre pour des montagnes tandis que les vraies montagnes se tenaient là à cent vingt kilomètres à peine, imperturbables et inimitables. L'Alberta et le Montana, m'as-tu dit, étaient deux noms arbitrairement différents pour ce qui avait toujours été un seul et même endroit, et l'arpentage fébrile du 49^e parallèle, suivi de la nomination prétentieuse de trente-cinq mille hectares de prairies pour une pompeuse princesse britannique qui n'avait jamais mis les pieds hors de son île natale, ne changeait pas d'un iota l'âme véritable de cet endroit : c'était le pays du Grand Ciel.

Hit the road, Jack, and don't you come back no more... Tu n'as jamais pris la route, Paddon. Pas une seule fois tu n'as quitté l'enceinte de ta province. Et maintenant tes propres os reposent dans la terre d'Alberta.

Cette contrée est donc à moi, enfin.

10.2. *Slow Emergencies*

That body is out of her.

A girl, say the people whose hands are now skillfully manipulating tiny angular limbs and lumps of glistening sticky buttocks and hairy head down there, then plunging deep into the yawning chasm of Lin's body to extract the black-red pulsating form of living flesh that belongs to no one, neither to her nor to the child – then they are sewing her.

Lin does not care what they do to her now. That body is out of her. It is on the roof of its empty house and its lips have fastened round her nipple and are sucking fast as heartbeat, fierce as sex. A person behaving like a real live baby and daughtering her. Such a wee wisp of a thing whereas it had weighed like a boulder in her gut. While the wolf was sleeping, bloated and ill from having gobbled down seven baby goats one after the other without so much as bothering to chew them, the nanny goat came to the rescue of her children: she slit open the wolf's stomach with a knife and all seven kids jumped out safe and sound, then they filled his stomach with stones and stitched it back up again and when the wolf awoke, oh my *God*... But here the stone has been replaced by a kid instead of the other way around, and the torn flesh is being sewed up and Lin is a mother. Not only that, but Derek is a father. His nervous futile fanning of her face and smoothing of her hair has ceased; now one of his hands is squeezing hers and he has laid the other gently on his daughter's minute white-clad back. So many monumental new terms coming into play here. A few seconds ago there was no such thing as daughter mother father and now there they are,

10.2. *La virevolte*

Ce corps est sorti d'elle.

– Une fille, disent les personnes dont les mains manipulent maintenant avec adresse, là-bas, les minuscules membres anguleux et les brillantes masses poisseuses des fesses et de la tête velue, puis plongent au fond du gouffre béant qu'est le corps de Lin pour en extraire la forme rouge-noir battante de chair vivante qui n'appartient à personne, ni à elle ni à l'enfant, puis se mettent à la recoudre.

Peu importe ce qu'on lui fait maintenant, cela lui est égal, ce corps est sorti d'elle. Il se trouve sur le toit de sa maison vide et ses lèvres se sont emparées de son mamelon et tirent : leur mouvement à la rapidité d'un cœur qui bat, et la férocité du sexe. Un être qui se comporte comme un vrai bébé vivant qui serait sa fille. Une chose si frêle et fine alors qu'elle avait pesé comme une pierre dans ses entrailles. Pendant que le loup dormait, bouffi et malade d'avoir englouti sept petits chevreaux coup sur coup sans même les avoir mastiqués, la chèvre se précipita au secours de ses petits : d'un seul coup de couteau elle fendit le ventre du loup et les sept chevreaux jaillirent sains et saufs, ensuite ils lui remplirent le ventre de pierres avant de le recoudre et quand le loup se réveilla, ô mon *Dieu*... Mais là, c'est la pierre qui a été remplacée par un enfant et non l'inverse, et on est en train de recoudre la chair déchirée et Lin est mère. Non seulement cela, mais Derek est père. Ses mains ont cessé de lui éventer nerveusement le visage et de lui lisser les cheveux; maintenant l'une de ses mains serre sa main à elle et il a posé l'autre doucement sur l'étroit dos emmaillotté de sa fille. Tant de nou-

these words have been violently promoted from clichés to Beethoven symphonies, choirs of angels, floods of sunlight. The nurse is still stitching and dabbing down there, the sting and pierce of the needle are pleasant to Lin, compared with the just-past hellish upheaval of self.

Once rinsed of womb muck and pressed dry with a towel, Angela's fine thin hair is blond. Her head nests in the crook of Lin's left arm as her lips pump imperiously to draw from Lin's breast the thin nourishing liquid which is-not yet milk. Her eyes stare into Lin's eyes as though each second of staring brought with it as much newness and replenishment as each second of sucking.

Voraciously Angela gulps down the look in her mother's eyes.

The ward is a swarm of cries and coos and cuddles. Other mothers press small squalling mouths to dripping nipples. Get out of my happiness, thinks Lin.

Angela is the only baby on earth and Lin the only mother.

How could she not know to swab the stub of scabbed at her own daughter's midriff?

In the shower, Lin soaps and scrubs her empty body, vigorously beneath the armpits, gingerly between the legs. She is still there. She did not die or become someone else. Not only is she still herself but she is also a mother. Not only is she still alive but someone else is also, totally, alive at

veaux termes monumentaux qui entrent soudain en jeu. Voici quelques secondes, fille, mère et père n'existaient pas et maintenant ils sont là, ces pauvres clichés ont été violemment et instantanément promus en symphonies de Beethoven, chorales d'anges, flots de lumière. L'infirmière continue de faire ses points de croix là-bas et Lin trouve agréable la piqure de l'aiguille, comparée au récent cataclysme de tout son être.

Une fois rincés de la glu utérine et frottés avec une serviette-éponge, les fins cheveux soyeux d'Angela apparaissent blonds. Sa tête se niche dans le creux du bras gauche de Lin et ses lèvres se mettent à pomper impérieusement afin de tirer de son sein le pâle liquide qui n'est pas encore du lait. Elle regarde Lin fixement, comme si chaque seconde de contact entre leurs yeux lui apportait autant de nouveauté et de nourriture que chaque succion.

Angela avale avec voracité le regard de sa mère.

Le pavillon est une clameur de cris et de roucoulements et de câlins. D'autres mères appuient d'autres petites bouches brailleuses contre leurs mamelons qui gouttent. Allez-vous-en de mon bonheur, pense Lin.

Angela est l'unique bébé au monde, et Lin, l'unique mère.

Comment ne saurait-elle pas nettoyer le chicot de chair croûtée, là où rebondit le ventre de sa propre fille ?

Sous la douche, Lin savonne et frotte son corps vide, vigoureusement

the far end of the corridor and she can feel the tug of that person's life at her heartstrings. It is like falling in love only without the darkness, without the thrill and clutch of fear.

Angela's feet. Those same feet which a thousand times had kicked Lin soft-thud strangely in the stomach, bladder, intestines, lungs. Long curved toes, nearly invisible slits of toenails, wrinkles everywhere. Absurdly large coming at the end of such puny calves and thighs, absurdly small next to any pair of shoes. Except the pastel booties knit by Derek's mother, Violet, with ribbons slipped through the ankle stitches to tie them securely but despite the ribbons the great red feet keep pushing them off, the left one is always waving around naked and chill, undressed by the snug smug right.

Bathing her. Lin's left arm crooked beneath Angela's upper back, supporting her head, her right hand gently sponging the fat stomach, sponging the frog legs parted in fifth-position grand plié, sponging the unspeakably sweet sex. Angela's big eyes follow every twitch and twinkle of the face above her. And she is so at home in the tepid water, so ecstatically abandoned.

During her daughter's long spans of white sleep Lin often finds the clinic's exercise room empty and can lie splayed on its hardwood floor, contract-release relaxing, getting reaccustomed to being the only person in her body. Sometimes when she sits and bends, forward forward downward, drops of milk seep through her shirt and spatter her naked knees.

You'll be back on stage in no time, Mrs. Lhomond, the nurse says one day, upon seeing her emerge from the exercise room. Lin nods, radiant.

sous les aisselles, délicatement entre les cuisses. Elle est toujours là. Elle n'est pas morte et elle n'est pas devenue quelqu'un d'autre. Non seulement elle est toujours elle-même, mais elle est mère. Non seulement elle est encore en vie mais quelqu'un d'autre l'est également, totalement, là-bas au bout du couloir, et elle sent la vie de cet être tirer sur les fibres de son cœur. C'est comme l'amour fou mais sans les ténèbres, sans les griffes lacérantes de la peur.

Les pieds d'Angela. Ces mêmes pieds qui lui avaient mille fois infligé d'étranges coups mats à l'estomac, la vessie, les intestins et les poumons. Ses orteils sont longs et recourbés, les ongles des fentes à peine visibles, il y a des rides partout. Absurdement grands, venant à la fin de jambes aussi chétives, absurdement petits à côté de n'importe quelle paire de chaussures. Sauf les bottines pastel tricotées par Violet, la mère de Derek, avec des rubans glissés dans les mailles à la cheville pour bien les attacher mais, malgré les rubans, les grands pieds rouges se déchaussent sans cesse, le gauche s'agitant toujours nu et froid, déshabillé par le droit douillettement au chaud.

Son bain. Le bras gauche courbé sous le haut du dos d'Angela, sa main droite tenant une éponge, Lin lave doucement le ventre rond, lave les pattes de grenouille écartées en cinquième position grand plié, lave le sexe indiciblement joli. Les grands yeux d'Angela suivent chaque frémissement, chaque pétilllement du visage au-dessus d'elle. Elle est si à l'aise dans l'eau tiède, si extatiquement abandonnée.

Pendant les grands pans blancs du sommeil de sa fille, Lin va à la salle d'exercices de la clinique qui est souvent vide ; elle s'étale sur le parquet, se

contracte et se détend, se contracte plus fort et se détend profondément, se réhabituant à l'idée d'être la seule personne dans son corps. Parfois lorsque, assise, elle se penche en avant, de plus en plus loin en avant, des gouttes de lait filtrent à travers sa chemise et éclaboussent la peau nue de ses genoux.

– Vous serez sur les planches en un rien de temps, madame Lhomond, lui dit l'infirmière un jour, la voyant sortir de la salle d'exercices. Et Lin hoche la tête, radieuse.

10.3. *L'empreinte de l'ange*

Elle est là, Saffie. On la voit.

Face blanche. Ou pour mieux dire : blafarde.

Elle se tient dans le couloir sombre du deuxième étage d'une belle maison ancienne rue de Seine, elle est debout devant une porte, sur le point de frapper, elle frappe, une certaine absence accompagne tous ses gestes.

Elle est arrivée à Paris il y a quelques jours à peine, dans un Paris qui tremblotait derrière la vitre sale, un Paris étranger, gris, plomb, pluie, gare du Nord. Ayant pris le train à Düsseldorf.

Elle a vingt ans.

Elle n'est ni bien ni mal habillée. Jupe grise plissée, chemisier blanc, socquettes blanches, sac en cuir noir et chaussures assorties, sa tenue vestimentaire est d'une grande banalité – et pourtant, à bien la regarder, Saffie, elle n'est pas banale. Elle est bizarre. On ne comprend pas d'abord à quoi tient cette impression de bizarrerie. Ensuite on comprend : c'est son extraordinaire manque d'empressement.

De l'autre côté de la porte sur laquelle elle a frappé, à l'intérieur de l'appartement, quelqu'un travaille à la flûte les *Folies d'Espagne* de Marin Marais. Le ou la flûtiste reprend à six ou sept reprises la même phrase musicale, cherchant à éviter l'erreur, la brisure de rythme, la fausse note, et

10.3. *The Mark of the Angel*

There she is.

Saffie.

Standing there.

Her face very pale. Or to be more accurate – pallid.

She's standing at a door in a shadowy hallway on the third floor of a handsome old house on the Rue de Seine, about to knock. She knocks. Her gestures are vague, preoccupied.

She just arrived in Paris a few days ago – a Paris trembling through raindrops on filthy windows – a gray, foreign, leaden, dripping Paris. The Gare du Nord. Having gotten on the train at Düsseldorf.

Twenty years old.

Neither well nor badly dressed. Gray pleated skirt, white long-sleeved blouse, white ankle socks, black leather purse, matching shoes – rather ordinary clothing – but when you look at her closely, Saffie herself is anything but ordinary. She's strange. Not easy, at first glance, to put your finger on what's strange about her. And then – ah – you see it: it's her utter lack of hurry.

finit par la jouer à la perfection. Mais Saffie n'écoute pas. Elle est là, devant la porte, et c'est tout. Voilà près de cinq minutes qu'elle a frappé, personne n'est venu lui ouvrir et elle n'a ni frappé une deuxième fois ni tourné les talons pour repartir.

La concierge, qui a vu Saffie pénétrer dans l'immeuble tout à l'heure et qui arrive maintenant au deuxième étage pour distribuer le courrier (elle prend l'ascenseur jusqu'au dernier et descend ensuite à pied, étage par étage), est étonnée de voir la jeune inconnue ainsi figée devant la porte de M. Lepage.

— Mais ! s'exclame-t-elle.

C'est une femme obèse et laide, dont le visage est parsemé de nævus à poils mais dont les yeux contiennent énormément de tendresse et de sagesse à l'endroit des êtres humains.

— Mais il est là, monsieur Lepage ! Vous avez sonné ?

Saffie comprend le français. Elle le parle aussi, mais de façon hésitante.

— Non, dit-elle. J'ai frappé.

Sa voix est grave, douce et un peu rauque : une voix à la Dietrich, moins les simagrées. Son accent n'est pas grotesque. Elle ne dit pas *ch* à la place de *j*.

In the apartment, on the other side of the door she's just knocked on, someone is practicing Marin Marais's *Folies d'Espagne* on the flute. The flutist goes over the same phrase six or seven times, trying to smooth it out, preserve the rhythm, keep from hitting any wrong notes – and finally manages to play it to perfection. But Saffie isn't listening. She's doing absolutely nothing other than standing at the door. Nearly five minutes have elapsed since she knocked on it, and no one's come to open it. She hasn't knocked a second time, nor has she turned to leave.

The concierge, who saw her entering the building earlier and has just gotten to the third floor to distribute the mail (she takes the elevator up to the top of the building then walks down floor by floor) is taken aback to see the young stranger standing motionless in front of Monsieur Lepage's door.

“What! ...” she exclaims.

She's an obese and ugly woman; her face is dotted with hairy moles; but her eyes are filled with treasures of kindness and wisdom where her fellow human beings are concerned.

“But – he's at home, Monsieur Lepage! Did you ring the bell?”

Saffie understands French. She speaks it, too, albeit imperfectly.

“No,” she says. “I knocked.”

Her voice is soft, deep, husky – a Marlene Dietrich sort of voice,

— Mais il ne vous entend pas ! dit Mlle Blanche. Il faut sonner !

Elle appuie longuement sur le bouton de la sonnerie et la musique s'interrompt. Sourire jubilant de Mlle Blanche.

— Voilà !

Se penchant en avant avec difficulté, elle glisse le courrier de M. Lepage sous sa porte et s'éclipse dans l'escalier.

Saffie n'a pas bougé. Elle est d'une immobilité vraiment impressionnante.

La porte s'ouvre avec violence. Flot de lumière dans la pénombre du couloir.

