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ALBERT CAMUS' *LES JUSTES* : A DESCRIPTIVE APPROACH TO THE ANALYSIS OF A DRAMA TEXT IN TRANSLATION

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A Translation Project submitted to
the Faculty of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand,
Johannesburg, for the degree of Master of Arts in
Translation.

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ABSTRACT

This translation research project examines the shifts made in Henry Jones' English translation of Albert Camus' play *Les Justes*, following a detailed comparative analysis of both texts. The approach used in the analysis is that formulated by José Lambert and Hendrik van Gorp, and uses the methods of descriptive translation studies. An increased semiotic component has been incorporated into the scheme in order to direct it more specifically towards the translation description of drama texts. Camus' philosophy as manifested in the play is discussed, as well as his position in French and other literatures. The texts are examined in detail and oppositions between the macro- and micro-structural levels of analysis are discussed. Changes made to the translation in its performance by the Performing Arts Council of the Transvaal are also considered. Following this detailed analysis, the conclusion that Henry Jones did take the performance dimension of the text into consideration when translating the play is reached, as many of the changes made to the stage directions and dialogue would not have been necessary had the translation been approached as a text to be read.

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This translation research project examines the shifts made in Henry Jones' English translation of Albert Camus' play *Les Justes*, following a detailed comparative analysis of both texts. The approach used in the analysis is that formulated by José Lambert and Hendrik van Gorp, and uses the methods of descriptive translation studies. An increased semiotic component has been incorporated into the scheme in order to direct it more specifically towards the translation description of drama texts. Camus' philosophy as manifested in the play is discussed, as well as his position in French and other literatures. The texts are examined in detail and oppositions between the macro- and micro-structural levels of analysis are discussed. Changes made to the translation in its performance by the Performing Arts Council of the Transvaal are also considered. Following this detailed analysis, the conclusion that Henry Jones did take the performance dimension of the text into consideration when translating the play is reached, as many of the changes made to the stage directions and dialogue would not have been necessary had the translation been approached as a text to be read.

DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own, unaided work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of Master of Arts in Translation at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university.

The 9th day of November, 1984.

FOR MY PARENTS

WITH LOVE

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PREFACE

The purpose of this translation project is the comparative descriptive analysis of *Les Justes*, a play written by Albert Camus and first published in 1950, and its English translation by Henry Jones, published in 1965, in order to discover the translation approach taken by the translator. Theatre is one of the most neglected areas of translation study, and very little material exists on the specific problems of translating drama texts (Bassnett-McGuire, 1980: 120); it was therefore thought that a detailed analysis of a drama text and its translation would highlight some of the problems involved in the translation of this type of text. Drama texts are often approached by translators as straightforward prose texts, with no provision being made for the 'performance' dimension of drama texts. *Les Justes* was selected for analysis as it was performed in its English translation in Johannesburg in 1987 by members of the Performing Arts Council of the Transvaal (PACT), and the translation was therefore seen to be a satisfactory text for performance.

The approach taken in the analysis is based on the synthetic scheme for translation description formulated by Jose Lambert and Hendrik van Gorp (1985), and as such uses the methods of descriptive translation studies. Chapter One of this study explains the difference between the prescriptive and descriptive approaches to translation studies, and briefly considers the concept of equivalence in translation. Lambert and Van Gorp's scheme is discussed, and the increased semiotic content is explained.

The second chapter contains a brief background to the play and the translation. Camus' philosophy as manifested in the play is discussed, as well as his position in French and other literatures. The need for systemic research in descriptive translation studies is stressed, so, although a broad systemic approach is beyond the scope of this project, the background information contained in this chapter provides a brief systemic context in which to situate the analysis of the actual texts.

The third and final chapter comprises the analysis of the two texts, and, in accordance with Lambert and Van Gorp's scheme, includes preliminary data, macro-structural data and micro-structural data.

The conclusion contains a comparison of the analytical results obtained in Chapter Three, and discusses the main shifts which were identified. Changes made to the translation for the PACT performance, including the omission of the entire fourth act, are also explained.

I should like to thank my supervisor Ms. E. Meintjes for her advice and constructive criticism during the writing of this project. I should also like to thank Mr Dieter Reible, the director of the PACT production of *The Just*, for his willing co-operation and helpful comments. Finally, I should like to thank my family and friends for their interest and encouragement, and my fiancé for his continued support and invaluable help with the typing of this project.

