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Albert Camus' Les justes: a descriptive approach to the analysis of a drama text in translation.

Hudson, Joanna L

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These five basic strategies have been distinguished from past approaches used in the translation of drama texts, and are:

1. Treating the theatre text as a literary work
2. Using the SL cultural context as a frame text
3. Translating 'performability'
4. Creating SL verse drama in alternative forms
5. Co-operative translation (1985: 89-91)

In the first strategy, the text is treated as a written, literary work, and the translator deals only with distinctive features of dialogue, without taking paralinguistic features into account. Bassnett-McGuire notes that this is probably the most common form of theatre translation, especially where the translation has been commissioned for publication rather than for stage production. The second strategy involves the use of TL stereotypical images of the source culture in order to provide a comic frame, and it usually results in a massive ideological shift. The term 'performability' in the third strategy, is often used by translators who claim they have reproduced the 'performability' of the text by linguistic means, thus taking the performance dimension of a theatre text into consideration. Although never defined, the term seems to imply that the translator has tried to create fluent speech rhythms so that TL actors can speak the lines of the text without too much difficulty. The fourth strategy concerns plays written in verse in the source language, which are translated in other forms in the target language. The fifth strategy involves 'the collaboration of at least two people on the making of the TL text - either an SL and a TL native speaker, or someone with a knowledge of the SL who works together with the director and/or actors who are to present the work', so that a basic scenario is produced which is then worked on by the company which is to stage the play.

Bassnett-McGuire feels that this last strategy is most likely to produce the best results since it 'involves the translation process with a set of problems related to the performance of a theatre text' (1985: 90-91).

The changes to Lambert and Van Gorp's model outlined in this chapter were made in order to direct it more specifically towards the translation description of drama texts. These texts differ substantially from poetry and prose in that they are written to be performed; they are more complex as they contain both verbal and non-verbal communication. Aspects peculiar to the study of drama texts were therefore added to the model in the hope that this would enable an accurate descriptive analysis of Camus' *Les Justes* and Henry Jones' translation to be carried out.

CHAPTER TWO - THE SYSTEMIC CONTEXT

The need to study translation within a systemic context has been stressed by descriptive translation theorists. The final section of Lambert and Van Gorp's scheme which comprises this systemic context considers: oppositions between micro- and macro-levels and between text and theory, intertexual relations and intersystemic relations. The oppositions between micro- and macro-levels and between text and theory will be considered following the micro- and macro-levels of analysis, but the scope of this project is too limited for the intertexual and intersystemic relations to be studied in any detail. Lambert and Van Gorp remark that:

> the different translational strategies evident in the text itself provide the most explicit information about the relations between the source and target systems, and about the translator's position in and between them. Furthermore, the translated text is an obvious document for the study of conflicts and parallels between translational theory and practice. The comparison of T1 and T2 is therefore a relevant part of translation studies - as long as it does not obscure the wider perspective. (1985: 47)

In order not to omit this 'wider perspective' entirely, a brief outline of Camus' literary works, his philosophy and his position in both French and other literatures will be briefly considered.

The plot of *Les Justes* is based on an actual event in Russian history in which the Grand-duke Serge Alexandrovich, the uncle of Czar Nicholas II, was assassinated in Moscow in 1905 by a student named Kaliayev. Kaliayev was a member of a group of idealistic terrorists known as the *Organisation de Combat*, which was led by Boris Savinkov, and Camus uses Savinkov's memoirs and other writings by the group on which to base his play. Kaliayev refused to throw the bomb at the Grand-duke

on a prior occasion, as the latter was accompanied by two children; only when the Grand-duke was alone did Kaliayev kill him. Kaliayev was then arrested, tried and executed. Camus considered Kaliayev to be 'a rebel with integrity, a man who (...) refused to extend revolutionary action beyond certain limits' (Freeman, 1971: 107). Because this group of terrorists was prepared to accept death as the price to be paid for revolt, Camus 'sees the Russian terrorists of 1905 as having resolved for one short moment of history the dilemma which has plagued man up to the present time: how to secure justice without degrading man in the process' (Schwarz, 1978: 291).

