Chapter 1

Adaptation and Appropriation: Is there a Limit?

Hugo Vandal-Sirois and Georges L. Bastin

Now that adaptation studies are currently thriving to become a discipline of their own that not only focuses on linguistic and cultural transfers, but also on a much broader spectrum of transpositions, it is important to step back and explore its presence in translation studies. After all, the idea of adapting any given text for a new specific audience has always been debated by quite a few theorists and practitioners, and eventually goes back to the old debate of domesticating versus foreignizing approaches. Yet, even the analysis of various aspects of genre adaptations such as the novelization of a movie, the transposition of a poem into a song, or the toning down of a certain narrative for younger readers finds echoes in many propositions published in translation studies papers.

The notion of adaptation itself was often discussed, supported or severely criticized in the field of translation studies. Regarded by some as a ‘free’ translation, even when the translational context demands it, adaptations are from time to time discarded or oversimplified. Still, in spite of the many accusations of being an abusive form of translation, or not a translation at all, adaptation is frequently listed among the possible valid solutions to various translational difficulties. Moreover, the idea that all translators do adaptations in their work, consciously or not, has already been around for a while. Lawrence Venuti, for instance, openly recognizes that any translation work implies a necessary domesticating task. This proposition denotes the importance of adaptation in the understanding of the process of creating efficient and accurate multilingual communications.
1.1 The Notion of Adaptation in Translation Studies
(and Adaptation Studies)

One of the first acceptations of the notion of adaptation that comes to mind is certainly Vinay and Darbelnet’s, who listed it as a simple translation procedure in their well-known *Comparative Stylistics of French and English* (1958, 1995 for the English translation). Here, adaptations are viewed as a ‘situational equivalence’ (Vinay and Darbelnet 1995: 39) conducted mostly to deal with cultural issues that might affect the target readers’ reception or understanding of the source text. Vinay and Darbelnet illustrate the notion with the example of a French interpreter, who translated the English sport ‘cricket’ as ‘Tour de France’. Although very basic, this example is a fine representation of a contextual situation that might justify such an initiative on the translator’s behalf. An interesting addition of *Comparative Stylistics* to the matter is that the authors clearly mention that resorting to adaptation when translating might be disputable. Although this method is quickly described as the ‘extreme limit of translation’ (39), Vinay and Darbelnet clearly stress that a translator who systematically refuses to adapt will eventually produce a weakened target text. In other words, adaptation isn’t necessarily a matter of treason or needless infidelity towards the original document or its author. The importance of adaptation is then underlined with the example of texts published by international organizations that often feel bland or inaccurate. That same point is still very relevant today in this era of mass communication and globalization, where organizations and corporations do not hesitate to send a single and unique message throughout the world. This situation is well illustrated by the examples taken from the fields of advertising and marketing that we will study later in this chapter.

Besides Vinay and Darbelnet’s definition of adaptation as a procedure, another unavoidable contribution is provided by Julie Sanders’ *Adaptation and Appropriation* (2006), which might very well be a classic in adaptation studies, alongside the breakthrough works of Robert Stam and Thomas Leitch. While Sanders seldom talks of translation itself in her book, she suggests a definition of adaptation that corresponds very conveniently to the process of translation: an ‘attempt to make text ‘relevant’ or easily comprehensible to new audiences and readerships via the processes of proximation and updating’ (Sanders 2006: 19). This notion originates from French literary theorist Gérard Genette. In the glossary of *Adaptation and Appropriation*, she defines this notion as ‘[…] an updating or the cultural
relocation of a text to bring it into greater proximity to the cultural and temporal context of readers or audiences' (163). This represents precisely the motivation that pushes translators to take the initiative of distancing their work from more literal approaches in order to preserve the meaning, effect, or purpose of the original text, while ensuring the best reception possible of the translation among the target audience. Most professional translators face both cultural and linguistic obstacles in their work, and it would be erroneous to state that those who oppose the domesticating approach stick to word-for-word translations: an adaptation might well be an intrinsic part of a successful translation. This conclusion is in fact compatible with the clear distinction that Sanders draws between adaptation and appropriation: ‘Adaptation signals a relationship with an informing source text or original. [..] Appropriation frequently affects a more decisive journey away from the informing source into a wholly new cultural product and domain (Sanders 2006: 26). Adaptation could be named telos, as suggested by Chesterman (2008): the personal goal of the translator. Examples taken from history will show how translators have often opted to adapt foreign texts to better serve their readers needs, but also decided to appropriate those texts to serve their own ideological commitments.

