The Role of Translation Style in Fostering Cultural Connections through World Literature

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https://doi.org/10.7275/s7jr-hk76 https://scholarworks.umass.edu/masters_theses_2/952

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The Role of Translation Style in Fostering Cultural Connections through World Literature

A Thesis Presented

By

BRIDGET M. BAUDINET

Submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTERS OF ARTS

September 2020

French and Francophone Studies
The Role of Translation Style in Fostering Cultural Connections through World Literature

A Thesis Presented

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ABSTRACT

THE ROLE OF TRANSLATION STYLE IN FOSTERING CULTURAL CONNECTIONS THROUGH WORLD LITERATURE

SEPTEMBER 2020

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While many high school English instructors in the United States teach world literature in translation, few of them explicitly present the literature as translated. High school English students would benefit from learning more about the linguistic origins of the world literature they read. This awareness would increase student understanding of the source culture and benefit their language skills. Various translation theorists have suggested methods to teach translational awareness, but few have offered advice on the type of translation to select. In my research, I examined the question of whether students would derive more cultural knowledge, and specifically language-related knowledge, by reading domesticated or foreignized translations. To explore this question, I created two different English translations of the same French literary texts and presented them to several classes of U.S. American high school students. One translation (Version A) was intended to be a domesticated version and the other (Version B) was deliberately foreignized. Classes read two versions of either Anna Gavalda’s short story “Happy Meal” or a selection from Joseph Zobel’s novel La Rue Cases-Nègres. Following the reading, they completed a series of multiple-choice and free-response questions. Responses to the readings indicated that students found the foreignized translations more “sophisticated” but did not consistently demonstrate a greater cultural understanding as a result. The results failed to prove one translation method more effective than the other, but they did suggest limitations to Lawrence Venuti’s foreignization approach.
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A. Premise

Although the American educational system does not follow a nationalized curriculum, the typical twenty-first century high school experience in the U.S. includes four years of English literature courses. In most cases, one of those years covers world literature. Few teenagers will graduate twelfth grade without having read Homer, Sophocles, or at the very least, snippets from the Beowulf poet. Students in more ambitious programs may read Flaubert, García Márquez, Tolstoy, and other acclaimed international authors. Each one of these works, however, will be taught in translation - a reality that few students will ever consider.

As a former English teacher and novice French translator, I recognize this glaring omission in the typical approach to teaching world literature. In my efforts to devise a more comprehensive and effective approach, I have questioned whether the methodology employed by the translator might affect the students’ perception of the text as a translation and, by association, their engagement with its foreign source culture. To explore this idea, I have conducted a research study to compare student reactions to domesticated and foreignized translations of the same text. At the heart of my inquiry was the question of whether a foreignized text might make the source language more prominent without sacrificing student appreciation and understanding of the source culture.
B. Rationale

In my experience both as a student and teacher of English, world literature in translation was never presented as being translated. Admittedly, I did not focus on the linguistic aspect myself during my decade of teaching, but neither did any of the mentor teachers, textbook prompts, supporting materials, or supplementary lesson plans I came across. World literature texts were presented to fulfill three general goals: expose students to international classics, encourage awareness of or activism for certain subaltern cultures, and teach useful literary forms and devices. In teaching a play like Antigone, for example, a typical unit plan encouraged students to explore the role of Ancient Greek values and study the structure of a classic tragedy. A lesson on Madame Bovary might emphasize the ennui of the 19th century along with issues of class and feminist theory. But neither unit would typically address the question of language or translation, and the more closely a text resembled our own culture, the more frequently the lessons abandoned the cultural component of the work altogether and focused heavily on universal themes and literary elements.

After entering into translation studies for my graduate work in French, I was struck by the way the invisibility of the translator is perpetuated through the American educational system and our methods for teaching world literature. Especially in our increasingly globalized society, in which our younger generations are routinely brushing up against different languages - whether through social media, YouTube comments, video streaming, or online gaming - the role of translation deserves to be addressed explicitly in our classrooms and general discourse. Not only would classroom discussions on translation reinforce the cultural uniqueness of a foreign text, but they would also
serve as a reminder that the world is not the monolingual anglophone universe that many U.S. Americans imagine. For many American students, the study of foreign language is a three-year requirement discrete from all other studies with no practical application. Stressing its connection to literature, history, and culture might help broaden some students’ perception of the beauty and utility of other languages. Furthermore, a recognition of the linguistic foreignness of a literary text might lead to a deeper consciousness of other aspects of the unfamiliar culture. In other words, teaching explicitly about the translated aspect of world literature might lead to increased cultural awareness or interest in general.

As a translator, one of the most fundamental questions I had to ask was whether the particular translation students read might facilitate or impede recognition of the text’s translated status and transmission of the text’s cultural elements. Specifically, I considered the opposing translation approaches broadly referred to as domesticating and foreignizing. Would students derive more cultural and intellectual benefit from reading a text that was deliberately foreignized to make its translated status apparent or from one that was domesticated to hide as best as possible its linguistic origins. To explore this question, I devised a literature lesson designed for high school English students who would read my French-to-English translations and provide me with responses to the content and the style of the writing.

From the students’ responses, I hoped to determine whether the method of translation could positively or negatively affect their perception of the text’s language and culture of origin. It was my informal hypothesis that translations that preserved obvious linguistic elements of the original text (foreignized translations) would more
successfully help draw the readers’ attention to the original language, prompt critical thinking about the source culture, and perhaps even encourage foreign language acquisition in students.

**C. Methodology**

For this study, I created two different English translations of the same French literary text and presented them to several classes of American high school students. One translation (Version A) was intended to be a domesticated version, or one that met, as much as possible, the linguistic and cultural expectations of the American target audience. In this version, I emphasized fluid and classic sentence structures, simple flow, and commonplace American idioms. The second translation (Version B) was deliberately foreignized, which meant that I translated the text in such a way that the differences in the source text’s sentence structures, vocabulary, and rhythms were accentuated without hindering the ultimate comprehensibility of the target text. After the different groups of students read either Version A or B, they were asked to respond to a series of questions designed to assess their impressions of the source language and culture based on the text they were assigned. These questions tested their understanding of the text through objective and subjective measures and solicited short-answer reactions to specific linguistic choices employed in the translations (see appendix).

To further explore issues of foreignization and domestication, I ended up translating two different texts, and presented English teachers with a choice: Anna Gavalda’s short story “Happy Meal” and an excerpt from Joseph Zobel’s novel *La Rue Cases-Nègres*. “Happy Meal” is a French short story with a twist at the end. It is a fairly domesticating choice of text as it contains few culturally foreign ideas. The text is meant
to be read on two possible levels, however, and thus presented both a translation and an interpretive challenge as diction and connotation carry significant weight in the text. *La Rue Cases-Nègres* recounts life for a poor black boy living in Martinique in the 1930s. The culturally-specific terminology and details of daily life expose American readers to a global culture and language very different from their own. This text provided a number of opportunities for me as a translator to choose between domesticating and foreignizing options, with regards to structural patterns, vocabulary, and unfamiliar cultural concepts (such as social roles, living conditions, foods, etc.). Both texts furnished a strong basis for creating two separate and distinct translations to present to test groups of students. Once teachers selected one of the stories, their students would be split into two groups to read either the A or B version but answer the same follow-up questions.

After determining the texts I wanted to translate, I used the free translation software Wordfast Anywhere to facilitate my translation. I began with the domesticated version of each text. After I uploaded the original French text in PDF form, the software took me through each narrative in manageable chunks, memorizing words and word couplings to create a personalized glossary. Upon completing each Translation A, I reimported the original French text into the program and began again with Translation B. This time, as I approached each new chunk, the glossary software would remind me of the translation I wrote the first time, enabling me to deliberately reuse or alter this rendition. As I went through the A and B versions, I kept in mind certain principles associated with domesticating and foreignizing methodologies, but I also worked to create a noticeable difference between the A and B versions when the original text seemed to allow for multiple accurate translations. Using a CAT tool for this literary
translation, though unusual, helped ensure that differences between the texts resulted from intentional efforts at domestication or foreignization rather than the spontaneous decision of a fresh translation attempt.

Creating the four translations was a laborious task, which required recourse to a number of online dictionaries and translator forums, subject-specific research, and consultations with several language and translation experts, including my thesis advisors, Eva Valenta and Cristiano Mazzei. Each translation went through a number of iterations over the course of a three-month period. With each revision, I addressed a different aspect, translating first for fluidity, then for increased cultural foreignness or similitude (depending on the version), then for faithfulness to the author, and finally for coherence with the goals of the response documents the students would be completing. Ultimately, I felt that I could have continued tweaking the translations endlessly, but I accepted my final versions because the steady march of time required that I move on to the study phase.

Once the translations were established, I contacted a number of high school English teachers by email to offer them the opportunity to participate in the study with their students. Given the local community’s familiarity with my institution, the University of Massachusetts, I began by writing to teachers in a radius expanding outwards from my university town. I had no previous connection with any of the teachers, but received a number of positive responses from schools within a 75-mile radius. These teachers were either teaching units on syntax and style or interested in explicitly addressing the aspect of translation in literature. They were to prepare their students for the reading lesson by explicitly teaching or reviewing writers’ use of syntax.
and diction and by briefly explaining the idea behind domesticating and foreignizing translation. They were not, however, to discuss either the text or its context until after the students had completed the reading and submitted their responses. By early March, I had between 180 and 200 students lined up to participate in the study and had sent out all the materials to be completed by the students in class and mailed back to me in hard copy.

Unfortunately, the school closures that resulted from the Covid-19 pandemic in mid-March of 2020 resulted in a complete upheaval in my subject base. All but two of the original teachers were unable to continue with the study. As a result, I had to reformat the materials for online completion using Google Forms, and I began reaching out through friends, relatives, and social media to find any teachers whose students had the time and resources to complete the study. Some teachers offered the project to their students as extra credit and others managed to get whole classes to complete it. In the end, I was able to obtain results from 83 students this way (45 for “Happy Meal” and 38 for La Rue Cases-Nègres). These students ranged from 10th to 12th grade, but the majority were 11th and 12th graders in either Honors or AP English classes. Of these students, 62 consented to have their responses quoted in this report. Since my communication with the new batch of teachers was limited, I cannot be sure what kind of background the students received preparatory to the exercise, and there were undoubtedly a number of inconsistencies in the students’ approach to the activity. Nevertheless, I have used the responses I received to draw certain general conclusions about the translation methodologies. These conclusions are addressed later in this paper.
CHAPTER II
TEACHING TRANSLATED WORKS IN THE WORLD LITERATURE CLASSROOM

A. The Importance of Teaching World Literature

At the heart of my study is a belief that reading the literature of another culture and learning another language are both worthwhile accomplishments. Such educational achievements are beneficial both for individuals and for society as a whole. Our education system explicitly recognizes this when state and national standards require high school students to take courses in world literature and foreign languages. To fully appreciate the context for my study, it is important to take a look at the role that direct classroom instruction in world literature plays in the development of our citizens and how this aligns with the translation methodologies I explored.

From Shakespeare to *The Odyssey* to *Don Quixote*, foreign texts have long been a part of the educated American’s literary foundation. In more recent years, a push for multicultural content has brought South American, African, Middle Eastern, and Asian texts to the forefront of literature classes. Many of the benefits of these texts are obvious: they teach us history, they expose us to the traditions, mores, and literary forms of other people and times, and they foster respect for and interest in other nations and cultures. In our world of ever-increasing globalization, the cultural literacy and global awareness foreign texts facilitate help to shape educated and compassionate citizens of the future.

How can we ascribe so much potential to literature? The power of world literature lies, in part, in its very form. As narrative-based writing, it appeals to us in ways that other forms of instruction cannot. As translation activist Mona Baker posits, in agreement
with a number of social theorists, narrative is the “principal and inescapable mode by which we experience the world” (464). To make sense of the world, we humans process knowledge in terms of stories, assimilating new information and experiences into a cohesive vision of the world and our place in it. This natural inclination to narrative means that the effect of stories on shaping our world view is particularly powerful. As Bennett and Edelman assert, “[stories can be] presented in ways that open up the mind to creative possibilities developed in ways that provoke intellectual struggle, the resolution of contradiction, and the creation of a more workable human order” (qtd. in Baker 471).

Cultural exchanges experienced through reading narrative literature may thus be assumed to have a significant impact on the reader’s lasting perception of another culture. In this way, the world literature class makes an important contribution to shaping the attitudes and awareness of our young citizens.

Given the impact of narrative, reading world literature has the potential to promote both intellectual and moral growth in our students. One goal of reading world literature is certainly for students to learn to walk in the shoes of individuals from other cultures, thus de-foreignizing them in drawing out the similarities between humans everywhere. Students may learn to be less judgmental and less inclined to stereotyping if they feel they can identify with people across the globe. International readerships can also prompt connections between readers thousands of miles apart and “[enable] the mobilization of numerous individuals with very different backgrounds and attributes around specific political, humanitarian, or social issues” (Baker 462). Reading world literature can thus be the first step toward activism.
Paradoxically, however, another important goal of reading world literature is the establishment of the differences between people and cultures. As important as it is to find common ground between peoples, it is equally important for our students to recognize and honor the differences that set cultures apart and distinguish one people from another. Readers run the risk of distorting another culture by assimilating it into their own in the sweeping mantra that “we are all the same.” While empathy is important, teachers and students should guard against simplifying or falsifying aspects of a culture to make it seem more compatible with our own. Instead, readers of foreign literature should be able to identify aspects of the source culture that set it apart from their own. Recognition of a culture’s similarities while acknowledging its differences is a delicate balancing act. In their essay “Translation as a Method for Cross-Cultural Teaching,” Anuradha Dingwaney and Carol Maier write that even attempts to give voice to representatives of other cultures can result in simplification or appropriation. The current “popularity” of literature about “Third World” culture, they contend, has caused instructional approaches to such literature to become standardized in ways that reinforce clichés and prevent students from engaging with new ideas and genuine cultural exploration. In fact, teaching world literature effectively is a complicated achievement, much like translating effectively. Like a good translation, lessons in world literature should “[make] familiar, and thereby accessible, what is confronted as alien, maintaining the familiar in the face of otherness without either sacrificing or appropriating difference” (Dingwaney and Maier 304).

