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# The Objectives of the Literary Translator: Translating a Science Fiction *Nouvelle*

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The Objectives of the Literary Translator: Translating a Science Fiction *Nouvelle*

by

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An undergraduate honors thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degrees of

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in

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and

French

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## Introduction

*“The fact of the matter is that the ‘real world’ is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached.”* - Edward Sapir

Language is a social tool. Humans use it for communication, comprehension, and connection. In Sapir’s view, one cannot exist in a language without simultaneously living in the social reality this language creates (209). What, then, of literature, whose purpose is arguably to communicate cultures, and when translated, can transcend the boundaries of space and time? When one writes a literary work in a given language, is it possible to convey to users of other languages the social reality on which the author has built their text? Readers now have rapid access to texts from around the world that range from centuries-old to freshly published, but when language barriers hinder access, translation becomes necessary, and with it comes the contention of whether a translated literary work can evoke the same social reality as the source text.

From here arises my central question: What are the objectives of the literary translator, and what is the agency of a translator when confronted with a text in a source language whose mode of perception may not correspond to that of target language readers?

What follows frames an initial response to this question within the broader context of my own experience translating “Dedans, Dehors,” a short story (a *nouvelle* in French) by science-fiction author Sylvie Denis from the original French into English. I completed the translation under the supervision of Dr. Annabelle Dolidon and Portland State University’s

student-run Ooligan Press. “Dedans, Dehors,” translated as “Inside, Outside,” will be published in early 2024 as part of an anthology of nine French science fiction short stories in translation, titled *Continuum*. Presenting a translation of the story and an argumentative commentary on the practice and purpose of translation, I will shed light on the constraints and considerations I took into account as I translated “Dedans, Dehors.” This will allow me to support my position that the objective of the literary translator is not only to translate cultural ideas and perceptions via the lens of language, but also to create a reading experience in the target language text. In doing so, they assume agency over the text and take on the role of a proxy-author.

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### **Original Translation of “Dedans, dehors”**

Inside, Outside

By Sylvie Denis

Translated by Aishwarya Marathe with Dr. Annabelle Dolidon

*“We, Free and Unique Men, declare that man can live freely and responsibly in a self-organized community, without hierarchy or State.*

*We believe that the purpose of all socioeconomic organizations is to serve people, not to serve itself or those who have created it. We believe that the community must not alienate the individual, that the individual must not endanger the community. We say that the community must serve the individual must serve the community must serve the individual.*

*We, Free and Unique Men, commit ourselves to never using the discoveries of genetics and biotechnologies to create a supposedly unique, definitive, and perfect model of human being.*

*We, Free and Unique Men, commit ourselves to never conflating description and prescription, observation, and injunction.*

*We commit ourselves to never using the discoveries of history, psychology, psychiatry, neurology, sociology, sociobiology, anthropology, ethnography, and other human sciences to reduce and imprison humans within any definitive model of humanity, or to alienate any branch of humankind in a role or status they would not have chosen.*

*We, Free and Unique Men, refuse to create and use/ machines that imprison humans in the machine-verse of transcorporations we condemn. We commit ourselves to never creating other machines or intelligences than those that serve humankind and one's liberty to invent themselves.*

*We, Free and Unique Men, refuse to hurt and use animals, save for the cases in which our immediate physical survival is concerned.*

*All of humankind is born in a socio-historico-economico-cultural context. We, Free and Unique Men, believe that there is nothing more difficult than finding a Middle Ground, a place where humans can live in complete accordance with themselves and their identities. Nevertheless, we commit ourselves to ensure that all human cultures on the planet are cherished and preserved, so long as they do not carry within themselves the germs of destruction and intolerance that have harmed us so much in the past.*

*That which differentiates us does not separate, but rather, enriches us.*

*That which unites us, unites us; it does not elevate us above those who have chosen other ways of existence.*

*We, Free and Unique Men, declare that no other humanity exists apart from the one we create day after day, no other destiny than the one we forge day after day. No other future than the one we build.”*

*(Excerpts from the Declaration of Rights of Free and Unique Men)*

No need to explain it to me: I *know* that the outside world is dangerous.

Otherwise, why live in the shelter of our Enclave, behind walls laden with barbed electric wire and heat detectors? Why code and card readers at the gates, why guards armed with missile launchers? Why, huh, if not to protect us?

Because outside, it's hell.

I know this because at school I am always the first to finish my exercises. I could call for Aunt Simona, ask her to give me something else to do, but I prefer to exit the program and go explore. I visit. I managed to get a small Ferret, not very high-performance but enough for me to get into an Agora, a museum, a few Discussion Forums. It's a blessing that our world extends into virtuality. With a bit of common sense, we can force the Control System of our Enclave to connect to the global network. Of course, I don't get to choose; there's no time. But I am learning all the same. I am learning that there is always something to learn. That's something.

For example, I know that in Paris and Brazzaville, in Madrid and Tokyo, executive partners at transcorporations send their companies the genetic card and educational program they have chosen for their kids, to increase their chances of being on the waiting list for position vacancies.

I know that Russian pimps go to Asia to look for little girls who they fit with monitoring implants and imprison in brothels from which they don't come out until their death.

I know there are nearly no cows left.

In short, I know that here, it is better than outside: no hordes of jobless ready to skin you alive to nab your identity chip, no cyborg cops whose neurotransmitters sweep along more synthetic products than natural molecules, no kids left to themselves while their parents get laid on planetary virtuBangs. Here the air is breathable. We have grass, and cows – just a few, that we try to breed, in the hopes of reselling their genetic material to the government. We even have trees, and everyone who lives in the New City, the Jerusalem of the White Knights of Europe, is convinced that it's paradise. The proof, it's that they never leave, except to go spread the Good Word once every two or three months. But it's reserved for those older than eighteen. The others remain inside, sentenced to paradise, so to speak. Some of them impatiently await the day they can bring the word of God and John Paul Sambara to the faithless. I'm waiting too: for the day I'll be able to get away from here.

\*

Life is monotonous in the celestial city. Sadly, I'm apparently the only one who notices.

In the morning, the alarm clock rings and projects the hologram of a trumpet-playing angel on the ceiling. I get up. My *mother* is already in the kitchen. She has already made breakfast for my *father* and I. I just say good morning (I don't like it, kissing them is an effort, every day, regardless of their attitude, regardless of my mood), sit down at the table and eat. In general, it's good. She can cook, that's for sure. Toasts, pancakes, porridge, fruit salad, homemade yogurt, muesli; anything you want, when you want it.

Little Brother is already up and dressed. In general, she has him eat before us. He's on his feet in the AutoPark. Head thrown back, he sways and stares at the ceiling. When he's had enough, he lets himself fall and the AutoPark catches him. This AutoPark is a brilliant thing. A

park, like the name indicates, but in the shape of a geodesic dome equipped with padded and jointed arms, on the sides and up high, to catch Little Brother no matter what.

The AutoPark isn't very smart. It nevertheless knows how to perform a certain number of useful tasks: feeding, dressing, undressing, changing, offering toys and shaking them, putting on music.

I was about to forget: Little Brother is ten years old and has never spoken.

After breakfast, I wash up (sometimes I pretend to), I get dressed, and I leave for school.

My mother and father stand at the doorstep: her, blonde, her well-brushed hair framing a perfect oval face, him in a suit and white shirt, his hair still damp from his morning shower. Happiness shines in their eyes and trickles from their smiles. They're so chock-full of it that it always seems ready to overflow. They wave and smile. Like in a movie.

On the way to school, I always run into the same people. There's the neighbors' daughter Francie, and Pierre and Fabrice, the twins from across the street. They're idiots. The girl, Francie, stops three or four times on the way to brush her brown curls and check her makeup. The second I arrive, the boys cut off their conversation. They make signals to one another they believe to be discreet, as if they shared a big secret, then resume their account of the latest episode in the series produced by the society of John Paul.

I think they're totally incapable of hiding anything from anyone at all, and I've stopped listening to them ages ago. In winter, I take every opportunity to think about the manipulations I'll have to perform to find a decent Place in the network. In the spring and summer, I observe the piece of land that prospers within our walls. Between the groups of houses, we have grass, trees, horses, and cows. I don't like horses, those stupid animals that let themselves be climbed on, but cows seem pretty nice to me. They make milk: I love milk. We didn't have it in the city,



just some kind of semi-transparent liquid supposedly full of everything that is necessary for growth, vitality, and development.