— Ça va pas, non ?

Raphaël Lepage n'est pas en colère, il fait seulement semblant. Il se dit que l'on ne devrait pas sonner aussi agressivement pour une demande d'emploi. Mais le silence de Saffie le frappe de plein fouet. Il accuse le coup. Se calme, se tait.

Les voilà face à face, l'homme et la femme qui ne se connaissent pas. Ils se tiennent de part et d'autre du seuil de la porte, et ils se dévisagent. Ou plutôt, lui la dévisage et elle... est là. Raphaël n'a jamais vu cela. Cette femme est là, et en même temps elle est absente ; ça saute aux yeux.

minus the mannerisms. Her accent is by no means grotesque.

“But he can't hear you!” says Mademoiselle Blanche. “You must ring!”

She leans insistently on the bell and the music breaks off. Triumphant smile from Mademoiselle Blanche.

“There you go!”

Bending forward with difficulty, she slips Monsieur Lepage's mail under his door and disappears into the stairwell.

Saffie still hasn't moved. Her immobility is quite astounding.

The door is flung open. Light floods the shadowy hallway.

“What the hell! ...”

Raphael Lepage isn't really angry, he's just pretending. It seems to him a bit inappropriate to ring so aggressively when one's looking for a job. Saffie's silence, however, strikes him with the force of a blow. Calms him down. Shuts him up.

And now, this man and this woman who've never met stand on either side of the threshold, staring at each other. Or rather, he stares at her and she... just stands there. Raphael is nonplussed. He's never seen anything

Quand, à l'instant, la sonnerie a retenti de son *fa* bécarre strident, il était justement en train de jouer un *fa* dièse aigu. Horripilé par la dissonance, il s'était arrêté, éperdu. En suspens entre les deux mondes. Ni dans ce monde-là, où l'air ruisselle et tremble de nuances sonores, ni dans celui-ci, où de jeunes femmes répondent à son annonce dans *Le Figaro*.

« Merde ! » Et il avait posé avec soin sa Louis Lot sur le velours bleu de l'étui ouvert, avant de traverser les tapis du salon et de longer le parquet du couloir. Autour de lui, tout reluisait et rutilait, respirant le bien-être et le bon goût ; les couleurs étaient rouge et brun et or, les textures donnaient envie de caresser, tapisseries murales, meubles en chêne lisse, c'était feutré, raffiné et chaleureux mais – dans le rai de lumière dansaient des millions de particules de poussière – cela avait besoin qu'on l'entretienne.

La mère de Raphaël lui avait donné de méticuleuses instructions à ce sujet la semaine d'avant, en lui cédant l'appartement parisien pour se retirer avec armes, bagages et domestique dans leur propriété en Bourgogne. Il fallait d'abord savoir rédiger une annonce pour *Le Figaro*, et ensuite trier sur le volet. Attention aux charpentes ! Ça se voyait tout de suite à leurs yeux, elles avaient le regard en zigzag.

« Ch. b. à tt f. pour petit ménage, logée, sach. cuisiner. »

Annonce minimaliste, choisie par Raphaël parce qu'il a horreur de jouer les bourgeois, et par Saffie parce qu'elle ne contenait ni « références exigées » ni « bonne moralité ».

like it in his life. A woman who can be standing right in front of you, yet somehow not be there.

When the doorbell's strident F-natural sounded a moment earlier, he'd been in the middle of playing a high F-sharp. He'd broken off, nerves jangling with the dissonance. Distracted. Suspended between the two worlds. Neither here, where the air rippled and streamed with sonorous shades, nor there, where young women answered his advertisement in the *Figaro*.

“Damn!” Carefully setting his Louis Lot on the blue velvet of its open case, he'd walked across the living-room rugs and down the hardwood floor of the hallway. Everything in the apartment around him was refined and burnished and genteel; wall tapestries and smooth oak furnishings glistened and gleamed, whispering affluence and good taste; reds and browns and golds reigned and the textures cried out to be caressed. A million motes of dust, however, danced in the shafts of sunlight – the whole thing *did* need to be kept up.

His mother had given him careful instructions on this subject the previous week before she packed up – lock, stock, barrel, and maid – to leave for their house in Burgundy, handing over the Paris apartment to him. First, she'd told him, he'd have to compose a proper ad for the *Figaro*, and second, handpick the prospective employees. “Watch out for the quick-fingered ones!” she'd warned him. “They're easy to spot; their eyes move in zigzags.”

“Seek maid for light housework. Room and board. Culinary skills

Tout à l'heure au téléphone, cette fille avait un accent ; de quel pays ? Raphaël n'aurait su le dire mais son français semblait incertain. Ce n'était pas pour lui déplaire. Il ne voulait surtout pas d'une pipelette comme Maria-Felice, domestique portugaise et confidente de sa maman depuis des lustres. Il lui expliquerait, à son employée future, qu'il était ultra-sensible aux sons. Qu'il ne fallait pas songer à passer l'aspirateur lorsqu'il se trouvait à la maison. Qu'il n'était pas question de chanter en époussetant les meubles. Qu'une chute de casseroles à la cuisine pendant ses heures de répétition serait un motif de renvoi.

Maintenant il ouvre violemment la porte, feignant la colère :

— Ça va pas, non ?

Cligne des yeux pour s'habituer à l'obscurité du couloir, cherche à vérifier le regard en zigzag, et s'arrête net.

Qu'est-ce ?

Sourire qui semble peint. Bras ballants le long du corps. Corps gracile. C'est tout ce qu'il a le temps d'enregistrer avant de basculer, tête la première, au fond de ses yeux. Yeux vert opaque, tels deux fragments de jade. Étangs placides, sans reflet et sans mouvement.

Dès ce premier instant, c'est l'indifférence de Saffie qui fascine Raphaël, le captive, l'envoûte. Dès ce premier instant, avant même de connaître son nom, Raphaël comprend que ça lui est égal, à cette jeune

required.”

A text reduced to the bare essentials, chosen by Raphael because he hated playing the role of the bourgeois, and by Saffie because it didn't contain the phrases “references required” or “good morality.”

When she'd called an hour ago, Raphael had noticed she had an accent. He couldn't have said from what country, but her French seemed a bit shaky. This was actually an asset, as far as he was concerned. The last thing he wanted was a chatterbox like Maria-Felice, the Portuguese maid who'd been his mother's confidante for as long as he could remember. He intended to explain to his future employee that he was ultrasensitive to sound. That it would be out of the question for her to do the vacuuming when he was at home. That she mustn't dream of humming while she dusted the furniture. That dropping a pot or pan in the kitchen during his practice hours would be cause for dismissal.

Now he yanks the door open, feigning anger –

“What the hell!...”

Blinks, as his eyes adjust to the darkness in the hallway. Tries to check out her expression for shiftiness, and is brought up short.

Because.

A smile that looks painted on. Arms hanging loosely at her sides. A

femme, de décrocher ou de ne pas décrocher un emploi. De vivre ou de ne pas vivre. Elle est livrée, abandonnée au monde, sans passion et sans peur. Elle n'a ni la pudeur hypocrite et calculée des filles comme il faut, ni l'impudence tout aussi calculée des putes. Elle est là. Il n'a jamais vu cela.

— Entrez, je vous prie, dit-il enfin d'une voix tout autre, douce et respectueuse.

Il voit que les mouvements de Saffie, avançant dans le vestibule, sont empreints de la même immobilité que ses yeux, et de la même indifférence. En refermant la porte derrière elle, son estomac fait un mouvement tellement insensé qu'il doit s'arrêter pour reprendre son souffle, les yeux rivés sur le bois de la porte, avant de pouvoir se retourner.

Ensuite il la précède dans le couloir, sentant son regard vide et vert sur l'arrière de sa tête.

Elle prend place dans un fauteuil au salon, en face de lui sur le canapé, et ne parle pas. Ses yeux fixent le tapis. Il en profite pour détailler en vitesse son apparence. Cheveux mi-longs retenus en queue de cheval par un simple élastique. Front haut, pommettes saillantes, lèvres enduites de rouge, oreilles coquilles parfaites serties de fausses perles, nez et arcades sourcilières ciselés : un visage bien dessiné, sur lequel on ne lit rien. Aucune minauderie, aucune coquetterie, rien. Le maquillage et les bijoux jurent avec la spectaculaire neutralité des traits. Raphaël en est comme hébété.

slender body. This is all he has time to notice before he falls headlong into the well of her eyes. Green and opaque, like two fragments of jade. Placid pools, unshimmering, unmoving.

Yes – from the beginning, it is Saffie's indifference that fascinates Raphael. Captivates him. Bewitches him. From the beginning, even before he learns her name, he can see that this young woman doesn't give a damn whether she gets the job or not. Whether she's alive or dead. She seems to have been somehow thrown out into the world, dispassionate and unfearing. She displays neither the hypocritical, calculating modesty of well-brought-up girls nor the equally calculating impudence of whores. She's just there. He's never seen anything like it.

“Please come in,” he says at last, in a totally different voice, gentle and filled with respect.

As Saffie crosses the threshold, he sees that her movements are just as motionless and indifferent as her eyes. His stomach leaps wildly when he closes the door behind her, and he has to stop to catch his breath, his eyes riveted to the wooden doorjamb, before he can turn around.

He then precedes her down the hallway, feeling her empty green gaze on the back of his head.

In the living room, he sits down on the couch and motions for her to take a seat in the armchair across from him. She obeys, wordlessly. Seeing her eyes glued to the rug, he rapidly surveys her appearance. Longish hair

Par réflexe, il tend la main et s'empare de la petite clochette en bronze pour appeler la bonne, demander qu'elle leur apporte du café – puis se ressaisit, rit en dedans, il n'y a pas de bonne, c'est elle la bonne, où sommes-nous, qui êtes-vous, ma chère...

— Vous êtes mademoiselle...

— Je m'appelle Zaffie, dit-elle, et, quand il lui demande de répéter, puis d'épeler, c'est par un S que cela commence, son nom est Saffie mais se dit Zaffie, parce qu'elle est d'origine allemande.

Allemande. Le mot lui-même presque tabou dans cette maison rue de Seine. Sa mère ne disait ni les Boches ni les Chleuhs ni les Fridolins ni même les Allemands, elle disait simplement *ils* et du reste, le plus souvent, elle ne disait rien du tout, elle se contentait de serrer les lèvres jusqu'à ce qu'on ne les voie plus, rien qu'une ligne rouge horizontale au milieu de son étroit visage osseux car, même si son époux n'était pas précisément mort en les combattant, c'était quand même par la faute des Allemands que Mme de Trala-Lepage s'était retrouvée veuve à quarante ans avec encore tant d'années à vivre et zéro espoir de connaître à nouveau l'amour, les caresses, les cadeaux d'un homme. Le père de Raphaël, professeur d'histoire à la Sorbonne, spécialiste de la pensée laïque et humaniste, avait trouvé sa fin dans le quartier des Halles pendant le terrible mois de janvier 1942, lorsqu'un camion chargé de pommes de terre avait été pris d'assaut et renversé, lui dessous, par une meute de ménagères frénétiques. (Quant à savoir ce que faisait le brave professeur rue Quincampoix à six heures du matin avant de périr sous le poids lourd...)

held back in a ponytail by a plain rubber band. High forehead, prominent cheekbones, lipstick-coated lips, ears like perfect seashells studded with false pearl earrings, finely sculpted nose and carefully arched eyebrows – a well-modeled face, on which it's impossible to read anything. There's no shyness in it, no simpering, nothing. The makeup and jewelry clash with the spectacular neutrality of her features. Raphael stares at her in a daze.

Stupidly, he reaches out a hand and grabs the little bronze bell to summon the maid, ask her to bring them some coffee – then shakes his head, laughing inwardly: there is no maid, she's the maid, where are we, who are you, my dear ...

“You are Mademoiselle? ...”

“My name is Zaffie,” she says – and, when he asks her to repeat it, then to spell it, it turns out that it begins with an *S*; her name is Saffie but she pronounces it “Zaffie,” because she's German.

German. The word itself virtually taboo in this apartment on the Rue de Seine. His mother called them neither Krauts nor Boches nor Jerries nor even Germans, she simply said *they*, in fact more often than not she didn't say anything at all, merely pressed her lips together until all you could see was a red horizontal line in the middle of her narrow bony face – because, even if her husband hadn't exactly died fighting them, it was still the Germans' fault that Madame Trala-Lepage had found herself widowed at the age of forty, with so many years left to live and practically no hope of finding another man to love her, cherish her, shower her with gifts.

Deux ans plus tard, l'Occupant avait massacré quatre résistants juste devant leur maison et Raphaël, les mains serrant le fer forgé du balconnet, s'était penché par la fenêtre du salon pour voir la mare de sang – les coups de feu ne crépitaient plus depuis une bonne minute déjà, tout était terminé, les jeunes gens n'étaient plus jeunes gens mais cadavres, un tas de chair inerte, et comment faire pour ne pas regarder ça, Raphaël penché loin loin en avant, sa tête aux belles boucles noires tout au bout de son cou tendu, ses doux yeux bruns s'écrouillant pour voir, non pas la mort mais la vérité derrière la mort, derrière cet amas chaotique de bras et de jambes, cette étreinte sanglante de quatre camarades tombés ensemble – mais – hurlant hystérique de Mme de Trala-Lepage, vrillant le tympan de son fils mais musicien – « *Qu'est-ce que tu fais ? Tu es fou ! Referme la fenêtre, mon Dieu ! Je n'ai plus que toi au monde, je ne veux pas qu'ils me prennent tout... !* »

Raphaël est convaincu que, sans l'interdiction explicite et inébranlable de sa mère, il se serait engagé dans la Résistance à la fin 1943 (il avait l'âge de le faire, il avait quinze ans et ne rêvait que de rejoindre les rangs romantiques des FFI), mais comme son père était mort et que sa mère n'avait d'autre enfant que lui, il avait dû se contenter d'apporter à la lutte contre les Allemands un soutien tout moral et intérieur. C'est pour cette même raison, à savoir la mort quasi glorieuse de son père en combattant au sens large du terme pour la patrie, que Raphaël n'avait pas été appelé pour servir en Algérie. En lieu et place, il avait fait le Conservatoire. Et brillamment. Et heureusement, car ses convictions politiques l'eussent plutôt fait pencher en faveur d'une Algérie indépendante. Avec le moins de dégâts possible, bien entendu, pour l'image de la France.

Raphael's father, a professor of history at the Sorbonne whose specialty had been the secular and humanist tradition in France, had met his end in the quarter of Les Halles in the fateful month of January 1942, when a pack of frenzied housewives had hurled themselves upon a truck of potatoes, overturning it with him underneath. (What the great professor had been doing in the Rue Quincampoix at six in the morning *before* perishing under the truck is another question....)