1. Teaching Translation Awareness
Studying the translated aspect of a text is one way to enrich student encounters with world literature. Translated texts provide an additional platform for studying the other cultures, particularly texts that are not fully domesticated. One way for literature teachers to draw out the otherness of a text while generally avoiding assimilative clichés is to explicitly teach translation awareness. In recognizing aspects of the original language behind particular translation decisions, students will get a taste of certain subtle (or at times quite obvious) differences that distinguish the text’s source language from English. Such awareness emphasizes the text’s foreignness through the linguistic domain, and opens up a new avenue for students to appreciate another culture. In fact, translation awareness can often result in recognition of the limitations of one’s own language, thus performing a sort of democratizing role among anglophones. As Martinican writer Patrick Chamoiseau argues, “It is through coming into contact with the unfamiliar that readers learn that their languages do not account for some phenomena in other languages and cultures” (qtd. in Tachtiris 120). Reading translated literature may give students their first glimpse at the fact that there is a rich body of experience that can only be attained through immersion in another language and culture.

Reading literature in translation is also a way to enrich our students’ intellectual capacity. Aside from the cognitive dissonance and resulting mental flexibility that new and different ideas provoke, reading world literature presents an important way for students to develop as writers. Exposure to a variety of literature can help our students build unique and varied voices. As we seek to inspire the next generation of writers in our literature classrooms, we can enrich their linguistic arsenal with the “newness and strangeness” that foreign literature in translation can provide (Unger 197). As American
novelist Douglas Unger maintains, aspiring “[w]riters should be taking on new voices all the time, challenging their language, seeking out their own subversions,” and the more widely someone reads, the more original the voice he or she can develop, often specifically as a result of absorbing the inflections and nuances of a multitude of foreign cadences (197). Nearly all successful, famous authors can point to some influence outside of their own nation’s literature. Consider the influence of Spanish writers on Ernest Hemingway or the impact of Eastern poetry on the philosophy of the Beat Generation writers. Ironically, as Unger writes, “crafting an original American voice may depend on inspirations discovered in world literature” (201). For the enrichment of our own language and literary corpus, then, our teachers of literature should be including a wide variety of foreign works in translation, including and perhaps, in particular, translations that preserve some elements of the text’s original idioms and syntax.

While our students can assimilate aspects of translated literature into their personal literary style without even being aware that they are reading a translation, some of the greatest benefits of reading translated literature come only when students explicitly address the text’s linguistic origins. Teachers and theorists promote various ways of implementing the translation studies approach. In her writing on texts in translation, Isabel Garayta suggests a number of different methods, but stresses, in particular, the utility of “contextualiz[ing] the source text within its originating culture” through studies of the author’s background, the book’s political context, etc (33). Garayta also recommends a “careful look at paratextual matter” including translators’ notes to better understand the context of the receiving culture (34). Lastly, she believes students should be “introduced to some of the basic concepts of translation such as ‘fidelity’ and its
variant interpretations” before attempting to analyze the translated aspect of a text (38). Unger promotes comparing multiple translations of the same text, allowing students to deduce the complexity of the original text by comparing diverse attempts to capture the same foreign concept. Garayta takes this tactic even further when she suggests presenting students with a few lines of the original text in the source language to compare to multiple translations in an attempt to trace points of divergence. Lawrence Venuti suggests a still more complicated approach, pointing out that the essence of the original text is mediated by the translator as well as the instructor leading the class in a translation study. He says students should be attentive to the complex limitations brought to a study of translation by the historical context and motivations of the translator as well as the political and social criteria stressed by the instructor. The multilayered analysis of the various ways the text has been mediated enriches the students’ understanding, for “with the knowledge of limitations comes the awareness of possibilities, different ways of understanding the foreign text, different ways of understanding their own cultural moments” (Venuti, Scandals 93).

Certainly these approaches to studying translated text reflect an appreciation of the role of the translator and encourage a more accurate look at the intent of the source author. At the same time, teachers must consider their audiences when planning their world literature units. A high school classroom requires different considerations from a college one, just as classes composed largely of bilingual or ELL students will have a different level of understanding than monolingual English speakers. The degree to which teachers can adopt a translation studies approach will depend on the developmental level and intellectual preparedness of the students. Not only does the analysis Venuti
recommends require substantial background research into the culture and politics of the various contributors, but it also rests on higher-level thinking skills which may be demanded of university students but which high school students are generally still developing. In fact, much of the analysis required for in-depth translation studies goes beyond the capacity (and typical study time) of most high school students. High school teachers who wish to address the issue of translation with their students will need to address it on a more basic level and in smaller segments. In this regard, teaching a text with obviously foreignized diction and syntax may prove an effective way to address translational awareness with high school students because it requires little background to identify and analyze.

Although a number of theorists and teachers have addressed ways to explicitly teach translation awareness in the last decade, few have discussed the way the particular translation approach selected by the translator affects students’ understanding of the text. It is my hope that by exploring this topic, I can help teachers think more critically about the translations they choose to teach and the ways they approach them with their students.
CHAPTER III

TRANSLATION THEORY AND DOMESTICATION VS. FOREIGNIZATION

A. Lawrence Venuti’s Vision of Domestication and Foreignization

The connection between global activism and literature in translation has been the subject of much discussion within translation circles over the last three decades. One of the most influential (and polarizing) voices to emerge has been that of American translation theorist Lawrence Venuti whose 1995 book *The Translator’s Invisibility* defined two fundamentally opposing methods of translation: domestication and foreignization. According to Venuti, while domesticating translations conform to the cultural and linguistic values of the target culture as if they were native texts, foreignizing translations work to emphasize the otherness of the source culture by accentuating cultural and linguistic differences. Venuti comes down firmly on the side of foreignization, which he sees as a form of ethical activism on the part of the translator. In particular, Venuti seeks to reduce the dominance of English-language hegemony by presenting English readers with obvious traces of a foreign culture in their literary selections. While a number of contemporary translators share his views on the importance of activism and the overrepresentation of English in global publications, his work has also received considerable criticism. Nevertheless, the concepts of foreignization and domestication have become an essential conceptual binary in the translation field.

Throughout history, Venuti says, domestication has prevailed in both technical and literary translations. Translators have tended to aspire to a standard of fluidity such that their target audience is not even aware that what they are reading has been translated.
The goal is that a piece reads so naturally as to render the existence of a translator effectively invisible. This preference is especially evident in the importance of fluency in gaining the approval of English-language readers. Venuti cites numerous reviews of literary translations to support his contention that editors and readers (particularly in the U.S.) seek fluency as their primary criterion for assessing a translation’s success. Fluency derives from a number of factors. It means that the subject matter is easily accessible, that the references are understandable and relatable without paratextual support, that the idioms are target-language staples, that the sentence structure meets contemporary target-language expectations, and that the vocabulary conforms to the public’s expectations for word choice and register. Ensuring all of these aspects of a translation generally requires some adaptation on the part of the translator, which is ultimately domesticating in nature. In Venuti’s words, the translator does “ethnocentric violence” to the text by eliminating some of its original meaning and intent in order to produce a “fluent” translation (Translator’s Invisibility 41). The domesticating approach thus modifies or suppresses elements of the source culture, resulting in an inaccurate presentation of that culture in service of the desires and expectations of the target culture. In particular, Venuti believes that American anglophone culture tends to aggressively assimilate other cultures to its style and values. A foreignized approach seeks to upset this power differential and encourage more equitable recognition of the world’s languages and cultures.

Given the activist context in which Venuti defines these two methods, it is evident that domestication and foreignization go beyond simply the linguistic level. As frameworks articulated to facilitate an ethical approach to translation, the two theories are most broadly concerned with culture, as it is conveyed through the lens of language and
literature (Yang, “Brief Study”). Assuming a domesticating or foreignizing attitude indicates a willingness to either preserve the status quo or to challenge the dominant narrative of the target culture, respectively. In fact, the choice to domesticate or foreignize begins long before the process of translation.

The very choice of a text reflects ideological values that often say more about the expectations of the target culture than the reality of the source culture. Chinese foreign language professor Wenfen Yang records, for example, that for decades, communist China only permitted its writers to translate Western novels that showed the failures of capitalist society, such as *Oliver Twist* and *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (“Factors” 2676). Contemporary American publishing companies tend to select foreign works for translation that align with popular American trends. Venuti’s particular brand of activism is largely focused on choosing to translate works that challenge the dominant narrative of Anglo-American culture or present counter narratives. The very selection of the text is thus either a domesticating or foreignizing choice, where either approach often assumes a certain political bent. Translators can choose to work on a text that will preserve and reinforce interests and values of the target culture, or they can select one that will introduce the target audience to new ideas more truly representative of the source culture. For Americans, this often means choosing to translate literature from non-Western countries or from a language that typically receives little recognition. Venuti believes that these foreignized choices will “challeng[e] literary canons, professional standards, and ethical norms in the target language” (“Strategies” 242)

Once a text is selected, the linguistic process of translation itself will vary considerably depending on the translator’s approach. Choices of diction and syntax will
shape either a domesticated or a foreignized translation. Venuti’s vision of these two approaches stems from German philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher’s oft-quoted dictum that there are only two fundamental methods of translating: “Either the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader toward him. Or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author toward him” (qtd. in Venuti, “Strategies” 242). In a more poetic, modern encapsulation, translation professor Isabel Garayta writes that “Reader and text must meet, and inevitably this meeting must take place either in the ‘land’ of the source text or the ‘land’ of the reader” (37) Those translators who choose to meet the author in his or her own “land” will produce a foreignized text, one that privileges the expressions and style of the text in its original language. Translators who move the author to the reader’s territory are domesticating the text, altering aspects of the original to cater to the expectations of the target readership. Of course, the reality of most translations is less extreme than these metaphors suggest. Domestication and foreignization efforts do not create a true binary, but exist instead on a spectrum. Some translations will travel between the “land of the reader” and the “land of the author” at various points, demonstrating a combination of typically domesticating and foreignizing practices. Though each approach is associated with certain general translation techniques, these divergent techniques may be intermingled within the same translation or applied unequally within different translations, thus creating a sort of continuum between domesticated and foreignized texts.

In general, the domesticating approach seeks to create a “transparent” text, or one in which all traces of translation are invisible. Thus, a domesticated English translation is
composed of language “that is current...instead of archaic, that is widely used instead of specialized..., and that is standard instead of colloquial.” It employs syntax that “unfolds continuously and easily” and results in language that is “immediately recognizable and intelligible” (Venuti, *Translator’s Invisibility* 4). In every way, the translation creates the illusion of not being a translation at all. Translators use a number of concrete techniques to adapt the foreign texts into their target versions. As laid out by translation theorist Antoine Berman, these commonly include such tactics as rationalization, or the recomposition of sentences and the alteration of parts of speech (changing a verb into a substantive, for example). Additionally, translators may add information through clarification and expansion or “improve” upon the original through ennoblement, in attempts to produce a more elegant rendition. On the other hand, they may “quantitatively impoverish” a text by shortening it, or “qualitatively impoverish” it by replacing rich or iconic language of the original with flat, insipid diction in the translation (Berman 291). Domestication efforts often destroy the rhythm of the original and eliminate elements of the vernacular or evidence of the superimposition of languages. In other words, translators may find it difficult to recapture the interplay of dialects that reveal character status or personality in the original text. Such complexities may be eliminated entirely or recast using linguistic paradigms familiar to the new audience. As a whole, these tendencies “lead to … the production of a text that is more ‘clear,’ more ‘elegant,’ more ‘fluent,’ more ‘pure’ than the original. They are the destruction of the letter in favor of meaning” (Berman 297). Such texts may be preferred by the casual reader, but they do leave them “at the mercy of the translator’s mediation” (Garayta 38).
By contrast, a foreignized translation will seek to combat the domesticating tendencies (which Antoine Berman actually labels as “deforming tendencies”) enumerated above in order to “stage an alien reading experience” (Venuti, *Translator’s Invisibility* 20). The goal of the foreignized text is to use language to project a sense of strangeness through which the reader implicitly recognizes the foreign origins of the work. This otherness can take many forms. Some translations may employ literalism or unusual syntax that replicate the structure of the source language even when such structures sound odd in the target language. Others may include archaic language, unusual dialects, or heterogeneous discourses, mixing sophisticated and simple language within the same sentence to unusual effect. Another hallmark of foreignized texts is the retention of foreign terminology and proper nouns like place names, titles, ethnic foods, and local flora and fauna. The frequently italicized typeface of these terms draws even more attention to already conspicuous terminology. For Venuti, as long as the style and structure evoke a sense of strangeness that alerts the reader to the text’s foreign origins, the strangeness does not even need to stem from the original text. In *The Translator’s Invisibility*, Venuti cites examples of writers like Ezra Pound, who in translating an Old English text into modern English added archaisms from the 18th and 19th centuries which had nothing in common with Old English but nevertheless sounded unusual to modern readers (35). For Venuti, “Foreignizing entails choosing a foreign text and developing a translation method along lines which are excluded by dominant cultural values in the target language” (*Strategies* 242). These translation choices need not accurately mirror the original language, but they should use language that is unfamiliar and marginalized which evokes a foreignness in place of the source language.
In their attempts to emphasize the source culture, many foreignized texts include wording that may surprise and even, at times, confound the reader. Translators debate whether foreignizing effects should go so far as compromise the elegance and correctness of the target language. French translation theorist Michael Oustinoff articulates this debate well. Some proponents of foreignization, he writes, advocate “translating word for word in such a way that the reader, line after line, always has the disorienting impression of reading the text in the original forms (semantic, morphologic, stylistic) of the foreign language” (my translation, qtd. in Oustinoff 21). Others align with the belief Oustinoff quotes from the 18th century philosopher Wilhelm von Humboldt: “As long as the reader senses something foreign rather than strange, the translation has accomplished its supreme goal; but wherever strangeness appears in a translation, perhaps even obscuring the foreignness, then the translator has not risen to the level of the original” (my translation 38). A modern poem translated using archaic language, for example, may feel foreign but still maintain a consistent elegance throughout. On the other hand, one that mixes words of various registers and translates some domain-specific vocabulary while retaining other foreign words may strike the reader as jarring or incomprehensible. Certainly, these degrees of foreignization will have different effects on the readers’ appreciation of the text and sense of the source language and culture. Either approach, however, produces a text that stands out from the standard literature of the target culture and thus meets Venuti’s definition of foreignized.