CHAPTER ONE - A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The approach taken in the analysis of *Les Justes* and its translation is based on the synthetic scheme for descriptive translation study as formulated by José Lambert and Hendrik van Gorp (1985: 42-53). Since the mid-1970s, a new, descriptive approach to translation studies has become evident, which embraces far more aspects of translation than the older, traditional approach, taking into consideration:

> the norms and constraints that govern the production and reception of translations, (...) the relation between translation and other types of text processing, and (...) the place and role of translations both within a given literature and in the interaction between literatures. (Hermans, 1985: 10-11)

While the traditional approach tends to be normative, and to concentrate on the problems involved in translating, the descriptive approach perceives literature as a system in which translation is one particular element. Translations should therefore be studied not only as individual units, but also as part of a larger system which takes into account the author, the reader, and the text in both the source (literary) and target (literary) systems. The focus in descriptive studies is target-text oriented with translations being studied as empirical phenomena; an attempt is made to determine the various factors that may account for a translation's particular nature (Hermans, 1985: 13), that is, to establish the norms adopted by the translator in making the translation. Theo Hermans notes that:

> The new approach tries to account in functional terms for the textual strategies that determine the way a given translation looks, and, more broadly, for the way translations function in the receptor (or target) literature. (1985: 13)

The traditional, or prescriptive approach to translation studies is source-text oriented, and focuses on the more abstract concepts such as whether translation is actually possible, and what constitutes a 'good' translation. Translations are studied as individual and separate units; they are constantly compared with the original in an attempt to highlight areas where the translation fails to capture the 'spirit' of the original. As Gideon Toury comments:

> Most of the theories of translation (...) concern themselves mainly with *potential* translation, or even with *translatability* rather than with *actual* translation, hence with the *act of translating*, which proceeds from ST, rather than with the *translations* as actual textual-linguistic products (instances of performance), which belong first and foremost to the system of texts written in TL (...). (1980: 35)

Many prescriptive theorists have advocated ways in which translation ought to be approached, and central to these discussions is the concept of equivalence. Catford's definition of translation as 'the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL)' (1965: 20) has led to numerous definitions of the term 'equivalence', and several ways in which it is to be achieved have been suggested. Full equivalence, implying equivalence between the source text and the translation on every level of language, with the style, form and meaning of the original being preserved in the translation, is generally accepted as being impossible. The question becomes one of what type of equivalence should be preserved, and this is decided by the type and function of the text to be translated. Nida proposes that an 'equivalence of response' should be aimed for; the receptors of the translated message should respond to it in substantially the same manner as the receptors did to the original message (1969: 24). This concept of 'equivalent response' is the basis of what Newmark terms the 'communicative approach' to translation, which gives precedence to the

force of the message to be translated at the expense of formal content. Newmark also distinguishes the 'semantic approach', with the emphasis on the contextual meaning of the source text being rendered in the target text 'as closely as the semantic and syntactic structures of the second language allow' (1982: 38). The choice of approach is dependent upon the language function of the text, and Newmark recognizes three functions: the expressive, the informative and the vocative. Where the force of the message is important (for example, in advertising or propaganda, where the vocative function is especially apparent), the communicative approach is to be used; the semantic approach is used for texts in which the style and form are important, often texts with an expressive function, such as literature proper (Newmark, 1982: 11).

The concept of equivalence is also discussed by the descriptive theorists, but the emphasis is somewhat different. Instead of concentrating on what equivalence is, and on how it should be achieved, the descriptive approach concentrates on establishing the type of equivalence a particular translator has decided upon. Toury, a leading descriptive theorist, remarks:

> the research activity into translation phenomena may and should proceed from the assumption that every actual TT does in fact stand in some equivalence to its ST. The key-question to be asked is thus not *whether* equivalence obtains between the two texts, but what its *type* and *degree* are. (1980: 115)

Toury then goes on to explain that the 'translational norms' will be the main factor in determining what relationships will be regarded as equivalence relations (1980: 115). These norms are 'the intermediating factor between the system of potential equivalence relationships and the actual performance', and they 'determine the actual position of a translation (...) between adequacy and acceptability' (Toury, 1980: 50).