Adaptation seems to be part of the process of linguistic transfer of a document, created in one source culture and then aimed at another culture. In spite of the adjustments and modifications, often imposed by the language of the source text or deemed necessary by the translator, an adaptation still shares a very strong link to the source text. On this view, it is the notion of appropriation that could be accused of being an ‘unfaithful’ representation of the source text. And since appropriation is a conscious and creative undertaking that does not aim nor pretend to be a translation (although it shares most of its procedures), this whole matter of ‘treason’ and infidelity to the original seems resolved by this appropriation/adaptation distinction.

Another author who questions the systematic differentiation of ‘adaptation’ and ‘translation’ is Yves Gambier, who points out that there is an uncertainty in defining the notion of adaptation, and clarifying which line a translation has to cross to become an adaptation. In ‘Adaptation: Une Ambiguïté à Interroger’ (1992), he underlines this blurriness by noting that many translation procedures suggested by Vinay and Darbelnet other than ‘adaptation’, such as omission and condensation, are adaptations nonetheless. As he implies in this paper, it will be hard to find a satisfactory definition of adaptation if the very definition of translation itself is still an
issue. Nevertheless, Gambier studies classic examples of translations that are commonly regarded as adaptations; this leads him to the conclusion that the labelling of any text produced by a translator as an adaptation is often a hasty personal judgment. Even if all source texts don’t permit the translator to work with the same degree of ‘freedom’, an adaptation will occur at some point. Besides, a ‘good’ translation is frequently described as a text that ‘feels’ like an original. Yet, asking a translator to produce a text that would favour the target audience while avoiding any kind of linguistic, semiotic, or cultural adaptation would be unrealistic. This is precisely the ambiguity of adaptation Gambier refers to in the title of his paper.

Finally, our own reflections on the subject of adaptation are based on a personal translational experience: the creation of a Spanish version of Jean Delisle’s L’Analyse du Discours Comme Méthode de Traduction. In order to produce a translation handbook that would be relevant, and above all, useful for our Spanish-speaking students (working from French to Spanish), it was obviously necessary to modify and adjust some of the content of the book that was originally intended for French-speaking students learning how to translate pragmatic texts from English. For instance, all the examples proposed by Delisle covered English-to-French translations, and by neglecting new examples in the Spanish version and just translating word-for-word would defeat the purpose of the book. On the contrary, our Spanish version aims to be a handbook equally ‘formative’ as the original. The purpose here is no doubt to form, and not to inform.

This experience inspired us to further study the notion of adaptation in the context of translation studies. After covering the earlier definitions of adaptation in the literature and reflecting upon the issues that came up during our translation project, we managed to formulate three hypotheses that would hopefully lead to a working definition of adaptation. These hypotheses, which are much more detailed in previous works (Bastin 1993, 1998), are that adaptations are ‘recreations’; adaptations are necessary if not indispensable; and that it is possible to draw a line between the notions of adaptation and translation. Since all three notions appeared reasonably valid at the completion of our project, at the very least in the precise field of the translation of educational texts, we proposed our own definition: ‘Adaptation is the process of creating a meaning that aims to restore a communicational balance that would be broken by the process of translation’ (Bastin 1993: 477). We also noted that the most common factors that cause translators to resort to adaptation are cross-code breakdown, situational or cultural inadequacy, genre switching, and disruption of the communication process (Bastin 2008: 5). It is worth mentioning that the third
factor refers to one of the main issues dealt with by Stam in his works on intertextuality and film adaptation (Stam 2004, 2005). In the Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies, we further investigated the perceived distinction between adaptation and translation, and eventually suggested that adaptation may be viewed as 'a set of translative operations which results in a text that is not accepted as translation but is nevertheless recognized as representing a source text of about the same length' (Bastin 2008: 3). Translation processes meaning while adaptation favours communicative situation and thus functionality. Moreover, we found that adaptations can be tactical (when the translation faces a specific translational problem in a text, often of a linguistic or cultural nature), or strategic (when global modifications are needed to ensure the relevance and the usefulness of the translation, such as our version of Delisle’s book). If the first kind of adaptation is optional and resorts to the text itself, the latter surely is needed for the translation to suit the expectations of the target culture. In other words, adaptations do not resort to the text itself, but to the communication situation (which, in our case study, was pedagogy). While these propositions were elaborated with metalanguage-filled academic texts in mind, we strongly feel that they might apply to a broader scope of translation domains. As for the questionable systematic distinction between translation and adaptation discussed by Gambier, our studies and practical work led us to believe that not only do these two notions share the same functions and objectives, but also that adaptation is essential to carry out the purpose of a message.