B. Criticism of Venuti’s Theory

As the range in foreignization options indicates, foreignization is not a precise approach, and its breadth is just one of many points of criticism that have been leveled
against it. A number of important voices within the translation field have found fault with Venuti’s foreignization theory for various reasons. As Venuti’s critics point out, the foreignization approach contains a number of contradictions and inconsistencies that make it difficult to pin down. First of all, the method does not rest on any standardized criteria. Just how much “foreignizing” in a text is enough? And is a foreignizing choice of a text adequate, or does true foreignization require noticeably unusual wording as well? Venuti suggests that any amount of overlap is possible. At the same time, he promotes practices that are not unique to foreignized translations. Any of the elements that Venuti considers hallmarks of foreignization - heterogeneity, defamiliarization, archaisms - can be found in both translations and original texts (Kadiu). In many cases, a text will contain a mix of domesticating and foreignizing elements, and the same text can be labeled domesticating by one theorist and foreignizing by another. The effectiveness of this approach must be called into question when it is based largely on individual perception.

Another problem lies in the almost paradoxical nature of foreignization’s foundation. The very standards that determine that something seems foreign are actually based on domestic values. As Venuti himself explains, “while foreignizing translation seeks to evoke a sense of the foreign, it necessarily answers to a domestic situation, where it may be designed to serve a cultural and political agenda.” In other words, “what is domestic or foreign can only be defined with reference to the changing hierarchy of values in the target language culture” (“Strategies” 242, 243). This self-referential definition of foreign calls into question the whole encounter with the other culture that the theory promotes. In his critique of Venuti, Douglas Robinson expresses legitimate
doubts that foreignization “actually constitutes an encounter with ‘foreignness’ rather than simply with other elite and elitist discourses already present within the translating language” (Emmerich 201).

Promoting an elitist agenda is antithetical to Venuti’s goal, yet a criticism that he has received from multiple sources. Maria Tymoczko argues that foreignization takes liberties that are only possible in cultures with a certain linguistic dominance. Since the technique prioritizes an activist approach at the expense of clarity and cultural relevance, Tymoczko explains that “Foreignization has also been rightly criticized as potentially an elitist strategy, more appropriate to a highly educated target audience than to a broad readership or a cultural situation in which the normal education level is more modest than it is in Europe or the United States” (212). Those with limited literacy skills are unlikely to elect to read texts that deliberately contravene the norms of the target language. What’s more, Venuti’s activist goals, which are specifically directed toward fighting against the linguistic imbalance in publishing and the undue dominance of English, do not transfer to cultures with subaltern languages. Venuti is hardly implying that these cultures should challenge the importance of their indigenous languages and try to force in elements of English or prominent Romance languages. Furthermore, Venuti even suggests that foreignization may be impossible to achieve with some languages. Quoting Schleiermacher, he explains that this translation method requires “languages which are freer, in which innovations and deviations are tolerated to a greater extent” (Translator’s Invisibility 102). English, which accepts calques and easily adopts new loan words, is one such language. But many more rigid languages are incapable of preserving foreign expressions and syntax and still retaining meaning. Clearly, Venuti’s idealized vision of
foreignization does not have universal application. Though based on worthwhile goals of social activism through language, this approach results in a wide variety of implementation methods and thus produces inconsistent effects on the reading public.

**C. My Vision of Foreignization**

While I recognize the drawbacks to a foreignizing approach, I am also fascinated by its potential to stimulate an awareness that a domesticated text might be incapable of doing. Even without a concrete blueprint for foreignization, an attempt to implement some of its elements should at least produce a reaction in the reader. My goal, through my research, was to study this reaction and see if it differed from reactions to more domesticated texts.

My interest in foreignization is not as politically motivated as Venuti’s but stems from the experiences I had teaching and observing world literature courses. I am less interested in “disrupt[ing] target-language cultural codes” than exposing students to the truth (Venuti, *Translator’s Invisibility* 42). The truth is that other cultures exist beyond our own borders and beyond our present moment. And many of these cultures speak a different language from our own. Thus, to broaden student thinking and horizons, we should expose them to other cultures and languages in such a way that the exposure is true and real, not just an extension of what is already familiar to them. Students should read from a variety of different cultures and time periods, and these readings should expose them to realities that open their eyes and challenge their worldview rather than simply melting into it. In this sense, foreignized texts might present a greater challenge to students’ existing understanding of the world. To use Mona Baker’s paradigm, we should
not present them with stories that they can simply assimilate to their world narratives, but ones that cause them to edit the narrative or add new chapters to it.

In high school, teenagers are still editing their worldviews and reworking the narratives that guide their understanding of the world. It is educators’ responsibility to challenge students with new information. Students at this age should be exposed to different cultures and different languages. Though the world literature classroom is not the foreign language classroom, the two should enjoy a symbiotic relationship. When we teach Beowulf in translation from Old to Modern English, for example, we focus less on the specifically modern English turns of phrase present in the translation, than on the stylistic underpinnings of the original that surface in the translations of kennings and alliteration. In studying this text, students typically learn a bit about Old English writing style in addition to Old English and Old Norse cultural values. The same approach should be true in teaching all translated literature. When we read a translated piece like “Happy Meal,” we learn about family relationships and dining habits in 21st century France, but shouldn’t we also learn about the pronoun repetition and syntactical reversals that characterize French speaking and writing? If the purpose of the story selection is to provide a taste of another culture, shouldn’t we take advantage of all the flavors the piece offers us? Looking into the particularities of other languages’ structures can only enrich our understanding of our own language and provide us with a broader variety of examples to pull from when developing our own unique 21st century writing styles. Learning to read and comprehend stylistically foreign pieces will also enhance students' linguistic flexibility and versatility. Given these goals, I contend that foreignized texts can provide important instructional value.
D. Applying Domestication and Foreignization to My Translations

My very selection of texts to translate reflected both domesticating and foreignizing efforts. “Happy Meal” was a short story from another Western culture, featuring an American restaurant chain. The cultural differences in the text are subtle, and, for the most part, the story presents a very familiar environment. Teachers could have no objection to teaching this story and would need to provide no background information for American high school students to understand it. This choice was thus a domesticating one. *La Rue Cases-Nègres*, on the other hand, was a somewhat more foreignizing selection. It brings to prominence the history and culture of a francophone island which few American students have ever even heard of: Martinique. The story presents a now-obsolete post-slavery economy as well as a version of family and community life very different from those of 21st-century America. At the same time, however, the narrative might not be all that unfamiliar to students who have read certain contemporary American authors like Toni Morrison and Maya Angelou. *La Rue Cases-Nègres* presents many of the same realities and tropes of American post-slavery narratives and African-American literature. In fact, one American history teacher who participated in my study agreed to assign the translated text to his students because of the similarities between the context of *La Rue Cases-Nègres* and the American post-colonialist intellectual movements of the 20th century. The degree to which *La Rue Cases-Nègres* acted as a foreignizing selection thus depended on the literary and historical background of the students reading it.

For my explicitly domesticated translations of each text, I focused on linguistic fluency, or ease of readability. To do this, I used many of the “deforming tendencies” that
Berman outlines. I added words and phrases and eliminated others, sometimes significantly altering syntax to do so, in order to render sentences’ meanings clearer. In other places, I eliminated words, particularly modifiers, that were too specific to easily translate. With sentences that were fragmented or lacked a clear subject and verb, I frequently ennobled the text, creating a more elegant complete sentence. Additionally, if the original text employed idiomatic expressions without literal English equivalents, I translated them into well-known English idioms or clichés.

In the foreignized versions, I tried to stick as closely as possible to the original syntax and diction, allowing sentences to sound a bit unusual as long as the meaning was still clear. As much as possible, I translated using cognates when a similar interpretation existed between the two. I also maintained a slightly more antiquated or formalized level of diction when this allowed for a word-for-word rendering of the French text. In other places, when an English substitute seemed inadequate or unnecessary for basic comprehension, I retained the original French or creole word in italics. Syntactically, I included a number of sentences whose word order sounded repetitive or inverted to English readers.

Since I used the domesticated translation as the base text for the foreignized one, the two versions contained a number of similarities and directly identical words and phrases. The distinctions between the two mainly occur in places where the sentence structure or diction seemed to elude a direct, fluid, and unambiguous translation. In some cases, I may have overemphasized foreignness in order to produce a greater disparity between the two texts and make students more likely to notice a distinction. Although I spent months reworking the translations, they were my first attempt at this kind of
dualistic project. As such, they certainly contain a number of imperfections, in part due to the time constraints I faced. Although I would have liked to have spent more time on the translations and passed them through several sample readers before sending them out, this simply was not possible.
CHAPTER IV
TRANSLATING “HAPPY MEAL”

A. Background to the Story

Anna Gavalda’s short story “Happy Meal” was first published in 2000 as a selection in a short story collection *Des mots pour la vie*. Gavalda then published it in her own 2004 collection of short stories, entitled *Nouvelles à chute*. She later edited and republished the story in the 2017 collection *Fendre l’Armure*. The version I translated was the better-known 2004 edition.

“Happy Meal” follows the events of an afternoon in which the first-person narrator describes a McDonald’s outing with a girl. Though he detests everything about McDonald’s and longs for a classier luncheon spot, the narrator agrees to eat at the fast food chain in order to please the girl. Throughout the story, he does everything he can to keep the girl happy and impress her. As the lunch concludes, he muses about what he will do next to keep her happy and earn her love. The last line in the story provides an unexpected twist when the narrator reveals that the girl, Valentine, is his six-year-old daughter, not his teenage girlfriend as an initial reading would suggest. The reader’s understanding of the story undergoes an upheaval, then, as he must reorder his vision of the narrator, the girl, and the outing in general. The story thus provides an interesting study in diction and connotation since readers must consider in hindsight the double meanings behind the words that suggested the boyfriend/girlfriend dynamic and the subtle hints that indicated the narrator’s true identity. On a more subtle level, the story also presents a satirical critique of the growing fast food culture in French and the American economic imperialism at its root.
I first selected “Happy Meal” to translate for my study in part because of its similarity to the typical American short stories read in the high school literature classroom. The story contains no taboo language or subject matter, and it includes interesting elements for literary analysis. Since I was working with a short timeline for my research, I knew I would be asking teachers to interrupt their regular course material to participate in my study, and I was sure they would be unlikely to do this if the story selection appeared too controversial or challenging. Thus, the text itself was a domesticating choice in this regard. Although I hoped to present a foreignized version of the text’s language, the context and content of the story were fairly familiar to American readers. Eating at a McDonald’s, either on a date or with a daughter, is a scenario easily imagined by American teenagers. Small details in the story do suggest subtle cultural differences and hint at the story’s underlying political message, such as the way the father dresses and perceives dining norms. Even these differences, however, align with many American stereotypes about the French and their perceived culinary and sartorial snobbism.

In considering how to translate “Happy Meal” for my two versions, I looked to the author’s background and the context of the story. Anna Gavalda began publishing short stories in the 1990s while working as a middle school French teacher and raising her two children as a single mother. Her first short story collection *Je voudrais que quelqu'un m'attende quelque part*, published in 1999, was both a domestic and international success and was translated into 27 languages (“Biographie”). Her early international renown led to continued translations of her subsequent books, so that many of her works can now be found in English translation. I did not consult these translations.
either before or during my own translation. Pinning down Gavalda’s style and motivation are difficult. Gavalda herself, has asserted that “Il n’y a pas de style Anna Gavalda, il n’y a que des voix dont je suis le diapason” (“There is no such thing as an Anna Gavalda style, there are only voices for which I am the tuning fork,” my translation) (Spaak). Gavalda is a character-driven writer, whose stories unfold naturally as she explores the personalities of her characters. In general, her style is contemporary and frequently reflects the casual, almost stream-of-consciousness thinking of her characters. According to an interview Gavalda did for a short story anthology, her motivation for writing “Happy Meal” came from her own daughter: “J’étais fascinée par la naissance de sa féminité, par sa coquetterie, par sa grâce… Comme si la séduction était déjà là, avant même qu’elle ne sache parler ou attraper une brosse à cheveux” (“I was fascinated by the burgeoning of her femininity, by her coquetterie, by her grace...As if the seduction was already there, even before she knew how to talk or pick up a hairbrush,” my translation) (Interview by Nathalie Lebailly). In “Happy Meal,” she explores this idea of children’s unexpected depths as she presents a precocious six-year-old who, at first read, seems already a teenager.

**B. Considerations in My Approach**

In approaching my translation of the story with this information, I tried to maintain the importance of the father’s voice and the precocity of the daughter, working especially to preserve the ambiguity about the relationship between the two main characters, so that they could conceivably be either a boyfriend/girlfriend or a father/daughter pair. In terms of the cultural aspects of the novel, I felt that, though they were relatively similar to the American fast-food experience, there were certain important
differences that might easily pass unnoticed, depending on the students’ attentiveness and the particular translational choices I made.

In some ways, the very similarity of “Happy Meal” to American expectations presented a problem. Given that American readers already have a ready-made concept of McDonald’s, its menu offerings, and its clientele, students might easily gloss over the small but important differences hinted at in the text. The casual, first-person, present-tense style of narration is also one very familiar to today’s young readers. The danger here was that the student would make assumptions about the McDonald’s setting and the French in general rather than reading the text carefully in search of the source meaning and cultures. The students’ seeming familiarity with the source culture could lead them to overlook the important differences revealed through both the language and content of the text. As Isabel Garayta writes in her article “‘Toto, I’ve a Feeling We’re Not in Kansas Anymore’: Reading and Presenting Texts in Translation from ‘Familiar’ Cultures,” “a sense of familiarity might entail a false sense of comfort. A reader might be lulled into thinking that she ‘knows things’ about the translated text, its characters, and its message that she in fact does not know” (32). In fact, young readers in the United States would likely be largely unaware of the satirical subtext of the story and its cultural critique of McDonald’s, fast food, and the economic imperialism of the United States. I did not focus on this aspect in my questions or analysis since I felt that the average high school student would not be able to make this connection unassisted, and the nature of the study meant students would not be presented with background material or cultural context before reading. However, I felt doubly pressured to emphasize the narrator’s strong reaction against McDonald’s and other cultural differences, either by explicitating in the
domesticated version or by accentuating the linguistic strangeness in the foreignized version.