Seeing my size, you'd doubt it!

So, every morning I look at the real cows, the big white livestock with flat snouts that you just want to kiss.

I don't know what the twins and Francie think about cows.

They believe in God and his prophet John Paul Sambara. They never talk about anything but the books of John Paul and the great Knights who are building the Celestial City. And it's impossible to communicate with them, other than through stereotypical sentences. There are some on respecting life, against abortion, against the mixed-race hordes, against working women and sex outside the bonds of marriage. Nothing on loving cows, who we saved from extinction in order only to resell them to the dairy product branch of some or other transcorp.

I think that the twins and Francie are the worthy children of their parents. They don't care about cows and believe in God and in Sambara.

Me, I don't believe in them.

I'm no one's worthy child.

I read somewhere, I don't know where anymore, that it's a childish thing. A fantasy or something. Possible. For others, not for me.

My *parents* aren't my parents. My *mother* didn't carry me in her belly, my *father* did not ejaculate the sperm that presided over the mix of genes that made me who I am.

So, you're saying to yourself, I'm an adopted child.

And it's right. It's about right.

Except that they were conned.

My mother—my real mother—lied to them. I know it: she told me everything, before they came. Then, while they were talking, I was supposed to play in my room. In reality, I was hiding behind the door and listening to them.

My mother's name was Alisson. She was seventeen years old when she met them for the first time, at the Shelter they ran. She told them she was fifteen. She already had a daughter: me. I was five and a half, but I was small, rather puny. She told them I was three. OK, it's not good to lie, but you know what it is: if you tell the well-dressed gentleman and lady that the poor little pregnant girl is fifteen years old, and that it's happened to her before, at an even more tender age, it moves them, it stirs their imagination in the most incredible way. All of a sudden, the gentleman and lady in suits see the future: the difficult pregnancy, alone, in dreadful sanitary conditions. Next, finding work. My mother knew how to read and write and use a console, but to get up every morning at the same time to go help a transcorp rake in billions, that is another matter. The gentleman and lady see all this, their hearts bleed, they feel a great rush of compassion, and they bend over backwards to help her.

They worked—still work—for *Save All Lives*, a neat little organization that looks after girls like my mother.

*Save All Lives* is a model association whose aim is to ensure that the babies of girls who don't want them are born anyway and are adopted by resident couples of the Jerusalem of the White Knights.

They have the status of a non-profit organization and what remains of the State pays them subsidies.

They didn't adopt me right off the bat. First they placed my mother in what they called a therapeutic apartment. She took courses. We had a console, a headset and gloves, and programs for the gym. I believe she also did stuff in swimming pools, with bubbles and all.

So there you have it: I was six years old and when they came I pretended to be three and a half. It was easy. Like I said already, I'm small, with a slender figure, a face with fine features. With the right clothes, you couldn't notice a thing.

I liked this time; when we were in the apartment, while we waited for Little Brother. Of course, sometimes my mother cried because of Dimithri, the guy who had made the baby and left, like the one who had conceived me (I don't know his name), but for the most part we weren't unhappy: we had comfort, the block of buildings didn't have too bad a reputation, my mother would meet girls and guys she had known in the past, and that cheered her up. I was young, but I was aware. But most importantly, I remember...

Where things began to go wrong was after the delivery, when they started telling her that she had to get ready to part with me and the baby.

She didn't want to anymore. She no longer wanted us to go live in the paradise of the cows, she didn't want her kids to know Eternal Salvation and the glory behind the walls of the White Jerusalem. My mother believed in the real world, the one that wasn't behind the walls.

So, it didn't go well, but I'm not supposed to remember it. It was ten years ago, and I was so little: at three and a half, you don't see anything, you don't hear anything, you don't pay attention to anything. But I was six.

My adoptive parents came at dawn to try to convince her. For hours.

She still didn't want to. They left again. Came back again the next day. This went on for days. She held steady. She wanted to keep us. Me, the first, she had wanted me, for a guy who

was as handsome as a god but who, no luck, made his dough as a gangster. The second, it was an accident; she would have aborted it for sure if she hadn't met my parents and their group. If they hadn't given her free meals, if she hadn't preferred their Homeless Shelter to the street... She would have found a way, and boom, he'd be gone, the kid. He would never have been here.

But now we were here, both of us, and she didn't want us to stay in the hands of Sambara and the Buddies of God.

She would say it at the kitchen table, in front of the coffee no one was drinking.

"But you can't raise them!" my *mother* would retort. You don't have a job, you hardly know how to read and write, and you don't have a sound knowledge of any iconic language. Not to mention that with your background, no one will want to give you work! Whereas if you enter one of our centers, you'll get professional training there, a future. You'll learn in better conditions if you know your children are in good hands..."

She didn't know what to do. I saw it on her face, in her hands which she was wringing, in the glances she was casting everywhere in the room so as not to meet my gaze. I vaguely sensed that she didn't want to abandon us, that she didn't want to go into their center either. That she was stuck, done for, obliged to hand us over to people who had helped her but whom she didn't like.

"Couldn't I go into your Enclave to follow your program? That way I could see my kids."

"No. It doesn't work that way. And you know it, you signed the contract."

He showed her the sheaf, on the polished, self-cleaning tablecloth—even though, two minutes earlier, his wife had told her that she didn't know how to read. They were rather on edge.

“No point in discussing it,” my future *mother* finally said. “The kids are ours. *She* is going to the Center, that’s it.”

What happened next is more blurred in my memory. I believe there was a scene. Screaming. I found myself in a corridor with my mother. We were alone. She clutched me in her arms and she said to me, in the ear, in a voice filled with sobs which caused me pain:

“It’s not my fault, I thought it was the best solution. You can trust them on one thing, only one: they’ll take good care of you. But don’t believe them when they tell you about the world, or about God. On all of that, they’re liars, you hear me? Liars.”

I’ve forgotten what happened next: I guess they caught us, separated us. I don’t remember my mother’s face at the moment she saw me for the last time.

In fact, I’m not meant to remember anything: neither the years before the Enclave, nor the contract, nor my mother: zilch, nada, nothing at all. I’m their daughter, and my Little Brother is their son. Save for one detail: I am two and a half years older than they think, and I know they lie. That they never stop lying.

\*

The best part of the day ends at the entrance of the school. Because at the school entrance, there is the Door, and in the Door, there is the prisoner, and every time I see him I say to myself that the outside world can only be Hell, and that, at the end of the day, maybe I’d better stay here.

I’ve heard that somewhere, underground in certain cities, some guys still believe themselves to be the government of Europe and attempt to organize the existence of people who have asked nothing of them.

For example, if the bastards that work for them (and who have the gall to call themselves the police) catch modified seed dealers “without the authorities’ approval,” or people who use Free Money, or who consume things they don’t like, well, bingo! They bring them in. Since the transcorps refuse to fund prisons, they contract with communities like ours, entrusting them with the prisoners, and we use them as we see fit.

So then, I don’t know what the guy from the Door did in the real world, but he’s here, among us. The school is a circular building. You go into the schoolyard, passing under a Door whose lintel is a transparent sarcophagus. The guy is there, lying in a harness, his body and head covered with wires and tubes. They’ve connected his brain to the building’s internal system (apparently, it’s simpler and less expensive than training an AI), and he does this all day: opening and closing doors, monitoring the kids, and directing the maintenance-robots/cleaning robots.

At night, they inject him with something to sleep, and he sleeps. I don’t know if he dreams. All I see, when I pass by, is his body stretched out on a green foam berth, in the transparent plastic aquarium, with the tubes and needles, and the headset on his head. I guess it’s lucky that we can’t see his eyes.

Once we’ve passed the Door, we go into the schoolyard, where weeding, shearer, and sprinkler robots come and go. The children of the Enclave are split up into Groups, and to each Group is attributed a class and an Educator, who we call Uncle or Aunt.

We sit down at our consoles and prepare ourselves to endure the torrent of inanities that make up the day’s schedule. Except when, like me, you’ve found a way to get out. Well, getting out, it’s easier said than done. My poor little Ferret is getting out of juice faster and faster. I’d really like to access a Place led by the Free and Unique Men, but how? They move all the time to

elude their enemies, who have apparently never heard about the Declaration of Rights of Free and Unique Men.

So, here I am, the others are struggling on a history test—it's a matter of responding to questions such as, "Why did God allow for several sorts of primitive peoples to evolve before choosing the white man to populate the universe?"—when I see an icon shining in the grayish fog I'm stuck in.