Two years later, the Occupation army had massacred four Resistance fighters right in front of their house and Raphael, his hands gripping the wrought-iron railing of the balcony, had leaned out the living-room window to see the pool of blood – the shots had ceased a full minute earlier, it was all over, the young men were no longer young men but corpses, a heap of inert flesh, and how not to stare at that?, so Raphael had stuck out his lovely head covered with soft black curls as far as possible, craning his neck, widening his gentle brown eyes to see – not death, but the truth behind death, behind the messy mass of arms and legs, the bloody embrace of four comrades fallen together – and then – Hortense's hysterical scream piercing the eardrum of her musical offspring – “*What are you doing? Have you gone berserk? Shut the window, for God's sake! You're all I have left in the world, I don't want them to take everything from me!...*”

Raphael is certain that, had it not been for his mother's explicit and unshakable opposition, he would have joined the Resistance movement at the end of '43 (he could have then, he was fifteen and longed to be part of the romantic ranks of the Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur), but, his father being dead and his mother having no one left but him, he'd had to support the struggle against the Germans in purely moral and spiritual ways. It was

Or voilà que Saffie une Allemande est assise là devant cette même fenêtre du salon, et personne n'a été assis de cette manière dans ce salon depuis sa construction au milieu du XVII^e siècle. Personne.

Elle sourit fixement de ses lèvres pleines et peintes. Ses grands yeux verts sont posés sur Raphaël en une attente dépourvue d'impatience.

Raphaël est si obnubilé par sa présence qu'il en oublie presque la raison et le prétexte. Il se lève et se met à arpenter la pièce, passant les doigts à travers ses épaisses boucles noires dans un geste qui lui est coutumier depuis l'adolescence – geste de fébrilité, geste d'artiste, la main gauche qui remonte, doigts écartés, depuis le front jusqu'au sommet du crâne – seulement ce tic commence à devenir saugrenu parce que les boucles noires reculent de plus en plus loin sur son front ; oui le fait est qu'à vingt-huit ans Raphaël Lepage souffre d'une calvitie précoce de sorte que sa main gauche, en exécutant son mouvement, ne rencontre plus pendant les trois quarts de son trajet que de la peau nue.

Tout en arpentant la pièce et en passant la main sur son front dégarni, Raphaël parle. Il décrit les tâches et les responsabilités qui incomberont à celle qu'il se propose d'engager comme domestique. À dire vrai il est plutôt mal versé dans ces affaires domestiques et parle plus ou moins à tort et à travers, suivant les images de Maria-Felice qui lui reviennent en tête : Maria-Felice montée sur un escabeau en train de laver les carreaux, Maria-Felice lui apportant le petit déjeuner et le courrier à 8 h 45, le thé à 17 heures, Maria-Felice revenant des courses, servant la soupe, Maria-Felice portant sur son dos dans l'escalier de service le sac de bûches pour la cheminée... Avec force gesticulations et pantomimes, Raphaël résume tout

for the same reason , namely the semi-glorious death of his father while fighting (in the broad sense of the term) for his country, that Raphael hadn't been called up to serve in Algeria. Instead, he'd gone on to the Conservatory. And done brilliantly there. Which was just as well, for his political convictions would probably have led him to favor independence for Algeria. With the least possible damage, naturally, to the image of France....

And now Saffie, a German, was sitting right in front of that same living-room window. And no one had sat in this living room in (quite the way she was sitting there since it had first been built in the middle of the seventeenth century. No one.

Her thick painted lips smile fixedly; her large green eyes rest on Raphael in calm expectancy.

Raphael is so overwhelmed by her presence that he's almost forgotten the reason for it. Rising, he starts to pace the room, running his left hand over and over through his hair, backward from forehead to crown, with fingers spread. This feverish artistic gesture has been a habit with him since adolescence, but it's growing faintly ludicrous because his black curls are receding farther and farther on his forehead – yes, the fact of the matter is that at age twenty-eight Raphael Lepage is prematurely bald, so that now, for fully three quarters of its trajectory, his left hand meets nothing but naked skin.

Even as he thus paces the room and runs his hand over his balding head, Raphael is holding forth. He describes the tasks and responsibilities

cela de son mieux, jetant de temps à autre un regard sur la jeune femme pour vérifier qu'elle le suit. Elle le suit, du moins en apparence. Elle a l'air de comprendre, mais... on dirait que cet air lui est inné. Elle semble avoir tout compris, à tout sujet, depuis toujours.

Il précise qu'il est flûtiste professionnel, qu'il travaille avec un orchestre (il articule avec soin le nom de l'orchestre en question mais les yeux de Saffie ne cillent pas, les sourcils de Saffie ne se lèvent pas, la bouche de Saffie ne bée pas ; d'évidence elle n'en a jamais entendu parler). Il ajoute qu'il s'absente souvent pour voyager, que ses absences sont parfois courtes (concerts en province), et parfois longues (tournées à l'étranger) ; que les corvées de Saffie pendant ces périodes seront naturellement moins nombreuses, mais qu'il lui sera loisible (comprend-elle « loisible » ?) de profiter de ses heures libres pour, par exemple, polir l'argenterie.

Sa chambre est située au sixième étage. Visites rigoureusement interdites. Il parle maintenant à l'indicatif, comme s'ils étaient déjà tombés d'accord sur les horaires, le salaire, le fait même que c'est elle, Saffie, qui prendra cet emploi, qui viendra s'occuper de lui, Raphaël Lepage, flûtiste en passe de devenir célèbre, dans son grand appartement de la rue de Seine ; qu'à partir de demain matin et jusqu'à nouvel ordre, cette jeune Allemande bizarre et silencieuse va épousseter ses livres, sucrer son thé, repasser ses chemises, laver ses sous-vêtements et changer les draps de son lit après le passage de ses amantes.

C'est d'accord ?

that will be those of the young woman he hires as a maid. To tell the truth, he's not particularly conversant in domestic matters and is spouting information virtually at random, grasping at whatever memories of Maria-Felice come to mind – Maria-Felice standing on a stepladder to wash the windowpanes, Maria-Felice bringing him his mail and breakfast at nine in the morning and his tea at five in the afternoon, Maria-Felice going out to do the food shopping, serving bowls of soup, struggling up the back staircase with a heavy bag of logs for the fireplace.... Raphael summarizes all this as best he can, illustrating with gestures and pantomime, glancing at the young woman now and then to make certain she is following. She appears to be. Yes, she seems to know what he means, but then ... it would seem she knows everything about the world there is to know, and always has.

He tells her he's a professional flutist, a member of an orchestra (he articulates the orchestra's name with care but Saffie doesn't blink, her eyebrows don't go up, her mouth doesn't drop open – clearly she's never heard of it). He adds that he's frequently away on trips, that his absences are sometimes short (concerts in the provinces) and sometimes long (tours abroad); that Saffie's duties during these periods will naturally be fewer, but that she can take advantage of her free time (does she understand the word "advantage"?) to – oh – to polish the silver, for example.

Her room's on the seventh floor. Visitors strictly forbidden realizes that he's now speaking in the indicative, as if they'd ready reached an agreement on the subject of her working hours, her wages, the very fact that it is she, Saffie, who will be taking this job – that, starting tomorrow morning and for the foreseeable future, it is she, this strange and silent

Lentement, elle hoche la tête, oui.

— Où se trouvent vos affaires ?

Pas beaucoup d'affaires. Deux valises seulement.

Je les cherche maintenant ?

Mon Dieu sa voix. Il ne l'avait pas encore remarquée. Une voix sidérante de fragilité. Il est paralysé. Doit se secouer pour ne pas rester là à la fixer bêtement. Se secouer encore, pour saisir en écho intérieur le sens des mots qu'elle vient de prononcer.

young German woman, who will be looking after him, Raphael Lepage, a flutist on the verge of becoming famous, in his large apartment on the Rue de Seine, dusting his books, putting sugar in his tea, ironing his shirts, washing his underwear, and changing the sheets after his lovers leave his bed.

“Do we have an agreement?”

Slowly, she nods her head.

“Where are your things?”

“Not many things. Two suitcases only. I go get them now?”

Good Lord, her voice. He hadn't noticed it before. A devastatingly fragile voice. It paralyzes him. He needs to make a conscious effort to stop standing there staring at her like an idiot. And another effort to grasp, in an inward echo, the meaning of the words she's just spoken.

Las memorias de tesis doctorales depositadas en esta Universidad deberán estar redactadas en español. No obstante, se admitirán a trámite las redactadas en la lengua propia de aquellos países con los que exista acuerdo o convenio oficial relativo a los estudios de doctorado. En este caso, dicha memoria deberá ir acompañada de un resumen en español de cada uno de los capítulos o publicaciones previas de que conste, el cual, deberá tener una extensión mínima de 25 hojas. Además, el índice y las conclusiones deberán estar redactados en lengua española. La lectura y defensa pública de dicha tesis deberá realizarse en español, pudiendo ser asistido, el doctorando, por el/los director/es de la tesis.

Cuando no exista el convenio de referencia la admisión a depósito y trámite de lectura de una tesis redactada en otro idioma diferente al español será decidida por la Comisión de Doctorado. En cualquier caso, deberá cumplir los requisitos de resumen de capítulos, índice y conclusiones redactados en español así como los referentes a la lectura y defensa pública anteriormente señalados.

Las tesis que versen sobre un tema de investigación propio de las licenciaturas en filología impartidas en la Universidad de León, también podrán ser redactadas en la lengua que constituye el objeto de su estudio. Asimismo, deberán cumplir los requisitos antedichos de resumen de capítulos, índice y conclusiones redactados en español.

Según el reglamento que rige las tesis doctorales de la Universidad de León¹

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¹ <http://www.unileon.es/estudiantes/estudiantes-doctorado/proyecto-de-tesis-doctoral/presentacion-y-exposicion-publica>

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Introducción

“¿Conoces a Nancy Huston?” Después de hacer esta pregunta en mi entorno, he llegado a la conclusión de que Huston es relativamente desconocida entre el lector medio. Sin embargo, a sus cincuenta y ocho años de edad, Huston tiene una larga lista de obras en su haber.

Me encontré con el nombre de Nancy Huston por primera vez cuando estaba enseñando literatura francesa en la universidad de León hace unos años. El fragmento que estudiábamos procedía de la colección de ensayos *Nord Perdu* y hablaba de la manera en que la visión del mundo de un individuo puede cambiar al hablar un idioma extranjero. Este fragmento me intrigó tanto que compré el libro en cuestión. Su lectura me conmovió a un nivel muy personal – por un lado, porque soy expatriada, igual que Nancy Huston, y por otro lado, porque soy bilingüe en inglés y alemán, ya que pasé mi infancia en Alemania con padres estadounidenses.

A los dos motivos expuestos para la elección de Nancy Huston – el desconocimiento de la autora por parte de un público general de lectores, y la conexión personal que sentí en relación a sus experiencias como expatriada – se añade un tercer motivo muy importante: mi situación como bilingüe. Huston se proclama 'falso bilingüe', un término que ella estableció para definir a la persona que deviene bilingüe después de su infancia. Esta circunstancia conlleva una cierta ausencia de emoción hacia el idioma 'nuevo' y Huston considera que el segundo idioma te pertenece, mientras que el materno te posee.

En los términos de Huston, yo puedo considerarme una 'verdadera bilingüe' puesto que he crecido en presencia de dos idiomas. Estoy convencida de que este hecho se encuentra en la raíz de mi amor por los idiomas. Por lo tanto la conclusión lógica fue buscar un tema que me permitiera usar más de un idioma. Dada mi situación actual en la que enseño francés a tiempo parcial en la universidad, me pareció apropiado elegir el inglés y el francés como idiomas de mi investigación. Desde ahí, era natural decantarme por los estudios de traducción y más en particular por la autotraducción, tan poco estudiada en comparación con otros campos, si bien me resulta atractiva pues en ella se necesita trabajar con un mínimo de dos idiomas. Además, si pudiera hacer realidad el deseo de escribir un libro sobre mis experiencias como expatriada en León, me plantearía cuestiones tales como: Si el libro fuese en inglés, ¿lo traduciría yo misma al alemán? ¿Y por qué?

El campo de la autotraducción se tratará más detalladamente en los capítulos 'La historia de la autotraducción' y 'Marco teórico'. En el capítulo siguiente, Nancy Huston tomará el papel protagonista con una biografía y su bibliografía. Siguen entonces los análisis de tres obras de Huston. La primera es *Plainsong* que Huston tradujo del inglés al francés porque no encontraba un editor para la novela inglesa. Fue su retorno al inglés. Desde entonces elige el idioma de su obra en función del idioma que utilizan sus protagonistas. La segunda obra analizada es *Slow Emergencies*, igualmente escrita en inglés, que cuenta la historia de una familia en una pequeña ciudad universitaria en algún lugar de Nueva Inglaterra. El tercer libro, *L'empreinte de l'ange*, traducido al castellano como *La huella del ángel*, fue escrito en francés, al tener lugar en París.

II

La autotraducción en perspectiva

La autotraducción es generalmente considerada como una actividad marginal, un fenómeno raro. Incluso muchos autotraductores desconocen la verdadera situación de la autotraducción. La verdad es que esta actividad se lleva realizando desde hace siglos y es mucho más común de lo que podemos pensar. Para los estudios de traducción es como una hijastra, pues la ignoran prácticamente por completo. Es un campo que necesita ser explorado mucho más para que se entienda. Empezaré por su historia y la situación actual.

2.1. La historia de la autotraducción

La autotraducción existe por lo menos desde la Edad Media. Julio César Santoyo, en su artículo “Autotraducciones: Una perspectiva histórica,” menciona al historiador judío Flavio Josefo del siglo I, y al judío Pedro Alfonso que vivió en España en los siglos XI y XII. En esa época el latín era la lengua franca del mundo educado y la producción literaria se hacía en latín, no en el idioma vernáculo. Jan Walsh Hokenson y Marcella Munson, en su libro *The Bilingual Text*, hablan de un eje vertical, en el cual el latín era muy superior al vernáculo, tanto en prestigio como en vocabulario. Muchos escritores que utilizaban el idioma vernáculo se traducían ellos mismos al latín para alcanzar más lectores y para hacerse 'inmortales'. Tampoco hay que olvidar que las nociones de traducción y de

autoridad no eran las que conocemos en la actualidad. El original servía a menudo de inspiración y no era cuestión ni de fidelidad ni de promocionar al autor original.

Con el Renacimiento, las lenguas autóctonas llegaron a ocupar una posición más importante. Se establecieron tradiciones poéticas en los distintos países y la Biblia se tradujo a varios idiomas. Llegado el siglo XVII, el francés tomó el relevo del latín como lengua franca. Se estableció la tradición, que duró hasta el siglo XIX, de tomar la traducción al francés de una obra como base para la traducción a otro idioma.

La colonización de las Américas y el éxodo de varios pueblos – los hugonotes de Francia, los judíos de España, por ejemplo – propagaron el cambio de un idioma a otro para que las obras fueran conocidas en la patria y en el exilio.

En el siglo XVIII, la autotraducción perdió importancia, aunque nunca cesaría de existir por completo. En el siglo siguiente, se produjo un aumento de la identidad nacional. En Alemania, por ejemplo, pensadores como Humboldt y Schleiermacher fueron fundamentales para establecer el escritor monolingüe como ideal. Sin embargo, en el siglo XX, por una parte a causa de las dos guerras mundiales, y por otra de la descolonización y de los éxodos consecuentes, hubo un realce del escritor bilingüe. Además, las características individuales de las tradiciones literarias en los distintos países se han ido borrando poco a poco. Las normas estrictas del pasado ya no se aplican al pasar de un idioma a otro.