C. Translation Challenges and Decisions

Throughout my two translations of “Happy Meal,” I made a number of small, individualized decisions in an effort to produce two distinct translations that seemed obviously domesticated or foreignized. In particular, I focused heavily on the following techniques:

1. Retaining cognates and literal translations in the foreignized version

In some cases, retaining cognates and word for word translations sounded quite natural, and was an easy decision. French and English are similar enough that the word order and sense could often remain almost identical (e.g. translating “Mais je ne dis rien” as “But I say nothing”). In other situations, however, the choice was less straightforward. Early in the story, the narrator says with resignation, “Cette jeune personne aime les nuggets et la sauce barbecue, qu’y puis-je?” (Gavalda, Nouvelles 11). Literally, this translates as “This young person loves nuggets and barbecue sauce, what can I do?” The direct translation of “young person,” however, is potentially problematic. In English, this terminology sounds a bit odd here. It emphasizes the youth of the girl, suggesting an age disparity while adding a certain emotional distance between the characters with the use of the cold designation “person.” Both of these hinder the text’s goal of simultaneously suggesting a girlfriend/boyfriend date and a father/daughter outing. In French, the combination “jeune personne” is used more frequently than in English (just as “grande personne” is sometimes used by children to refer to adults). What’s more, it is often
associated with teenagers. In this way, “jeune personne” helps build the boyfriend/girlfriend layer without literally being untrue to the father/daughter reality. To more closely capture a word with both youthful and teenage connotations, I rendered “cette jeune personne” as “this girl” in the domesticated version A. In the foreignized B translation, however, I chose to retain “young person” and see what effect this might have on readers.

Another example of differing word choice in versions A and B was the narrator’s conclusion to a paragraph describing the sophisticated dining experience he dreams of showing Valentine. He describes the customs in the “grandes brasseries,” and predicts Valentine’s reaction: “Elle sera bien étonnée” (11). This phrase literally translates as “She will be very surprised.” The “very,” however, is an inadequate rendering of “bien” and intensifies the element of surprise in a subdued manner, where the surprise suggests something merely unexpected. The slightly more casual use of “bien” as an intensifier in French exaggerates the emotion and suggests a note of pride in the narrator’s voice for being able to surprise her this way. To capture this in the domesticated version, I translated the whole phrase as “She’ll be pretty impressed,” taking a bit of a liberty in emphasizing the subtle pride in the narrator’s voice, rather than translating the word “étonnée” more directly. In the foreignized version, I worked to preserve the word “surprised” by translating the modifier “bien” as “good and,” as in “She’ll be good and surprised.” This rendering does sound a bit like Southern or country slang to the American ear, but it captures the narrator’s pride in fine dining while preserving the closest semantic translation, so I kept it. Another point in its favor is that it uses the word “good” as an adverb, thus making it the literal translation of “bien.”
In general, the overall effect of translating as literally as possible in the foreignized version was to lend this translation a more sophisticated voice. Often, words that are shared in both French and English are ones now considered slightly formal or academic. In a number of places, use of cognates like “concentrating” instead of “focusing” or “obliged” instead of “have to” created subtle differences between the A and B translations, which, in combination, produced texts with a slightly different register of narrative voice.

2. Preserving French words when possible in the foreignized version

When the French words were ones that were likely to be recognized by an educated American readership or that appeared in a context which made their definition evident, I tried to preserve them in Translation B. I believed this would help combat the all-too-familiar sense that the text exuded without sacrificing overall comprehensibility. Students might be reminded that they are not shaping the foreign to conform to their ideas, but that they are instead foraying into the land of the foreign. As translation scholar Indira Karamcheti writes, preserving a word in the original language “reminds us that what is extraordinary to us is ordinary to others,” thus flipping the script and making the reader feel like the foreign one, rather than the text (192). Instead of translating terms like brasserie and sauce gribiche, both of which can be found in English language searches on the web, I italicized them to draw attention to their foreign origins. Likewise, I left the French slang for MacDonald’s as “McDo” (although I did add an apostrophe s), while I wrote the colloquial “Micky D’s” in the domesticated version. Later in the story, I retained the phrase “c’est comme ça” in the foreignized version, while rendering it as “that’s just the way she is” in the domesticated one. This is a common enough French
phrase, like *je ne sais quoi*, that many Americans have heard it. Even for those who have never heard the phrase, the loss of information is minor. Thus the phrase adds a French flair without sacrificing much meaning. The italicized terms in Translation B serve as visual and linguistic reminders of the text’s origins, but they do also increase the perceived sophistication of the text.

3. **Retaining the original syntax when possible in the foreignized version**

For the sake of fluency, I altered the syntax in numerous places in the domesticated version. When the sense could still be preserved along with the original syntax, however, I tried to match the English version to the original French, even if this meant that a sentence sounded a bit stilted or unusual. The very first line of the story presented my first opportunity for this. “Cette fille, je l’aime” became “I adore this girl” in Translation A, but “This girl, I adore her” in Translation B (11). The second version is perfectly comprehensible, but signals immediately that the text will not follow a conventional style of English expression.

I made similar decisions in numerous other places throughout the story. At times, it meant using punctuation that created a rather choppy sentence. Near the conclusion, the narrator says, “Et puis, pour sa main, elle me la donnera, je le sais bien” (17). In the foreignized version, I preserved this nearly word for word with the choppy “And then, as for her hand, she’ll give it to me, I’m sure,” whereas in the domesticated rendition, I altered it for fluency: “And as for her hand, I know she’ll give it to me.”

4. **Translating French idioms literally in the foreignized version and adding English idioms to the domesticated one**
Preserving French idioms was a significant decision that I made in two different places. In the first one, the original text says, “Son petit doigt caresse l’intérieur de ma paume et mon coeur fait zigzag” (12). Here, the italicized portion is the idiomatic expression, which literally means “my heart does a zigzag.” Although this image is easily understood by English speakers who can picture the heart jumping up and down and understand the narrator’s emotion, it is jarring in its unusualness. It does not flow fluently as an English source text would. For this reason, I retained the literal translation in the foreignized version and wrote the well-known expression “my heart leaps” in the domesticated one.

A slightly more difficult decision cropped up later in the story after Valentine professes to like only the toppings on her ice cream, not the ice cream itself. When her father sees her picking at the peanuts and caramel, he offers to ask for more toppings, goes to the counter, and returns from a successful mission. The next line describes the daughter digging in once more: “Elle recommence son travail de fourmi”; in literal English, “She recommences her ant’s work” (16). Because “travail de fourmi” is a common expression in French, meaning a task that requires sustained patience, French readers should easily recognize this as a metaphor for Valentine resuming her efforts to pick out the fresh toppings. The idiom is not completely incomprehensible to an anglophone audience, since most readers would be able to see a connection between Valentine picking at the small peanuts one by one and an ant laboriously carrying small fragments of food one by one. The added difficulty here is that the text does not provide any other clues to suggest that connection and indicate Valentine’s actions. Readers must reason through the unfamiliar idiom without any contextual support. It’s a jump that most
good readers should be able to make, but one that a less astute reader could certainly miss. Ultimately, my foreignized version produced the more challenging translation of “She resumes her ant-like work,” while the domesticated one explicitates, “She resumes her painstaking work on the ice-cream toppings.”

In general, I tried to replicate the colloquial feel of the original French text through English idioms in the domesticated text. This meant that in a few places I took liberties with the text, adding English expressions that were not strictly necessary for translation. For example, after Valentine tells the narrator to eat, he narrates, “Je m’exécute,” literally, “I carried out the order” (14). In the domesticated version, I translated this using the expression, “I bite the bullet.” This phrase still expresses the narrator’s obedience to Valentine and further emphasizes the disagreeableness of the task at hand (eating MacDonald’s food). The relatively informal nature of “bite the bullet” also attempts to replicate the casual, emotion-laden style of the father’s narration. I made a similar decision to translate “Elle se régale” (roughly, “she’s enjoying herself immensely”) as “she’s in heaven,” a metaphorical construction that captures the heights of Valentine’s delight while still sounding simple and natural (14).
CHAPTER V

TRANSLATING *LA RUE CASES-NÈGRES*

**A. Background to the Novel**

*La Rue Cases-Nègres*, published in 1950 by Joseph Zobel, recounts the semi-autobiographical story of young black boy, José Hassam, growing up on a sugar plantation in 1930s Martinique. When the novel begins, more than 80 years since the abolition of slavery on the island, José’s plantation community is still mired in the economic and racist structures of a colonial slave society. The novel spans over a decade of José’s childhood years as, with the tireless support of his grandmother and mother, he pursues an education in an attempt to rise above the endless cycle of poverty.

The selection that I chose to translate recounts an incident when José is around five years old that leads to a pivotal change in his daily routine and future trajectory. The name *La Rue Cases-Nègres* refers to the street that forms the center of the poor neighborhood in which all the working black families on the plantation live. Typically, while all the adults would go to work in the fields during the day, the children would be left unattended in la Rue Cases-Nègres. In this particular incident, young José and his companions are playing on their own when they find some chicken eggs and try to cook and eat them. To do so, they go to the plantation store and buy matches and rum on credit. In the wild, drunken behavior that follows, the children almost burn down the street. Although the adults see the smoke and put out the fire in time, the white overseers (the békés) declare that the children can no longer stay in the village during the day. If the children will work in the children’s work gangs, they will receive a small weekly wage for their industry. Though most of the parents give in and send their children into the
work gangs -- a step tantamount to condemning them to a life of hard labor -- José’s grandmother and guardian refuses. She takes José to work with her and allows him to sit idle most of the day while she works to earn money to send him to school. This change in José’s routine is the first of many small changes that set him apart from his peers. Importantly, it sets the stage for the struggles José and his family will undergo to help him rise above the cycle of poverty and oppression experienced by most of the black laborers on the island.

I selected this particular incident to translate, first of all, because it could function as an independent episode, easily comprehensible with little outside context. Students could read this small excerpt and follow its narrative sequence without difficulty. I also believed that the range of speakers in the selection would present an interesting challenge and provide me the opportunity to address some interesting translation questions. The selection includes both direct and indirect dialogue from numerous characters, ranging from young children to José’s elderly grandmother. The narrative voice itself is also challenging as it seems to fluctuate between the perspective of young José and the retrospective voice of the adult José. Lastly given the incident’s blend of innocent childhood adventure, unique family dynamics, and significant thematic developments, I felt the excerpt was an ideal text to which to apply Venuti’s foreignization lens. The story is not too dissimilar from post-slavery life in the American South to be incomprehensible to students, yet it contains enough culturally and linguistically foreign elements to expose students to a narrative that will broaden their conception of the world.
1. The Influence of the Négritude Movement

Given the historical and cultural distance between 1930s Martinican society and the modern American audience for whom I would be translating *La Rue Cases-Nègres*, it was essential to research the author and historical context of his text. Joseph Zobel was born in 1915 in Martinique and grew up in conditions much like his protagonist, José Hassam. Through the support of his grandmother and mother, he was encouraged to pursue his education and eventually received a rare scholarship to attend lycée in Fort-de-France, Martinique’s capital city. Although he dreamed of continuing his education in Paris, a lack of funding and later the Second World War delayed these aspirations for a number of years. In the meantime, he began writing short stories that were published in local Martinican publications. These stories were favorably received by the Martinican public as they were some of the only literature to capture the reality of life for the lower classes without condescension or exaggeration. In 1946, Zobel finally made it to Paris, where he began publishing full-length texts intended for a global audience. There, his work was influenced by the legacy of the Négritude Movement, but diverged from the movement’s earlier literature in significant ways.

The Négritude Movement arose in the 1930s and 40s and found expression largely through literary means. Important Antillaise and African figures like Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor, and Léon-Gontran Damas led an intellectual awakening denouncing the institutionalized racism established by Western colonizing powers. The movement took on many forms as each writer created his own definition of the idea, but all shared the general goal of creating a “pan-African consciousness” and articulating an “unapologetic declaration, and celebration, of blackness” (Hardwick 7, 34). As Jean-Paul
Sartre wrote, Négritude was the “negation of the negation of the black man.” At its height, Négritude was an elite movement, not a popular one. Intellectuals like Césaire and Senghor wrote sociological and philosophical tracts and dense, symbolist poetry. Zobel’s later writing, by contrast, appealed to the common reader through his concrete rather than theoretical approach. This accessibility was due in part to his prose style as well as his relatively simple diction and commonplace and identifiable protagonists. As a result, Zobel’s writing “expand[ed] the scope of Négritude in order to depict the lived experiences of colonialism, race, and identity among the most humble strata of Martinican society” (Hardwick 32).

In *La Rue Cases-Nègres*, in particular, Zobel’s accessible style directly reflects the needs of his intended audience. In contrast to his earlier works, written for a Martinican readership, Zobel intended *La Rue Cases-Nègres* as a cross-cultural work, designed for readers in metropolitan France and the greater Western population (Hardwick 150). In general, therefore, the novel contains mostly correct, formal French. However, when including dialogue, and even at times when evoking the younger voice of his narrator-protagonist, Zobel uses a limited sort of hybrid text in which certain stylistic aspects of Creole make their way into the text without obscuring the overall message. Zobel’s accessible but culturally flavored prose along with his familiar narrative structure in *La Rue Cases-Nègres* has made it an enduring staple of postcolonial francophone literature.
B. Translating Key Terms

As part of my efforts to foreignize the text, I needed to consider the influence Zobel’s cultural moment should have on my translation. Before I could address broader stylistic issues and techniques for foreignization, I had to examine several specific and essential terms that recur throughout the novel, most importantly those with racial overtones.

1. Translating the word nègre

One of the most difficult decisions I had to make was how to translate the word nègre, both alone and in the street name La Rue Cases-Nègres. Ultimately, I avoided the most direct translation, negro, only after much consideration of the connotive and cultural loss weighed against the maturity and cultural expectations of my audience.