1.2 The Notion of Adaptation in Functionalism

In addition to underlining the cultural nature of adaptation that is clearly reflected in the various definitions we just surveyed, it is important to locate adaptation in the ever-growing field of translation theory. Although many theories that push the domesticating ‘agenda’ suit the notion of adaptation very well, the functionalist approach seems the most suitable to describe the reasons why a translator resorts to adapting a text. Since adaptations are motivated by keeping the source text applicable to the target culture, and ensuring the efficacy of a text for a specific group of readers, the translator should consider the purpose of the text that will be introduced in a different culture, the reason why the translation is requested, and the target readers of the translation. Mark Shuttleworth and Moira Cowie’s definition of adaptation is also in the same vein: ‘The term usually implies
that considerable changes have been made in order to make the text more suitable for a specific audience (e.g., children) or for the particular purpose behind the translation’ (Shuttleworth and Cowie 1997: 3). This last point about the purposeful nature of adaptations illustrates how well this translational practice comes within the scope of functionalist theories. Giuseppe Palumbo’s definition of the functionalist approach, where translation is seen ‘as an act of communication and a form of action involving not only linguistic but also social and cultural factors’ (Palumbo 2009: 50), illustrates how convenient and valuable the technique of adaptation is for functionalist translators. Many elements related to the functionalist theory of translation are relevant to adaptations, from Hans Vermeer’s skopos (Vermeer 1996) to Christiane Nord’s loyalty (Nord 1997).

1.3 Adaptation as a Part of the Translation Process

The four interpretations of the notion of adaptation and its role in the translation process surveyed at the beginning of this chapter contain similarities that can be combined in order to understand adaptation’s ‘ambiguity’ in translation studies. First and foremost, as Gambier states at the beginning of his paper (Gambier 1992: 421), even a basic translation goes way beyond the word-by-word transfer process. These various definitions clearly emphasize the significance of adaptation’s domesticating nature. Whether they are consciously carried out by a translator or not, successful adaptations allow (or even force) the target readers to discover the text in a way that suits its aim, ensures an optimal reception experience, or simply promotes the understanding of a specific message. Adaptations take place on the cultural or pragmatic levels at least as much as on the linguistic or textual level. Furthermore, the statement that every translator needs to adapt at some point or another seems to be a commonly held idea – something that is far from being just a creative whim. According to Vázquez-Ayora (1977), adaptations ‘allow the adequacy of a content with the particular view of each language’ (324, our translation). He then goes on: ‘Except for the fields and the cases where it is necessary to keep the ‘foreign element’, every non-adaptation forces the reader to move him or herself into a strange and false reality’ (330). In Translation: An Interpretive Approach, Jean Delisle writes: ‘Creation, interpretation, re-creation, translation and adaptation are more closely related than one might think’ (Delisle 1998: 63). And in Berman, Étranger à Lui-même?, Marc Charron brilliantly demonstrates that adaptation is, once again consciously or not, in
Adaptation and Appropriation

the very nature of every translator. He studies the first pages of the French translation of Augusto Roa Bastos's *Yo el Supremo* done by Antoine Berman, a fierce opponent of the domesticating approach, and finds examples of each one of Berman's twelve deforming tendencies. Indeed, his translation includes among others clarifications, destructions of vernacular elements and expansions. Charron's paper indicates that there is a cross-cultural shift in most if not all translations, and that the gap between the foreignizing theories and the actual practice of translation appears to be almost unavoidable. Besides, we can also diverge from the field of translation studies to find definitions of the notion of adaptation that suit the ones we mentioned earlier. In our doctoral thesis for instance (Bastin 1998: 89), we already quoted Charles Darwin, for whom adaptation is the modification process whereby any living being adjusts itself, him, or herself and complies with the conditions imposed by their environment. Therefore, if adaptation is a matter of survival in biology, we can surely suggest it is a matter of communicational relevance in translation.

1.3.1 Localization versus internationalization

The notion of adaptation is at the heart of the localization/internalization dichotomy. In this era of globalization, where international corporations and organizations aim to promote the same product or idea to the widest range of potential targets possible, the need for efficient multilingual communication is constantly increasing. This is why the act of translation is more and more integrated to business plans and communication strategies at an early stage, instead of being the last-minute activity it has usually been in the past. Of course, both concepts of internationalization and localization raise important questions relevant to translation studies. Can a single idea be understood, interpreted, and remembered the same way in various cultures? Are any notions, realities, or philosophies understood in the same way by source and target readers? Can a translator ever ignore the target reader’s cultural, social, and personal backgrounds? Have we reached a point where the inhabitants of this 'global village' think similarly and share the same ideals or needs? To answer these questions, we must not only consider the definitions of 'globalization' and 'localization' (since there seems to be a certain ambiguity about what they actually mean), but also adopt the point of view of those institutions whose activities include multilingual and multicultural communications. First of all, the Localization Industry Standards Association (LISA), an international
non-profit organization helping corporations to communicate and do business globally, suggests two definitions of localization: (i) The process of modifying products or services to account for differences in distinct markets; and (ii) The process of adapting software for a particular geographical region (locale).