2.1. La situación en el presente

Al final del siglo XX y principios del siglo XXI, los nombres más destacados en la autotraducción son Samuel Beckett (inglés y francés), Vladimir Nabokov (ruso e inglés) y Julian Green (inglés y francés). En su artículo “Blank Spaces in the History of Translation” Santoyo nos informa de que más de 200 escritores en la España actual se traducen ellos mismos del catalán, vasco o gallego al castellano. Dada la situación de tener cuatro idiomas oficiales, no es sorprendente que así sea. Pero Santoyo señala también que hay muchos más autotraductores de idiomas mucho menos asociados a la autotraducción, por ejemplo en Turquía (Talât Sait Halman), Dinamarca (Karen Blixen), Pakistán e India (Miatreyi Devi, Raja Rao, Vijayan) o Kirguistán (Chingiz Aitmatov). El más curioso de los casos, quizás sea el del bengalí Rabindranath Tagore, que se arrepintió de haber traducido sus poemas del bengalí al inglés, pensando que había cometido una injusticia contra su propia obra.

El campo de la autotraducción conlleva muchas preguntas – ¿En qué dirección, en una o en dos, se traduce el autotraductor? ¿Lo hace una vez o repetidas veces para dejar un corpus bilingüe de obras? ¿Qué motivó la autotraducción, fue por obligación o fue voluntaria? Esta disertación intentará contestar a estas preguntas. El estudio de Nancy Huston y de tres de sus novelas nos llevará a preguntas más concretas, que espero contestar con el análisis de sus textos.

III

Marco teórico

Tras esta perspectiva general sobre la autotraducción a través de la historia, es hora de centrarse en el trabajo propiamente dicho, empezando por un breve marco teórico.

Para empezar, quizás resulte útil definir la palabra 'traducir':

Expresar en una lengua lo que está escrito o se ha expresado antes en otra.¹

Lo que es importante es tener en mente que en una traducción no sólo se produce un trasvase de un texto original (TO) en una lengua (L1) a un texto meta (TM) en otra lengua L2, sino también que el texto original fue escrito por el autor (A) y traducido por el traductor (T), lo que se puede resumir visualmente de la manera siguiente:

$$A \rightarrow \text{TO en } L_1 \rightarrow T \rightarrow \text{TM en } L_2$$

Ya en los tiempos de Cicerón y Horacio, en el último siglo antes de Cristo, existía el debate sobre la fidelidad frente a la libertad de una traducción. Los poetas mencionados condenaban la traducción literal, palabra por palabra. También Jerónimo, traductor de la *Vulgata* en los

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¹ <http://buscon.rae.es/draeI/>

siglos IV y V, se servía de una traducción 'sentido-por-sentido', como lo llamó él.

En Francia en el siglo XVII se llegó a ver la traducción como una *belle infidèle*, porque muchos consideraban imposible transmitir exactamente una obra en otro idioma, y por lo tanto era preferible adaptar la obra a las convenciones y a los gustos de la cultura meta. La superioridad de la lengua francesa como lengua franca también llevó a los intelectuales y traductores en Francia a creer en la superioridad inherente de la lengua francesa. El romanticismo en Alemania, que hizo surgir la identidad nacional mencionada anteriormente, fue en parte también una lucha contra esa superioridad francesa. La idea de respetar la peculiaridad y mentalidad de otro país en la traducción tomó cuerpo y forma. Schleiermacher formuló las expresiones 'estrategia de extranjerización' y 'estrategia de domesticación.' En su opinión se trataban de estrategias mutuamente exclusivas, y el traductor debía de decidir entre una de las dos.

El debate sigue abierto hoy en día. En 1985 Theo Hermans expresó: “Desde el punto de vista de la literatura meta, toda traducción implica un grado de manipulación del texto original para un propósito específico”² (traducción mía). Hace un año, Gideon Toury dijo: “La traducción siempre es un acto político.”³ Ciertamente, como ha escrito Julio César Santoyo en su conferencia “Traducción: ¿Manipulación o transformación necesaria?”, que la transformación es necesaria: “La manipulación busca dirigir el texto traducido hacia metas y objetivos distintos de los del original; la

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2 Hermans, Theo (ed.). 1985. *The Manipulation of Literature: Studies in Literary Translation*. London & Sydney: Croom Helm.

3 Toury, Gideon. 2010. “Some Recent (and More Recent) Myths in Translation Studies: An Essay on the Present and Future of the Discipline” (p. 166) in Muñoz-Calvo, Micaela & Buesa-Gomez, Carmen (eds.), *Translation and Cultural Identity: Selected Essays on Translation and Cross-Cultural Communication*, Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, págs. 156-171.

transformación, no: la transformación, sobre todo cuando es necesaria, busca una mayor cercanía del nuevo texto al lector meta, mayor que la que la lectura del propio original podría ofrecerle; busca que el lector meta sienta el texto tan suyo como si leyera el original.” (p.11).

Bien distinto, sin embargo, es el caso de la autotraducción, porque las nociones sobre la traducción mencionadas hasta ahora no se aplican de la misma manera.

Para empezar, analicemos el esquema previo aplicado a la autotraducción:

$$A \rightarrow \text{TO en } L_1 \rightarrow A \rightarrow \text{TM en } L_2$$

El cambio del traductor al autor es muy significativo. En última instancia el autor como traductor tiene toda la libertad del mundo para hacer lo que le plazca con su traducción, y nadie – ni el autor del original puesto que es el mismo, ni el público, ni otros traductores – podrá privarle de ese derecho. El autotraductor es libre de traducir como le parezca.

Dada esa libertad total del autotraductor, el fenómeno de la autotraducción no es un fenómeno único, sino que cada autotraductor es un caso aparte. El ejemplo del gallego Suso de Toro, que traduce sus propias novelas del gallego al castellano, ilustrará este punto. En su novela *Ambulancia*, el inspector, protagonista de la novela, muere, mientras que en su traducción castellana el mismo inspector es resucitado – le pareció una pena al autor haberle matado.

Aunque la historia de una novela quede inalterada, los aspectos culturales pueden variar, como lo demuestra la catalana Carme Riera. Su obra *La novel·la experimental* hace referencia al mundo literario de Cataluña, pero en la traducción al castellano las referencias son al mundo literario español: Espriu en la segunda versión es Cervantes, el 'Premi Prudeni' se convierte en el premio Planeta, etc.

En el momento en que existen dos versiones de una sola novela por el mismo autor, surge otra pregunta: ¿Cuál de las dos se utilizará como original para una traducción a un tercer idioma? En el caso de Tagore, por ejemplo, fueron sus versiones al inglés las que le hicieron ganar el premio Nobel de literatura y las que le llevaron a la fama mundial a través de traducciones a otros muchos idiomas.

El punto clave en todos estos ejemplos es que cada autotraductor se comporta de modo diferente y debe ser tratado como tal. Quizás se puedan establecer unos procedimientos para un autor en particular, o al contrario, es posible que el autor cambie de procedimiento con una novela nueva. Bajo este punto de vista, he elegido a Nancy Huston, autotraductora, para saber cómo actúa en lo que al proceso autotraductor se refiere. Aparte de contestar a las preguntas generales establecidas al principio, espero demostrar que Huston utiliza la autotraducción como herramienta, a la que llegó 'accidentalmente.' Se tratará el punto del lapso de tiempo entre la escritura de una novela y su traducción. También es de gran importancia verificar las declaraciones de Huston a propósito de la fidelidad al original: “Je tiens à ce que les deux versions soient identiques dans la mesure du possible”⁴. En el caso de esta novelista, se trata de 'domesticación' o de

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4 Yi, Mi-Kyung. 2001. “Épreuves de l'étranger : entretien avec Nancy Huston réalisé par Mi-Kyung YI.” *Horizons philosophiques*, vol. 12, n° 1, págs. 1-16.

'extranjerización?' Y posiblemente la pregunta más importante: ¿se puede establecer un patrón?, ¿se puede establecer una casuística?, ¿procede de manera sistemática a la hora de traducir?, ¿aplica una metodología concreta? En la contestación a tales preguntas espero presentar una imagen clara de quién es Nancy Huston, autotraductora.

Inicio este trabajo con una biografía y bibliografía detallada de Nancy Huston. Las obras de Huston constarán de tres partes, una para cada novela. Se detallarán las referencias bibliográficas de las obras originales y de las obras citadas. Después seguirá un breve resumen de la novela en cuestión, y finalmente un análisis de la obra. Cada parte terminará con las conclusiones referentes a esa novela. En las conclusiones finales de mi trabajo espero poder detallar la metodología que Nancy Huston sigue en la autotraducción de sus obras del inglés al francés, o viceversa.

IV

Nancy Huston

Nancy Huston es una autora con multitud de facetas. Ha escrito novelas, ensayos, artículos, pero también libros para niños y adolescentes, guiones y obras de teatro. Además, es músico y ha actuado en una de sus películas, ha dado conferencias y clases, y es la co-fundadora de una revista. Todos estos aspectos serán tratados a continuación con más detalle en la biografía y bibliografía. Es importante destacar, sin embargo, que Huston es una escritora cuyo trayecto personal no sólo tiene una influencia profunda en su carrera de escritora, sino que también está presente de manera tangible en sus obras, tanto de ficción como de no ficción.

Nancy Louise Huston nace en Calgary, Alberta, Canadá, el 16 de septiembre de 1953, hija de James Palmer Huston, matemático y físico, y Mary Louise Engels, psicóloga clínica. Sus antepasados proceden de Irlanda, aunque los familiares más cercanos son protestantes: su abuelo paterno es pastor, la hermana de su padre misionera en Nepal. Dios y la religión están sumamente presentes en sus obras, aunque no queda claro si es creyente.

Su madre toca muy bien el piano, es una gran lectora, amante del teatro y del ballet. Está dotada de una inteligencia más bien fría y de un carácter racional, tiene los pies en la tierra. Su padre es muy emotivo, atormentado por las dudas y cuestiones espirituales.

Su primera infancia está marcada por frecuentes traslados de residencia y cuando Huston tiene seis años, la madre abandona la familia para formar una nueva. Este trauma se ve reflejado en *La virevolte*, *Prodige: Polyphonie*, *Nord Perdu* y *Fault Lines – Marcas de nacimiento* en español – pero también en ensayos como “Journal de la création” o “La pas trop proche”. La relación con su madre se limita a la correspondencia escrita. Su padre vuelve a casarse con una alemana que se ocupa de los niños. Durante una estancia de varios meses en Alemania con ella, Huston aprende el alemán.

En 1968, cuando Huston tiene quince años, la familia se traslada a Estados Unidos, a la ciudad de Wilton, en New Hampshire. Se vuelve hippy, estudia literatura en el instituto y empieza una relación con su profesor de creación literaria, diez años mayor que ella. Los dos se prometen en matrimonio, pero la relación no durará. También aprende francés durante esta época con un profesor que les enseña lengua, cultura, y música. El francés remplace en su mente y en su corazón al alemán aprendido de pequeña.

En 1970 se gradúa en el instituto con sólo diecisiete años, porque había saltado un año en primaria debido a su inteligencia por encima de la media. Antes de empezar la universidad, Huston pasa dos años trabajando. Durante el primero trabaja en Cambridge, Massachusetts, para Harvard como secretaria médica en una clínica psiquiátrica, transcribiendo las cintas de dos intelectuales excéntricos. Tiene inclinaciones suicidas, pero con tratamiento gratuito de la clínica, mejora. Se traslada a Nueva York y trabaja como secretaria temporal en el Empire State Building. Por las tardes toca el piano en la Julliard School of Music. Durante este tiempo tiene una

relación – o un matrimonio – con un judío del Bronx. Finalmente se inscribe en el Sarah Lawrence College, a cuarenta kilómetros de la ciudad de Nueva York, para obtener una licenciatura en creación literaria. La universidad le ofrece la posibilidad de pasar un año en París, y así llega a la capital francesa en 1973, una ciudad que ya no abandonará.

Aunque persuadida a su llegada de que quería ser novelista, su entorno parisino le lleva a ser una verdadera intelectual de izquierdas. Se lanza a los estudios del estructuralismo, del psicoanálisis y de la lingüística. Se suceden los acontecimientos: el amor con un francés, la obtención de la licenciatura en el Sarah Lawrence College, estudios con Roland Barthes y Jacques Lacan, una tesis sobre palabras malsonantes bajo la dirección de Barthes, y la participación en el movimiento feminista *Mouvement de Libération des Femmes*. Influida por el MLF, empieza a escribir resúmenes de libros, reportajes y textos sobre sus propias reflexiones. Co-funda la revista *Sorcières* para mujeres. Finalmente, después de la muerte de Barthes, logra escribir su primera novela, *Les Variations Goldberg*, publicada en 1981. Con ella obtiene el mismo año el premio Contrepoint.

Durante estos mismos años enseña también en varias instituciones, como la Cámara de Comercio de París, en el campus del Sarah Lawrence College en París, y más tarde será conferenciante en lugares tan prestigiosos como las universidades de Yale, Princeton, Montreal, etc.

En 1981 se casa con Tzvetan Todorov, un filósofo, historiador y teórico franco-búlgaro. Un año más tarde nace su hija Léa Tina. En los primeros años de su matrimonio escribe artículos y algún libro, pero nunca de ficción.

Huston publica una segunda novela, *L'histoire d'Omayya*, que cuenta la historia de una mujer joven violada, que se trastorna, basada en un hecho real. Dos años más tarde se publicará la autotraducción, aunque muchas fuentes proclaman erróneamente que esta novela no ha sido traducida.

Igualmente en 1986 Huston cae enferma. No puede caminar, y la enfermedad neurológica le hace tomar consciencia de su exilio. Se siente paralizada, tanto físicamente respecto a sus piernas, como mentalmente respecto a sus raíces, su lengua y su infancia. Huston empieza a pensar que una novelista sin infancia no puede producir nada de valor. Empieza entonces una novela en francés, aunque supuestamente la protagonista va traduciendo del inglés las cartas de una amiga. La novela, *Trois fois septembre*, publicada en 1989, es un fracaso, y su traducción al inglés, aunque existente, nunca se publica.

En 1988 nace su hijo Alexandre Lorne, llamado Sacha. Al año siguiente empieza su primera novela en inglés, *Plainson*, que además trata de su estado natal, Alberta. Su editorial habitual no quiere publicarla, y decide traducirla al francés. En total pasan tres años hasta que encuentra nuevas editoriales para ambos textos, pero Huston se da cuenta de que la novela mejora a través del proceso de traducción. La novela francesa gana el premio Canadian Governor's Award en la categoría de ficción en francés, lo que suscita una controversia en Quebec, porque Huston ni es de Quebec ni es francófona, y la novela inglesa original ni siquiera fue una de las finalistas del mismo premio en ficción en lengua inglesa. Huston considera que *Cantique des plaines* no es simplemente una traducción, sino una segunda versión original del mismo libro.

Desde ese momento Huston utiliza la traducción como herramienta para mejorar el original. La elección del idioma la hace según la lengua que hablan sus protagonistas. Tarda un año en escribir el original y otro año en escribir la traducción, que procura hacer tan similar como es posible. La lista de novelas, traducciones, artículos, libros para niños etc. se prolonga.