In order to understand the specific meaning and connotation that would be altered in translation, I had to first research the term nègre as it was understood by Zobel in 1950s Martinican society. The word is laden with cultural and emotional associations, both positive and negative. Certainly the word contains historical connections to slavery and white supremacy. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, the word had taken on a broader meaning in Creole society. As Corine Tachtiris explains, “in Creole nègre and nèg carry a different sense; the words simply mean ‘man’ or ‘guy’, regardless of his race” (122). In her biography on Zobel, Louise Hardwick explains that Zobel’s use of the word nègre to refer to himself “position[ed] the author as a man of the people” (67). In this sense, use of nègre reflects Zobel’s Creole roots and his interest in writing for a broader, non-academic audience, and particularly his desire to communicate his connection with his Martinican peers. Lastly, the word nègre used by a black francophone writer also
conjures up important associations with the Négritude movement. In this sense, the word contains overtones of black pride and self-assertion.

Bearing in mind the many layers that this one word nègre carried in French, I weighed my translation options. One possibility was to translate the word nègre as black. Although this word is more currently acceptable in US culture, it still does violence to the full import of the original term. As Hardwick writes, “To translate the word nègre in [Zobel’s] novels by the term ‘black’ is problematically anachronistic, as it occludes the context of the racial struggles in which he and his fellow authors were engaged” (37-38). Hardwick acknowledges that the N-words “can still appear unacceptably offensive to some modern readers,” but at the same time, she maintains that “to translate nègre as ‘black’ would obfuscate the term’s specific historicity” (37).

As mentioned above, another option would have been to translate nègre as negro. This English word contains some of the same historical and current connotations as its French counterpart. However, having witnessed the reactions of numerous 8th grade classes to learning that the Spanish word for the color black is negro and their extreme reluctance to read the English word aloud in any historical reading, I know from experience that today’s youth have thoroughly absorbed the culture’s proscription against using the word negro or any form of it. (In my experience, the fact that negro is pronounced slightly differently in Spanish did not appear initially to make them any more comfortable with using it.) Again, in choosing my translation terminology I had to consider my audience and the circumstances under which they would encounter each word, reading an unfamiliar text without mediation. Certainly, their teachers could discuss the issues brought forward in the reading, but not until students had submitted
their responses for my study. I did not want these responses overly colored by indignation brought on by a lack of understanding of the historical and cultural significance of nègre.

A final option would have been to keep the French word nègre in place of translating the term into English. Corine Tachtiris makes an interesting case for preserving this form as a method of “peaceable resistance” to avoid the violence inevitably done to the source text if the choice of translated word dilutes or reorients the original. Not only does preservation of the French word contribute to the foreignization of the text, but it also better preserves the mixture of racial undertones, deracialized Creole culture, and political power associated with the Negritude movement. Still, I felt that nègre was close enough to negro to have the same offensive effect on young American students.

Clearly, it is impossible to find a single English word that contains all the cultural and historical facets of nègre in its original language. Any translator will have to sacrifice some element of the word in substituting an English one, even the word negro. Maintaining the original French spelling would still result in a loss of substance since an American audience would see the foreign word without really understanding its weight. It is obvious, therefore, that in eliminating the word nègre, I was sacrificing some of the original racial and cultural history of the text. I did what I could, then, to preserve this in other ways, in part by translating different iterations of nègre in multiple ways depending on the circumstances.

2. Translating the word case
Not only was the word nègre problematic in the title, but so was the word cases. This was another translation choice that I struggled with for some time. The dictionary definition provided by l’Académie française defines case as “Cabane, habitation rudimentaire, en particulier en Afrique noire.” Roughly translated, the definition reads “Cabin, rudimentary habitation, in particular in sub-Saharan Africa.” Even this definition is hard to translate, since cabane can be rendered as cabin, hut, shack, or shed, all possibilities for translating case as well. The dictionary entry then provides a few examples of usage, including “Un village de cases” and “Une case aux murs de pisé, au toit de feuillage” (“a village of cases” and “a case with walls of clay bricks and a roof of leaves”). When I performed a Google image search for “case en Afrique,” round structures of clay bricks and thatched roofs dominated the results. Clearly, the word case itself is associated in francophone usage with African dwellings in particular.

In attempting to select the best English equivalent for case, I was unhappy with both the images and connotations that most of the options conjured up. Cabin evoked too much of a summer camp feel or a rustic pioneer log home. Shack sounded too run-down. While certainly the cases Zobel’s novel were simple and rustic, they were clearly seen as homes, places where the characters felt a sense of belonging, security, and a degree of pride (the different floor plans of the homes reflected a person’s status). This image was incompatible with a first-person narrator’s use of shack to describe his own home. Hut, I felt, also sounded a bit too primitive. However, this was the English word that seemed most associated with African housing, and thus most similar in association to case. Google image searches of “African hut” produced the same images as “cases en Afrique,” while “African cabin” and “African shack” brought up slightly different styles.
of structures. Of course, the *cases* referred to in the novel are not African at all, but Martinican; however, the Martinican plantation workers quarters I found were often constructed of clay brick with thatched roofs. Believing the associations of *hut* to most resemble those of *case*, but aware of its limitations, I eventually decided to use *hut* in the domesticated version and retain *case* in italics in the foreignized version. In the latter version, I also included a footnote upon the first usage of the word, explaining that “*Case* (pronounced *cazz*) is the French word for a small, unsophisticated hut-like dwelling. This word is often used to describe the habitations in rural African villages.” Thus, in the domesticated version, the children “[rush] into the nearest hut” and “tumble from hut to hut,” while in the foreignized rendition, they “[dash] into the nearest *case*” and “roll from *case* to *case*.”

3. **Translating the title**

In translating the title, I had to consider the double challenge of *case* and *nègre* combined. The simple fact that a direct English translation of the title would require a syntactical reversal precluded this option from the start; *Negro Hut Street* or *Black Hut Street* present bald, clipped, almost shocking titles in comparison with the more fluid, doleful flow of *La Rue Cases-Nègres*. Since I had already decided not to use the word *negro*, I looked to some previous translations of the title for ideas. The title of the1980 English version of the novel, *Black Shack Alley*, had an offensively belittling ring, but the 1983 film adaptation *Sugar Cane Alley* was not as bad. Both used the term *alley* to capture the sense of neighborhood implicit in Zobel’s *Rue Cases-Nègres*, while also suggesting poverty and struggle.
After deciding that using *black* or *hut* in the title might be too racially suggestive for some and deter teachers from taking on the text, I turned to *Sugar Cane Alley* as a point of departure, using this for my domesticated translation. Even in the U.S., sugar cane is associated with plantations and thus with slavery and black workers. Tangentially, then, this title hints at the role of race in the novel. At the same time, it might also be read as a deceptively pleasant title, given the favorable connotation of sugar in our culture. To better indicate the novel’s black subjects along with the sense of oppression and poverty implicit in *cases-nègres*, I entitled the foreignized version *Plantation Alley*. I felt that *plantation* better evoked the more somber realities of the historical black experience than *sugar cane*. Informal polling that I conducted indicated that most other American adults had the same impression. My concession was to include the original title under the translated one at the top of the foreignized translation.

**C. General Translation Challenges and Decisions**

Once these decisions were made about the terminology, I could focus on other efforts to build a foreignized sense of style. The list below highlights my main tactics and the difficulties I encountered in trying to implement them.

1. **Maintaining the register of the narration and dialogue**

   Zobel’s style was difficult to translate. Though it remains in first person, the narrative voice shifts oddly between childlike and adult, fragmented and formal, present and past tense. José’s narration will jump from mature to childlike in the span of a single line. In one particularly difficult passage, José describes how he feels when his friend
returns to the group of children with matches and rum. First, he describes his reaction in formal language, even making use of the literary passé simple tense:

“j’éprouvai la sensation d’être transporté dans un monde où les désirs des enfants enfin se réalisaient sans l’entremise ni la censure des parents. C’était comme si quelque chose d’inaperçu venait de se produire; comme si, par l’apparition de notre messagère, nous allions vivre une vie franche et exaltée” (“I felt a sensation of being transported to a world where the desires of children at last come true without the meddling or censure of parents. It was as if something invisible had just taken place; as if, as by the apparition of our messenger, we were now going to live a free and exalted life”). (70)

Immediately following this poetic reflection, he exclaims, “Du rhum ! des allumettes ! Entre nos mains, a nous qu’on déclarait trop petits pour en user!” (“Rum! Matches! In our very own hands - we who they said were too little to use them!”) (70). Although I translated both of these passages fairly literally in the foreignized version, I struggled to adapt them to the domesticated one in which I was attempting to preserve a more consistent childlike voice.

Another aspect of difficulty was the confusing sense of hybridity in the dialogue, particularly M’man Tine’s. Hardwick provides an explanation for this:

“M’man Tine’s speech is also an example of the hybrid language which Zobel forges: his petit-nègre plantation characters would have spoken Creole, and the author undertakes to transcribe their speech in a style which signals their linguistic otherness, while ensuring that their words remain accessible to readers accustomed to metropolitan French.” (162)

One example of this blend of standard French with a slightly Creole flavor is the difficult passage when M’man Tine revolts against sending José into the children’s work gangs:

“Hein! Comment cela pourrait-il finir si les pères y foutent les fils là-dedans, dans le même malheur? Eh bé! Si j’y ai pas mis ta mère, c’est pas toi que j’y mettrai” (“Huh! How will this ever end if fathers send their own sons there, into the same misery? Come now! If I didn't put your mother there, I sure won't be sending you”) (79). Some sources I
consulted suggested replacing M’man Tine’s dialect with an American dialect like historical Black English. I was very hesitant to take this leap, however, firstly because the use of such language is often considered offensive today, and secondly, because M’man Tine’s language didn’t strike me as overly informal or non-standard. She dropped the *ne* in the negative *ne pas* construction, but this is a typical characteristic of informal speech among all French speakers. Her syntax reflects a somewhat dialectical usage, but it sounds almost lyrical rather than ungrammatical.

In general, I found Zobel’s attempts at hybridity inconsistent. Many times, M’man Tine’s dialogue was largely indistinguishable from formal, metropolitan French and seemed hardly consistent with that of an uneducated plantation worker. When agonizing over the reaction of the white békés to the children’s misbehavior, she waxes poetic, lamenting, “Et c’est envers les guenilleux que les chiens de garde sont le plus méchants!” (“And it is toward the ragged that the guard dogs are cruelest!”) (74). This metaphorical rendering of the plantation workers’ position is stylistically at odds with many of M’man Tine’s simpler utterances. As I translated, I found it difficult to find a steady English voice for M’man Tine and debated whether the translation should reflect some of the inconsistency of the original or correct for it. Ultimately, I preserved fairly grammatical dialogue for M’man Tine in both translations, attempting to render her voice more consistent in the domesticated version, but leaving the broad shifts in register in the foreignized translation. To replicate a sense of her illiteracy and informal creole, I added contractions to her dialogue in the domesticated version, writing “how’ll” and “mis’ry” and “gonna.”
2. Capturing the rhythm of the original

Capturing the rhythm of the source text was important to me in both my translations, but especially so in Translation B. I was willing to sacrifice more English fluidity for the sake of replicating rhythm in the foreignized translation. The rhythm seemed particularly essential to the preservation of the cultural aspects of the source culture because of its significance in Caribbean society. As Caribbean researcher Martin Munro writes, “Rhythm is one of the most persistent characteristics of all Caribbean sounds. If forests, swamps, and beaches are typical Caribbean landmarks, rhythm, specifically the rhythm of the drum is a Caribbean ‘soundmark,’ a marker of space that is recognized by the community as such, making ‘the acoustic life of the community unique’” (132). This sense of rhythm was preserved in the literature of the Négritude period through the prioritization of poetry and “esoteric verse.” Although Zobel belongs to a slightly later literary period, his prose “refigures rhythm but maintains its centrality” (Munro 136). Munro argues that this rhythm is most apparent in a symbolic way in the novel. The cyclic repetition of the seasons of work on the plantation represent the way the rhythm of life has not changed for these people even ninety years after the abolition of slavery; this rhythm is “a marker and reminder of subjugation” (137). I would argue, however, that this rhythm is present not only symbolically in the novel, but also literally through a repetitive style of syntax and the many sentences whose halting construction and heavily punctuated fragments evoke the sound of chanting or drum beats.

In sentences like the following, the punctuation alone imposes rhythmic pauses throughout:

“Je n’en ai jamais mangé, des œufs. D’ailleurs, aucun de nous n’en a jamais mangé. Les œufs de nos parents, c’est pour faire des couvées. Et les poules, c’est
pour être échangées à la boutique de “la maison” contre du riz, du kérosine, de la
morue : ou peut-être vendues aux békés de l’usine.” (68)

In the domesticated Translation A, I eliminated much of this choppiness by reordering the
sentences, but in the foreignized Translation B, I preserved the original sentence order
and punctuation as closely as possible. My attempts to mimic the meter of the source
went beyond syntax and punctuation to include alliteration and repetition as well, when
possible. The sentence below illustrates the way Zobel employs repetition and parallelism
to evoke a particular cadence, in this case one that accentuates the frenzied disorder of the
children’s revelry. The translations that follow show my attempts to preserve the original
rhythm to varying degrees in the two versions.

Original:
Tortilla frotte des allumettes les unes après les autres et les lance parmi nous, et chacun
de courir gil et lit, de crier et de rire.

Domesticated:
Tortilla strikes the matches one after the other and throws them among us, making us
dodge left and right, shouting and laughing.

Foreignized:
Tortilla strikes the matches one after the other and throws them among us, leaving each
of us to dart here and there, to shout, and to laugh.

In the original French, the repetition of les, et, and de + infinitive breaks the
sentence into short, rhythmic segments, almost poetic in sound, and evocative of a drum
beat. This repetition is hard to replicate in English because English generally allows less
repetition than French and does not have the same requirements for repeating certain
articles and prepositions in front of each new substantive.
For the first repetitive construction “les unes après les autres,” I opted for the expression “one after the other” in my domesticated translation instead of “one after another” in order to preserve repetition of the article “the.” For the sake of fluidity, however, I did not retain the infinitive construction in the second half of the sentence. The paired phrases “left and right” and “shouting and laughing” do, nevertheless, create a certain parallelism, and the sentence still maintains natural breaks, which preserve a certain rhythm, albeit a less consistent one than the original. For the foreignized version, I made the same decision regarding “one after the other” but sacrificed some fluidity in order to more closely mimic the structure and meter of the original. I translated the “chacun de” as “leaving us to,” a construction that would allow for repeated infinitives and thus the same amount of repetition in the second half of the sentence as in the original (though each English segment was one syllable shorter than the French).