Those two conceptions of the notion of localization seem very close to the various definitions of adaptation we studied earlier. The idea of changing the source text to ensure a better efficiency in the target culture, the domesticating nature of adaptation, and more precisely the constant focus on target readers and their environment are all evident. On the other hand, LISA defines internationalization as 'the process of generalizing a product so that it can handle multiple languages and cultural conventions without the need for re-design'. In other words, whereas localization aims to create customized communications for various linguistic and cultural communities, internationalization aims to reproduce a unique reader experience (same content, same structure, same graphic presentation, and audiovisual elements, translations as close to the source text as possible, etc.) It is easy to recognize in these opposing strategies echoes of the adaptation/translation argument mentioned earlier. In her article about the translation of videogame advertising, Raquel De Pedro Ricoy sums up the dilemma multinational companies are facing of whether to choose a unique message that aims to reach the widest possible audience, or to ‘adapt the message to specific locales, taking into account cultural differences and autochthonous peculiarities’ (De Pedro Ricoy 2007: 262). The choice is not just up to the translator: other linguistic, cultural, and economic factors have to be borne in mind as well. Anthony Pym addresses the consequences of this: on the one hand, this reduction of responsibility on the translators’ behalf allows them to focus on the translation itself, without being distracted or constrained by technical or business-oriented considerations. On the other hand, he notes that translators have a deep knowledge of the target culture, which can play a crucial role in the success of any given multilingual communication, and that ‘they should be listened to at more than phrase level’ (Pym 2010: 137). This trust in the translators’ ability to facilitate the reception, or enhance the efficiency, of a given communication in a specific context is the cornerstone of most arguments in favour of localization and adaptation. In fact, many previous papers in translation studies analysed practical cases where the translators’ creative input, not only from the linguistic, but also from the cultural content point of view, was deemed worthy or downright necessary. For instance, in Voices in Translation, the award-winning literary translator Margaret Jull Costa...
wrote about the role of creativity in the translation process of culturally specific elements such as food, puns, idioms, proverbs, as well as references of historical, geographical, or cultural nature (in short, of most elements of a text that might be considered untranslatable). She gave the example of the proverb ‘o seguro morreu de velho’ quoted by the narrator in a Portuguese novel that is not only a narrative element, but also a pun referring to insurance and reinsurance. Since ‘better safe than sorry’, the English equivalent of the proverb, wasn’t satisfactory on both the semantic and narrative levels, Jull Costa adapted the original proverb by creating a new and much more suitable one for the narrative context: ‘slow but sure ensures a ripe old age’. She took great care to come up with an idea that had a strong ‘proverbial ring’, in order to render the phrase comprehensible to the target culture, a self-admitted domesticating strategy that seemed ideal in this case (Jull Costa 2007: 115).

As for the choice between internationalization and localization multinational organizations are facing, the motivation of the communication act itself seems to be the key element (functionalism once more) in choosing the best strategic and most relevant approach. Sometimes as important as the content, the aim and the target of such communications are crucial in the selection of the linguistic and semantic transfer strategies to be used. In a publication about commercial and institutional translation, Mathieu Guidère shows the importance of considering the target culture in order to avoid incoherence or inefficient translations, by giving the example of the website of the Canadian Embassy in Morocco (Guidère 2008: 69). Due to the bilingual status of Canada, it’s natural that this website is in both French and English. Yet it’s indeed surprising that absolutely no content has been translated into Arabic, not even the sections intended for Moroccan citizens. This case indicates how important the reflection process prior to undertaking the translation of such documents can be. In order to select a more suitable strategy, many factors should be considered by translators and their clients. First, from the business and operational standpoints, internationalization makes a lot of sense. Among other things, it allows economies of scale, is very compatible with the centralized structures such organizations tend to adopt, and if done well, favours the upholding of a strong, unique, and coherent brand image and corporate identity throughout the world. On the other hand, localization allows for more customized and in all likelihood more applicable target texts. With many kinds of source documents, the extra time, energy, and dollars invested in creating numerous local versions often result in a better overall reception in the target culture. Of course, this argument between domesticating and
foreignizing approaches isn't new in translation studies, but the notions of localization and internationalization seem more sharply divided than ever before. For instance, just a quick glance at a translated website of a multinational corporation is enough to determine which multilingual communication strategy was used.