Entre sus obras destaca la novela *Instruments des ténèbres*, traducida al español como *Instrumentos de las tinieblas*. Esta novela cuenta dos historias, en capítulos alternos, en idiomas alternos. La primera, relata la historia de una escritora norteamericana en inglés – la segunda la historia verdadera de una pareja de mellizos en el Berry del siglo diecisiete, en francés. Después de terminar la novela de esa manera, Huston procedió a traducir cada capítulo al otro idioma. En el homenaje a Samuel Beckett con el título *Limbo/Limbes*, del año 2000, también escribe en dos idiomas, pero la versión final del libro lleva el inglés por un lado, y el francés por otro.

Para dar una idea de la multitud y variedad de proyectos que Huston realiza, mencionaré aquí, de manera esquemática, algunas obras. En 1996 participa en un libro de gastronomía con el título *Comfort me with Apples*. El año siguiente escribe un drama para la radio en francés, *In Deo*. Escribe dos guiones de película al final de los 90, y en una de ellas obtiene un papel secundario. En 1999 traduce por primera vez la obra de otro autor. Escribe también un musical en cooperación con Valérie Grail, basado en su novela *The Mark of the Angel*, traducida al español con el título *La huella del angel*. Como la música ha acompañado a Huston toda su vida, participa en una serie de conciertos, en los que autores recitan y tocan algún instrumento en directo. También graba un CD titulado *Les Variations Goldberg*, en el que dos músicos tocan las Variaciones de Goldberg de

Johann Sebastian Bach mientras Huston lee nueve de los treinta y dos capítulos de la novela.

Aparte de numerosos premios por sus escritos, recibe honores tales como *Officer of the Order of Canada*, *Officier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres* en Francia, y títulos honoríficos de la universidad McGill en Montreal y de la universidad de Lieja en Bélgica.

En su conjunto, Nancy Huston es una persona polifacética: dos culturas, dos lenguas, dos instrumentos; la filosofía, la semiología, el feminismo; best-sellers y premios; lecturas muy extensas – por citar unas pocas, Simone de Beauvoir y Virginia Woolf, Rainer Maria Rilke, Marina Tsvetaïeva, T.S. Eliot; dos hogares, en Paris y en Le Berry, zona rural en el centro de Francia.

En palabras de la propia autora: “I don't really live in France; I live in an imaginary country, and I don't have to put up with it very much.”⁵

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5 Homel, David. Spring 1996. “Once Abroad, Always Abroad – David Homel speaks with Nancy Huston.” http://booksincanada.com/arti-cle_view.asp?id=394 (12 Noviembre 2007).

Plainsong / Cantiques des plaines

El primer par de libros que analizaré es *Plainsong/Cantiques des plaines (PS/CP)*, hasta ahora sin traducir al español. En la parte inglesa de este trabajo se encuentran los detalles bibliográficos de los originales y de las obras citadas, un resumen del argumento de la novela y el análisis propiamente dicho.

5.1. Referencias bibliográficas

Obras originales

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Obras citadas

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—. 2002. *Plainsong*. South Royalton, Vermont: Steerforth Press L.C.

5.2. Resumen

La narradora, Paula, al morir su abuelo Paddon, hereda su manuscrito, notas para una tesis doctoral sobre el tiempo. De pequeña había prometido terminarla por él. Pero en lugar de eso, Paula cuenta la historia de Paddon, con unos pocos hechos reales y mucha fantasía. El padre, John Sterling, y su hermano Jack vinieron de Irlanda en busca de oro, pero el clima de Canadá era demasiado duro. Después de luchar contra los Boers en el sur de África, John monta un rancho de ganado en el sur de Alberta. Quiere que su hijo sea un verdadero *cowboy*, pero Paddon tiene alergia a los caballos y se interesa más por los libros y el piano de su madre. En cuanto puede, escapa a Edmonton para estudiar. Llega incluso a empezar el doctorado, pero de vuelta a casa por la muerte de su padre, conoce a Karen, una sueca de dieciséis años que trae la leche. Embarazada después de poco tiempo, se casan, eufóricos por la libertad de ser adultos. Paddon empieza a enseñar historia en un instituto. Cuando ya tienen tres hijos, Frankie, Ruthie y Johnny, no aguanta la futilidad de su vida y quiere terminar su tesis. Cae en una depresión cuando conoce a una artista india, llamada Miranda, que le devuelve el amor a la vida. Hasta la muerte de ella tienen una relación larga, durante la cual ella le cuenta cómo los blancos han abusado de los pieles rojas. El hijo mayor de Paddon le odia por traicionar a su madre, su hija lo acepta. Paddon muere, amante de Alberta, de sus llanuras y de su canto llano, casi a los cien años.

5.3. Análisis

Una lectura superficial parece indicar que las dos novelas son exactamente iguales. Una lectura conjunta, sin embargo, revela una serie de diferencias que he agrupado en categorías. Hasta cierto punto esas diferencias son parte inevitable del proceso de traducción – para transmitir hechos culturales, por ejemplo, hay que recurrir a distintas estrategias – pero Huston, como autotraductora, utiliza otras estrategias también cuando pasa del texto original al texto meta. Como esta sección de mi trabajo es únicamente de un resumen, escogeré uno o dos ejemplos de cada categoría que me han parecido representativos o llamativos en su uso.

1. Conversión

Igual que el turista encuentra difícil de entender distancias, medidas o monedas, el lector puede verse limitado a la hora de estimar la importancia de uno de esos valores. Huston ha optado por convertirlos. Se ven las millas convertidas en kilómetros, los kilos en libras, y los pisos siempre son un número inferior en inglés, porque en Norte América el bajo recibe como denominación 'primer piso'.

2. Paráfrasis

Huston recurre a la paráfrasis cuando falta un término concreto en la lengua meta. En el caso de la palabra inglesa *frontier*, automáticamente asociada con el límite de los territorios del oeste de Canadá colonizados al final del siglo XIX, Huston ha preferido usar la expresión 'nuevo mundo' en

francés, para evitar una confusión con la frontera, una división política, ya existente.

También cuando Huston inventa palabras, a veces recurre a la paráfrasis: *hellchill* (lit., un frío infernal) se convierte en *neige à l'infini* (lit., nieve al infinito).

Una característica de la lengua inglesa es su facilidad para formar palabras compuestas. Así la expresión *board-and-brick book-case* se convierte en una paráfrasis al pasar al francés: *bibliothèque de planches et de briques*.

3. Aproximación

La aproximación es un término que he elegido para referirme a traducciones que se aproximan al texto de salida, pero que no son traducciones exactas. Mona Baker, en su libro *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation*, expone diferentes estrategias que los traductores profesionales utilizan. La primera que menciona es el uso de una palabra más general (o subordinada) en el texto meta. Huston también aplica esta estrategia, que será tratada en el apartado 'Menos precisión'. Sin embargo, Huston también procede de la manera inversa, es decir, utiliza un término o una expresión más específica. Empezaré analizando el segundo grupo.

A. Más precisión

But why did your father hate him? Don't you see? (p. 56)	Mais pourquoi ton père lui en voulait-il? demandas-tu . Tu ne vois pas? dit Miranda . (p. 65)

En este extracto se suceden dos preguntas, pero no son hechas por la misma persona. En el texto inglés el lector quizás no se dé cuenta. Para facilitar la lectura, Huston añadió la explicación de quién habla. A veces Huston convierte un pronombre personal en sustantivo – “lo pisotearon” en inglés ahora es “pisotearon a mi padre” en francés.

Paddon pide un año sabático para terminar su libro, pero cae en una depresión. Paddon devuelve los libros prestados a la biblioteca – nada fuera de lo común. En la traducción francesa, sin embargo, devuelve los libros prestados a la biblioteca sin haberlos abierto – lo que muestra claramente su estado de ánimo.

La lista de ejemplos es larga: la bebida 'ginger ale' es traducida por una marca famosa de ginger ale llamada Canada Dry; New York City se traduce por Manhattan porque en el extranjero son a menudo sinónimos y la palabra *city* podría llevar a confusión, etc.

B. Menos precisión

Cuando Huston pasa a ser menos precisa en francés, el efecto puede provocar confusión en el lector. En las dos novelas utiliza la misma frase extraña:

the younger older woman Ruthie (p. 5)	la plus jeune vieille femme (p. 9)

Sin la presencia del nombre, Ruthie, la frase difícil en inglés queda casi incomprensible en francés.

En otros momentos una traducción menos precisa no implica confusión – *fourth grade*, el cuarto curso pasa a ser *le cours élémentaire*, pero la idea de que Miranda es prácticamente analfabeta es la misma. En el relato de Miranda a propósito de la historia de su padre y su pueblo pasa de siete días hasta que regresó su padre a seis o siete días. Ese cambio sutil da un toque de tradición oral a la historia de Miranda.

4. Irregularidades/incoherencias

En algunos casos Huston ha procedido de manera un tanto irregular. Es evidente que una palabra puede tener varias traducciones en otro idioma – Huston traduce la palabra *world* como *pays*, *univers* y *monde*, y las tres son válidas porque el contexto es distinto. Sin embargo, en otros casos las traducciones elegidas por Huston no tienen una explicación tan clara. Es el caso de la palabra *dozen*, por ejemplo. Encontramos como traducción *trente-six*, *une nuée*, *dix* y *douze*. Por el contexto – que por falta de espacio aquí no consta (véase p. 95 en la parte inglesa) – es evidente que *dozen* no se refiere a doce en concreto, por lo tanto la traducción no tiene que ser la misma. En el caso de la temperatura Huston ha procedido de manera similar. En inglés, las temperaturas, expresadas en Fahrenheit, son –30, –15, –20 y cero. La sorpresa surge al comparar el texto francés, ya que en

todos los casos la temperatura es -20° (centígrados), con la excepción de una vez en que la traducción es *les températures grotesquement basses*. Posiblemente el canadiense es capaz de distinguir entre las distintas temperaturas (¿Hasta qué temperatura puede aventurarse uno fuera? ¿Cuándo hay que preocuparse por el ganado?, etc.), mientras el francés, viviendo en un clima menos riguroso, sólo entiende que hace mucho frío.

Otra curiosa transformación es el caso del libro *Pilgrim's Progress* de John Bunyan. Se trata de una alegoría cristiana del año 1678, considerada una de las obras más significativas de la literatura religiosa inglesa. El título francés del libro es *Le voyage du pèlerin*, pero Huston lo traduce como *Le voyage du chrétien*. El libro probablemente no lo conoce el lector medio francés, por lo que el cambio de título quizá se deba al deseo de transmitir a ese lector el tema general de la obra.

5. Sin cambio

Se encuentra una serie de expresiones que no han sido traducidas, como es el caso de los títulos/tratamientos de personas: Mr. Sterling en la novela francesa es Mr Sterling. Algunos nombres indios no son traducidos, como Crowfoot o Tom Three-Persons – aunque otros, como Bluefeather, sí que están puestos en francés, en este caso Plume-Bleu.

Importante es el caso de la palabra *cold-cream*, una crema que producía una sensación de frío en la piel al aplicarla. La palabra existe en francés dentro del ámbito de la cosmética, pero no es conocida por la mayoría de la población francesa. Huston ha elegido usarla en francés para poder guardar el juego de palabras: Paula, la narradora, de pequeña creía

que su abuela Karen se había vuelto una persona fría por aplicarse cada noche la *cold-cream*.

6. Omisión

Huston hace uso de la omisión como estrategia para evitar largas explicaciones, por ejemplo. El 'Bennett buggy', básicamente un coche sin motor ni ventanas, tirado por un caballo, tan conocido en Canadá durante la Gran Depresión, ha sido omitido, evitando largas explicaciones.

Cuando la hermana misionera de Paddon cuenta la 'Masacre del perezil', el texto queda confuso para el lector inglés que no conoce el incidente entre la República Dominicana y Haití. Huston ha optado por omitir qué papel jugaba la palabra *perezil* en esa masacre.

La única omisión llamativa ocurre al final del libro, donde Huston ha omitido tres párrafos enteros. En ellos, Paula narra lo que ocurrió el único verano que ella no pasó en Alberta con sus abuelos. Paddon escribió una nota a Ruthie, la madre de Paula, quizás para amargarle el verano.

7. Corrección

Huston aprovecha la traducción también para hacer correcciones. En los extractos siguientes hay un error en la novela inglesa.

Too brash, scrawled your professor on the back of the last page,	Trop prétentieux, gribouilla le pro- fesseur au dos de la dernière page

gleefully awarding you a C . One cannot radically transform the terms of the author's discussion and then expect to receive a passing mark for one's comprehension of the author. (p. 24)	en t'infligeant une note exécration . On ne peut pas radicalement transformer les termes mêmes dans lesquels se développent les arguments de l'auteur et s'attendre ensuite à recevoir une bonne note pour la compréhension de l'auteur en question. (p. 31)

El profesor de Paddon en Edmonton le da la nota C (A, B, C y D son aprobados, F es suspenso), pero enseguida le escribe una nota diciendo que al transformar de manera radical los términos del autor no se puede esperar una nota de aprobado – lo que es incongruente. Este fallo ha sido revisado en la traducción, usando las expresiones *une note exécration* y *une bonne note*.

En otro caso en inglés se dice que Paddon, Mildred (su madre) y Elizabeth (su hermana) cantaban para bendecir la mesa. En francés, Paddon ha sido omitido – como a Paddon siempre le sentaban mal las obligaciones y conversaciones religiosas en el entorno familiar, parece más lógico que hubiera decidido no cantar con su madre y su hermana.

8. Juegos de palabras

Los juegos de palabras tienen su dificultad en la traducción y por lo tanto Huston utiliza varias estrategias. A veces traduce un juego de palabras sin guardar el artificio lingüístico, lo que puede resultar más o menos acertado dentro del contexto de la lengua meta. Otras veces la autora logra crear otro un juego de palabras en francés de manera satisfactoria.

an amber -skinned stranger stinging ember eyes into her (p. 8)	un inconnu à la peau ambrée qui la brûlerait de ses yeux ardents (págs. 8-9)

Aquí la frase ha sido traducida con el mismo sentido pero sin guardar el juego de palabras entre *amber* (ámbar) y *ember* (brasa).

he'd spent six months in South Africa shooting at Boers , which for the longest time you thought meant wild pigs (p. 17)	il avait passé six mois en Afrique du Sud à tirer contre les Boers , et pendant de longues années tu croyais qu'il s'agissait de sangliers (p. 23)

El juego de palabras ocurre en inglés porque el nombre Boers suena a jabalí – *wild boar*. El juego de palabras no sólo se ha perdido en francés, sino que el extracto en sí no tiene mucho sentido para el lector francés, pues falta la homonimia.

some say Cough Child some say Calf Child (p. 56)	Certains disent Enfant-qui-tousse , d'autres Enfant-Secousse (p. 65)

En este extracto, en que Miranda le cuenta la historia de uno de sus ancestros, Huston ha guardado el juego de palabras francés, que dependía más de la similitud entre sonidos que del significado de las palabras.