3. Using cognates and preserving original terms in the source language

Whenever possible, I translated French words with their English cognates in the foreignized translation. In the domesticated translation, I chose the cognate only if it rang true as the English word most likely to create a sense of fluency. The effect of this often was to elevate the register of Translation B. At other times, using cognates provided a slightly different connotation than other translation options. One example of this was my frequent translation of the verbs crier and s’écrier as cry instead of yell, since one meaning of cry is “a loud utterance or exclamation.” This word choice contributed to a slightly more literary style than the word yell. In other instances, some words not only lacked cognates but were also difficult to translate with a single English word. In some of these situations (as with case and the drink tisane), I left the original French word in
Translation B. In general, however, I only left foreign words whose meanings could be inferred through context clues or for which I provided a footnote, as I did with *case*.
CHAPTER VI

RESEARCH RESULTS

A. Response Format and Numbers

The following analysis is based on 79 responses to my translations by high school students (see table 1). This number is less than half of the intended study sample, due to difficulties presented by school closures in response to the Covid-19 virus. At times, this smaller number made it difficult to draw conclusions as the number of usable responses was too small to mark any clear trends. This was especially true for *La Rue Cases-Nègres*, which had a slightly smaller readership than “Happy Meal” and included some participants who did not respond to all questions. Apart from 13 students who completed the study before schools closed, all of the responses I received were anonymously submitted through online forms. As a result, I have no way of knowing what affiliation respondents might have had to a particular school or with a particular teacher I may have spoken with. In recruiting new participants during this unusual academic semester, I passed along my study to a number of classroom teachers and tutors, many of whom persuaded just one or two student volunteers to participate. Three teachers also managed to get nearly full class participation with classes ranging from 10-20 students. This unusual way in which the study was disseminated meant that I had very little control over the way students were or were not prepared for the study’s topic. Some responses I received were nuanced and intelligent, while others were half-hearted, incomplete, or inaccurate. This may be due to different levels of preparation or simply to a variation in student abilities and interest. The conclusions I draw here are generalized rather than definitive ones.
Table 1
Breakdown of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>“Happy Meal” Respondents</th>
<th>Sugar Cane/Plantation Alley Respondents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Translation A</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire 1:</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire 2:</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Translation B</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Questionnaire 1:</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Questionnaire 2:</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total respondents</strong></td>
<td>45 total, 41 complete</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My data is based on two questionnaires that the students had to fill out after reading their respective stories (see appendix). The first questionnaire presented ten multiple-choice questions about their selected story to test general comprehension and student impressions. The questions were the same for the A and B versions, although a few words were changed to reflect the words used in each translation (e.g. *hut* vs *case*). The majority of the questions were objective ones whose answers could be deduced by careful reading (e.g. “What does the narrator in Happy Meal seem to fear most?” or “Why doesn’t Gran’ma Tine want José to join the children’s work gang?”). The goal of these questions was to determine whether a particular translation version either helped or hindered understanding. These questionnaires also included a few questions with multiple acceptable answers, designed to quantify student impressions. Prompts like “In what way is McDonald’s in France different from a McDonald’s in the US?” or “Which theme seems most prominent to you in the story?” were followed by multiple valid choices.
These more subjective questions were designed to test whether a particular translation version affected students’ overall perception of the story.

The second questionnaire began with a section in which students provided personal reaction ratings on a scale of 1 to 5 (see appendix). This gave a way to quantify some student reactions in a numerical way. Then, there were four free-response questions about the story in general. These questions were fairly open-ended to try to avoid leading students into particular responses. Questions here included “What three words would you use to describe the story?” and “What elements of this story seemed different from American culture?” The original intent of these questions was to determine if reading one version over the other seemed to prompt a different impression of the story, its culture, or its language of origin. The second half of this worksheet presented a side-by-side comparison of a short selection as rendered in Translation A versus Translation B. Three open-ended questions then followed, asking students to discuss examples of differences in syntax, diction, and the overall effectiveness of the two versions. This section yielded the most interesting comparative results.

B. “Happy Meal” Responses

The results of the multiple-choice questionnaire were very similar for both the “Happy Meal” Translation A and Translation B respondents. The two samples showed a very similar response pattern to both the objective and subjective questions, with the only notable difference being in the variety of incorrect responses for Translation B. While the majority of students reading both translations answered objective questions correctly, the range of incorrect answers tended to be wider in the B version. With a sample section this small, it is hard to draw conclusions from this.
For the second questionnaire, the ratings section revealed that the foreignized translation presented more obvious difficulties for students (see table 2). The average rating for four out of the five categories was higher for readers of Translation B, indicating that the foreign language and culture of origin were more obvious and the reading more difficult in the foreignized translation. Interestingly, the numbers were reversed with the last question: “Do you feel you learned much by completing this reading?” Readers of the domesticated version responded with an average of 3.17 out of 5 (where 1 was “not at all” and 5 was “very much), while readers of the foreignized version averaged 2.72 out of 5. This contradicted the assumptions I had made prior to the study. I had expected that students’ sense of having learned something new would increase with their recognition of wider differences in culture and language (the more different they found the culture and language, the more they would learn). However, it seems that students who felt they understood the text better came away from the experience feeling they had learned more.

Table 2
Average Ratings for Both Translations of “Happy Meal”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>* Questions were ranked from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very/very much)</th>
<th>How difficult was this reading?</th>
<th>How different is the culture of this text from American culture?</th>
<th>Was it evident by the diction and syntax that you were reading a translation?</th>
<th>To what degree did the fact that this was translated affect your attitude toward completing the reading?</th>
<th>Do you feel you learned much by completing this reading?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Happy Meal A</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>3.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy Meal B</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>2.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For the four open-ended questions that followed the ratings section, two trends stood out. While most of the responses were fairly similar among the A and B groups, I found interesting distinctions between the two groups in Questions 8 and 9. When students were asked in Question 8 to list three words to describe the story, those who read Translation B were more likely to list negative words. Overall, most responses were positive, and students in both A and B groups wrote words like “emotional,” “sweet,” and “surprising.” Twenty-eight percent of the B responses, however, included negative words along the lines of “condescending,” “confusing,” and “odd,” while only 8.5% of the A responses included such language. It seems that the foreignized version inspired a more negative impression than the domesticated one. While the goal of foreignization is to convey a sense of strangeness, it may be counterproductive if it provokes negative judgment upon the source culture. The foreignized translation did seem to draw students’ attention to the linguistic aspect of the text, however. When students were asked in Question 9 what elements of their story seemed different from American culture, 33% of B respondents referenced the language, as compared to 8.5% of A respondents. Readers of the foreignized translation cited the “sophisticated,” “specific,” and unusual vocabulary and the “short and clipped” sentence structure as being important cultural differences. This seems a small indication that my attempts to draw attention to the source language through the foreignized translation met with some success.

The question of language was explored more explicitly in the side-by-side comparison and final three questions (see figure 1). This comparison presented the first few paragraphs of the story as rendered in each translation. I chose this particular excerpt (reproduced below) because it contained a variety of different elements reflective of the
two translation methodologies. The selections used different word choices in several instances, including use of original French terminology in Translation B. They also varied syntactically in multiple places, which, combined with some literal word for word translations, conveyed a sense of French phrasing and cadence in Translation B. These two selections provided enough material for students to be able to comment on some of the elements I had intentionally made distinct between the two versions.

**“Happy Meal” Comparative Analysis of Syntax and Diction**

Read the side by side translations below and answer the questions that follow.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HAPPY MEAL, Translation A</th>
<th>HAPPY MEAL, Translation B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I love this girl. I want to make her happy. I want to invite her to lunch. A fancy restaurant with mirrors and cloth napkins. Sit next to her, look at her profile, watch the people all around me and let everything get cold. I love her.</td>
<td>This girl, I love her. I long to make her happy. I long to invite her to lunch. A big brasserie with mirrors and cloth napkins. To sit myself next to her, look at her profile, watch the people and let everything get cold. I love her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Okay,” she says, “but we’re going to McDonald’s.” She doesn’t wait for me to grumble about that. “It’s been a really long time…” she adds, setting her book down, “really long…”</td>
<td>“All right,” she says to me, “but we’re going to McDonald’s.” She doesn’t wait for me to grumble. “It’s been such a long time…” she adds, setting her book next to her, “such a long time…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She’s exaggerating, it’s been less than two months. I know how to count. But fine. This girl loves nuggets and barbecue sauce, what can I do?</td>
<td>She’s exaggerating, this makes less than two months. I know how to count. But okay. This young person loves nuggets and barbecue sauce, what can I do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If we stay together long enough, I’ll teach her other things. I’ll teach her about fancy egg sauces and crepes Suzette, for example. If we stay together long enough, I’ll teach her that the waiters in the fancy restaurants are not allowed to touch our napkins, that they let them glide down when removing the first plate. She’ll be pretty impressed.</td>
<td>If we stay together long enough, I’ll teach her other things. I’ll teach her sauce gribiche and crepes Suzette, for example. If we stay together long enough, I’ll teach her that the waiters in the big brasseries don’t have the right to touch our napkins, that they let them slip down while removing the first plate. She’ll be good and surprised.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Side-by-side Comparison of “Happy Meal” Translations

For the first two questions after the side-by-side reading, students were given similar prompts with regard to diction and syntax. They were asked to identify a difference and discuss the way this changed their impression of an aspect of the story.
Students were unable to reliably distinguish between syntax and diction in their responses, but they did all cite specific textual differences and articulate a number of thoughtful conclusions. By far the most frequent commentary was to the effect that Translation B seemed more “sophisticated,” while Translation B sounded more “casual.” Respondents described the domesticated Translation A as “more direct,” “relatable,” and “natural.” It “made sense,” read “like a thought,” and seemed “translated to fit American culture.” Most students agreed that the diction and syntax seemed more advanced in B than A, but students were split in their feelings toward this. Many of the students described Translation B with positive words, like “educated,” “more intelligent,” “Shakespearean,” “mature,” “formal,” and “elegant.” Others found the language less appealing, labeling it “forced,” “unnatural,” “condescending,” and “snobby.” And some students included both positive and negative comments in the same response (one student called Translation B both “poetic” and “clunky”). Interestingly, a number of students from both groups felt that the difference in language affected their impression of the narrator. Most of these students wrote that the narrator in version B seemed older, while the version A narrator sounded like a teenager. These students further pointed out that this changed the dynamic of the story by reducing the element of surprise in Translation B when the narrator was eventually revealed to be a father.

Similar themes appeared in student responses to the final question asking them to assess the effectiveness of the two versions. Students who found the domesticated version more effective explained that it was “simpler,” “easier,” “accessible,” “smoother,” “natural,” “more American,” and better suited for a wider audience. Some also argued that it felt more “innocent” and better evoked the voice of a teenager. Readers who found
the foreignized version more effective tended to argue either that the B translation seemed to convey more love and emotion which helped develop the father/daughter relationship, or that it more effectively conveyed French culture. This last reason was particularly interesting, as several students made connections specifically between the language of the piece and its effective conveyance of culture. While some students simply said that Translation B gave “a better sense” of the setting or culture, others provided more developed explanations. These included the idea that the sophistication of the language was in keeping with French culture as expressed in the story through the narrator’s admiration for fine dining and dressing. One student wrote that Translation B has “a more sophisticated and intricate air to it, which correlates with French culture and its emphasis on elegance and fanciness.” Another explained that the “love and elegance” emphasized through the language of Translation B tie in with French culture, making B “a better fit for the story.” These responses suggest that a number of students found that the foreignized language contributed to and supported their understanding of the cultural aspects of the story. Nevertheless, overall, a greater number of students identified Translation A (44%) over Translation B (34%) as the more effective of the two versions (see table 3).

The students’ preference for the more natural domesticated version aligns with the ratings data stating students felt they learned more after reading Translation A. All in all, the high school readers were more comfortable reading Translation A and seemed to struggle less to identify with the narrator and follow the story. This is consistent with the reviewers Lawrence Venuti references in The Translator’s Invisibility who value fluency in a translation above all. A plurality of my American high school readers, like
commercial reviewers, preferred the ease, comfort, and enjoyment of a domesticated text. On the other hand, the foreignized translation of “Happy Meal” did seem to spark greater reflection on the language of the source and its connection to the source culture.

Table 3

Effectiveness Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More effective “Happy Meal” translation</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Translation A</td>
<td>18 votes, 44% of respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translation B</td>
<td>14 votes, 34% of respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>9 votes, 22% of respondents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. La Rue Cases-Nègres Responses

The overall results for *La Rue Cases-Nègres* were in every way less clear than the results for “Happy Meal.” There was little I could conclude from the results of the multiple-choice questionnaire, as responses based on both translations indicated very similar comprehension levels. Overall, readers of both translations showed a solid understanding of the text, which suggested that the foreignization attempts did not significantly impede comprehension. For the few questions that were subjective, the opinions were roughly equivalent between versions. When students were asked which theme struck them as most prominent, the most popular response in both groups was “growing up.” It may be worth noting, however, that the second most common answer in group B was “racial inequality” as opposed to “economic struggles” in group A (see figure 2). I did strive to include some more racially evocative terms in Translation B, so
the higher percentage (25% versus 13.6%) may possibly reflect students’ sensitivity to this language. Other opinion-based questions did not yield significant differences from which I could draw any logical conclusions.

Figure 2. Breakdown of Themes Students Found Most Prominent

For the second questionnaire, the ratings section was somewhat less telling than the ratings for “Happy Meal.” The average ratings for Translation B were higher for level of difficulty, perception of foreign syntax, and the correlation between the text’s translated status and students’ attitude toward reading it. Students seemed to find Translation B more challenging. However, on average, readers of Translation A believed the culture of their text differed more from American culture than readers of Translation B. Finally, students who read Translation A ranked the amount they learned from the text just slightly higher than B readers, for an average rating of 3.18 versus 3.12. Taken as a whole, the ratings suggest that, at least to a small degree, students found Translation B more foreign than Translation A. It is unclear how this influenced their understanding of the text, however, since, despite the linguistic differences evident in the foreignized text, the readers of the domesticated translation perceived a greater cultural difference through
their reading. This may have been due to students’ better understanding of the more natural text, an ineffectiveness of some of my attempts to domesticate the translation, or random chance and a small sample size.