The icon depicts a door, and God knows why, I understand immediately that it's the guy from the entrance.

"Hey," I say to him, "do you hear me?"

"Of course, he says. I see you as well. You should be helping your friends answer their questions, but you're trying to go elsewhere. And it's not the first time."

I have a moment of doubt. What if he reported me to Aunt Simona, who is fussing on her console instead of working with us?

"I don't give a damn," he says. "If you don't want to work, don't work. As for me, all that interests me is that the building functions."

I find him very alert, for a guy whose brain is supposed to be permanently immersed in a flood of inhibitors.

"You get used to it," he says. "It depends on what you've taken beforehand. Some products reinforce synaptic connections. It prevents the brain from getting reconstructed by any crap."

Now, I wonder if the guy from the door wasn't imprisoned for mental babbling. Nano-concoctions that maintain synaptic circuits? It's too complicated, even for the best bioengineers. If such a thing existed, my *father* and my *mother* would already sell God in a

bottle: but the product isn't yet available in stores. I'm on the verge of asking the Door to explain to me what he means, but Aunt Simona has come out of her trance and has connected with me. I return to my exercise, pronto, and we leave it at that.

\*

I think of my mother often. I remember word for word what she would say to me. Does she still think of me a little from time to time, at night, in her room? Or have they made her take so many drugs and so much crap that she's forgotten us? Wouldn't it be better for her to have blotted us out from her memory after all?

Me, I've erased nothing.

My mother believed, among other things, that fertility is power.

"To give life," she would say, "it's the best and the worst. The moment before, there is nothing, and the moment after, there's you: like a flower whose flowers open. Inside, there is an eye. That's what you are," she would say—"a gaze upon the universe.

"It's for this reason," she used to say, "that we have the power, us women: because you don't know who's going to be born, you don't know what new consciousness you're going to give to the universe. It could be the best and it could be the worst. You can never know."

So there you have it, I'm a gaze, a fragment of the universe that has had access to consciousness. The day I die, the universe will no longer see itself the same way.

It's possible. Right at this very moment, what's hard is to live, day after day after day. Until now, I've always managed to pretend, to pull the wool over their eyes, but now I think I'm going to crack.

Let me explain.



They're not against science. On the contrary. They believe that progress and knowledge were given to Mankind to carry out the word of God and Sambara.

Consequently, they establish for each of us a Profile—like the people on the outside construct a Blazon that they use on the Net, except that we can't choose what we put on the icon, and we don't have access to the file. It contains all the results of our tests, our psychological profile, plus information about our tastes, our behavior, our plans. They stick this in the Grand Computer, and poof! Guess what? A husband.

I don't know all the details of what happens next—it's a Divine Mystery, reserved for adults. I know that the series of rituals ends with a collective wedding, after which the couple goes away to live their "life" somewhere in the world, in the community chosen by Sambara.

A magnificent fate. A radiant future.

\*

They don't have any trouble with Little Brother. His existence doesn't pose the least problem to them: God wanted him to be born, and everything that God wants is good, including living in an AutoPark and not being able to walk, nor to speak or to show the least bit of perception of oneself or the surrounding world.

Me, I have trouble. I tell myself that spending time swinging, without playing, without running, without messing around with other kids, that's not a life. If God, or Nature, or the Universe, or whatever it is that made and desired us, also wanted Little Brother, then the Universe that doesn't know what it wants.

And *I* think of what the Door told me about the nanos that reinforce synaptic circuits. I think that on the outside, they must have invented lots of substances that I've never heard of. That can possibly put right what isn't working in Little Brother's brain.

But for that I'd need to get out. I think about it nonstop, but I don't see how: the outer wall is riddled with sensors, the main gate is guarded day and night by implant-controlled dogs, everything that enters and exits is x-rayed. For me to pass would be a miracle; for me to pass with Little Brother would mean God exists—and I don't believe He does. No, what I need are contacts, connections with the Free and Unique Men. But those people are in hiding. They're nomads, just as much in the real world as in the virtual one. Apart from some towns, up in the mountains, which have seceded from Great Europe, they don't have a fixed position, no place where one would know to find them. They say that they move under the cloak of circuses, theatrical troupes. How to know whether one of them could come around in the vicinity?

\*

In class, I regularly search the library. Not ours—it only has writings by Sambara, his disciples, and the leaders of the major communities—but the one in the neighboring city, which, in certain circumstances, is relatively easy to access. It doesn't get me very far. Ah, if only I had a good Fox-Terrier, instead of this anemic Ferret.

A few days ago, I finished my exercises before everyone, as usual. I was just about to launch my Ferret when the Door appeared.

“What are you looking for?”

The moron scared me. I was worried that someone saw me jump. With a finger, I raise my headset to make sure. No, they all have theirs on their heads, and they are typing away like crazy, except for Francie and the twins, who are whispering in a corner. Aunt Simona, tied up in checking I don't know what, didn't see anything.

“A Fox-Terrier. I want to find information about the Free and Unique Men, but my Ferret is daft and the ones at the public library aren't powerful enough.”

“I see,” he said. And he disappears.

I continued to look, but in the Enclave’s database. I’ve heard my parents talking several times about compilations of infidel Places and Forums—whose coordinates, protected by first-class Cerberuses, are only accessible to those whose mission is to keep them under surveillance.

Meanwhile, the others had finished their work. The twins took advantage of the opportunity to fling pieces of foam upholstery from the microdisk cases at each other. Francie tried to access a game that’s reserved for adults, triggering an alarm that made Aunt Simona jump. In a single movement, she tore off her headset and her bun and started shrieking.

“End of the lesson! Turn off your consoles and get out of here!”

Furious, I grit my teeth. Because of these idiots, I may have to wait weeks for the Door’s next visit.

Aunt Simona had stood up. I moved my hand towards the keyboard. She was walking through the rows to make sure we hadn’t damaged anything. Just as she was coming over towards me, the Door threw me a Fox-Terrier—right into the microdisk I’d surreptitiously slipped into the drive. Clever, this Door.

I turned everything off, took the microdisk, and went back to my parents’ house with the twins.

\*

It’s crazy what you can do when you have the right tools.

At the public library, I launched my new Ferret on the word “autism,” and I found a ton of references I had never come across before.

I found out some surprising stuff.

All autistic people aren't alike. Despite their disability, many develop a personality—an internal life that can't be expressed due to their neurological problems.

But there is a way. They've gotten them to talk: if someone holds their wrist and helps them type, they're capable of using a keyboard.

It only works in certain cases, but it works. In others, more rare ones, they use a robotic arm that's adapted to fit a wheelchair. They've been able to make them use the same optical commands as tetraplegics. In short, regardless of the techniques used, we can communicate with them.

And so, when the parents aren't here, I take the cellphone they gave me as a birthday gift two or three years ago, and I show letters to Little Brother.

I have to admit that so far, he hasn't shown the slightest sign of interest, but it doesn't matter: I try all the same. I don't believe it's forbidden to meddle with the work of God.

\*

This is it. I knew it. In two weeks, they're sending me to Spain, to a Sister Community. I'm going to ride horses, listen to conferences in the company of other Young Elects, and—it's supposed to be the highlight of the trip—spend an hour in a tête-à-tête with my betrothed!

How, but how am I going to be able to escape this without causing a scandal whose first victim would be me? How?

I think about it during the day, and I don't sleep at night, without getting a glimpse of the slightest solution. And, to make matters worse, I can't find the Door anymore. He's always there, in his box, when I enter the school in the morning and leave in the evening, but it's impossible for me to get in touch with him. Did they, by any chance, catch him? What punishment can you inflict on a guy who's already locked up?

I'm so preoccupied by all of this that on the way to school I listen to even less of the twins' conversation than usual—that is, until the moment something in the tone of their voices spurs me to prick up my ears.

"I'm telling you we shouldn't talk to them about it," says Fabrice. "It's the best way to ruin everything."

"Ruin what? They're incapable of organizing anything! *I* think that we're not risking anything by giving it a try."

"Nonsense! If we talk to them, all we'll get is a sermon. Nothing more."

We're nearly under the porch. It's no longer the tone of their voice that compels me to listen, but—strange, exceptional situation!—the content of their conversation. I'm convinced they haven't changed the subject since we left, but I don't know what they're talking about.

"Hey, you two, why are you arguing?"

I try to look as innocent as possible. It must work, because they cut off immediately to shoot me a look of pity mingled with exasperation.