Camus' purpose, however, was not to create a historical play. Camus viewed theatre 'not as an instrument of political change or as a model of redemption, but as a means of exploring the choices which life offers in extreme situations' (Schwarz, 1978: 291), and in *Les Justes* he considers the distinction between revolt and revolution. Camus feels that revolt should be creative and relative, not destructive and absolute, for this is revolution. Revolt should 'be based on a recognition of values, a "qualitative" ethic, that is to say a scale of ethical priorities'. The rebel should therefore be prepared 'for the anguish of making value-judgements about other people whose claims to life are no greater than his own' (Freeman, 1971: 157). In *L'Homme révolté* Camus gives a number of historical examples where revolt has become altered and debased, but in his account of the 1905 terrorists he notes that:

> Kaliayev a douté jusqu'à la fin et ce doute ne l'a pas empêché d'agir; c'est en cela qu'il est l'image la plus pure de la révolte. (1951: 216)

In order to introduce this dialectic between 'idealist revolt' and 'realist revolution' into *Les Justes*, Camus creates a central conflict between

Kaliayev and another terrorist in the group, Stepan. Stepan, having been imprisoned by the Czar, is a bitter and hard realist. When Kaliayev fails to throw the bomb the first time, Stepan criticizes him harshly for disobeying the Organization and states :

> Quand nous nous déciderons à oublier les enfants, ce jour-là, nous serons les maîtres du monde et la révolution triomphera. (1986: 59)

The other members of the group , however, support Kaliayev's decision; Dora argues with Stepan, saying :

> Yanek accepte de tuer le grand-duc puisque sa mort peut avancer le temps où les enfants russes ne mourront plus de faim. Cela déjà n'est pas facile. Mais la mort des neveux du grand-duc n'empêchera aucun enfant de mourir de faim. Même dans la destruction, il y a un ordre, il y a des limites.

To which Stepan replies:

> Il n'y a pas de limites. La vérité est que vous ne croyez pas à la révolution. (1986: 62)

Stepan is prepared to commit any deed which he believes will contribute to the eventual reign of justice, whereas Kaliayev rejects this attitude as it subordinates morality to alleged efficacity, and because it increases present injustice in the name of an uncertain justice in the future (Cruickshank, 1960: 217). Alter reiterates this statement:

> La grandeur et le torment de Kaliayev, c'est de croire en une justice inséparable du bonheur, confondue avec la vie - une justice incarnée. S'il pèse le juste et l'injuste, c'est précisement parce qu'il lui importe vraiment de ne pas les confondre, parce qu'il lui semble impossible d'atteindre la justice par le chemin de l'injustice et du malheur. (1960: 333-334)

Camus believed that modern tragedy should be independent and distinctive, and not simply a modernization of ancient drama. He therefore needed to create a style of language in his plays which would be simple enough to be natural, and yet elevated enough to achieve tragic power.

He solved this problem by using a style of speech 'which is literary in tone without being too far removed from spoken language' (Cruickshank, 1960: 194). As Freeman points out 'Camus is "correct" in his theatre dialogue to the extent of using totally unnaturalistic structures such as the past historic, imperfect subjunctive and the inverted form of the interrogative' (1971: 158). Numerous examples of this can be found in *Les Justes*:

> Je suis heureux, Stepan, que le parti t'ait envoyé ici. (1986: 15)
>
> La proclamation est-elle rédigée? (1986: 17)
>
> Il fallait que tout fût prévu et que personne ne pût hésiter sur ce qu'il y avait à faire. (1986: 57)

Freeman summarizes Camus' approach to style and language in his plays by saying :

> Camus thus tried to harmonize all the elements of form to accord with his metaphysical and somewhat abstract themes. (...) with their elevated and unified tone, purity of language, minimization of physical detail, and concentration on theme to the exclusion of superfluous humour, anecdote and scenic ingenuity, Camus' plays are thus much more authentically classical in form than those of his contemporaries. (1971: 160)

The theme of revolt which is so central to *Les Justes* is one of the two most important philosophical concepts in Camus' work, the other being the theme of the absurd. *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* (1942) is a philosophical essay by Camus which is based upon the legend of Sisyphus :