Finally, it is important to point out for the sake of clarity that nowadays many professional translators, translation agencies, and even advertising agencies frequently use the term 'localization' not to describe the act of customizing a product for a specific target culture, but simply as a generic buzzword referring to the process of adaptation itself. In these cases, the localization process is often promoted as a kind of target-oriented translation (or maybe as customized recreation). This common professional activity finds its echo in translation studies in André Lefevere's view of translations as a rewriting of the original text that reflects 'a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way' (Lefevere 1992: xi). It also relates to what we called 'deliberate interventions' (Bastin 2007), conscious decisions that can be considered objective or subjective. Objective interventions, better known as 'shifts', are text-based and correspond to the necessary shifts translators usually resort to for the sake of language or culture adequacy. On the other hand, subjective interventions are dependent on historical or ideological factors, or because of the specific socio-cultural identity of the translator. These are 'deliberate', since nothing obliges the translator to behave that way; they depend on the translator's telos.

1.3.2 Adaptations in advertising and multilingual marketing

Until recently, the translation of advertising texts has been quite ignored by translation studies and yet, it provides a vast array of very interesting case studies about the influence of both source and target cultures on the translator's work, the constraints of translating a single message through different media, as well as the understanding of the notions of fidelity, equivalence, and adaptation. Furthermore, the analysis of translated advertising texts and multilingual marketing provides striking examples of the application of numerous major translation theories such as Toury's norms, the polisystem theory, the interpretive theory, and for obvious reasons, functionalism. To our knowledge, the first scientific publication entirely dedicated to the matter was a special issue of *Meta: Translators' Journal* published back in 1972, which addressed different practical matters
related to the translation of advertisements. It is very interesting to note that adaptation was considered an obvious strategy by the authors; this view of adaptation as a natural choice for advertising still prevailed in subsequent publications and continues to this day – for example a special issue of The Translator, published in 2004, was titled Key Debates in the Translation of Advertising Materials. Numerous publications in translation studies spanning over more than three decades support adaptations in the case of multilingual advertising campaigns, from Roger Boivineau’s L’A.B.C. de l’Adaptation Publicitaire (1972): ‘It is rather a matter of reacting the goal of the original ad, and the way to achieve this goal might differ noticeably from the way followed by the copywriter’ (Boivineau 1972: 15, our translation), to the conclusion of Veronica Smith’s article about the challenges of translating visual elements in advertisements: ‘There are a number of factors which make the involvement of translators in the creation and adaptation of global advertisements desirable’ (Smith 2008: 57).

Many authors interested in the notion of culture in multilingual communication include advertising in their work (such as Marieke de Mooij, Beverly Adab, or Mathieu Guidère just to name a few). Advertising is one of the few fields of specialized translation where adaptation is free from the criticisms we highlighted earlier on. Due to the nature of the advertising text, this systematic use of adaptation and the high relevance of the functionalist approach are constantly discussed and promoted in the literature, as well as on numerous business websites of specialized translation agencies and marketing services companies.

It is crucial to briefly review the characteristics of the advertising text in order to understand why adaptation is so commonplace. First of all, advertising translators constantly face various practical challenges involving limited space or time frame, as well as untranslatable semantic correlations between text and image. In addition to these technical difficulties, there is always the matter of cultural, linguistic, and semantic differences, for example, the socio-cultural realities of a specific target market, the nature of the client’s selling points and incentives, humour, and puns. But above all, it’s the persuasive nature of the text itself that is behind this clear preference for domestica ting translations. The purpose of an advertisement consists of broadening awareness of a cause, a company, or a product, and ultimately altering the opinions or behaviour of a specific demographic. To achieve this goal, the advertisement must not only reach its intended target, but also create the belief that the ad speaks directly to individual viewers. ‘What’s in it for me?’ is truer than ever. This crucial process of
identification by the target audience explains why foreignizing strategies are often dismissed at once, except for some very particular products such as imported luxury goods. In fact, any indication that the ad has been created in a distinct culture might jeopardize the viewer's ability and 'willingness' to feel concerned by the message and to comprehend its content. To successfully reach their target audience and efficiently get the key message across, the translator must go through a reflection phase that is in many ways similar to the creative process followed by the copywriters of the original version. This includes finding answers to questions such as: ‘What do we need to say?’, ‘Who are we talking to?’, ‘Who is sending the message?’, ‘How and where will the target see the message?’ But beyond these questions, the advertising translator must also consider the specific context of the demographic targeted by the translation. For instance, is the original ad featuring a product that is well known in the source culture, but new to the target culture? Is the product facing well-established local competitors in the target culture that do not exist in the source culture? Are the arguments and the incentives of the source ad as efficient in the target culture? To produce purposeful adaptations, according to functionalist concerns, advertising translators should be familiar with business and marketing strategies, as well as master the art of persuasive writing.