"It's none of your business," says Pierre.

The pity has disappeared from his expression. Replaced by something that strongly resembles disdain.

"Why?" Fabrice asks. "She must have seen it anyhow."

I have a weird feeling. I see that he's having doubts. That he's wondering whether or not they should let me in on this. It's like my twins have been transformed. Replaced by imposters. As if all of a sudden, they just pulled off their syntheskin masks. An instant before, they were robots programmed by Sambara, now they might be real people who, like me, are playing a part.

I can't get over it. I stay stupefied, speechless. I look at them one after the other, wondering what mind-blowing conspiracy they could be talking about.

Then, Fabrice points her finger to our right, towards the city.

"That," he says. "You know what that is?"

It's humiliating. They're really taking me for an idiot! That'll teach me, I suppose, to play my part too well.

What Fabrice is showing me, is a Ferris wheel. I've never seen one in real life before, but I must have read stories in which there were some, or ended up in a Place established in a virtual fair. I don't know anymore.

"It's a Ferris wheel," I fling back. "There's a fair in town? Well, that's a first."

They don't deign to nod their heads in agreement, but I sense that I just went up a notch in their respect.

"Has it been there a long time?"

"A day and a half. Everyone's seen it, except for you—and the parents, of course."

And suddenly I understand: someone among the kids saw the wheel and described the wonders of the fair to the others. No doubt based on memories of a past life because I can't believe that one of them was able to secretly access the network without me noticing. Be that as it may: a fun fair's Ferris wheel is turning in our sky, and the children of God are tempted.

"We'd like to see," explains Fabrice while we cross the porch. "There are two camps: those who think that we must ask Aunt Simona for permission to organize a picnic on the observation deck, and those who think we should organize one at night—without permission."

\*

I'm sitting in my seat, and I think about it—about the idea that some kids of the Enclave could not only be curious about the outside, but get organized to assuage this curiosity, when I come across, as it were by chance, a message the Door has left me.

He says this:

“Serotonin inhibitor levels increased, difficult to reach Network. Fair Free Men cover: contact Zirah the Truth-Teller.”

While I delete it, Francie throws foam at two girls in the last row. I'm about to tell her to cut it off when I catch on to her movement: she's stuffing something into the ball of foam before throwing it. It's a ruse! A trick to pass messages to people we only encounter at this time of the day. Having seen Fabrice and Pierre behave like normal human beings was enough to change my viewpoint. All at once, the twins and the others appear to me in an entirely different light. I wonder how I could have been foolish enough to have believed that, of all the kids that live here, I was the only one to resist!

They meet in the evenings, at the foot of the main wall, behind a garden shed that serves as a cemetery for broken or unusable tools. No one ever comes here.

The twins slipped me the meeting time on the way out of class. Like every evening, I went to bed, and then I went out through the window while thinking that, despite all of my dreams of the Great Departure, it was the first time I'd dared a getaway like this.

I creep stealthily between the houses, cross the lawns with the temptation—absurd—to take off my shoes and run until I am out of breath.

Behind the shed I find the twins and Francie. They are already deep in discussion, and I don't think it useful to interrupt them. I took advantage of the opportunity to listen and observe.

“No, no,” said Francie, shaking her brown curls as if to detach them from her head, “I don’t agree, if we present things to them like that, it’s not going to work. We shouldn’t tell them we want to see the fair.”

“Excuse me? We’re not going to tell them we want to *go* there, not really!”

An expression of absolute certainty sweeps over the face of this girl who I’ve always considered a featherbrain of the first order, even though she’s fifteen.

“Yes. We’re not going to do it ourselves. It’s too risky.”

“So, then who?”

“The zombies,” she said.

That’s what they call the kids whose brains have been permanently colonized by the word of God and Jean Paul Sambara.

“We’re going to talk to them, and we’re going to get them to understand that it would be good to go to the fair—not to see the attractions, of course!”

She pauses, prolonging the suspense.

“To carry the good word. Believe me, it’s going to work!”

We are sitting in the grass, in the dark, but even so I see the twins’ eyes widen.

“Now that’s an idea!”

“What did you think, loser.”

And she explains to them that it would be convenient to whisper to the zombies, in the days that follow, so that they pass on the right message to the Uncles and the Aunts.

“At any rate,” Francie concluded, “it’s not because they aren’t aware of it that they don’t want to leave too. It can’t fail.”



I sense then that the silence that sets in is for me. They are waiting for a reaction, an opinion, a comment.

“It can work,” I say, trying to be neither too enthusiastic nor too skeptical. “But how do you plan to make the most of the attractions?”

“Good question,” said Fabrice. “We haven’t had the time to think about it yet.”

Which means I probably need to come up with an idea.

“We’ll talk about this again,” Francie said, consulting her watch. “Tomorrow night, same time?”

The twins nod. Francie gets up and quickly disappears from our view. We stay sitting in the grass. The fair warms the night with a pale green, violet, and orange glow, the Ferris wheel stands out in the sky like a giant Christmas ornament. And we hear music. Not the songs they are playing, no, but like a massive pulsation, the rhythmic beat of an artificial, synthetic heart.

I must look surprised, because Fabrice says to me, pointing in the direction Francie disappeared:

“Her dad checks if she’s in bed every night at the same time.”

“It doesn’t stop her from going back out,” says Pierre. “But not tonight. Should we go home?”

I stood up.

“Let’s go.”

The day has been full of emotion and revelations. It would be good to go digest all of this under the quilt.

The twins seem to agree with me. We walk in silence to the spot where, in the morning, we meet to go to school. It is here that Fabrice turns to me and says:

“You didn’t suspect a thing, huh?”

I must admit I didn’t.

They don’t press further, but in the dark I see them exchange broad smiles.

“But we did. We know about you.”

Now I’m starting to get it, that they know. But what, exactly?

“Yeah,” Pierre concludes. “And we think that being able to fool everyone about your age, it’s not bad. But to be so old and not see what we’re up to, that sucks!”

“*You* suck,” I say to myself as I slide into my bed. It’s just because I’m too old that I saw nothing: you and I, we don’t belong to the same world anymore. In relation to you, I’m like the parents, who live in a parallel dimension. But here’s the thing: if your crazy plan works, me, I’m not going to settle for a ride on the merry-go-round. I’m going to get out of here.

\*

The next morning, I realize the second I wake up that something’s wrong. Normally, a chaotic melody emerges from the kitchen, an ensemble of disorganized yet harmonious sounds that remind me of an orchestra preparing for a concert.

But now, from my bed, I hear cupboard doors closed harshly, glasses set down carelessly on the table, piles of plates that clatter because they’re being carried unceremoniously.

A series of rapid footsteps to my door, which opens with full force and rebounds on the wall.

“Get up! It’s time! And hurry up!”

So it’s my *mother* who’s in a bad mood. It happens to them, to one or the other, from time to time. It’s rare that they tell me why, but it generally has something to do with what they call

their “work” and what always consists, for him and for her, of identifying and saving from death the poor little souls condemned by their unworthy mothers, then finding them a new home.

I understand what’s wrong when I enter the kitchen. The AutoPark is out of order. Two of its arms stretch towards the sky, toys jammed in their claws, and a third jerkily shakes a completely tangled mobile. Little Brother has taken refuge in a corner, away from this strange noise. He conscientiously knocks his forehead against one of the bars. I slip my hand between his head and the plastic to prevent him from hurting himself, and I return him to the middle of the AutoPark, wedging him in place with cushions. Then I say good morning to my *father*, who is polishing off his breakfast.

“Sit down,” he says to me. “I need to talk to you.”

Whoa. Is it the morning of catastrophes or something?

I sit down and serve myself cereal. My brain runs at full speed. I can’t believe that he’s found out about my little outing last night.

“It’s about the fair. Your teachers got wind of the fact that some of your classmates had decided to organize a secret picnic. They intended to punish them, but others suggested inviting them to join the group that is going to bring the word of God and of our Prophet to the very heart of this den of iniquity. The proposal is going to be debated during the general meeting this morning. If it’s accepted, and I believe that it will be, the leadership of certain groups will be entrusted to students of your section. Your mother and I intend to reward your good behavior by nominating you.”

I search for the right response, but fortunately, my *mother* comes back from the bathroom and says:

“If the repairman doesn’t get here, I won’t be able to attend!”

“He’s going to come,” says my *father*.