Table 4

Average Ratings for Both Translations of *La Rue Cases-Nègres*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>Questions were ranked from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very/very much)</em></th>
<th><strong>How difficult was this reading?</strong></th>
<th><strong>How different is the culture of this text from American culture?</strong></th>
<th><strong>Was it evident by the diction and syntax that you were reading a translation?</strong></th>
<th><strong>To what degree did the fact that this was translated affect your attitude toward completing the reading?</strong></th>
<th><strong>Do you feel you learned much by completing this reading?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sugar Cane Alley A</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plantation Alley B</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>3.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the four open-ended questions that followed the ratings section, I was unable to identify trends that suggested a particular response to the style of translation students read. Whereas in the “Happy Meal” responses a few patterns emerged, the responses to *Sugar Cane Alley* and *Plantation Alley* were so broad and varied, I could find no meaningful connections between ideas. When asked to list three words they associated with the story, answers ran the gamut. A random sampling from both translations includes the following words: “ antiquated,” “change,” “poverty,” “slavery,” “blissful ignorance,” “sharecropping,” “compassionate,” “unfortunate,” “cycle,” “historical,” “compelling,” etc. The questions about culture received equally diverse responses, though most observations fell into three categories: comments on race and the legacy of slavery, comments on poverty and economic oppression, and comments on the structure.
of the community. All of these topics were referenced in the multiple-choice questions, so they do not necessarily demonstrate originality of thought. Several students saw similarities between the Martinican culture of the 1930s and the sharecropping economy in the American South at the same time (also referenced in the lesson materials). Others emphasized the hierarchical social structure on the plantation. Some perceptive students commented on the role of parents in providing their children with a practical education rather than receiving access to schools. On the whole, there was no noticeable difference in the content or quality of the responses from each group. Both the A and B samples included some insightful and intelligent inferences from the text as well as some rather simplistic and incomplete observations.

Based on these responses, neither translation seemed to draw readers’ attention to the source language. The free-response questions regarding culture contained very little reference to the aspect of language. Three students (split between groups) did comment that the proper nouns sounded foreign, but no other reference was made to word choice, syntax, or any other linguistic differences. I believe this may be due to the already very foreign nature of the story’s setting, characters, and plot. The students could easily identify so many more obvious aspects of Martinican culture that they did not consider the more subtle issue of language.

The students did react to the language of the translations when it was addressed explicitly in the side-by-side comparison and final three questions (see figure 3). The passages for comparison were excerpted from an episode in the middle of the story when the children enact a plan to get matches and rum from the plantation store. I selected this excerpt because it included a number of translation decisions that I considered at length
when crafting the different versions. Two sentences, in particular, presented difficulties
due to their complexity in the original, which made it difficult to maintain both a childish
voice and fluency even in the domesticated version (see figure 4). The selections also
contained other small differences in diction and syntax, including an instance where I
created a full sentence in Translation A to translate a fragment in the original (Du rhum!
des allumettes!). Perhaps most significantly, the chosen passage also included several
foreign words that I preserved in the Translation B: maman and case. Given my lengthy
reflections on whether or how to translate case, I was particularly interested to see how
readers might react to this difference. Lastly, of course, the titles at the top were clearly
different, and students might consider commenting on this as well.

Sugar Cane Alley Comparative Analysis of Syntax and Diction

Read the side by side translations below and answer the questions that follow.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUGAR CANE ALLEY, Translation A</th>
<th>PLANTATION ALLEY, Translation B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maximilienne was already on her way when Tortilla reconsidered and called her back:</td>
<td>Maximilienne was already on her way when Tortilla, after reconsidering, called her back:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Hey, I’ve got an idea! To get them to really believe your maman is sending you, ask for a jar of rum too.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Hey, I’ve got an idea! So that they’ll really believe it’s your maman sending you, ask for a jar of rum too.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She quickly found a bottle, and Maximilienne set off to the sound of Tortilla’s reiterated exhortations.</td>
<td>She moved quickly to find a bottle, and Maximilienne set off to the sound of Tortilla’s reiterated exhortations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mute, breathless, practically frozen in place, we watched her climb the hill. Then, suddenly overcome with panic when she arrived in sight of the big house, we rushed into the nearest hut. And we waited, without speaking.</td>
<td>Mute, breathless, nearly immobile, we watched her climb the hill. Then, suddenly overcome with panic at the moment she arrived in sight of the House, we dashed into the nearest case. And we waited, without speaking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When Maximilienne returned, out of breath from running, and showed us the box of matches and the bottle of rum, I felt as if I’d been transported to a world where the dreams of children came true without any interference from parents. It was as if something invisible had just taken place; as if by the apparition of our messenger, we were now going to live a life of joyous freedom.</td>
<td>When Maximilienne returned, breathless from running, with the box of matches and the bottle of rum, I felt a sensation of being transported to a world where the desires of children at last come true without the meddling or censure of parents. It was as if something invisible had just taken place, as if, by the apparition of our messenger, we were now going to live a life of pure and excited life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We had rum and matches! In our very own hands - we who were considered too young to use them! Now we could make fire and drink this liquor that we’d only ever smelled before! We have matches! And rum, above all!</td>
<td>Rums! Matches! In our very own hands - we who were considered too little to use them! To be able to make fire and drink this drink that we only knew by its smell. Matches! And rum above all!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. Side-by-side Comparison of La Rue Cases-Nègres Translations
The results, however, were disappointing. Only one student commented on *case*, though a few mentioned the use of *maman*. Overall, a plurality of students labeled the language in Translation B as more sophisticated or unusual than A. They described B as using “elevated” language and being “elegant,” “mature,” “refined,” and “descriptive.” Some wrote that the result was a more “authentic” and “accurate” narrative, but others found that the foreignizing word choices were “unnecessary” and produced a text that was “uptight” and “wordy and confusing.” In contrast, these students labeled Translation A “conversational and casual,” “easier to get,” and “more syntactically appealing.” Other respondents, however, wrote the exact opposite. As a result, the responses were rife with contradictions. Translation B was both “more childish” and “less childish,” “more natural and present” and “less natural to English,” and “more aligned with proper English grammar” yet containing “broken English.” Translation A was “refined and mature” but also “blocky and awkward.” Its narrator was, according to one student, “more put together but worse at grammar.” These inconsistencies were numerous enough to preclude conclusions about the effectiveness of one translation over the other. Instead,
they called into question my success in producing a distinctly domesticated or foreignized style in either one. The two “problem sentences” included in the excerpt seemed to confirm this failure. Students strongly disagreed about which version sounded more natural and which better evoked the voice of a child.

The student comments on the narrative voice were perhaps the most interesting aspect of the results. Slightly more than one-third of the students commented on the way the translations’ diction or syntax aligned with their perception of the narrator. They all perceived the narrator as a young boy and therefore felt that simpler language was “more suitable” for the character as it “[fit] better with the narrator’s personality.” The majority of these respondents found Translation A “amateur,” “childish,” and “uneducated,” while Translation B was “mature,” “sophisticated,” and “formal.” In some instances, however, a few specific sentences elicited the opposite reaction. Several students zeroed in on the last paragraph where the B narrator exclaims, “Rum! Matches!” while the A narrator proclaims, “We had run! and matches!” using a complete sentence, albeit with unconventional punctuation. The single-word responses struck several students as being more childlike than the subject-verb construction. Two more sentences some readers found awkward in the B version (see figure 4) led others to echo the minority position that B was more childish and uneducated. The inconsistency here may be due, in part, to the inconsistency present in the source text or the inadequacy of my translation. I had struggled to satisfactorily translate the sentences that sounded overly complex in the original.

For a number of students, the issue of the narrative voice was key to their assessment of the texts’ effectiveness. They argued that the text was most effective when
the language was consistent with the narrator’s identity and logically contributed to his character development. These students generally found Translation A more effective. Other students preferred Translation B and provided the kind of answer I had originally anticipated, as in this response: “I feel Translation A is better at connecting to the reader with familiar English phrases, but Translation B is better at representing the story’s Martinican culture.” Ultimately, however, nearly half the students declared that neither translation was more effective than the other. Translation B received more positive votes (13) than translation A (8), but 45% of students (17) wrote that both stories seemed equally effective. These 17 students felt that both stories “[got] the point across.” As one representative student wrote, “Although there are some minor differences, I feel that if I read either of those sections without reading the other I would have had the same understanding and interpretation of the story.” Although the differences between versions seemed significant to me, they clearly did not strike the student readers as quite so noteworthy.

1. Interpretations

What conclusions can be drawn from these limited and confusing results? My own tendency is to think that the results may have been confusing and at times contradictory because the text was. It is important to take a critical look at my translation and reevaluate some of my decisions, particularly my efforts at domestication in Translation A. The students’ inability to consistently identify stylistic differences between translations could mean that I did not make the two translations distinct enough for this sort of analysis. Another consideration might be the selection of the passage I provided for comparison. In retrospect, this may have been too complicated a passage to
present to the students. Perhaps I should have provided them with a selection in which the translation decisions had been simpler and more clear-cut. Presenting them with a passage that had been particularly difficult for me to translate undoubtedly made it more likely that the students themselves would find difficulty in analyzing the translations.

In addition to the lack of consensus among respondents, it was frustrating to see that the variations I considered most significant between versions - the titles and *hut* vs. *case* - went virtually unnoticed by students. I could have adapted the questions to ask for responses to specific differences like these, but doing so would have eliminated the ability to compare results directly with the “Happy Meal” responses. A final possibility is, of course, that these particular students were simply not well-equipped for this kind of assignment. All the students who read *La Rue Cases-Nègres* were in either 11th or 12th grade, but the sample size was small, and the results could have been skewed by students unused to this type of analysis.

The results of this reading sample certainly did not bear out my supposition that my foreignized translation would prompt more critical thinking and language awareness than my domesticated one. I would argue, however, that to a degree, both translations acted as foreignized ones. Both Translation A and Translation B provided students with a new cultural perspective, and students identified awkward and unusual language usage in each. Descriptors like “broken English” and “blocky and clunky” meant that the language registered as “alien” to anglophone students. In this respect, their difficulties with the language were perhaps the type of reaction Venuti was looking for. Both translations contained language or syntax “whose strangeness invite[d] the recognition that [they were] a translation produced in a different culture at a different period” (Venuti,
“Strategies” 244). Whether these foreignized readings actually enhanced student understanding of 1930s Martinican culture more than a more fluent translation, however, cannot be determined from this research.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

A. Comparative Conclusions

Before completing the study, I had hypothesized that teaching foreignized reading selections might help draw the readers’ attention to the original language, prompt critical thinking about the source culture, and perhaps even encourage foreign language acquisition in students. While my research did not include a way to assess this third objective, I did hope to compare the success of domesticated versus foreignized texts in addressing the first two. With my study participants totaling less than 50% of my original goal, I did not collect enough data to draw reliable conclusions. Considering the “Happy Meal” results together with the La Rue Cases-Nègres responses, however, I can make several observations. Ultimately, the study challenged some of my original ideas and helped me better understand certain nuances of Venuti’s somewhat amorphous theory of foreignization.

Taken together, the study results showed a general consensus that the foreignized versions were more “sophisticated,” a term used by many students in both the “Happy Meal” groups and the La Rue Cases-Nègres samples. There was a noticeably higher perception of difficulty in readers of Translation B for both stories, but this did not correspond to a consistent articulation of increased cultural understanding (see table 5). There was no consistency in the type of translation that students found more effective, as “Happy Meal” readers preferred A, while La Rue Cases-Nègres readers preferred B or stated no preference. It is impossible to postulate from this data whether a more
challenging text is a hindrance or a help to the kind of cultural instruction world literature courses seek to facilitate.

Table 5

Average Ratings for all Translations Compared

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>* Questions were ranked from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very/very much)</th>
<th>How difficult was this reading?</th>
<th>How different is the culture of this text from American culture?</th>
<th>Was it evident by the diction and syntax that you were reading a translation?</th>
<th>To what degree did the fact that this was translated affect your attitude toward completing the reading?</th>
<th>Do you feel you learned much by completing this reading?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Happy Meal A</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>3.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy Meal B</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>2.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar Cane Alley A</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plantation Alley B</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>3.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although “Happy Meal” results generally corresponded to my expectations for this study, the counterexample provided by *La Rue Cases-Nègres* responses confounded my assumptions. The unpredictable results suggested three interesting conclusions.

1. **The level of foreignness of a story’s content may influence the perception of its language.**

Although the B translation of *La Rue Cases-Nègres* contained at least as many intentional attempts at foreignization as the “Happy Meal” B translation, readers seemed much more attentive to these abnormalities in “Happy Meal” On the other hand, while the cultural differences between American and French culture in “Happy Meal” were so subtle that some students confessed to being “under the impression it took place in America,” readers of *La Rue Cases-Nègres* easily identified many significant differences.
It may be that the plethora of unfamiliar content in *La Rue Cases-Nègres* attracted more notice than the language itself; or perhaps more foreignized language seemed natural alongside such foreign content. By contrast, students reading “Happy Meal” may have found the foreignized language more noticeable because it felt so incongruous with the domestic content of the story. This leads me to consider that a text’s content itself might affect readers’ impression of the language. Translators should therefore consider the interplay of content and language before deciding on a translation style.