This tendency to adapt and to produce 'freer' translations than in many other fields is certainly linked to the highly domesticated nature of advertising, and by extension, to what the client actually expects from the translator: an advertisement that will impact the target culture. However, another point to consider is that the advertisements are requested by the clients and created on demand by marketing agencies, freelance copywriters, and art directors. Even the most creative brains adopt a functionalist approach and observe a set of concrete strategies. This is why the advertising translators feel that they have to be faithful towards the client (the product, the brand, the company) rather than the source text. The fact that advertising translators collaborate with copywriters, artistic directors, and graphic designers should not be overlooked. Being involved in such a collaborative environment has a strong influence on the creative decisions presented to the client (pragmatic, linguistic, cultural, strategic).

At this point, it's useful to refer to two case studies where typical translations are certainly possible, but would create a text that would be either dull or highly embarrassing for a client. We selected two simple and down-to-earth examples that actually happened in our professional experience as translators in an advertising agency. They give a good idea of common issues arising in this field of work. The adaptations are both from English
Adaptation and Appropriation

Strategies such as the creation of a message that is intended to appeal to the original audience have been employed by translators in many contexts, but the nature of the original message and the context in which it is translated can significantly impact the translation process. In one example, an animated online ad from a major travel agency was translated into Québec French. The ad features a snowman escaping a snow globe, a visual incentive for viewers to take a break from the cold winter and go south. The short animation was topped by a headline saying ‘give ice the slip,’ a common expression that refers both to the idea of getting away from a freezing winter, as well as to the visual elements of the advertisement. Obviously, translating an expression that doesn’t have an exact French equivalent is unthinkably here, and suggesting a more generic sentence such as ‘fuyez l’hiver’ (‘Get away from winter’) would be a significant loss. Therefore, we had to find a French headline that would carry the same pattern, respect the constraints of the medium, and of course preserve the strong link to the image. We eventually came up with ‘mettez l’hiver sur la glace’ (literally ‘put winter on ice’), a funny way to say ‘put winter on hold’ that suited the visual elements perfectly. With this idea in mind, we produced a French version that was instantly understandable (which is particularly important for online advertisements), and as colloquial as the source text.

Even if these kinds of very specific adaptations are common, it is true that from time to time, translators must undertake much more extensive adaptations to sustain not the meaning but the function of a text. This is the case of our second example, which is a whole excerpt from an American brochure of a motorized recreational vehicle that stated that the engine remains efficient even in very warm weather such as 100°F (37.7°C). Those advertising translators, who are not only experts of the target language and culture, but who also have a deep knowledge of the habits, customs, and mentality of the potential customers they are writing for, should know that extreme heat isn’t a big concern in Québec. Therefore, a literal translation of these brochures, no matter how well written, would be useless for the local Québec dealers and their customers, as well as being potentially damaging to the company’s public image. Translators must then place themselves in the shoes of a copywriter and take the liberty of changing a portion of the source text’s content (‘Will the motor work in very cold temperatures?’ or ‘Is there some accessories that allow the vehicle to perform in snow?’). They also have to create a visual composition that would be more suitable (in this case, a boreal forest instead of desert and dry landscapes). This shows the importance of not only knowing the product and ideally experiencing it first-hand, but also mastering creative copywriting. In her article, De Pedro Ricooy gives examples of situations where the translator has to create new content. In one case, the original slogan was judged to be a little too sexist in some cultures (De Pedro Ricooy 2007: 270), and in another, the reviews
from specialized magazines unknown in the target culture were replaced by a compelling description of the game (271) that the translator wrote from scratch. In a globalized world, where the need for adapting advertising is constantly increasing, translators are often expected to be more involved in the whole communicative process as cultural and even creative consultants. This means taking part in briefings, strategic meetings and brainstorming sessions, suggesting modifications of textual content and visual presentation, and even being present during the casting and the recording of audiovisual productions. It is then interesting to note that, as Guidère remarks (2008), this preference for adaptations led to a shift of perception of the advertising translator’s role, from linguistic expert to provider of more generalized communication services. The translator doesn’t sign his work (at least publicly) and the reader cannot be misled as to authorship. Therefore, advertising translation is clearly a matter of adaptation, where a strong link to the source text is preserved, even though the gulf between both versions can turn out to be extremely wide.

1.3.3 Adaptations and appropriations in translation history

It is clear from the above discussion that two main kinds of strategies can be distinguished, namely adaptations, that we already addressed, and appropriations, where any link between the source and the target texts is voluntarily eluded. Of course, hybrid strategies can appear as what Stetting (1989) has called transediting, in the specific case of the pro-independence press in the nineteenth century, or imitations and transcreations.