> Les dieux avaient condamné Sisyphe à rouler sans cesse un rôcher jusqu'au sommet d'une montagne d'où la pierre retombait par son propre poids. Ils avaient pensé avec quelque raison qu'il n'est pas de punition plus terrible que le travail inutile et sans espoir. (1942: 163)

The myth is a metaphor for human life; man desires that the world be explicable in human terms, but the world is not explicable, so a feeling of the absurd results 'from the conflict between our awareness of death

and our desire for eternity, from the clash between our demand for explanation and the essential mystery of all existence' (Thody, 1957: 4-5). Camus was not the first to write about the absurd; the concept forms part of the existentialist movement which included such writers as André Malraux and Jean-Paul Sartre. Camus was original, however, in his view that the absurd nature of the world was, paradoxically, an invitation to happiness:

> The basic quality of the absurd world is that it reinforces man's solitude and renders all actually unimportant and insignificant. Having made this absence of values the philosophical centre of his early work, Camus is henceforth concerned with the creation of new moral values to replace the lost humanist tradition. (Thody, 1957: 17)

The value of existence, both his own and that of others, became important to Camus; he therefore advocated that not only should we not accept death but that we should refuse to accept solutions which destroy the absurd :

> Vivre, c'est faire vivre l'absurde. Le faire vivre, c'est avant tout le regarder. (...) l'absurde ne meurt que lorsqu'on s'en détourne. L'une des seules positions philosophiques cohérentes, c'est ainsi la révolte. Elle est un confrontement perpetuel de l'homme et de sa propre obscurité. (Camus, 1942: 76-77)

It can therefore be said that Camus conceived of revolt as 'a political doctrine which emphasizes the sanctity of human life and the need to translate justice, compassion, freedom and honour into practical realities' (Cruickshank, 1970: 240).

Attempts have often be made to categorize Camus' four original plays according to these two philosophical concepts, by classing *Caligula* and *Le Malentendu* as plays about the absurd, and *L'État de siège* and *Les Justes* as plays about revolt. Freeman, however, feels that all four are to some extent based on the notion of life's absurdity, and hence concern

the two possible reactions to this adsurdity: revolt and revolution. The difference between the plays depends on the different emphasis in each (1971: 6). Like Anouilh and Sartre, Camus used the theatre as a medium for serious statements about the more general aspects of human life, since he saw theatre as being an ideal vehicle for philosophising (Cruickshank, 1960: 190). Cruickshank notes that one of Camus' main problems as a dramatist was 'to portray individualized and convincing people while exploring metaphysical dilemmas' and that 'his plays have to reach a compromise between his own intellectual interests and the familiar expectations of theatre audiences' (1960: 193). Camus' theatre is essentially one of debate, a 'theatre of ideas', and the themes of the French theatre of the 1940s, 'Violence and horror, the inevitability and finality of death, the vertiginous isolation of man forced to take extreme actions', are all present in his work (Freeman, 1971: 11).

Camus was in many ways typical of the time in which he lived, his novels, plays and essays reflecting his personal response to the events of his times. The emphasis on the absurdity of man's existence and the consequent rejection of traditional attitudes and explanations which constitute the dual rebellion of the twentieth century, are both clearly manifested in the two themes of Camus's work: 'l'absurde' and 'la révolte' (Cruickshank, 1960: 221-222). Justin O'Brien remarks that all of Camus' writing 'consistently proclaims the dignity of the individual, the necessity of justice, and the primacy of freedom', and so 'Albert Camus can properly be called the conscience of our era' (1967: 155). Cruickshank notes that Camus was regarded by his contemporaries as 'the most significant writer of this generation (...) both a spokesman and a guide' (1960: viii). It therefore came as no surprise to his contemporaries when Camus was awarded the Nobel prize for literature in 1957.

Camus' influence has been felt not only in France but throughout Europe and the United States as well. Most of his work has been translated into English, mainly by either Stuart Gilbert (who translated *Les Justes* as *The Just Assassins*, 1958) or Justin O'Brien. It is interesting to note that *The Just* seems to be the only one of Camus' works to have been translated by Henry Jones.