The broken AutoPark doesn’t concern him. It’s my *mother’s* domain. It’s then that I hear myself say, without really having thought about it:

“I can stay, if you want.”

“Sorry?”

“I can keep an eye on my brother. That way, *mother* will be able to go to the meeting.”

They look at each other. If they can entrust the word of God to me, they can also trust me to supervise Little Brother. They accept.

Once the door closes on them, I find myself alone and I finally realize that if I offered to do this, it’s not only to be alone with Little Brother. It’s also because I have a feeling that I’ll have to leave him soon.

\*

I should have consulted the public library before we left. But, from the moment when they confirmed to me that I would lead one of the missionary groups, I haven’t had a minute to myself. I haven’t had time, neither to inform myself about fairs nor to contact the Door. I stayed a whole five minutes looking up under his sarcophagus, but I didn’t see him move a limb. I imagine he’s joined the kingdom of molecular dreams, the coma of Divine druggies.

Be that as it may, if I’d had the time to gather information, I wouldn’t have, like the others, opened my eyes wide and nearly unhinged my jaw while entering the fair, which is a village.

A village, what am I saying, a city! A small city of stretched canvas and steel ropes, of bioplastic lines and guy wire, sails and bubbles. All of it bursts with vivid and fruity colors, and gives the impression that, if the ropes and cables weren’t firmly anchored to the ground, the

rides, the houses of horror, the cafes, the arbors, the pistolaser shooting booths, and the virtual labyrinths would take off into the skies.

The adults who organized the entire operation have placed us at supposedly strategic intersections, which we're not meant to move from. Our mission is to distribute leaflets, mini video bulls, and t-shirts with the holographic image of John Paul. Whether or not the location is strategic, a wave of kids and teenagers circulates between the rides and passes in front of us without showing anything other than a cosmic indifference. My group—which they let me put together as I wished—is composed of Francie, the twins, and two other girls whose names slipped my mind as soon as they said them. We came to an agreement with Francie and the twins: they're enjoying one of the rides while we keep watch and distribute leaflets, badges, and mini-bulls. To the two zombies, we said that they were in the bathroom, and they ate it up.

We're at a crossroads, or rather a small open space where six paths converge. Since we arrived, I keep watching the rides, in the hope of coming across a sign of Madam Zirah's presence.

To my left, kids between four- and eight-years old ride pale blue dolphins, pink unicorns, white whales, and silver elephants on a carousel. Their parents wait for their turn to end while casting sideways glances at the Octopus Kingdom, where, if I've understood correctly, you put on a costume to hunt treasure in the glaucous depths of the virtual tropics. I've heard several people recount their combat against the octopus with the very convincing intonations of seasoned sailors... The teens seem to prefer the Jungle, a labyrinth of moss, gelatin, and plastic, painted in green tones, at the heart of which they pelt each other with balls full of orange or bright pink gel. They come out of it looking wild, with colored hair and laughing expressions, holding in their suddenly too-small arms stuffed toys that represent lions or giraffes...

Fabrice and Pierre are across the way. They're going in circles under the stretched-canvas roof of the Insect Kingdom. I recommended to them to choose a car that's well-visible: for twenty minutes, they've occupied the same bright-red ladybug.

The twins, I must clarify, solved the delicate problem of money for us by bumping into some kids dressed in the uniforms of schools sponsored by the food-processing branch of the third European transcorp.

Which in no way gives them the right to break our contract and enjoy the carousel for twenty minutes, when we agreed on ten. I lean towards my neighbor.

"Francie, do you want to go tell these two idiots that their turn has ended?"

She doesn't need to be told twice. I follow her with my eyes while she crosses the small space; so well that I nearly miss the advertising robot that is coming towards me. These machines are so primitive that they're funny: a cart with remote-controlled wheels, on which is an animatronic marionette. It holds a television that broadcasts a video ad. I've already caught sight of several, but they passed by too far away for me to see their message. This one takes around a Pierrot that holds a white and gold television set. On the screen, a woman of a certain age explains that she can tell you if your boyfriend really loves you, by examining your brain. Madam Zirah is a clairvoyant psychic!

Madam Zirah!

The cart hasn't stopped moving. I jump in front of it to see if the screen shows the place where Madam Zirah works. My motion triggers the mechanism of the Pierrot, which hands me a flier. On the front, Madam Zirah smiles at me; on the back, a map shows me which aisle her consultation room is in.

My heart beats at full speed.

Luckily, the twins are back from their ride on the carousel. I dump my bundle of leaflets and t-shirts into their arms.

“You two, stay here. Watch Francie and the two zombies. And if anyone asks, say I’m with our leaders.”

“But you had said...”

“This is a case of extreme emergency.”

And I ditch them.

\*

Madam Zirah runs her boutique in a fake pumpkin.

I enter a waiting room hung with almond green velvet and full of cushions made to look like red fruits: strawberries, raspberries, cherries, and redcurrants. Madam Zirah doesn’t have many clients at this hour of the day; I wait by myself for her to lift the plastic flower-printed curtain, concealing what must be the entrance to her consultation room.

I’m starting to feel like time is dragging when she appears. A plump figure, but how can I put it, energetic. She has blossomed in width without any complex, or the least amount of fuss. Shorter than I am, yet imposing. A more warm and real presence than all the Aunts who pride themselves on the love of God. She studies me for a couple of seconds and says:

“All alone? Or is the lucky guy not going to be long?”

I take a few seconds to understand.

“Alone. It’s the Door who told me to come see you.”

“The door?”

“In the Enclave. He’s a prisoner.”

Her face lights up. She raises the curtain.

“Come in! Quick. How much time do you have?”

How much time? But I’m not leaving again. I have all the time I need.

We go down a step to go into a room without windows. The walls are hung with black velvet, the floor covered with a carpet of the same color. Lighting is provided by optic fibers running on the ground. They give off a red light from which arises an atmosphere at once mysterious and cozy. Nothing trashy or fake. When my eyes adjust to the lack of light, I make out two semi-circular sofas that encircle a table with a set of consoles. Two headsets are set on it. The final decor element I become aware of is the screen inserted in the wall, facing me.

“Sit down,” says Madam Zirah, pointing out the sofa facing the screen and sitting in the other with her back turned to it. I obey. Because I don’t know what to do with my hands, I pick up one of the headsets and examine it.

“We use them to obtain an image of the brain’s electrical activity. The client focuses on a word and I interpret the image projected on the screen. But you’re not here for that. What did Michael tell you, exactly?”

“His name is Michael?”

“Michael Bontemps.”

“He didn’t say anything to me. If I’ve understood correctly, they became aware of his activity and adjusted his inhibitors. We haven’t communicated for days.”

“I see.”

She settles comfortably into the black velvet of the sofa and observes me.

“You can’t stay here.”

“Sorry?”



“Don’t worry, no one knows anything. Just one look at you is enough to guess your intentions, young lady. But what you want to do isn’t possible.”

I try to meet the gaze of this woman who I find infinitely kind and reassuring, and a big black thing explodes under my skull. A dark nebula. A black hole.

“There are two reasons for that. On one hand, the Free and Unique Men don’t have the means to take in and protect whoever appears at their door. What’s more, we’ve had quite enough of the White Knights. We’d like to rid the world of these people.”

“You mean...destroy the Enclaves?”

“Perhaps. Not right away. Even with the latest deconstructors of synaptic networks, it’s extremely difficult to deprogram adults, but children...We’d like them to stop attacking children. For that, we need agents who can act from the inside.”

I’m starting to understand. But Madam Zirah hasn’t finished.

“The second reason,” she says, “is that Allison Mollet is dead.”

“Pardon?”

“Your mother is dead. Michael did some research, which we completed by looking up files from the rehabilitation center where they had sent her. She committed suicide after a year in their reeducation program.”

I don’t say anything. Shrink a bit into the sofa. The black hole in my head fully engulfs me. My mother is dead. Even if I don’t return to the Enclave, I will never see her again. All that I have left of her, it’s the images of our last moments together, and everything she used to say to me.

“What do...What will I need to do?”

“Not much more than what you’ve always done.”

“They want to marry me off. How am I going to be able to help you with a zombie on my back?”

She furrows her brow.

“That’s true. We’ll deal with it. We’ll find a way: either by finding you a ‘husband’ who’ll be a part of our troops, or by tampering with their tests so that they’re convinced it’s better that you don’t marry. We’ve done it before.”