9. Repetición

Huston usa la repetición como recurso dramático. En las traducciones a menudo guarda la misma repetición.

a falling away a draining and receding and lightening and melting and sliding (p. 1)	se met à tomber lentement à s'écouler à s'éloigner à s'alléger à fonder et à couler (p. 5)

En otras ocasiones muestra repetición mediante otros medios, como el uso del prefijo re-.

it can hold – hold – hold (p. 9)	de tenir ou de retenir (p. 14)

10. Recursos poéticos

En *Plainsong/Cantiques des plaines* Huston utiliza los recursos poéticos de aliteración y de asonancia. Estos dos recursos se encuentran en ambas novelas, pero no de manera paralela, sino que las intercambia indistintamente. Se pueden establecer los siguientes casos:

Inglés	Francés
1. aliteración	aliteración
2. aliteración	asonancia
3. asonancia	aliteración
4. asonancia	asonancia

5. cualquiera de los dos	<i>no presente</i>
6. <i>no presente</i>	cualquiera de los dos

Para mostrarlo, presentaré un ejemplo de cada uno.

Inglés	Francés
1. pinching pennies (p. 5)	surveiller des sous (p. 9)
2. teeming and thronging with movement (p. 147)	un tel grouillement , un tel brouillonnement des gestes (p. 165)
3. a mask of lumpy bumpy wet white mush (p. 19)	au fond du masque de bouillie blanche (p. 24)
4. there's no two-timing treaty (p. 192)	un de vos traités traîtres (p. 213)
5. This land is my land at long last. (p. 9)	Cette contrée est donc à moi, enfin. (p. 13)
6. There was a grunt. (p. 118)	Il n'y eut pour toute réponse qu'un bruit bas et bref (p. 133)

5.4. Conclusiones

Plaingsong es único dentro del corpus de sus obras, porque fue la primera novela escrita en inglés. Nancy Huston sentía haber alcanzado un límite con el francés al negar, hasta ese momento, su pasado, y por consecuencia quiso volver a sus raíces. Por otro lado, como no encontraba editorial para publicar el texto inglés lo tradujo al francés y se dio cuenta de que al traducirlo mejoraba la obra. Es a partir de este momento cuando escribe en un idioma y después lo traduce al otro.

En varias entrevistas Huston ha dicho que es muy importante que el texto sea el mismo en las dos lenguas. En la entrevista con Mi-Kyung Yi en 2001 menciona que pone las novelas a prueba con tres preguntas básicas: ¿las versiones cuentan la misma historia?, ¿hablan de los mismos personajes?, ¿evocan las mismas emociones?

Plainsong y *Cantiques des plaines* cuentan la misma historia. A pesar de una omisión importante de tres párrafos, no se puede decir que la historia haya cambiado.

Tampoco en personajes hay cambios. Sin embargo, hay que tener en cuenta que Paula, la narradora, se va a Montreal y trabaja como periodista. Como explica Gilles Mossières (2007) en su artículo “Lecture(s) : exclusion et altérité dans *Cantique des plaines* de Nancy Huston.”, aunque Paula vive en Montreal utiliza el francés de Francia, porque Huston tradujo la novela pensando en un público francés. En consecuencia, el personaje de Paula es algo menos creíble en la versión francesa.

De manera superficial las emociones también son las mismas en las dos versiones. Pero hay que hacer hincapié en el hecho de que *Plainsong* está repleto de canciones populares y religiosas que hacen avanzar la historia. Huston ha traducido todas las canciones ella misma y a menudo ha sabido guardar incluso cierta calidad poética, pero las melodías y sus asociaciones se han perdido.

Otro aspecto muy cultural que se ha perdido es la Calgary Stampede. Esta fiesta local, tan típica de Calgary, es evocada casi de manera tangible con el vocabulario específico y las descripciones detalladas. En francés, sin embargo, el vocabulario usado proviene de distintos ámbitos – el circo, las corridas y el matadero. La lectura se hace un tanto extraña para el lector francés.

Los juegos de palabras han sido traducidos a veces como juegos de palabras, otras veces no. Únicamente en el caso de los Boers se ha perdido el juego de palabras de tal manera que la traducción resulta un tanto misteriosa para el lector meta.

Las repeticiones, aliteraciones y asonancias están presentes en las dos novelas. Pero Huston no se esclaviza a su uso, sino que las usa como lo dicta el idioma, para obtener el ritmo y la poesía que ella busca.

Se puede ver como tendencia general un texto más preciso, más explícito en la traducción.

Lo que sorprendió a la misma Huston es el hecho de que las novelas que ella considera 'francesas' gustan a los canadienses, y las que son de tipo western gustan más en Francia.

VI

Slow Emergencies / La virevolte

El segundo par de libros a analizar es *Slow Emergencies* (SE) y *La virevolte* (VV). Aunque la versión francesa fue publicada antes que la inglesa, Huston ha dicho repetidamente que escribió la novela primero en inglés.

6.1. Referencias bibliográficas

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6.2. Resumen

Lin es bailarina. Cuando tenía tres años, su madre de veintiún años murió de un derrame cerebral, a causa de los golpes recibidos de sus padres. Aunque Lin creció con su padre y su madrastra, nunca se sintió querida por su parte. En el instituto conoció a Rachel – ambas vivían al límite, alimentándose de cigarillos, buscando la perfección en el baile y en la filosofía hasta quedar exhaustas. Vivían el lema: “Tener éxito en todo, creer en nada”. Lin traicionó todo eso cuando se casó con un compañero de trabajo de Rachel, el profesor Derek Lhomond.

Tienen dos hijas. Ángela es el bebé perfecto, las emociones son increíbles para los dos. Lin vuelve a bailar. Con Marina, su segunda hija, todo cambia. La niña se aferra a Lin constantemente y se vuelve manipuladora. Lin sólo se puede evadir de este mundo bailando. Cuando las niñas tienen siete y cuatro años respectivamente, Lin deja a su familia para dirigir un grupo de baile en México.

Derek sufre enormemente. Pasados unos meses, Rachel y él se acercan, y al cabo de un año Rachel se muda a su casa, para luego casarse con él. Para Marina ésta llega a ocupar el lugar de su verdadera madre, aunque Lin invita a las niñas a visitarla en los lugares donde baila. Ángela quiere ser bailarina como su madre, pero al final se decide por la comedia. Marina, por otro lado, sigue los pasos de sus “dos madres”, comiendo lo mínimo, estudiando hasta quedar exhausta. Cuando muere el primer marido de Rachel, el poeta irlandés Sean Ferrel, del cual Lin también se había enamorado en un momento dado, se encuentran Lin, Rachel, Derek y sus dos hijas ya adultas, Ángela y Marina, ya que el lazo de amistad entre Lin y Rachel siempre fue el más fuerte de todos.

6.3. Análisis

1. Conversión

Tal como se ha hecho en *Plainsong/Cantiques des plaines*, las medidas están convertidas al sistema europeo. También las denominaciones se convierten, como *Mrs. Lhomond*, transformada en *madame Lhomond*.

Los cuentos de hadas están igualmente reconvertidos. Cuando Lin lee para Ángela, Huston usa una serie de fragmentos de cuentos y poemas infantiles seguidos unos de otros, para expresar una larga duración de lectura o la frecuencia con la que madre e hija leen juntas. En francés, se ha repetido un fragmento de un cuento famoso como el de “Los tres cerditos”, y los extractos y trabalenguas en esta versión son los más populares en Francia.

2. Paráfrasis

Huston hace uso de paráfrasis en el caso del nombre de una bebida, hablando de 'algo para beber' en vez de elegir el nombre de una bebida típica en Francia, quizás para evitar la incongruencia de tener gente en Nueva Inglaterra bebiendo una bebida francesa.

Cuando se describe la relación estrecha entre Ángela y Marina, la aritmética se convierte en 'las cuatro operaciones fundamentales', un concepto que abarca mucho más que la aritmética y que muestra de manera más profunda el lazo entre las dos hermanas, con Ángela de profesora y

Marina de aprendiz.

3. Aproximación

A. Más precisión

El siguiente extracto es muy pertinente para constatar que la precisión aumenta con la traducción.

Lin points . (p. 7)	D'un geste de la tête , Lin montre une famille . (p. 12)

Derek y Lin se encuentran en el parque con Ángela rodeados de otras familias con sus hijos. En inglés Lin señala con el dedo. Unas líneas más abajo el lector sabe lo que está señalando. En francés, sin embargo, Lin señala con la cabeza y no con el dedo, y en la misma frase se indica que está fijando su atención en una familia.

El siguiente extracto es aún más llamativo.

She is ... almost a little girl you could walk past in a slum without a glance (p. 19)	presque une adolescente maigrichonne qu'on croiserait à Harlem sans lui accorder un regard (p. 24)

Una de las chicas que baila con Lin en Nueva Inglaterra podría pasar desapercibida en un barrio bajo – la palabra inglesa *slum* tiene connotaciones negativas muy fuertes – mientras que en la versión francesa ya no es un barrio bajo sino Harlem, el barrio más infame de Nueva York.

Una transición tan drástica podría considerarse políticamente incorrecta, pero Huston como autotraductora puede hacerlo.

B. Menos precisión

En algunos casos la versión traducida es menos precisa:

But Sean lays his fingers on her lips (p. 32)	Mais l'homme lui pose un doigt sur les lèvres, (p. 37)

Cuando Lin y Sean se conocen en una fiesta sienten una cierta atracción y una corriente eléctrica fluye entre ellos. En inglés es Sean quien le posa los dedos en los labios, pero en francés Huston usa la expresión 'el hombre' para aumentar el contraste en la acción tan íntima entre dos personas de sexo opuesto que se han conocido hace muy poco tiempo.

Cuando antes de abandonar el hogar familiar Lin observa a las dos niñas todavía pequeñas practicando ballet, en francés Huston habla de 'acrobacias', posiblemente porque Marina es aún demasiado pequeña para imitar el ballet.

4. Irregularidades/incoherencias

En *Slow Emergencies/La virevolte* es muy difícil que el lector establezca de manera exacta el paso del tiempo. Huston se salta temporadas largas sin dar muchas indicaciones de ello. Ni tampoco es muy cuidadosa a la hora de pasar esas referencias temporales al francés. Al principio del

libro el lector sabe que la madre de Lin murió cuando Lin tenía tres años (en inglés) y cuando era muy pequeña (en francés). Más adelante, Huston repite que Lin tenía tres años, en inglés, mientras en francés la edad es de 'dos años'.

En *Plainsong/Cantiques des plaines* la autora usó el término *cold-cream* en francés, aunque poco conocido, porque era necesario para el juego de palabras relacionado con la personalidad fría de la abuela de Paula. En *Slow Emergencies/La virevolte* no hay ningún juego de palabras, y la misma crema ha sido traducida como *la crème* a secas.

Last summer ... riding his bicycle ... quiet street ... drunken driver ... sixty miles an hour ... rammed ... skull split ... (p. 127)	... faisait la bicyclette ... rue si calme ... trois heures de l'après- midi ... voiture déboulé ... soixante à l'heure ... ivre mort ... percuté ... crâne fendu ... (p. 126)

Este último ejemplo demuestra claramente como Huston utiliza el lenguaje sin esclavizarse a él. En esta historia de un chico muerto a causa de un conductor borracho, sólo hay un elemento que cambia significativamente – el 'verano' pasa a ser 'las tres de la tarde' – pero el párrafo francés sigue un orden muy distinto al del inglés, porque así lo decidió Huston. La historia sigue siendo la misma, sin embargo Huston sacrifica una traducción literal para obtener un texto más melódico.

5. Sin cambio

Cuando se conocen Lin y Sean, el poeta, levantan sus copas en un brindis selencioso – aquí Huston añade una línea de un poema, “*Drink to*

me only”, del poema *To Celia* de Ben Jonson. Como no encontré una traducción al francés, ésa puede ser la razón por la cual el verso está presente en inglés en el texto francés. Por otra parte, el poema ha sido utilizado para una canción interpretada por gente tan famosa como Johnny Cash o Aretha Franklin, y la canción sí que puede ser conocida por los lectores franceses.

6. Omisión

En *Slow Emergencies/La virevolte* las omisiones son muy pocas. Hay un párrafo corto omitido que trata de un juego de palabras un tanto grosero que un invitado a la fiesta hace a una invitada. Como la traducción hubiera sido difícil y los personajes son tan insignificantes que ni siquiera reciben nombres, el párrafo ha sido omitido. En otra ocasión Huston ha suprimido un detalle incongruente – que Rachel sea muy tímida no concuerda con su carácter –, la palabra *gravy* también ha sido omitida una vez – es un concepto muy anglo-sajón que sería difícil de traducir –, mientras que es traducida como 'salsa' en otra ocasión.

7. Corrección

Algunas correcciones son más subjetivas. Hablando de Marina, el bebé difícil, la historia narra que Lin tenía que mecerla incluso al amanecer – en inglés a las 5 de la mañana, en francés a las 7. Las 7 es una hora más lógica puesto que la historia tiene lugar en Nueva Inglaterra en el mes de febrero, donde en invierno amanece más tarde que a las 5.

En otras ocasiones se trata de la corrección de un error sin sentido.

He decides to drive downstate with them and spend part of the Christmas vacation with Sidney and Violet, though he knows his parents' house will be more restful than his own. (p. 126)	Il décide de les amener dans le New Jersey pendant les derniers jours des vacances, même s'il se doute que la maison de ses parents ne sera guère plus reposante que la sienne. (p. 125)

En las primeras navidades después de que Lin haya dejado la familia, Derek decide ir a casa de sus padres con las niñas, a pesar de que su casa 'sera más apacible', lo que ha sido corregido en francés como 'aunque duda que su casa (la de los padres) sera más apacible'. El contrasentido ha sido eliminado.

Aunque en el momento de dejar la familia, el texto dice claramente que las niñas tenían siete y cuatro años, algo más adelante Lin se encuentra con una niña de la edad de Marina, pero enseguida se acuerda de que ya han pasado diez años. En la novela inglesa, la niña tiene tres y Marina trece, pero en la francesa las edades son cuatro y catorce, lo que concuerda con la información anterior.

8. Juegos de palabras

En *Slow Emergencies/La virevolte* hay varios juegos de palabras que han sido a su vez traducidos con otros juegos de palabras. Ángela, todavía pequeña, pronuncia mal las 'contracciones' – *concracktions* en inglés y *concractions* en francés. La similitud de las palabras en los dos idiomas ha permitido guardar el juego de palabras.

En otro momento, ya de adulta, Ángela dice:

Condoms are the first step on the path to condominiums , baby. (p. 165)	Les capotes sont le premier pas sur le chemin des décapotables . (p. 160)

En los dos idiomas, la primera palabra en negrita se refiere a un preservativo – la conversación en ese momento va en torno a las relaciones de Ángela con hombres – y la segunda se parece a la primera, pero tiene que ver con dinero – un piso en inglés, con coche descapotable en francés.

Algún juego de palabras no resulta tan acertado, pero por otro lado consigue crear otro juego de palabras donde en inglés no lo hay.

rows of grinning teeth, teeth, death mother death mother death death death (p. 186)	autant de dents – des dents maman – ça mord ! sa mort ! (p. 181)

En inglés Huston usa la repetición, en francés recurre a la homofonía.