Adaptations, as we said earlier, can be tactical or strategic. Since tactical adaptation can be considered as a commonplace translation procedure involving issues of textual fidelity, we will focus on strategic or global adaptations. A good example is certainly Manuel García de Sena’s version of Thomas Paine’s writings. Making a selection of extracts from various works by Thomas Paine, García de Sena published in Philadelphia the book *La Independencia de Costa Firme Justificada por Thomas Paine Trinta Años ha* (1811). García de Sena introduced explanations in his text in order to be sure that his readers understood the references to the North American political system described by Paine. He added paratexts of his own such as a dedication and various footnotes of the most aggressive style, designed to prompt his compatriots to rebel against the Spanish crown and build republics similar to the United States. He also exerted censorship on everything contrary to his Catholic beliefs, as well as aspects of the source text that were not directly applicable to the situation in Hispanic America.
Thus, this version is clearly an act of selective translation designed to suit the interests of his readers. Note that, by naming the original author in the very title of his book, García de Sena does not appropriate Paine’s texts.

As opposed to the translation of the first Declaration of the Rights of Man (1789) by Antonio Nariño in Bogotá, which was quite a literal piece of translation, the translation of the second Declaration (1793) can be seen as an example of adaptation. It appeared in Venezuela in 1797 by Juan Bautista Picornell, who led the failed insurrection in Spain known as the San Blas Conspiracy (February 3, 1795) to overthrow the monarchy and establish a republican government. With his fellow conspirators, Picornell translated various revolutionary French documents, using a perlocutionary vocabulary designed to encourage his readers to take action. He does not present the text as a translation (nor does he put his name) but as an original document addressing Venezuelans. Therefore, he omits the Declaration’s preamble beginning with the phrase: ‘The French people . . .’

On the other hand, as Sanders observes, appropriations aim to create new products fully independent from their source. For instance, this can occur in obvious cases of plagiarism. A good example is that of Miguel José Sanz, a leading Venezuelan independence intellectual. All texts signed by him in the Semanario de Caracas, a pro-independence periodical during 1810–11, are in fact translations of Adam Ferguson’s Essay on the History of Civil Society (1767). Falcón (1998) compared most of Sanz’s writing in the Semanario de Caracas to Ferguson’s Essay and there can be no doubt that they are literal translations, or transeditions of Ferguson’s work. Sanz never mentions his sources, and quite a lot of Venezuelan historians have erroneously interpreted the ideological and political content of his writings as if they were his own. Plagiarism can also occur between two translations, as in Berman’s translation of Schleiermacher, which is for the most part the French version of a Spanish translation by García Yebra of the same German text (Schleiermacher 2000). These examples of plagiarism are clear appropriations of the foreign text or of a previous translation by the translator.

Imitations constitute a different kind of appropriation. Although they might mention the source, they use procedures that change completely not only the ‘reality’ (as in adaptation) but above all the authorship of the text. Many examples of imitations can be seen in literature. Let us mention the famous imitations of European poets by Andrés Bello (1781–1865). Rafael Caldera summarizes this strategy as follows: ‘[Bello] makes his, in an original way, others’ thinking and transports on the
American scene episodes that happened in completely foreign environments' (Caldera 1981: lxviii). In another kind of imitation, Bello transforms the source poem in order to express his own experiences. His translation of Victor Hugo's 'À Olympe' is used to express his sufferings in England while in exile. In the French text, Olympe finds supreme comfort in love, but this love becomes honour in Bello's imitation (Pagni 2004). Another example of appropriation in the same poem is the fact that for Bello, the emphasis is on peace while in Hugo's Olympe, enemies hope to fight a war. In another Victor Hugo's poem, 'La Prière pour Tous', Miguel Antonio Caro (1843-1909), stresses the interpolations by the translator, in particular by interrupting the religious and moral tone of the original and introducing verses charged with political and personal connotations (Caro 1982: 158).

Latin American literature reveals many more cases of appropriations by José Martí, Jorge Luis Borges, José María de Heredia (Bastín et al., 2004), and Monteiro Lobato (Milton 2002) among others. Hence, the concept and practice of appropriation may thus reconfigure the status of translation as the production of texts that are not simply consumed by the target language and culture but which, in turn, become creative and productive, stimulating reflections, theorizations and representations within the target cultural context. (Saglia 2002: 96)

An in-between adaptation and appropriation case is the Spanish version of the French Revolution song 'La Carmagnole', which appeared in La Guaira together with other 'subversive' texts in Spanish (among them the Declaration of the Rights of Man) gathered and printed by Juan Bautista Picornell in the French Antilles (Guadeloupe 1797). Several adaptations were introduced by the translator Manuel Cortés Campomanes, the so-called 'poet of the revolution': the joyful tone of the French text becomes very solemn in Spanish; the number of stanzas increases from thirteen to twenty-five; all cultural and historical French references are replaced by Spanish and American ones; and new concepts such as heroism, God, unity and Motherland appear. If it were not for one verse referring to the French revolutionaries, we might have assumed that it had been written to celebrate the rebellion of the Venezuelans against the Spaniards.