For a few seconds, she seems lost in thought, then she resumes:

“Michael told me that a number of other kids in the Enclave are quite street-smart.”

“It’s because of them that I’m here.”

“That’s what I understood. But they’ve only come here to have fun. It’s going to be necessary to keep a close eye on them, study them, bring them little by little to consider the possibility that they can get out. I mean in a concrete and permanent way, not only with temporary distractions. You see what I’m saying?”

I understand, but I feel like crying, and I respond with only a nod. She leans over, opens one of the table’s compartments, and hands me a black plastic box.

“Michael is in trouble. For him to survive, you would need to inject the contents of this syringe into his nutritional system. It’s a virus that will permanently protect him from the inhibitors.”

I take the box and hide it in my underpants. Then I stand up. Madam Zirah gives me a kiss—I don’t have the time to stop her from doing it.

She sees me out to the entrance of the pumpkin. As I’m leaving, I turn to her.

“By the way,” I say, “your business of interpreting images of brain activity, is that bullshit?”

She smiles wide and gives me a whack on my behind that propels me outside.

“Yes,” she says. “But that doesn’t matter. What counts, it’s not what we look at, it’s the way we look at it.”

\*

A few minutes later, I have caught up with the others. Francie and the twins, in the joy of having deceived our wardens, didn’t notice that I wasn’t really in my usual state anymore. We returned to the fold, and they congratulated us on our good behavior.

Since then, we meet every evening behind the tool shed and I listen to them recount their exploits. I think Zirah is right: it’s pointless to talk to them about anything as long as they haven’t demonstrated a desire other than to treat themselves to a ride on the merry-go-round. The carnies haven’t left yet, and, when the wind blows in the right direction, you hear the shrieks of the girls that the Giant Octopus carries towards the sky.

I suppose that one day, we too will go to the fair. First, we have a lot on our plate. It’s time that the Uncles and the Aunts, the Fathers and the Mothers stop believing that they can impose their warped vision of the world without encountering resistance. Time to show them that they don’t have the right to take possession of other people’s lives—even if they’re poor, uneducated girls.

There is no God and life is nothing without the freedom to choose it. The followers of John Paul aren’t free. They believe that to live this life they must find an answer, an interpretative framework that will enable them to understand the world at last. But it’s not a grid that they’re making: it’s a cage, and they want to put all of us inside. They don’t want to understand that our only freedom is knowing how and why we aren’t free.

Because there is nothing to find. There is just being, making, and creating. There is no other God than the ones we imagine. There is no other humanity than the one we invent, day after day.

In the meantime, I've gotten permission to look after Little Brother one morning a week. When they leave, I unplug the AutoPark and we go for a walk. Little Brother is incapable of walking by himself. The second you let go of his hand, he's terrified. He stays on his feet, paralyzed, shaking all over, unable to move forward. The second I put his hand back in mine, he starts moving forward again.

\*

The package that Madam Zirah gave me contained the syringe, and microdisks to use on the school's consoles. I now have a Fox-Terrier and Ferrets that enable me to go where I want, when I want. And even a Cerberus, which guards my pocket of personal data. I had to wait before making use of the syringe. I needed to procure some tools. For that, I deliberately sabotaged the AutoPark. The repairman came; while he talked with my mother, and fiercely defended the work he'd done during his last visit, I borrowed two or three little things from him.

Tonight, I leave through the window of my room and run in small strides towards the school's door. A ladder awaits me, hidden behind a flower bed. I put it up against the wall and climb to the height of the sarcophagus in which lies Michael Bontemps. I've chosen a clear and starry night, close to the full moon. It's dangerous, but if I have a halogen microlamp that fits in the palm of my hand for finicky tasks, I also need a minimum amount of brightness to not mess up.

He's here, behind a good two centimeters of polycarbonate. Nothing separates us but the somewhat yellow thickness of an assembly of macromolecules. I see the straps that hold him in

place, the needles that go into his wrists. His face and his skull are entirely confined in the headset. We are a few centimeters apart and it's absolutely impossible for us to communicate.

It's not the moment to let myself be overwhelmed by this type of thought. It's what they've done to this guy that repulses me—not him. I take the laser blade I've borrowed from the repairman and cut out a polycarbonate disk next to the base of his neck. There passes a thin pipe that transports the nanos they use to control his cerebral activity and his mood. I pick up the syringe from its foam-upholstered box, and carefully put my arm into the sarcophagus. The other hand aims the microlamp at the pipe. Advantage of my small size: I didn't have to cut out too big a piece of the plastic to carry out this exploit. A push down on the plunger, and a diode indicates that the contents of the syringe have been injected.

I pull my hand out. Then I slather the edges of the polycarbonate disk with glue and put it back in place. Next, all I have to do is put away the ladder and go back home.

Tomorrow, at school, I'll be able to judge if my little expedition was useful for something.

While walking, I think: yes, it has helped. And there will be others, many others. And, one day, we'll get out of here.

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***Traduire : Lire, Réfléchir, Réécrire (To Translate: To Read, To Reflect, To Rewrite)***

My translation process began before I translated the first word of “Dedans, dehors,” with significant consideration for the ideas that Sylvie Denis conveys in the text and the rhetorical strategies she uses to this end. A preliminary analysis of the story helped lay the ground for the translation and provided a number of insights into my translation approach. It goes without saying, although I do reiterate it, that a literary translator cannot enter their source text prior to having a grasp on the text and its cultural, socio-historical context, or their lack of comprehension may consequently result in a translation riddled with inaccuracies or ineffective equivalents. While one cannot deny that reading a short story in translation is a different experience than reading the original text, due to my background as both a creative writer and a translator, I held myself accountable for putting forth as closely similar a reading experience to the target language audience. For example, Denis set a precedent for my translation through her authorial choices concerning the linguistic register and the voice of her narrative, and I tried to translate the register and voice she set in her story to see how it would then impact the target language text.

I supplemented my first reading of the *nouvelle* with contextual knowledge of the science fiction genre from other science fiction short stories and notably a keystone book, *The Seven Beauties of Science Fiction* by Author Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr., who lists seven “beauties” of the genre. I paid special attention to the concepts of “neologisms” and “novums” he develops in his book, which are new words and ideas to designate inventions or artifacts that form a vital part of the imagined reality in science-fiction narratives. Csicsery-Ronay Jr. remarks that readers notice neologisms and their linguistic power, which ties into his statement, “Languages have an inherent potential for development through their interaction with the discourses of other cultures

and their own internal elaboration” (15). In other words, intralinguistic creative directions and intercultural transfer can lead to the evolution of a language; a neologism is one such form of intralinguistic “elaboration” that interacts with the target language culture. There are only a few neologisms in Denis’s story, but Csicsery-Ronay Jr.’s claim begged the consideration of which terms and ideas would draw the reader’s attention, in both the source and target languages. In what follows, I show examples of neologisms. Furthermore, the quote led me to contemplate how, in my translation, the English language would relay the linguistic features of the French language that reflect French culture, such as syntax and colloquial expressions.

With regards to novums, Csicsery-Ronay Jr. offers details about the science fiction genre that relates to my own translation process and theoretical discussion. Novums are integral to science fiction, in that a novum creates an alternative reality as aforementioned; in his words, the constructed reality is “a model that readers make sense of by constantly, though not always consciously, comparing it with the familiar world... The novum establishes a distance from which reality can be seen with fresh eyes...” (50). This distance is achieved through the reader’s defamiliarization or estrangement from their own reality, and their oscillation between the two models of reality (50). For example, in “Dedans, dehors,” a man named Michael is imprisoned in a sarcophagus, restrained under the influence of serotonin inhibitors to serve as the gatekeeper of the narrator’s school (Denis). The concept of a human body locked in a box, serving as the nexus of a computer surveillance system, is a novum that defamiliarizes the setting for the audience, but underlying it is a critique of the incarceration system and of surveillance networks. These issues, identifiable in our own reality, remain present in the story under the framework of the novum, which allows the audience to view the imagined reality from an adjacent angle.

Moreover, in “Ideology and the Position of the Translator,” Maria Tymoczko examines the cultural loyalty of a translator, which is often brought into question “because the translator is in fact all too committed to a cultural framework, whether that framework is the source culture, the receptor culture, a third culture, or an international cultural framework...” (201). By this standard, if reading the world of a science fiction *nouvelle* in its source language implies the experience of two realities, that of the source language culture and the imagined sci-fi world, then for readers of a science fiction translation, the realities are threefold, requiring the translator to factor in aspects of the target language culture as well.