In discussing Camus' plays within the context of other French theatre of this time, Cruickshank notes that although this type of 'theatre of ideas' is not usually very popular in England, these recent plays (i.e. those by writers such as Camus, Sartre and Marcel) have mostly been well received since 'they also possess an excellent sense of the theatre and because the moral issues behind their didacticism are the source of intense dramatic conflict. A theatre of ideas has proved acceptable when supported by sufficient skill and sufficiently important subject-matter' (1960: 191). Freeman feels that the reason Camus' plays are often reproached with being 'eternal debates', especially when they are staged in Britain or America, is due to 'bad, inept or casually naturalistic productions'. Camus' theatre does consist of debates, debates in which the philosophical implications are stressed and a high degree of tension is maintained. If this tension were to slacken in the middle of a debate, the play would fail. Productions of Camus' plays therefore require 'carefully stylized movement, lighting, grouping, gesture and delivery to establish a total *rapport* between actor and audience' (1971: 163-164).

Having thus given a brief outline of Camus' philosophy and his position in French and English literatures, the analysis of *Les Justes* and its translation will now be carried out according to Lambert and Van Gorp's scheme for translation description.

CHAPTER THREE - TEXT ANALYSIS

Before commencing the descriptive analysis of *Les Justes* and its translation, it was hypothesized that the translator, Henry Jones, would have adopted the approach which constitutes Bassnett-McGuire's first category, that is, the play would have been treated as a literary, and not a dramatic work. It was felt that any major changes to the structure or contents of the play were unlikely to have been made, owing to Camus' position as a well-known and highly respected literary figure both in France and throughout the world. It was further hypothesized that the satisfactory performance of this translation by members of the Performing Arts Council of the Transvaal was due more to Camus' style of writing, which has already been briefly discussed, than to a particular approach adopted by the translator. It was thought probable that the stage directions would have been treated in what Toury terms an 'acceptable' manner.

PRELIMINARY DATA

Jones has translated the title of the play *Les Justes* as *The Just*, which is a direct translation of the French, unlike Stuart Gilbert's translation of the play under the title of *The Just Assassins* (1958). Jones' trans-

lation appears as part of a work entitled *The Collected Works of Albert Camus*, and there is no indication on the title page of the volume that the plays are all translations. The title page to *The Just*, however, bears the words 'Translated from the French by HENRY JONES' (1965: 121), so the play is clearly acknowledged as a translation. The genre indication 'Pièce en cinq actes' on the title page of *Les Justes* (1986: 3) has been preserved on the title page of the translation as 'A Play in Five Acts' (1965: 121), but no mention is made on this page of Camus, the original author.

Camus includes a preface to the play describing the historical facts upon which the play was based, but this is omitted in the translation. Camus used a quotation from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* as an epigraph to *Les Justes* (the source text or ST), but this is also omitted in the translation (the target text or TT).

The general strategy throughout the TT is that of a complete translation; no substantial sections have been added or omitted (with the exceptions of the omitted preface and epigraph mentioned above), nor have any changes been made to the sequence of the text.

From this preliminary data it is established that the TT is acknowledged as a translation; whereas the overall translation strategy of the play itself is complete, however, two features of the ST which would not affect any actual performance of the play, namely the historical background and the epigraph, have been omitted in the TT. It is therefore hypothesized that further analysis on the macro- and micro-structural levels will show very few changes to the dramatic plot, events and dialogue of the play, but

that certain changes may be found to have been made to the stage directions.

MACRO-STRUCTURAL LEVEL

The division of the play into five acts has been preserved in the TT. The acts are not divided into scenes in either text. In the presentation of the acts, certain changes have been made in the format of the text in accordance with accepted conventions of script presentation in the target system. The names of the characters speaking the lines of dialogue in the ST are positioned in the middle of the page, above the line they are to speak. Most of the stage directions in the ST also occupy this position, that is, the middle of the page, even if the line immediately following the stage direction is spoken by the same character as the line immediately preceding the direction. Where the lines of dialogue constitute a long speech, the stage directions appear in brackets and are positioned between the lines of dialogue. In the TT, however, the names of the characters are positioned on the left-hand side of the page, and all stage directions are in brackets between the lines of dialogue.