Transediting is the simultaneous interaction of both translating and editing, which implies tactical and strategic interventions such as expansion, deletion, summary, commentary and reformulation. Notorious examples can be found in a study of the Gaceta de Caracas, where this strategy is frequently used to serve the political interests of the journalists of this
Adaptation and Appropriation

Venezuelan pro-independence periodical (1808–22). Aura Navarro (2008) shows how translators add, suppress, paraphrase, summarize, and comment original texts from the English, North American or French press of that time. For instance, every time the source text refers to 'colonies' or 'Spanish provinces', the Gaceta speaks of 'America' or 'parts of South America'. There are various footnotes that make negative comments about words like 'insurgent', referring to revolutionaries or about actions taken by the Spanish government. In many cases, those translations are inserted in different parts of the articles, so that readers cannot distinguish between source and target texts, and in others, only the source text can lead the reader to acknowledge a translation. All are deliberate interventions motivated by the target journalists and their readers, and even though sources are often quoted, they still represent appropriations. The interest of studying deliberate interventions lies in the fact that the 'translation strategies go beyond the description level of analysis, since they help to explain the translator's behavior' (Gagnon 2006: 207).

Related to transediting is the process of transcreation put forward and used by Haroldo de Campos. According to de Campos (1983: 58), transcreation implies that the source and the target texts 'will be different in terms of language, but, as isomorphic bodies, they will be crystallized within the same system' since transcreation is, for de Campos, an act of transgressive appropriation and hybridism.

1.4 Conclusion

As Ladrinal (1994: 20) put it: 'adaptation refers less to a translation procedure than to the limits of translation [. . .] since the reality to which the source message refers does not exist for the target culture'. Indeed, although some pretend that anything can be translated, translation has limits. Adaptations and appropriations as global strategies certainly go very often beyond the normal work of pragmatic translators, but nevertheless are commonly used by individuals in many translation settings. They are essential to translation studies and should not be seen any more as 'non-translations', 'treasons', or 'transgressions' of a source text. On the contrary, they represent the visibility that gives translators the same recognition as the author of the source text. Tejaswini Niranjana and Theo Hermans suggest that

Translation is, of course, a rewriting of an original text. All rewritings, whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as
such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way. Rewriting is manipulation, undertaken in the service of power, and in its positive aspect can help in the evolution of a literature and a society. Rewritings can introduce new concepts, new genres, new devices, and the history of translation is the history also of literary innovation, of the shaping power of one culture upon another. But rewriting can also repress innovation, distort and contain, and in an age of increasing manipulation of all kinds, the study of the manipulative processes of literature as exemplified by translation can help us towards a greater awareness of the world in which we live. (Niranjana 1992: 59)

[...]

Translations appropriate, transform and relocate their source texts, adjusting them to new communicative situations and purposes. [...] The 'antecedent text' to which a translation refers is never simply the source text, even though that is the claim which translations commonly make. It is a particular image of it [...]. And because the image is always slanted, coloured, pre-formed, never innocent, we can say that translation constructs and produces [...] its original. (Hermans 1999: 58–9)

Translation studies would greatly benefit from rethinking adaptation at hand, if only for the sake of the numerous authors who demonstrated its practical efficiency and necessity in the process of ensuring meaningful linguistic and cultural transfers.

Notes

1 Vermeer's Skopos theory advocates for translation as a purposeful activity and within this framework, Nord puts forward the need for the translator to be 'loyal' to both the source author and the target user.
3 Quoted in Pum (2010).
4 'il s'agira plutôt d'atteindre le but recherché avec l'annonce originale, et la voie pour rejoindre ce but pourra s'écarter sensiblement de celle suivie par le concepteur'.
5 'Will you save the girl, or play like one?', a line obviously aimed at the young male demographic.
6 'fait si même, de manière originale, la pensée d'autrui et transportait sur la scène américaine les épisodes réalisés dans des environnements complètement étrangers'.
7 '...l'adaptation désigne moins un procédé de traduction qu'elle n'en indique les limites [...] la réalité à laquelle se réfère le message-source n'existe pas pour la culture-cible'.
Bibliography