9. Repetición

En el apartado anterior hay un ejemplo de repetición. Igual que en las novelas *Plainsong/Cantiques des plaines* Huston utiliza la repetición únicamente en un idioma u otro, o incluso en los dos a la vez. Otras veces utiliza expresiones que implican la repetición u otros recursos.

10. Recursos poéticos

En *Slow Emergencies/La virevolte* se encuentran los mismos casos de aliteración y asonancia que en *Plainsong/Cantiques des plaines*.

11. El modo narrativo

De las tres novelas de mi corpus principal ésta destaca por su modo narrativo. Hay tres elementos importantes que ver. Por un lado, en inglés se han omitido todas las comillas, lo que dificulta el paso entre la narración y el discurso directo. Por otro lado, también se distinguen mal la narración de la realidad de la novela y la narración de un mundo de sueños, que se entremezclan a veces. En consecuencia la novela tiene un aire de 'corriente de consciencia', más pronunciado en inglés que en francés por la presencia en este último de comillas. A esto se añade que en ambas novelas hay párrafos enteros en los que se ha omitido por completo la puntuación y las frases se convierten en fragmentos. Huston ha descrito el proceso de escribir *Slow Emergencies* como tallar una piedra a golpes, quitando de un lado y de otro, sin poder recuperar nada. Físicamente ciertas páginas de la novela reflejan la ruptura creada por una madre que abandona a sus hijos, y la discontinuidad que eso conlleva se muestra mediante una falta de puntuación y los fragmentos de frases.

6.4. Conclusiones

Huston admite haberse hecho escritora porque en su vida había algo incomprensible. En *Slow Emergencies/La virevolte* intenta ponerse en el lugar de una madre que abandona a sus hijos, para enfrentarse al trauma de su propia infancia al haber sido abandonada por su madre, aunque la historia de la novela no tiene mucho que ver con la suya.

Si de nuevo se vuelven a poner las dos novelas a prueba, se contesta otra vez que la historia es la misma, los personajes lo son también, y las emociones igualmente.

De la misma manera que en *Plainsong/Cantiques de plaines*, Huston utiliza la traducción para añadir detalles o corregir errores. Hay relativamente pocas omisiones, que no cambian la historia de ninguna manera. La omisión más importante estaba relacionada con un juego de palabras, pero procedía de personas sin nombre, por lo que la omisión carece de consecuencias.

En general los juegos de palabras están muy bien traducidos, guardando también en francés el mismo efecto. Huston ha vuelto a utilizar los mismos recursos poéticos para lograr un cierto ritmo y sonoridad con los idiomas. Igual que en *Plainsong/Cantique des plaines*, el uso que la autora hace de los recursos poéticos, en función de sus objetivos, y no una obligación paralela en las dos novelas.

Lo que más destaca en *Slow Emergencies/La virevolte* es el sentimiento de 'corriente de consciencia' y la forma física que ha dado a sus

textos, representativos de la ruptura y discontinuidad relacionadas con el abandono de una madre. En una entrevista Huston dijo: 'Ojalá mi madre nos hubiera dejado de manera tan gloriosa.'

VII

L'empreinte de l'ange / The Mark of the Angel

L'empreinte de l'ange/The Mark of the Angel (EA/MA) es quizás la más internacional de las novelas de Huston. Fue escrita primero en francés.

7.1. Referencias bibliográficas

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Obras citadas

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7.2. Resumen

El libro narra la historia de Saffie, una joven alemana recién llegada a París en 1957. Ha vivido muchas experiencias duras y está encerrada en sí misma. Busca trabajo como criada en casa de Rafael, un flautista prometedor. La emplea enseguida, hechizado por su silencio. Al poco tiempo se casan y tienen un hijo llamado Emil. Saffie sigue igual de pasiva, hasta que conoce al judío húngaro András que repara las flautas de Rafael. Empiezan a ser como 'una pequeña familia'. Para Emil, András es mucho más padre que Rafael, éste se alegra de ver a su mujer feliz sin sospechar nada. Rafael se hace un nombre en el mundo de la música en Francia y en el extranjero. András también ha sufrido durante la segunda guerra mundial y ahora quiere ayudar a los argelinos que luchan por su libertad. Cuando Rafael se entera fortuitamente de la relación entre András y Saffie, se lleva a Emil, de seis años, de viaje para sacarle información. Como el niño no quiere hablar, abre la puerta del tren en movimiento pero en un descuido pierde el control del niño. Emil muere al instante. Saffie, cuando conoce la noticia, desaparece.

7.3. Análisis

1. Conversión

Igual que en las otras novelas, Huston ha convertido muchas medidas, como las distancias, los pesos y los números de piso. También la hora pasa del sistema francés con 24 horas al anglo-sajón con 12.

Generalmente los nombres no cambian salvo el de un personaje secundario, cuyo apellido – Longuecuisse/Longlegs, con un significado aproximado de 'muslos largos/patas largas' – tiene que ver con el hecho de que invitaba a las jóvenes trabajadoras de su empresa a pasar el fin de semana con él en Burdeos.

En otra ocasión el nombre de András es comparado a su versión francesa, André, para distinguir las dos pronunciaciones. En esta ocasión André ha sido traducido al inglés como Andrew.

2. Paráfrasis

En esta novela Huston ha utilizado la paráfrasis en muchos contextos. El *14 Juillet* se convierte en el día de la Bastilla, porque el evento es mucho más memorable que la fecha. *La loi Marthe Richard* de la época de posguerra es parafraseada como *the 1946 no-tolerance law*. Se trataba del cierre de las casas de citas, también llamadas *maisons de tolérance* en francés, propulsado por Marthe Richard, que también había sido prostituta. La paráfrasis inglesa usada por Huston, sin embargo, conlleva poco significado para el lector inglés.

Como la novela narra los aspectos políticos de la época se encuentran muchas siglas en francés, como FFI y FLN, que pasan a escribirse enteras en inglés, Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur y National Liberation Front respectivamente, a veces en francés, otras en inglés como lo muestran los ejemplos.

Saffie y Andrés son dos extranjeros en Francia que no dominan del todo el idioma. Entre otras cosas les resulta difícil saber los géneros de las palabras, y cuando Andrés se confunde Saffie le corrige insistiendo en los artículos femeninos y masculinos. Eso causa un problema en inglés ya que las cosas son neutras y solo hay un artículo. Huston opta por la paráfrasis, tanto 'la flauta es femenina' como 'por qué una flauta debería ser como una mujer y una mesa como un hombre, no lo entiendo'.

3. Aproximación

A. Más precisión

Igual que en las otras dos novelas, en *L'empreinte de l'ange/The Mark of the Angel* se encuentran muchos ejemplos en los que la traducción lleva a más detalle. La 'misa de medianoche' se convierte en la 'misa de medianoche en Notre Dame'. 'Pronto' se traduce por 'a mediados de febrero'. Cuando Andrés pregunta a Saffie '*Tu as vu chez toi?*', un tanto ambiguo, en inglés pregunta '*Did you see what's going on in your city?*'.

B. Menos precisión

Algunos de los números en francés no son muy exactos – *cinq à dix milles Français sont massacrés*. En inglés, el número es aún más inexacto: *several thousand French people*.

4. Irregularidades/incoherencias

Como en otras ocasiones, Huston traduce una idea de varias maneras si le conviene hacerlo. En una ocasión la novela contiene un término referente a la noche en la que en Alemania se rompieron los cristales de las tiendas y casas judías. En la versión francesa Huston utiliza la expresión francesa, *la Nuit de cristal*, pero en la versión inglesa prefiere la expresión alemana, *Reichskristallnacht*, aunque Huston la utiliza de manera errónea como *Krystallnacht*.

Otro ejemplo llamativo es el número de argelinos que mueren durante la guerra de independencia. En la versión francesa son 'casi un millón', la cifra oficial proclamada por el gobierno argelino, mientras que en la versión inglesa son 'más de tres cientos mil', la cifra oficial en Francia. No hay indicios para saber la razón de este cambio – quizás ha querido corregir un error, a lo mejor ha intentado provocar al lector francés.

5. Sin cambio

Muchos nombres no cambian, como he mencionado previamente. Los periódicos también conservan sus nombres. Aunque las piezas musicales tienen un nombre traducido o no, según las convenciones internacionales, las canciones infantiles que Emil no aprende porque su madre no canta – *Alle meine Entchen* – y su padre Rafael está demasiado ocupado con su carrera para cantar – *Le Bon Roi Dagobert* – no son ni traducidos ni sustituidos por sus equivalentes, porque se perdería la doble carga cultural que Emil lleva.

Poco a poco el lector conoce la triste historia de Saffie. Un incidente es el del avión americano que chocó cerca de la casa de Saffie cuando era una niña pequeña. El soldado sobrevive y le pide agua – “*Water! Please, little girl, get me some water!*” – a la niña. En la traducción Huston ha optado por dejar la petición en inglés, añadiendo 'alien' – “*the same alien word*” – para aclarar la situación para el lector inglés. Pero el párrafo queda un tanto confuso con el inglés como idioma extranjero dentro de una novela en inglés.

6. Omisión

Se encuentran varias pequeñas omisiones que tienen que ver, sobre todo, con temas lingüísticos. Una primera omisión es cuestión de la pronunciación de Saffie en francés. Por razones obvias ha sido más fácil omitirlo, ya que una simple traducción no significaría nada para el lector e intentar encontrar una equivalencia en inglés sería difícil – ¿habría que buscar un acento alemán en inglés?

En otra ocasión el *tu* ha sido omitido donde no era necesario – Andrés, por no saber hablar muy bien, cambia entre el *tu* y el *vous* sin darse cuenta, lo que emociona a Saffie; en inglés está emocionada 'inexplicablemente' – pero cuando Rafael le ofrece a su criada tratarse de *tu*, la palabra francesa sigue presente puesta en cursiva.

7. Corrección

Hay un error de cálculo en la versión francesa que se corrige en la

traducción: es la una y media, y Saffie tiene que estar en casa a las seis y media de la tarde – una diferencia de cuatro horas en la francesa, pero cinco en la inglesa.

8. Juegos de palabras

En *L'empreinte de l'ange/The Mark of the Angel* hay dos juegos de palabras, por así decirlo. En el primero Saffie se equivoca de palabra y piensa en *tableau* (cuadro) en vez de *tablier* (delantal). Las dos palabras empiezan con las mismas cuatro letras, de ahí el problema para el extranjero. En inglés Huston ha utilizado las palabras *napkin* (servilleta) en vez de *apron* (delantal). Las palabras tienen menos similitud, pero por otro lado provienen del mismo entorno, el de la cocina.

En una segunda ocasión Huston juega con la similitud de las palabras *mairie* (ayuntamiento) y *marié* (casado), el primero 'un anagrama' del segundo. En inglés ha optado por utilizar la palabra *mairie* en francés con su traducción al inglés entre paréntesis, para que el lector pueda ver la similitud.

9. El lenguaje de Saffie

En *L'empreinte de l'ange/The Mark of the Angel* no se encuentran los mismos recursos poéticos que en las otras dos novelas. Sin embargo hay un elemento que me gustaría destacar: el lenguaje de Saffie. Antes de llegar a París y trabajar para Rafael había estudiado francés en el instituto. Por lo tanto, su francés es algo rudimentario al principio. Con el paso del tiempo –

la novela abarca unos siete años – aprende más, al tener que relacionarse con su entorno francés, pero el cambio no es el mismo en los dos idiomas.

El alemán, un idioma que como bien se sabe es muy difícil, tiene un aspecto que resulta más sencillo que en otros idiomas: el uso de los tiempos. El presente indicativo, por ejemplo, se usa para el presente, el presente continuo (progresivo) y el futuro. Saffie, poco habladora, tiene poco diálogo en la novela, pero lo que destaca es que siempre utiliza el presente. En la versión francesa empieza a utilizar otros tiempos verbales – *passé composé* por ejemplo –, pero en inglés se queda siempre en el presente.

7.4. Conclusiones

Aunque no lo parezca, Huston ha indicado que la novela tiene elementos autobiográficos. Por un lado, Emil pierde su vida a la edad a la que Huston 'perdió' a su madre. Por otro lado, Emil se encuentra en un *ménage à trois* en el que la figura del padre está ocupada por Andrés. Pero nadie le ha preguntado su opinión. También Huston, en su infancia, tuvo que soportar la pérdida de su madre, un segundo matrimonio, y mudanzas sin poder manifestar su opinión. Pero no vio esa similitud con Emil hasta después de haber escrito la novela.

También el aspecto internacional tuvo que ver con elementos biográficos. Tuvo una crisis después del éxito de su novela anterior, *Instrumentos de las tinieblas*, porque no quería ser una escritora francesa y no podía ser una escritora canadiense, ya que no había escrito una sola palabra estando allí. El aspecto internacional de la novela es una reacción

contra sus sentimientos y la crisis.

Esta novela es posterior a las otras dos de mi corpus principal. Se ha establecido ya un modo de trabajo para ella. Necesita un año para escribir una novela, otro para traducirla, a la vez mejorándola. Normalmente termina las dos versiones antes de que cualquiera de ellas – o ambas a la vez – sean publicadas.

Poniendo las dos versiones a prueba, se puede hablar de la misma historia. Las omisiones son tan mínimas que no alteran la historia de ninguna manera. También los personajes son los mismos. Únicamente Saffie cambia ligeramente por el lenguaje mencionado anteriormente. En general se espera que una persona en un país extranjero mejore el idioma con el tiempo. Ése no es el caso en la versión inglesa, lo que le da un aire más distante e introvertido a Saffie y transmite mejor que es una persona completamente ajena a su entorno.

También las emociones son esencialmente las mismas. Saffie sufre los acontecimientos de su infancia. András, en vez de padecer el sufrimiento del pasado, se apasiona por la lucha delante de él. Rafael es feliz con una mujer alegre, un hijo y el éxito musical hasta que su mundo perfecto se viene abajo al comprender la traición. Otros pueblos y sus luchas ocupan la novela – los judíos, argelinos, franceses – y la discrepancia en el número de argelinos muertos durante la guerra sólo es notable si se leen las dos novelas. Independiente del número de víctimas, una guerra hace sufrir a todo el mundo y murieron muchos más argelinos que franceses. Por lo tanto las emociones serán muy similares.

L'empreinte de l'ange/The Mark of the Angel está repleta de intervenciones directas del autor/narrador, 'una voz que está presente para 'acompañar' al lector durante su bajada a los infiernos.'” (Traducción mía, Huston 2004b: 29).

VIII

Conclusiones

Nancy Huston es una persona/escritora tan compleja que una sola disertación difícilmente le hará justicia. Pero en mi trabajo he podido compilar una cantidad de información importante sobre Nancy Huston como persona y como autotraductora que podrá servir de base para futuros artículos, investigaciones, etc.