There is no chorus or monologue in the ST; the ST's composition of dialogue has been preserved in the TT. The dramatic intrigue of the ST has been faithfully reproduced in the TT, no changes having been made to the events or sequence of action of the play in the translation.

The section of 'authorial comment' at this level of analysis introduces a very important division in a drama text, that between the dialogue and the stage directions. As already indicated, stage directions are linguistic features which describe the use of non-linguistic signs such as paralinguistic, mimical, gestic and proxemic signs, which, together with the linguistic signs of the dramatic dialogue, constitute the meaning of the dramatic text as a whole (Fischer-Lichte, 1984: 154). Paralinguistic signs describe the non-verbal elements in speech such as stress, intonation and pauses, which may affect the meaning of an utterance. As such, they are not always found only in the stage directions, but also in the printed lines of dialogue, for example in the form of italics to show the emphasis within a sentence, and so on. Mimical signs refer to the use of gesture or bodily movement in order to express an idea or mood without any use of words. Gestic signs refer to the motion of the hands, head or body in order to emphasize an idea or emotion especially while speaking. Proxemic signs are indications of restraint on the arrangement of space. Edward T. Hall distinguishes three main proxemic systems which he terms fixed feature space, semi-fixed feature space and informal space (in Elam, 1980: 62). Applying these systems to the theatre, Elam notes that fixed feature space involves static configuration, and relates to the playhouse and the shapes and dimensions of the stage and auditorium. Semi-fixed feature space refers to movable but non-dynamic objects such as the props, the set and the lighting. Informal space refers to the ever-shifting relations of proxemity and distance between actor and actor, between actor and spectator, and between spectator and spectator (Elam, 1980: 62-63). As the written, dramatic text is being analysed, only the semi-fixed feature space and the informal space between actors will come under consideration.

After analysis of the stage directions, it was found that changes had been made to paralinguistic, mimical, gestic and proxemic signs, as well as to Kowzan's fifth semiological category of expression: non-spoken sound (cf. Chapter One: 9). A detailed examination of these changes is now given.

PARALINGUISTIC SIGNS

The most numerous changes were made to paralinguistic signs. Pauses used as a parasyntactic function to segment the current of speech are present in the ST in three forms: the words '*silence*' and '*un temps*', and through the use of the verb '*se taire*'. '*Silence*' appears sixteen times in the ST (on pages 15, 17, 19, 34, 36, 40, 50 (twice), 55, 86, 92 (twice), 116, 125, 143 and 151), and in the TT it was translated as '*silence*' on seven occasions (pages 130, 136 (twice), 138, 151, 175 and 178), as '*a pause*' on five occasions (pages 124, 125, 131, 133 and 164), once as a verb '*(he) pauses*' (page 154). once as '*short pause*' (page 124), and once as '*a short silence*' (page 154). In Act IV, it was omitted from the stage directions in the TT:

> *Kaliayev recule, ferme les yeux. Silence. Il regarde Skouratov à nouveau.* (ST: 125)
>
> *KALIAYEV starts, closes his eyes, then looks at SKOURATOV again.* (TT: 168)

Whether the text is being read or performed, these actions create tensionin the play, and the impression that Kaliayev has paused to gain

control of himself is given. Because the pause is omitted in the TT, the tension is reduced and there is more continuity of action.

'*Un temps*' is used sixteen times in the ST (pages 20 (twice), 35, 39, 93, 106, 108 (twice), 111, 118, 119 (twice), 124 (twice), 138 and 141), and it is translated as '*a pause*' fourteen times in the TT (pages 125 (twice), 131, 132, 153, 160 (twice), 162, 165 (twice), 167, 168, 173 and 174), and omitted on two occasions, both in Act IV. The first time it is omitted is during a speech by Skouratov, the Chief of Police:

> Vous savez ce que vous voulez. (*Un temps.*)Si j'ai bien compris(...) (ST: 106)
>
> I see you know your own mind. Unless I'm very much mistaken (...) (TT: 160)

In the ST, the pause is used to show a change in direction of the topic under discussion; there is more continuity in the TT.