Like Toury, Lambert and Van Gorp feel that the type of equivalence to be observed between the ST and TT, or between particular parameters in them is the central question. The translation is examined in terms of the dominant norms determining the selectional strategies in the translation process, so that a decision can be made as to whether the translation is target-oriented (acceptable) or source-oriented (adequate) (Lambert and Van Gorp, 1985: 45-46). Lambert and Van Gorp's scheme is systemic in nature, and involves a study of the relationships between the source text and the target text, between the two authors and the readers of these texts, between the situation of the texts and the authors within their own systems as well as the relations between the systems themselves. They state that:

> As every translation is the result of *particular* relations between the parameters mentioned in the scheme, it will be the scholar's task to establish *which* relations are the most important ones. (1985: 44)

To fulfil this task, Lambert and Van Gorp formulated a practical model for textual analysis through which translational strategies can be described and tested (1985: 48). In this model (see Appendix A), preliminary data concerning the title and title page, metatexts and the general translation strategy followed is first collected; this should result in hypotheses regarding the approach taken by the translator, and to further analysis on the macro-structural level. Information about the general macro-structural features (for example: the division of the text, the relation between the types of narrative, the internal narrative structure or dramatic intrigue, authorial comment and stage directions) is then collected, giving an approximate idea of the overall translation strategy and the translator's main priorities (1985: 48). Based on this information, hypotheses concerning the micro-structural level can be made. The micro-structural features (for example: word selection, forms of speech

reproduction, modality and language levels) are then studied and compared to the macro-structural strategies and considered in terms of the broader systemic context. Lambert and Van Gorp admit that exhaustive analysis of every textual problem is not feasible, and suggest that various fragments should be studied and analysed from the point of view of particular textual rules:

> By adopting a flexible method of this type the scholar will gain an insight into text rules and translational rules; he can test them throughout the text and classify them according to specific parameters, without having to accumulate random examples. (1985: 49)

The dominant norms which are identified by following this model are used to establish the kind of equivalence observed between the two communication schemes.

Lambert and Van Gorp's scheme is used for the descriptive analysis of *Les Justes* and its translation. A few adjustments have been made to the model, however, because the latter was formulated for the translation description of poetry and prose as well as drama texts, and it was therefore felt that the model was in some respects too general for an adequate description of a drama text to be carried out. As Susan Bassnett-McGuire points out, a drama text is incomplete, as it is only in performance that the full potential of the text is realized; a drama text thus has a different function from a poetry or a prose text which is designed to be read in its own right (1980: 120-121). In performance, the drama text is only one source of the theatrical information conveyed, the other sources being: the director, set designer, lighting designer, costume designer, composer, stage manager, technicians and the actors. The performance is therefore made up of multiple 'messages' which the spectator will interpret as an integrated text (Elam, 1980: 37-38). Drama

and theatre are thus essentially semiotic in nature, as semiotics is 'a science dedicated to the study of the production of meaning in society' and 'is equally concerned with processes of signification and with those of communication, i.e. the means whereby meanings are both generated and exchanged' (Elam, 1980: 1). Keir Elam makes the following distinction between drama and theatre:

> 'Theatre' is taken to refer here to the complex of phenomena associated with the performer-audience transaction: that is, with the production and communication of meaning in the performance itself and with the systems underlying it. By 'drama' (...) is meant that mode of fiction designed for stage representation and constructed according to particular ('dramatic') conventions. (1980: 2)

This distinction will be used in the present study: since the translation of *Les Justes* is being examined, the written or *dramatic* text will be considered, and not the *theatrical* text.

Jan Mukařovský applied Saussure's definition of the sign as 'a two-faced entity linking a material *vehicle* or *signifier* with a mental *concept* or *signified*', by identifying the work of art as such as the semiotic unit (in Elam, 1980: 6). If the theatrical performance is seen as the semiotic unit, then the signifier is the work itself, as a body of material elements, and the signified is the concept of the play as witnessed by the public. The performance text therefore becomes a macro-sign, the meaning of which is made up of its total effect. This approach emphasizes the fact that all the elements making up the sign are subordinate to the unified textual whole, and stresses the role of the audience as the maker of its own meanings. This macro-sign, however, is too complex to be analysed as a whole, so Mukařovský's colleagues instead viewed the performance as a 'network of semiotic units belonging to different co-operative systems' (Elam, 1980: 7). Bassnett-McGuire lists the five categories of ex-

pression corresponding to five semiological systems, as they were defined by Tadeusz Kowzan:

1. The spoken text (for which there may or may not be a written script)
2. Bodily expression
3. The actor's external appearance (gestures, physical features, etc)
4. The playing space (involving size of venue, props, lighting effects, etc)
5. Non-spoken sound (1985, 88)

Although these five semiological systems are present in the performance of a play, references to all five can usually be found in the written, dramatic text. The spoken text is produced from the written lines of dialogue, and references to the other four systems, which include references to body movement, gesture, props, lighting and sound effects, can be found in the stage directions. In any drama text there is therefore a major division between dialogue and stage directions, that is, between verbal and non-verbal communication. Dramatic dialogue signifies a situation of direct communication and simulates it, and so is performed in paralinguistic, mimical, gestic and proxemic signs as well as linguistic signs. Only the linguistic signs are overtly apparent in the lines of dialogue of a drama text; the use of other, non-linguistic signs is described more or less precisely by the stage directions. Without reference to the stage directions, the meaning of the dramatic dialogue is incomplete, as the meanings created by the stage directions may amplify, augment, modify or contradict meanings of the dialogue. There is therefore a continuous interaction between the linguistic signs constituting the dialogue, and the stage directions, which are composed of linguistic signs describing the non-verbal behaviour of the characters (Fischer-Lichte, 1984: 139-149). Fischer-Lichte states that 'theatrical dramatic dialogue

(...), composed of linguistic and non-verbal signs (...) creates meaning by using all these kinds of signs and by combining and relating them to one another' (1984: 154).

The treatment of stage directions in Lambert and Van Gorp's model was felt to be inadequate, as they form only a small part of the macro-structural level of analysis. As the stage directions are an essential part of the total meaning of a drama text, it was considered necessary to incorporate semiotics into the model in order for adequate analysis of the stage directions to be carried out. Equivalence in the translation of a drama text will be observed at two levels, the verbal level and the non-verbal level. Verbal equivalence is concerned with the content of the lines of dialogue, taking into account concepts such as imagery, symbolism, tone and so forth. Non-verbal equivalence is concerned with facts contained in the stage directions, so the study of their translation is just as important as that of the translation of the lines of dialogue in establishing the type of equivalence that has been preserved in the translation of the whole text.

Other areas of semiotic study have been incorporated into Lambert and Van Gorp's micro-structural level of analysis. Elam notes that drama consists of an '*I* addressing a *you*, *here* and *now*' (1980: 139), so the origin of dramatic discourse is the verbal deixis. Any major change in the deictic system of the source text will therefore inevitably cause unexpected changes in the target text. Bassnett-McGuire suggests that:

> By analysing the way in which the deixis operates in the SL text, it will become apparent whether those units can be viable in the TL, what they signify by their presence and equally by their absence, what happens to the dynamics of the scene when they are altered. (1985: 98)

Verbal deixis is thus an extremely important unit of comparison, and so it was felt appropriate to incorporate the study of deictic shifts into the micro-level of the model.

Although the micro-level of Lambert and Van Gorp's model is fairly thorough in its treatment of linguistic shifts, it makes no provision for the study of cultural or ideological shifts. For this reason, the study of denotative and connotative shifts has been added to this section. Denotation is the name given to the role played by a sign-vehicle when it stands for a class of objects. The theatrical sign will inevitably acquire a secondary meaning or secondary meanings for the audience; this second-order sign-relationship is the connotation (Elam, 1980: 10). As every aspect of performance is governed by denotation and connotation (Elam, 1980: 11), a change in either of these in the TT will result in the implication of new meanings in the translation which were not present in the original.

The textual analysis of *Les Justes* and its translation will follow Lambert and Van Gorp's synthetic scheme for translation description, taking into consideration the increased semiotic content outlined above. Oppositions, if any exist, between the macro- and micro-levels will also be noted and discussed, and an attempt will then be made to determine the norms and strategies of the translator, Henry Jones, in his translation of *Les Justes*. The simple distinction between the 'acceptable' and 'adequate' translation approaches was, however, felt to be insufficient for the analysis of drama texts, in view of their more complex function as texts to be performed. Susan Bassnett-McGuire distinguished five approaches to the translation of drama texts, and these will be used as a basis upon which to make hypotheses concerning the translation approach used.

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