Al principio de este trabajo se establecieron unas cuestiones generales referentes a la autotraducción. Ha llegado el momento de contestar a ellas con respecto a Nancy Huston. La primera pregunta trataba la direccionalidad de los idiomas. En el caso de Huston, la traducción se hace en los dos sentidos. Como he establecido previamente, la elección de la lengua es 'dictada' por el lugar en que se desarrolla la historia. *Plainsong* y *Slow Emergencies*, que tienen lugar en Canadá y en los Estados Unidos respectivamente, fueron escritas en inglés y traducidas al francés. Con *L'empreinte de l'ange* fue al revés.

Sin embargo, hay que recordar que *Instrumentos de las tinieblas* fue escrita alternando párrafos en inglés y en francés. Se desarrollan dos historias alternas. Por un lado está Nadia, una escritora que vive en los Estados Unidos contemporáneos. Está escribiendo *Scordatura notebook*, que en realidad es un especie de diario. Al final resulta que intenta aceptar el aborto que tuvo de joven. Los capítulos que tratan de la historia de Nadia fueron escritos en inglés. Los capítulos alternos cuentan la historia de unos

mellizos en la Francia del siglo XVIII. Nadia investiga sus vidas y lo llama *Resurrection Sonata*. Su historia se cuenta en francés. Después de terminar el libro Huston tradujo cada capítulo al otro idioma. Huston afirma que el lector observador puede darse cuenta de cuales son los capítulos traducidos. Fue un caso único, un reto que se lanzó ella misma, para demostrarse que la dualidad y el bilingüismo son aceptables.

La segunda pregunta trata de la frecuencia del fenómeno autotraducción. Nancy Huston ha traducido todas sus novelas, aunque *Thrice September* no ha sido publicada. Además ha traducido un gran número de artículos propios. Por ejemplo, los veinte artículos en *Longings and Belongings* se encuentran en casi en su totalidad en *Âmes et corps y Désirs et réalités* en francés, mayoritariamente el idioma original. En otras palabras, en el conjunto de las obras de Huston hay una parte relativamente grande que es bilingüe, pero no por completo. Como se ve claramente en la bibliografía de Huston en el capítulo 3, el apartado de ficción existe prácticamente por completo en los dos idiomas.

La tercera pregunta aborda el tema de la motivación: qué incitó el cambio de idioma y si fue por obligación o por voluntad propia. La propia trayectoria de Huston demuestra que eligió el francés cuando decidió quedarse en Francia después de su año de estudiante en el extranjero. Se muestra muy abierta sobre el hecho de que en un principio le resultara más fácil escribir en francés, porque ese idioma estaba desprovisto de emociones y le permitía revelar cosas que hubieran sido imposibles revelar en inglés, porque el francés no tenía nada que ver con su vida íntima e interior. Empezó a escribir artículos, y publicó su primer novela en 1981 – *Les Variations Goldberg* en francés – y así encontró su voz literaria poco a

poco. Pero en 1986, después de haber escrito nueve libros en francés Huston enfermó gravemente de mielitis y fue obligada a permanecer en cama, dejándole tiempo para reflexionar. La enfermedad le paralizó las piernas, y sus pensamientos giraban en torno a sus raíces. En ese momento entendió que “un novelista sin infancia no puede escribir nada válido” (traducción mía, Huston 2005a: 342). Alrededor de la misma época también escribió un reportaje largo para la radio francesa sobre la diáspora haitiana. Tenía casi envidia de la nostalgia que ellos sentían por su patria. El resultado de todos estos eventos fue *Plainsong*, un libro que la llevó de vuelta a sus raíces en Alberta. Como no encontraba una editorial para el libro, lo tradujo al francés – dándose cuenta de que el libro mejoraba en el proceso. Más tarde escribiría medio en broma: “Una confesión: cuando estaba produciendo *este* libro [*Longings and Belongings*] se me olvidó que “Singing the Plains” había sido escrito originalmente en inglés, así que lo traje de la traducción francesa “Les Prairies à Paris”. Cuando comparé las dos versiones, resultó que el texto traducido dos veces era superior al original. Esto me asusta bastante. Quizás si tradujera mis libros de un idioma al otro cincuenta o sesenta veces se harían *verdaderamente* buenos.”

Aun así, desde *Plainsong/Cantiques des Plaines*, Huston admite en la entrevista con Mi-Kyung Yi que siempre hace una versión original y enseguida la traducción que le ayuda a revisar. El libro es traducido antes de que pase al editor. Como dice el autor desconocido de la página francesa de Wikipedia, Huston utiliza “esa técnica de doble escritura”. En ese sentido Huston usa la traducción como herramienta – para verificar el original a través del prisma de la traducción.

Después de haber verificado repetidamente que las proclamaciones de Huston respecto a su fidelidad son ciertas – en principio el lector en un idioma puede esperar compartir la misma historia, los mismos personajes y las mismas emociones de la novela en el otro idioma – es necesario analizar hasta qué punto Huston es fiel al original y hasta dónde lleva la libertad del autotraductor.

En las tres novelas de mi corpus principal ciertos elementos han sido transformados. Con más regularidad han sido convertidas distancias, temperaturas, pesos y los números de pisos. Eso encaja con una estrategia de domesticación, porque permite al lector apreciar esos elementos sin tener que calcular su equivalencia o saltárselos por ser demasiado extraños.

La paráfrasis es una estrategia usada por traductores, generalmente por necesidad, cuando un término exacto no existe en la lengua meta, o, por propia voluntad, cuando se quiere explicar un término existente más detenidamente. Huston lo utiliza, por ejemplo, cuando ha inventado una expresión en un idioma: *hellchill/neige à l'infini* (PS p. 13/CP p. 19). Aspectos culturales como *le 14 juillet* y *la loi Marthe Richard* se convierten en *Bastille Day* (el día de la Bastilla) y *the 1946 no-tolerance law* (la ley de no-tolerancia de 1946). Sin embargo, no se puede hablar de una estrategia sistemática. Por ejemplo, en *L'empreinte de l'ange*, la *salade niçoise* se convierte en 'ensalada de huevo y atún', pero el *gratin dauphinois* no cambia salvo que el adjetivo se escribe con mayúscula en inglés (EA págs. 35 y 207/MA págs. 28 y 207 respectivamente). Ejemplos similares se encuentran en *Plainsong*, donde el 'Chinook' se describe con paráfrasis en francés pero el animal *gopher* (la taltuza) se traduce por otro animal, más común en Francia. En otras palabras, Huston utiliza la

paráfrasis según su propio criterio. Y aunque a veces esta paráfrasis forma parte de una estrategia de domesticación, otras veces elige otras estrategias o la extranjerización del texto en parte.

La aproximación (apelación mía), revela mucho en cuanto a las traducciones de Huston. He subdividido los ejemplos en 'más' y 'menos precisión', lo que demuestra claramente que Huston usa la traducción para añadir detalle. A veces los detalles son irrelevantes – en *Slow Emergencies* Lin camina por le Boulevard Saint Germain (p. 123) pero en la traducción camina bajo los olmos en un resplandeciente y magnífico día de otoño (p. 121) – pero en otros casos los detalles clarifican el pasaje. En *Plainsong* hay muchos ejemplos donde un pronombre es remplazado por un nombre, y de esa manera queda más claro de qué o de quién se trata. En *Slow Emergencies* muchos lugares reciben un nombre concreto – 'downstate' (el sur del estado) se convierte en 'New Jersey', un 'barrio bajo' en 'Harlem'. Únicamente en *L'empreinte de l'ange* la tendencia es menos apreciable, donde muchos números son imprecisos u omitidos por completo en la traducción, como es el caso de las víctimas durante la segunda guerra mundial y la guerra de Argelia.

A pesar de la fidelidad en traducir la historia, personajes y emociones, hay momentos en los que cierta inconsistencia aparece sigilosamente en las traducciones. A veces la razón es que una palabra puede tener varias traducciones en el otro idioma. Pero en otras ocasiones Huston traduce una sola expresión idiomática de varias maneras. Tal es el caso de *nook and cranny* (el último rincón) en *Plainsong*, traducido primero como *niches et fissures* y *coins et recoins* más adelante. En *Slow Emergencies* el doctor que parece ser una sola persona en inglés, se convierte en *l'obstétricienne* y

médecin en francés. En *L'empreinte de l'ange, les toilettes à la turque* se traducen por *Turkish-style toilets* y después *squat-down toilets*. Lo que más destaca en cuanto a incongruencias es el uso que Huston hace de los números. Por ejemplo, en *PS* 'una docena' se traduce como doce en una sola ocasión de cuatro. Llega a ser divertidísimo cuando se agrupan las temperaturas del invierno en Alberta en una tabla, y todas son traducidas como 'menos veinte', y para variar como 'grotescamente bajas' en una ocasión. En *SE* las edades y indicadores temporales se han traducido sin ocuparse mucho de la precisión, y hay un error en la novela francesa en cuanto a la edad que tenía Lin cuando su madre murió. En *EL*, como quedó mencionado previamente, los números relacionados con los diferentes pueblos son traducidos en alguna ocasión, en otras no, y en el caso de las víctimas argelinas el número cambió de 1 millón (cifra oficial del gobierno argelino) a 300.000 (cifra oficial francesa). Es decir, en estos momentos Huston se aprovecha de la libertad del autotraductor al máximo sin preocuparse por la precisión.

Varios elementos en las novelas no han sido cambiados. Entre ellos, los títulos (tratamiento) de la gente, aunque la forma abreviada en un idioma puede verse en su forma integral en el otro – *Mlle* se convierte en *Mademoiselle* en la versión inglesa, etc. Otros incluyen todo tipo de palabras extranjeras, como *ranch wife* y *cold-cream* en *Plainsong*, *Drink to me only* y *Main Street* en *Slow Emergencies*, *tutti quanti* y *Wehrmacht* en *L'empreinte de l'ange*. No hay ningún patrón que se pueda identificar en estos casos, y a veces Huston espera un gran conocimiento previo por parte del lector, sin el cual hay un elemento de extranjerización.

Fiel a su opinión de que la novela debe contar la misma historia en las

dos versiones, hay relativamente pocas omisiones, de las cuales ninguna cambia la historia. La omisión más larga se encuentra en *Cantique des plaines* cuando Paddon le escribe una nota desagradable a Ruthie y así le amarga las vacaciones. No queda claro el porqué de esta omisión. Las otras omisiones en las tres novelas, a menudo están relacionadas con juegos de palabras y referencias culturales. En *CP*, el 'Bennett buggy' se omitió. En *VV* un juego de palabras en torno a la bebida con vodka llamada *screwdriver* no se incluyó. En *MA* algunos aspectos lingüísticos, como *tu* y *vous* se omitieron donde fue posible. Lo cierto es que un traductor independiente no habría osado hacer lo mismo, pero estas omisiones por parte de Huston no constituyen un cambio para las historias o los personajes.

Puesto que Huston utiliza la traducción como herramienta para mejorar el original también aprovecha el proceso para corregir errores en la primera versión. En *PS* existían problemas con las fechas del viaje de John y Jack en búsqueda de oro, por ejemplo. Además, la nota 'C' para un trabajo de universidad de Paddon, que es un aprobado pero que no concordaba con el contexto, fue cambiado por 'una nota abominable' y 'una buena nota' respectivamente, dándole así sentido a la frase. De modo parecido, la frase en *SE* que concierne las vacaciones de Derek en casa de sus padres y que no tenía mucho sentido en el original, fue corregida, igual que otros errores menores. En *MA* se corrigió el cálculo de horas.

Los juegos de palabras, como bien se sabe, son difíciles de traducir. A veces Huston omite algún juego de palabras por completo – como es el caso del *screwdriver* mencionado arriba – y otras veces los ignora, con lo que quiero decir que aunque el juego de palabras se traduce la traducción

que resulta no es un juego de palabras. Generalmente eso funciona, por ejemplo cuando *an **amber**-skinned stranger stinging **ember** eyes into her* se convierte en *un inconnu à la peau ambrée qui la brûlerait de ses yeux ardents* (PS p. 8/CP págs. 8-9). Como he mencionado previamente, a veces esa falta de atención al juego de palabras hace que la traducción sea torpe. Es el caso de *Boers/wild pigs* traducido como *Boers/sangliers* en PS/CP, y en SE cuando la asociación de palabras entre *can-can* y *can-opener* se pierde. Sin embargo en MA Huston recurrió al uso del término original y a su traducción entre paréntesis para que el juego de palabras sea reconocible por el lector. Surge la pregunta de por qué Huston no usó esta técnica en los dos casos problemáticos anteriores.

Por otro lado hay varios juegos de palabras que Huston tradujo con éxito y con elegancia. En PS/CP se pueden mencionar *Cough Child/Calf Child* comparado con *Enfant-qui-tousse/Enfant-secousse*, en SE/VV *condoms/condominiums* y *captes/décapotables*, y finalmente en EA/MA *tablier/tableau* y *apron/napkin*.

Como Huston ha comentado, a veces exagera con los recursos poéticos mientras que otras veces los evita al máximo. En EA/MA no hay ningún recurso poético en particular. En las otras dos novelas los usa de manera similar en el original y en la traducción. Es decir, si los hay, se encuentran en ambas versiones. No obstante, su uso lo dicta la situación y la fluidez del texto más que la obligación de echar mano de manera rigurosa de los mismos recursos poéticos en los mismos lugares.

También los otros recursos se repiten. Por ejemplo la condición de 'corriente de consciencia', aunque menos evidente, sigue presente en VV, y

los fragmentos de frases están presentes en los dos textos. La forma es prácticamente la misma. La diferencia mayor se encuentra seguramente en el lenguaje de Saffie, que parece ir mejorando en el original pero que permanece el mismo en la traducción.

Para resumir cuanto queda dicho: Nancy Huston es fiel a su palabra, contando la misma historia en la traducción – una regla que ella misma se impuso, – pero a la vez se toma la libertad del autotraductor para mejorar, corregir y añadir detalles en la traducción. Es muy consciente de ello y lo ve como una herramienta. No ha hablado de una intención consciente de aumentar el número de sus lectores – de hecho, la popularidad de la que goza en Francia no tiene parangón en ningún otro país, ni siquiera en Canadá – y desde luego no escribe para un lector bilingüe. Su estrategia es la de la domesticación, la de llevar el texto hacia el lector meta, pero también hay elementos que constituyen una extranjerización, así que se tiene que hablar de un término medio. La domesticación supera a la extranjerización, pero los elementos extranjeros no son eliminados por completo.

Me gustaría terminar con una cita de Nancy Huston en la entrevista con Mi-Kyung Yi (2001:11):

MK.Y. : “Quelle figure métaphorique pourriez-vous prendre pour caractériser vos aller-retour entre les deux langues dans votre travail d'écriture et de traduction?”

N.H. : “Je ne sais pas. Je trouve surtout que c'est un travail long et fatigant. Sur le plan psychanalytique, je dirais que c'était comme si je faisais Palier-retour entre mon père et ma mère, avec le sentiment qu'au fond, si

seulement ils voulaient bien s'écouter, ils verraient qu'ils disent la même chose. Autant je trouve ce travail fastidieux, autant quand j'en suis à la deuxième version, je constate que c'est le même livre, j'éprouve une immense satisfaction. Quand j'entends la musique de la langue d'arrivée, quand ça commence à produire l'effet recherché, c'est gratifiant, alors que le chemin qui y conduit est sans aucun intérêt.”

IX

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