2. **Foreignizing a text using literalism will affect the narrative voice in a manner specific to the source language.**

   In my study, the results of foreignizing a French text were generally to elevate the level of the text as descriptors like “sophisticated” revealed. Given the structure of French and its shared history with English, replicating French syntax and using cognates tends to produce an English that harkens back to an earlier era. The French language is shaped around grammatical constructions that have died out in the last hundred years among English speakers who have tended toward a more casual way of speaking. Consider the rule never to end a sentence with a preposition, still essential in French but practically defunct in English. Literally translating “l’homme dont je parlais” as “the man of whom I was speaking” automatically sounds both refined and outdated. Regardless of the content of the story or the identity of the narrator, foreignizing the text through imitation of the original style will result in the narration seeming more sophisticated to a modern English speaker. As my study revealed, this can be problematic when the story or narrator is not intended to sound sophisticated. The more formal voice in the B translation made the twist at the end of “Happy Meal” less of a surprise and created an off-putting disparity
between the narrator’s age and manner of speaking in *La Rue Cases-Nègres*. A translator of French must consider, then, whether the benefits of foreignization will be outweighed by potential distortion of the narrator’s character. On a broader scale, every language will have its own “feel” when translated into English, which will be more or less appropriate to accentuate depending on the intended voice of the story. It is clear, therefore, that foreignization through a literal imitative style of translation is not equally effective with all language pairs. As some of Venuti’s critics have pointed out, his foreignization approach is simply not practicable with all languages.

3. **Though critics lament the lack of specificity to Venuti’s foreignization approach, I believe Venuti is right to avoid enumerating precise requirements.**

Translators must be free to select some techniques over others, as not all approaches will be effective with every text. The problems with literal translations, addressed in the previous paragraph, are proof of this. Some techniques may also require more heavy-handed application than others. The fact that a number of my foreignization techniques went unnoticed in *La Rue Cases-Nègres* translation seemed to defeat their purpose. The point of creating a foreignized translation is to *draw attention* to the otherness of the source text and culture. If translational decisions do not have this effect, they are not succeeding as foreignization techniques. When some students reacted to my Plantation Alley B translation by saying it sounded more natural than the A version, I felt that I should have accentuated the text’s French language origins further with still more unusual syntax when possible. The sense that some of my foreignizing attempts needed to be exaggerated helped me recognize the logic behind Venuti’s insistence that the most
important aspect of a foreignizing tactic is its “resistance to [prevailing] values” of a culture rather than unfailing accuracy to the original (Translator’s Invisibility 36). As long as they are still truthfully conveying the content of the text, foreignizing translators, like domesticating ones, may need to take certain liberties to achieve their desired effect.

**B. Final Thoughts**

Though the results of my study failed to demonstrate an advantage to teaching domesticated or foreignized texts in translation, they did provide a useful demonstration of the complexities of the translation process. Reading the student reactions to the text helped me better understand the consequences of my translation decisions. Certainly, the process of effective linguistic foreignization is much more complex than I had anticipated.

I remain convinced that providing students with a translated text that prompts them to acknowledge its source language as well as culture enhances their learning on a personal and linguistic level. Comments students made about the translated texts in my study showed that they did carefully consider the question of translation, perhaps for the first time. While students may find translation studies difficult, I would argue that the classroom is just the place to challenge students with texts that might otherwise be outside their comfort zone. Teachers have an obligation to broaden students’ horizons through reading, and both domesticated and foreignized texts can achieve this in different ways. Recognizing that the issues at play are complex, I hope to continue to explore the role of translation style in stimulating student engagement with other cultures in the world literature classroom.
APPENDIX

RESPONSE QUESTIONS COMPLETED BY STUDY PARTICIPANTS*

*Formatting has been altered to fit this document.
“Happy Meal” Reading Comprehension Questions
Please circle only one answer for each question.

1. What is one indication that the narrator might be Valentine’s adult father rather than her teenage boyfriend?
   a) He is annoyed by the other people in McDonald’s.
   b) He wants Valentine to hold his hand.
   c) He sees himself as a knight in shining armor.
   d) He seems to have experience with sophisticated food and restaurants.

2. What does the narrator seem to fear most?
   a) Eating packaged food.
   b) Dealing with other people.
   c) Not teaching Valentine about the finer things in life
   d) Losing Valentine’s devotion

3. Based on the details of the story, what is the narrator most likely wearing?
   a) A tracksuit
   b) A dress suit
   c) Jeans and a sweater
   d) Khaki pants and a casual shirt

4. Which of these traits does the narrator accentuate in his descriptions of Valentine?
   a) Her beauty and gracefulness
   b) Her opinionated character
   c) Her sophisticated tastes
   d) All of the above
   e) Both A and B

5. What time of year does the story most likely take place?
   a) Summer
   b) Spring
   c) Fall
   d) Winter

6. Based on the details of the story, what way is McDonald’s in France different from a McDonald’s in the US?
   a) There is no real difference
   b) The servers have a larger role in the French McDonald’s.
   c) French McDonald’s attract different kinds of people than American ones.
   d) French McDonald’s carry different types of food
7. Why does the narrator dislike McDonald’s so much?
   a) He believes the food is poor quality and the ambiance is unsophisticated.
   b) Ice cream makes him feel sick.
   c) He thinks the people there are bad influences on his daughter.
   d) Eating packaged food makes him very nervous.

8. Why does the narrator allow Valentine to dictate the details of the lunch outing?
   a) The narrator loves her and wants to please her.
   b) She has a controlling and demanding personality.
   c) She is the one paying.
   d) The narrator wants to impress her so she will go out with him.

9. What does the father’s narrative style seem to reflect?
   a) His emotional personality
   b) His native language, French
   c) His fragmentary thoughts
   d) His literary background

10. What is one aspect of Valentine that is remarkable or unusual for someone her age?
    a) She has dragonfly barrettes in her hair.
    b) She has a mature way of speaking.
    c) She likes McDonald’s food.
    d) She likes to see her father happy.
“Happy Meal” Reading Response

Circle the version you read: Translation A / Translation B

A. Complete the chart below by selecting a rating from 1-5 for each question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RATINGS</th>
<th>Not at all (1)</th>
<th>Some what (3)</th>
<th>Very/Very much (5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How difficult was this reading?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How different is the culture of this text from American culture?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Was it evident by the diction and syntax that you were reading a translation?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. To what degree did the fact that this was translated affect your attitude toward completing the reading?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Do you feel you learned much by completing this reading?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Answer each question below as clearly as possible. Use an additional sheet of paper if necessary.

1. What three words would you use to describe this story?

2. What elements of this story seemed different from American culture?

3. What are three impressions that this reading gives you about French culture?

4. In general, how is a country’s language related to its culture?
“Happy Meal” Comparative Analysis of Syntax and Diction

Read the side by side translations below and answer the questions that follow.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HAPPY MEAL, Translation A</th>
<th>HAPPY MEAL, Translation B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I love this girl. I want to make her happy. I want to invite her to lunch. A fancy restaurant with mirrors and cloth napkins. Sit next to her, look at her profile, watch the people all around me and let everything get cold. I love her.</td>
<td>This girl, I love her. I long to make her happy. I long to invite her to lunch. A big brasserie with mirrors and cloth napkins. To sit myself next to her, look at her profile, watch the people and let everything get cold. I love her.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| "Okay," she says, "but we're going to McDonald's." She doesn't wait for me to grumble about that. "It's been a really long time..." she adds, setting her book down, "really long..." | "All right," she says to me, "but we're going to McDonald's." She doesn't wait for me to grumble. "It's been such a long time..." she adds, setting her book next to her, "such a long time..."
| She's exaggerating, it's been less than two months. I know how to count. But fine. This girl loves nuggets and barbecue sauce, what can I do? If we stay together long enough, I'll teach her other things. I'll teach her about fancy egg sauces and crepes Suzette, for example. If we stay together long enough, I'll teach her that the waiters in the fancy restaurants are not allowed to touch our napkins, that they let them glide down when removing the first plate. She'll be pretty impressed. | She's exaggerating, this makes less than two months. I know how to count. But okay. This young person loves nuggets and barbecue sauce, what can I do? If we stay together long enough, I'll teach her other things. I'll teach her sauce gribiche and crepes Suzette, for example. If we stay together long enough, I'll teach her that the waiters in the big brasseries don't have the right to touch our napkins, that they let them slip down while removing the first plate. She'll be good and surprised. |

1. Underline one example of a phrase or sentence in which the syntax differs between translations. How does the change in syntax change your impression of the narrator or the writing style?

2. Circle one place where the two translations use different diction (word choice) to convey the same basic idea. Explain how the different words affect your impression of the story. Consider the tone, message, character development, and cultural context they help to establish.

3. Do you feel that one translation is more effective than the other? Explain.
Sugar Cane Alley Reading Comprehension Questions
for Translation A
Please circle only one answer for each question.

1. The narrative voice of this selection can best be described as that of
   a) a Martinican man looking back on his past
   b) a young boy from Martinique
   c) an uneducated plantation worker from Martinique
   d) an third person observer of the society on Martinique

2. Why doesn’t Gran’ma Tine want José to join the children’s work gang?
   a) She doesn’t want him to fall into the cycle of hard work and poverty that she has experienced.
   b) She wants him to learn the value of hard work.
   c) She wants to punish him for the part he played in starting the fire.
   d) She doesn’t think the békés make good overseers.

3. What causes Mr. Gabriel, the béké overseer, to announce that children can longer stay in Sugar Cane Alley unsupervised?
   a) The children stole rum.
   b) The children got drunk.
   c) The children set fire to part of the village.
   d) The children lied to the white people at the plantation store.

4. What initial discovery triggers the events of the story?
   a) The parents refuse to let their children come to work with them.
   b) The overseer shuts down the village school.
   c) The children find a nest of chicken eggs and want to eat them.
   d) Paul sets fire to Mr. Saint-Louis’s yard.

5. Why does José have to stay in bed for several days after the fire?
   a) He has been badly burned.
   b) He has trouble breathing.
   c) He is recovering from a severe beating.
   d) He feels guilty and ashamed.

6. What upsets Gran’ma Tine the most about the fire?
   a) She worries about how the békés will respond to it.
   b) He is upset that José disobeyed her.
   c) She worries that José might have been hurt.
   d) She thinks it ruins her chances of getting José into the children’s work gang.
7. According to the last few lines of the story, why don’t the children complain about having to work or accompany their parents to work in the field?
   a) They all get paid for their work.
   b) They accept that their life will be full of hard work, like their parents’ lives.
   c) They are afraid to complain in front of the békés.
   d) They know that it is only temporary and there will soon be an end to the work.

8. Based on the reading, which of the following is clearly true of José’s community?
   a) The plantation workers and slave descendants live in a cycle of poverty.
   b) The békés are physically abusive to the plantation workers.
   c) The children of Sugar Cane Alley have to pay for their own education.
   d) Most of the parents do not truly love their children.

9. Which answer best describes Gran’ma Tine?
   a) A kind-hearted, determined, strong woman
   b) A proud, stubborn, successful leader in the community
   c) An uneducated, hard-working mother-figure for José
   d) A motivated, educated, and frail grandmother.

10. Which theme seems most prominent to you in the story?
    a) Racial inequality
    b) Economic struggles
    c) Growing up
    d) The importance of family and community
1. The narrative voice of this selection can best be described as that of
   a) a Martinican man looking back on his past
   b) a young boy from Martinique
   c) an uneducated plantation worker from Martinique
   d) an third person observer of the society on Martinique

2. Why doesn’t M’man Tine want José to join the petites-bandes?
   a) She doesn’t want him to fall into the cycle of hard work and poverty that she has experienced.
   b) She wants him to learn the value of hard work.
   c) She wants to punish him for the part he played in starting the fire.
   d) She doesn’t think the békés make good overseers.

3. What causes Mr. Gabriel, the béké overseer, to announce that children can longer stay in Plantation Alley unsupervised?
   a) The children stole rum.
   b) The children got drunk.
   c) The children set fire to part of the village.
   d) The children lied to the white people at the plantation store.

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   a) The parents refuse to let their children come to work with them.
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Grade level______  
Course title__________________  

Reading Response for Sugar Cane Alley / Plantation Alley

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A. Complete the chart below by selecting a rating from 1-5 for each question.

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**Sugar Cane Alley Comparative Analysis of Syntax and Diction**

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<th>SUGAR CANE ALLEY, Translation A</th>
<th>PLANTATION ALLEY, Translation B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Maximilienne was already on her way when Tortilla reconsidered and called her back:  
"Hey, I’ve got an idea! To get them to really believe your mama is sending you, ask for a jar of rum too."  
She quickly found a bottle, and Maximilienne set off to the sound of Tortilla's reiterated exhortations.  
Mute, breathless, practically frozen in place, we watched her climb the hill. Then, suddenly overcome with panic when she arrived in sight of the big house, we rushed into the nearest hut. And we waited, without speaking.  
When Maximilienne returned, out of breath from running, and showed us the box of matches and the bottle of rum, I felt as if I’d been transported to a world where the dreams of children came true without any interference from parents. It was as if something invisible had just taken place: as if by the apparition of our messenger, we were now going to live a life of joyous freedom.  
We had rum! and matches! in our very own hands - we who were considered too young to use them! Now we could make fire and drink this liquor that we'd only ever smelled before! We have matches! And rum, above all! | Maximilienne was already on her way when Tortilla, after reconsidering, called her back:  
"Hey, I’ve got an idea! So that they’ll really believe it's your maman sending you, ask for a jar of rum too."  
She moved quickly to find a bottle, and Maximilienne set off to the sound of Tortilla's reiterated exhortations.  
Mute, breathless, nearly immobile, we watched her climb the hill. Then, suddenly overcome with panic at the moment she arrived in sight of the House, we dashed into the nearest case.  
And we waited, without speaking.  
When Maximilienne returned, breathless from running, with the box of matches and the bottle of rum, I felt a sensation of being transported in a world where the desires of children at last come true without the meddling or censure of parents. It was as if something invisible had just taken place; as if, as by the apparition of our messenger, we were now going to live a free and exalted life.  
Rum! Matches! In our very own hands - we who were considered too little to use them! To be able to make fire and drink this drink that we only knew by its smell. Matches! And rum above all! |

1. Underline one example of a phrase or sentence in which the syntax differs between translations. How does the change in syntax change your impression of the narrator or the writing style?

2. Circle one place where the two translations use different diction to convey the same basic idea. Explain how the different words affect your impression of the story. Consider the tone, message, character development, and cultural context they help to establish.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY


Garayta, Isabel. “‘Toto, I’ve a Feeling We’re Not in Kansas Anymore’: Reading and Presenting Texts in Translation from ‘Familiar’ Cultures.” Maier and Massardier-Kenney, pp. 31-42.