The second omission is during a speech by the Grand-duchess:

> Je ne les aimais pas beaucoup. (*Un temps.*) Ce sont les neveux du grand-duc. (ST: 119)
>
> I didn't like them very much. They are the Grand-duke's niece and nephew. (TT: 165)

The pause in the ST is used to highlight the irony that Kaliayev refused to murder these children, who were in fact not very pleasant, whereas he did murder the Grand-duke, who was a kind and well-meaning man. This irony is not emphasized in the TT as the pause is omitted.

The verb '*se taire*' is used in the stage directions of the ST either to indicate the reaction of a specific character other than the character who is speaking, or to indicate a pause in the speech of a certain character. It appears twelve times in the stage directions of the ST (pages 41, 56,

74, 78, 85 (twice), 113, 115, 140, 147 and 150 (twice)). On five occasions where it functions as a specific reaction, it is translated as '*(he) says nothing*' in the TT (pages 151, 164, 176 and 177 (twice)). Four times it is translated as '*silence*' (pages 146, 148, 151 and 173), which changes its function from the reaction of a specific character to a general pause in the flow of speech and action. The same is true of the one occasion where it is translated as '*a pause*' (page 162). In Act II, it functions in the ST as a pause in Kaliayev's speech and in the TT it is altered to a definite change in emotion:

> J'imaginais le choc, cette tête frêle frappant la route, à la volée...
> *il se tait*
> Aidez moi... (ST: 41)

> I used to imagine the shock, the small head hitting the ground...
> (*He breaks down.*) ...oh, help me... (TT: 139)

'*Se taire*' is used in Act I of the ST as a pause to indicate Dora's hesitation before continuing to speak; although this pause is omitted in the TT, the hesitation remains apparent from the other stage directions:

> Mais le premier rang... (*Elle se tait, le regarde et semble hésiter.*) Au premier rang, tu vas le voir... (ST: 41)

> But you'll be standing right out in front... (*she looks at him and seems to hesitate*). ..and you'll see him. (TT: 133)

Pauses were found to have been added to the TT on no fewer than sixteen occasions. Of these, twelve were added in places where a pause is implied from the content of the lines of dialogue (pages 125, 130, 134, 138, 153 (twice), 158, 174, 175, 176 and 177 (twice)), either because of a change of subject, or to give added weight to something said or about to be said. In Act V, for example, an indication of '*silence*' has been added in the TT after Dora's announcement of Yanek's death:

> DORA
> Voici l'aube. Yanek est déjà mort, j'en suis sûre.
>
> ANNENKOV

Je suis ton frère. (ST: 143)

DORA: Ah, it's morning. Yanek is already dead!...I can feel it. (*Silence*)

ANNENKOV: I am your brother. (TT: 175)

There is a natural pause between these two lines, both to mark the gravity of Dora's announcement, and because Annenkov's reply does not relate directly to Dora's words but is rather an indirect attempt to comfort her.

In Act 1, a pause has been added in the TT to a line spoken by Kaliayev, which is not implied in the ST:

La foi? Non. Un seul l'avait. (ST: 37)

Faith? (*Long pause.*) No...no, only one man had that... (TT: 132)

The pause lends far more added emphasis to the rest of the line than is present, or implied, in the ST.

A pause which is not implied in the ST has also been added in Act III. In the ST, Kaliayev's response is an immediate affirmation of and agreement with Dora's line; the pause added in the TT makes Kaliayev's line a thoughtful repetition of Dora's statement, and slows down the pace even more, rather than picking it up as Kaliayev's line does in the ST:

DORA, *lentement*.
C'est un grand bonheur.

KALIAYEV
C'est un bien grand bonheur. (ST: 83)

DORA (*slowly*) : Yes, it's a wonderful happiness. (*A pause*)

KALIAYEV: Yes...it *is* a wonderful happiness... (TT: 150)

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