The multiplicity of cultural framework options engenders a challenge for the translator, to an even greater degree when one factors in the intricacies of genre. When it comes to science fiction a triangular interplay occurs between the source language and culture of the original text, the new world invented by the author, and the language and culture of the target audience. It is evident that at the foundation of science fiction rests an act of transposing one’s cultural reality to the imagined world of the story, and therefore, understanding the genre played a large role in my translation process. As I studied the genre theory, I deliberated how my translation could best encompass these three ‘realities,’ all of which impart a mode of cultural perception. In “Dedans, dehors,” Denis presents the novums and neologisms through the narrative voice of an unnamed adolescent girl, and as such, I focused not solely on the protagonist’s specific way of perceiving the history of her world and her perception of the reality she lives in, but also on how the English translation could doubly relay American and French culture to readers. Additionally, the *nouvelle* is framed as a coming-of-age for the narrator, and the wry tone and youthful, choppy point of view due to the first person permits Denis to advance a decidedly anti-establishment standpoint, something that informed my choices as I translated. The publisher’s directive to remain as



faithful as possible to the source text often proved frustrating, more so in light of the idea that “translations, although aiming for linguistic equivalence, are articulated in a language with different semantic possibilities, whose words and expressions have different connotations for the speakers of that language than the equivalent, original words and expressions” (Bantinaki 311).

According to Walter Benjamin in his essay “The Translator’s Task” (translated by Steven Rendall), “translation ultimately has at its purpose the expression of the most intimate relationships among languages” (154). Nonetheless, the interlinguistic relationship is imbued with culturally-charged connotations. With these tensions in mind, I did not make sweeping changes but I did make slight alterations to Denis’s authorial choices for a more nuanced cultural translation. To match the text’s structure, I followed the action-based and point-A-to-point-B structure of the story without deviating from the sequential process. This mimics the protagonist’s straightforward thinking and bluntness, in that my initial draft moved from the beginning to the end of the text in clear sections, similar to the way the narrator makes larger discoveries throughout the story. Because she herself undergoes an immense change over the course of the plot, I translated with linearity with the intention to parallel her development. This gave me greater comprehension, and above all, a sense of authorial agency over the target text as well.

My main roadblock in the manuscript centered on finding American-English cultural equivalents for the word choices and colloquial register Denis’s protagonist uses in the story. At the beginning of the text, the protagonist describes the current state of her world—while she lives a surveilled and controlled life inside the walls of the Enclave, on the outside living conditions are undesirable and riddled with social issues and technologies. Of these technologies, the “virtuBaises,” a neologism that refers to platforms for virtual sex, are one innovation the narrator

mentions (Denis 16). In “Literary Style in Translation,” Delabatista describes “*blending*” as a way to form neologisms by combining parts of two words (884). The neologism “virtuBaíses” constitutes one such instance of blending the word ‘virtuel’ with ‘baise,’ a vulgar slang term which denotes the act of sexual intercourse. To translate this, I retained ‘virtu’ and selected ‘bang’ as the appropriate slang equivalent in American English. The translated neologism is “virtuBangs” (5). Using ‘bang’ allowed me to keep the same consonant sounds as in the source language as well.

Later on, the colloquial register repeatedly challenged me. I could not ignore the protagonist’s pithy, sarcastic voice, which highlighted its own Frenchness doubly through her age and her cynical worldview. For instance, near the end of a clandestine meeting with her rebellious classmates, Pierre says to the protagonist: « Mais être si vieille et ne pas voir nos petits manèges, c’est nul ! » (Denis 39, my emphasis). Upon returning home she says as a response to Pierre, « Nul toi-même ». The issue resides in the phrase ‘c’est nul,’ which I equate to “that sucks” (24); Denis repeats ‘nul’ in a different context under the same register.

At the outset, I considered “Suck yourself,” but this came off as too strong for the protagonist, who eschews the moral ideologies of the Enclave but does not use extreme language. In my revision I changed the dialogue to “You suck,” but despite the milder insult, I did not feel that the “toi-même,” which one would translate word-for-word as ‘yourself,’ carried the narrator’s voice. In my final translation, I changed the formatting to place stress on ‘you,’ thereby incorporating the weight of “toi-même.” The resulting “*You* suck” (24) maintains several aspects of the source language and characterization while appealing to an American readership’s knowledge of specific conversational forms.

Indeed, not all of my decisions stand out on the page as crucial to the narrative, nor do they have a major influence on the power of the translated *nouvelle*. They nonetheless lend a specific mode of perception to the descriptions and tone, which is inherently cultural. Delabastita supports this in his analysis of neologisms, writing that isolated problems, such as neologisms, “reveal intrinsic connections with fundamental notions such as...the cultural embeddedness of every language event” (Delabastita 883). Denis paints a particular social reality due to the language she writes in, and in this vein my translation changes the social reality of “Dedans, dehors” to one recognizable to English speakers, notably those familiar with colloquial and standard varieties of American English.

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### **Agency-Centric Objectives of the Translator**

To produce my translation of “Dedans, dehors,” I have thus read, analyzed, and to some extent, rewritten the text. As a literary translator, I have every right to the former two strategies, but what of the latter? By settling for a translation closer to the source language, what implications arise for the target language text? How does the reading experience change? These questions regarding agency and limits remain essential to my ongoing translation practice, and provide a springboard for my view of the literary translator’s role and objectives with the text. It is my view that a translator must make informed decisions about cultural translation, and create a reading experience in the target language that is informed by text and reader expectations, in order to assume agency over the text and their visibility or invisibility therein.

Overall, one can see cultural translation as the movement of a text from the readership of one sociocultural context towards that of another, but there always remains a seam, however small, between source and target language, that blends the two cultures rather than remaining a

clearly demarcated path from language to language. Because the translator holds invaluable input regarding the cultural and language perceptions of the reader in the target language, they cannot be cast in the position of simply transposing text. According to Bantinaki, the cultural context of the target language necessitates an act of interpretation:

“...the translator...is situated in a different cultural context than the writer of the original work, and her historical and cultural circumstances inevitably influence not only how she reads the original – so that there is always an act of interpretation that the translation reflects – but also her choices of expression in her attempt to reach an audience with specific cultural references, again different from those of the original’s target audience” (311).

For example, “Dedans, dehors” takes place in a futuristic France, where society has been divided into rich Enclaves such as the one run by the “Jerusalem of the White Knights” and the rest of Europe is run by an ineffective government and plagued by unemployment and gang activity (5). Denis centers the story in a pan-European world with an organized Judeo-Christian, mission-centric religious society as the main setting. While the novums in the *nouvelle* center around technological innovations, “their significance derives from their effects on human consciousness” (Csicsery-Ronay Jr. 48). In the case of “Dedans, dehors,” Denis employs the novums, such as serotonin inhibitors or genetic cards, to underscore the sociocultural context, namely a criticism of religious orthodoxy and its arguments for abortion rights, racial justice, and anti-establishment sentiment. It is a cultural context familiar to audiences from the United States and France, but the worldbuilding rests on a unique French cultural perception of Europe and the rest of the world, doubly so due to the cultural references of the French language.

The cultural contexts and target language forms that serve as their vehicles form the core of Lawrence Venuti's argument in *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. Venuti believes that in contemporary Anglo-American culture, a translated text that reads fluently is transparent and makes the translator invisible because it casts an illusion that the target text is the original (1). This invisibility "at once enacts and masks an insidious domestication of foreign texts," and to resist it, Venuti calls for a "foreignizing method" in which dissimilarities of culture and language are highlighted rather than being effaced, leading to the visibility of the translator (Venuti 15-16). As a translator working within American English, the cultural translation specific to an American audience stems from my reading of the original text, and in this regard, I dissent from Venuti with regards to transparency and invisibility. A term like "Chevaliers Blancs," for example, translates with ease to "White Knights" because the cultural evocation of knighthood is similar to both American and French cultures. The consideration of transparency does not pose a complication here. On the other hand, were I translating "Dedans, dehors," to Marathi, I would have to consider that there is no direct Marathi translation for "Chevalier" that would evoke the same image in a Marathi target language reader's mind as 'knight' would in English. One option would be to use either the term "शूरवीर" [shoorveer] or "योद्धा" [yoddha], which denote a warrior; another solution would translate the original French term to 'knight' and phonetically transcribe the English word in the Devanagari script as "नाइट" [knight].

Given his encouragement for 'foreignization,' Venuti would choose the latter option, "नाइट." On the other hand, I would select one of the former two options, as the term "नाइट" is not a French term to begin with, and secondly, because the direct use of "Chevalier" would be incomprehensible to Marathi-language readers. Venuti's claim veers towards one extreme in an exclusive promotion of the translator's visibility, introducing yet another restriction on the

translator, which I disagree with. No matter whether the translator surfaces from their invisibility, I advocate for a moderate viewpoint that allows the translator to ask: Does the target language culture necessitate transparency in the target text, as with my preceding example, or does the source text push the translator to retain its ‘foreign’ elements in the target language? It follows in my approach that a translator's goal is to come as close to mirroring the *effects* and ideas in the target language as they are conveyed through the source language.

This example is more broadly indicative of my practical view on cultural translation: a literary text cannot entirely inhabit the target language. Depending on the extent of the cultural differences, the ideas of the source text cannot be fully permeable to the target language, either. A translator “works creatively to produce a new text, and give new expression to pre-existing ideas, grounded in her own understanding of language and culture,” states Bantinaki (307). Tymoczko has a similar point of view regarding the translation’s ideology, which “resides not simply in the text translated, but in the voicing and stance of the translator, and in its relevance to the receiving audience” (“Ideology and the Position” 183). I liken this ‘ideology’ to the textual effects, as the new, translated text reflects how the individual translator sees culture and language, but elicits their and the original author’s ideas in a unique way. By virtue of expressing the same ideas in a different language, the target text offers a different reading experience than the source text.

When crafting a ‘reading experience,’ a translator must factor in the expectations of the publisher, which I did when translating “Dedans, dehors.” Tymoczko writes, “Because of the potential open-endedness of a translator's agenda, cultures have tried in various ways to control translators...an indication of [the translator’s] cultural power” (“Translation: Ethics, Ideology, Action” 453). One of the strongest agents of control in a given culture is the publisher. If the

publisher requires the translation to be faithful to its source, or vice versa, then the translator needs to navigate how many concessions they can make in their process. Due to the restrictive impositions on the translator's decision-making process, the reading experience may be more rigidly confined to the publisher's vision, which ultimately diminishes the translator's cultural power.

In the *nouvelle*, for instance, the narrator uses a familiar, self-referential phrasing through which she emphasizes herself with the word 'moi,' such as in the sentence, "Moi, je n'ai rien effacé" (Denis 27). This is a common feature in colloquial French. Following my guideline to remain faithful to the text, I first chose a direct translation: "Me, I've erased nothing" (14). Because this is a common linguistic feature in French, but reads as unnatural in English, I shifted my translation to "Me? I've erased nothing," which meshes with American speech patterns. To further Americanize the text would involve removing the "Me" and italicizing "I've." However, unlike the single appearance of "*You suck*" (24), this structure repeats itself throughout the story. I would need to change the original form in several sentences for consistency.

Because I was unsure whether this would constitute a violation of the source text and go against the editorial guidelines of source text conformity, I chose the first option. My unresolved decision questions whether a translator should change a recurrent linguistic structure to better conform to the target language culture, or conversely, whether they ought to retain the structure to stay close to the source language. Given that the audience approaches a translated text with their own expectations, this debate has direct implications on the reading experience and the way a text will be received. The tendencies of the French language that I have kept in my translation, like the above example, can raise the target audience's awareness that they are reading a translation, rather than an original work. One must assess how the target language audience for a

story like “Dedans, dehors” would respond to a translation that leans towards its origins (e.g. a ‘French’ text) more so than it follows ‘American’ English language patterns.

The audience and the publisher are priorities, but they are not actively involved in the translation process itself. Benjamin asserted that a translator should “find the intention toward the language into which the work is to be translated, on the basis of which an echo of the original can be awakened in it” (159). I envision this highly intentional “echo” as none other than the reading experience, which the translator has constructed through choices regarding content and language (henceforth referred to as form). At the center of translation is the text, which comes with its own expectations that contribute to the reading experience of the translation. To clarify my approach to form and content, I present a brief examination of one of my own fictional texts, “Batique,” which I wrote in French and translated to English. In one scene, the narrator and another character stand unclothed, looking at the batik scarf that is the heart of the story. The sentence is “Nus, nous regardons le batik,” which I crafted as a play on words to have two meanings. I aim for the language to evoke a symbolic triangulation, in which “Nus, nous” is a reflexive verb with an interrupting comma to denote that the characters are at once looking at each other and the batik. Yet this is complicated by the intentional misuse of “Nus” as a pronoun, whereas in actuality it is the adjective for ‘nude’ in its plural form. One potential English translation is “Nude, we look at the batik,” while another is the grammatically incorrect, “We look at each other the batik.”

It is impossible to fully preserve the symbolism in the source text, which corresponds to Benjamin’s beliefs around form-content fidelity: “Fidelity in translating the individual word can almost never fully render the meaning it has in the original...it is self-evident that fidelity in rendering form makes rendering meaning more difficult. (160-61) During my process, I realized



I could translate the reflexive verb and the phonetic wordplay. Thus I opted for, “We bare ourselves to the batik.” Although the inaccuracy comes at the expense of a direct translation, I manage to convey not only the reflexivity and the alliteration, but also the image of nudity and the symbolism of the character-object-character triangle. I change the original meaning with a specific intended reading effect for the target language audience. Deviating from the form permits me to meet the source text’s expectations for the content, and as a result, the reading experience of the translation is more or less what I had intended for the original French. I do not have complete fidelity over either form or content, but I address both with thought in the translation.

This illustrates my argument that a literary translator must strike a balance between form and content with the overall effect of the translation as a goal. Sacrifices of form and content are inevitable, even crucial. It is an essential understanding that “the relation between content and language in the original [text] is entirely different from that in the translation” (Benjamin 158). To tackle the contrasting relationships between content and language (form) in the two languages, a translator can prioritize one over the other, provided they do so with a conscious intention for the outcome. Why does the outcome matter? For one, Bantinaki writes, “Literary works can be insightful, challenging, apocalyptic, insulting, in terms of the world and the vision that they bring forth, whereas translations can be precise, illuminating, distorting, biased, in terms of the quality of the representation of the original” (313). Like in a literary work, the small decisions on form and content in a translation come together to have a lasting impact on the text as a whole.

Ideally it is the translator who should determine both the form-content balance and the reading experience. Much like the author, the translator cedes their work to the audience upon

publication, responds to the publisher's expectations, establishes a reading experience, and experiments with form and content. Publication considerations and reader expectations aside, the two texts are distinct entities because the translator does more than copy the original text, although their translation is always in conversation with the original. "In [translations] the original's life achieves its constantly renewed, latest and most comprehensive unfolding," writes Benjamin, suggesting there exists a delimitation between the texts that allows the translation to 'illuminate' the original ideas (154). Bearing in mind textual interactions and tensions, how does one differentiate a translator from an author? For one, it is widely accepted that textual ownership rests primarily with the author. I am of the opinion that this position relegates the translator to a secondary status in relation to the literary work, undervaluing their creative agency so as to sustain the author's power over the text and reduce the translator to an intermediary between languages.

However, a translation exists independently of its source, and the translator "is the only collaborator who *has the power to decide* on the properties that the final work is going to have" (Bantinaki 309). They bring the cultural and linguistic tools at their disposal to the translation process, which provides them with the agency to make choices that go beyond this secondary status. Supporting this, Bantinaki ascribes "authorship of *representations* of literary works" to the translator (314). Notwithstanding that the translator can never call the original literary work their own, because of their informed translation choices, one can grant them authorship of the representation of the source text.

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## Conclusion

My remarks on authorship and agency come full circle to my ideas on cultural translation. An author's decisions about writing a 'social reality' can indicate their presence in the source text, and in this fashion, I contend that the translator must have the agency to decide how they will represent themselves in the target text, through cultural translation and the development of a specific reading experience. Whether the target text evinces or hides the translator's presence, the choice is theirs. One could even say they may position themselves 'inside' or 'outside' the target text as they see fit.

The narrator of "Inside, Outside," at the end of the story, concludes that her small action to save the prisoner has helped, and "that there will be others, many others" (36). I see the art of literary translation similarly. Despite the debates and questions surrounding a translator's objectives, the mere act of literary translation breaks down walls and renders literary works accessible to a wider audience. It is a bridge between languages that illuminates the multitude of realities in our world.

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