

CANONIZATION, PSEUDO-CANONIZATION AND ABEYANCE: THE ROLE OF PARA-TEXTS IN THE CONFLICT OF INTERPRETATIONS

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Résumé : Quand l'histoire de la traduction est abordée comme l'histoire de la traduisibilité, chaque aspect de la transposition d'un texte dans une autre langue (texte, événement et sujet traduisant) devient un objet d'intérêt. Une telle approche ouvre le domaine à des concepts qui nous permettent de mieux comprendre comment une interprétation peut monopoliser et sceller l'espace liminaire (Wolfgang Iser) où le texte et le registre se rencontrent afin de produire de nouvelles traductions à potentiel canonique. Nous nous concentrerons alors sur le rôle primordial des paratextes dans ce processus, car les interprétations dominantes se présentent aussi dans les textes qui accompagnent les traductions, influençant la traduisibilité au-delà du texte et constituant ainsi une force déterminante dans la canonisation d'un texte. Le présent article décrit trois stéréotypes de situations : d'abord, la canonisation en tant que situation dans laquelle un paratexte a un effet positif sur la traduisibilité d'un texte, lequel peut par la suite être canonisé dans la langue étrangère et dont la matière reste ouverte à des nouvelles interprétations/traductions. Ensuite, je propose d'appeler pseudo-canonisation les situations stéréotypes dans lesquelles ce n'est pas un paratexte mais une « grande traduction » (souvent de la main d'un auteur-traducteur) qui devient l'interprétation canonisée, mettant également à l'arrêt le mouvement relais de l'interprétation à cause du statut intouchable de cette « grande traduction ». Le troisième stéréotype relève de la mise aux abois (*abeyance* en anglais) d'une traduction, terme proposé ici pour décrire la situation où un paratexte colonise l'interprétation avec une telle force que, même si une première traduction a lieu, le texte n'est plus retraduit et languit dans une version inadéquate et aliénée dans les marges du canon de la langue étrangère. La mise aux abois et la canonisation seront alors présentés ici comme les deux extrémités de l'échelle de la traduisibilité, illustrées respectivement à travers les traductions anglaises des œuvres de Pierre-Joseph Proudhon et Frantz Fanon, afin de mettre en évidence l'impact durable qu'ont les paratextes sur la traduisibilité des textes qui sont inaccessibles aux lecteurs dans leur forme originale.

Mots clés : histoire de la traduction – traduisibilité – espace liminaire – registre – Wolfgang Iser – paratextes – canonisation – pseudo-canonisation – mise aux abois – Frantz Fanon – Pierre-Joseph Proudhon – traduisibilité.

Abstract: When the history of translation is approached as a history of translatability, every aspect of the transposition of a text into another language (text, event and translating subject) can be taken into consideration. This opens

the field to concepts that allow us to better understand how a given interpretation can monopolize and seal off the liminal space (Wolfgang Iser) where text and register meet to produce new translations that can become canonized. It focuses our attention on the primordial role of para-texts in this process because dominant interpretations also come in the shape of the texts that accompany translations, affecting translatability beyond the text itself, and determining whether a text will be canonized or not. The article outlines three stereotypes: firstly, canonization is described as the situation where para-text positively affects translatability, so that the translation can be canonized while also leaving the source text open for new interpretations/translations. Secondly, I propose to call pseudo-canonization the stereotypical situation where it is not the para-text but a “great translation” (often by an author-translator) that becomes the canonized interpretation of the text, which often ends the relay movement of interpretation by virtue of the great translation’s untouchable status. Thirdly, the notion of abeyance is introduced to refer to a situation where para-text colonizes interpretation to the extent that the text, though still present in its first translation, is never retranslated, and languishes in an inadequate and alienated version in the margins of the foreign language canon. Abeyance and canonization will be presented here as the opposite ends of the scale of translatability and illustrated through the examples of the English translations of the oeuvres of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and Frantz Fanon, with the aim of highlighting the lasting impact that para-texts have on the translatability of texts that are inaccessible to readers in their original form.

Keywords: history of translation – translatability – interpretation – liminal space – register – Wolfgang Iser – para-texts – canonization – pseudo-canonization – abeyance – Frantz Fanon – Pierre-Joseph Proudhon – (un)translatability.

Epigraph:

Illud autem ante omnia memento, demere rebus tumultum ac videre, quid in quaque re sit ...
 (“Remember, however, before all else, to strip things of all that disturbs and confuses” - Seneca the Younger - Epistle XXIV, Letter to Lucinius)

1. Introduction

The history of translation designates descriptions of a wide range of objects: we write about past translations, translators or translation methods, often all three at the same time (for the obvious reason that the three go together), and many publications in the field present a mix of descriptions and comparisons of past translation methods, of the reception of these new texts, and of bio-bibliographical information about translators from the past in the shape of studies that focus on the translating subject. It would seem, then, that the object of the history of translation is ontologically manifold and that “the history of translation” is as vast as “the history of the world” as the designation of a research field.

In this article I will begin by arguing that we need to change our expression “history of translation” by adopting the notion of “translatability,” which involves looking at translation as interpretation and allows us to move beyond a text-object approach into a much wider perspective that also includes people, events and contexts of translation and reception, and more specifically, para-texts. Secondly, I will explain how Wolfgang Iser’s hermeneutics, in which he views interpretation as translatability, generates both a persuasive argument and a theoretical framework for underlining the ineluctability of para-texts in accounts of translatability (Iser 2000). Iser’s concepts of register and liminal space, which turn out to be extremely helpful in understanding para-textual effects on translatability, will therefore be explained. This will allow me to outline three stereotypical paratextual situations that each show the decisive role of para-texts not only in the reception of a translation but in translatability itself: two of them constitute the two extremes of the translatability scale, namely canonization on the one hand, and on the other hand a situation I have called “abeyance,” referring to a state of being present but unclaimed by new interpretations. The third situation, which I call “pseudo-canonization,” is in fact the well-known case of historical or “great” translations, which, as I will explain, are *sui generis* outside of the scale of translatability. After describing the main features of these three situations in abstract theoretical terms I will then illustrate the two polar opposites of paratextual impact, canonization and abeyance, by discussing the state of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon’s oeuvre on the one hand, and the renewed canonization of Frantz Fanon’s work on the other, both in terms of their current translatability in the English-language world. My findings allow me to conclude that from a historic perspective, looking at translation as interpretation leads to studying the history of translatability, which in turn brings to the surface the essential role of para-texts in the happy continuance of the conflict of interpretations.

2. History of Translation, History of Translations and History of Translators

2.1. Towards a History of Translatability

Recent proposals concerning the study of translations as historical events confirm not only our desire to understand what the translating subject was thinking when she was translating, but also illustrate the ineluctability, in any *a posteriori* take on translation, of translation process, translated “product” or text, and translating subject being studied together. In this way the recently proposed genetic translation studies (Cordingley & Montini, 2015: 1-18) inevitably reaches beyond the genealogy of translation choices as found in archived translators’ correspondences and notes, as its stated aim is not merely to discuss the existence and contents of such para-text, but also to reveal the effects which these meanderings might have had on the translation – all the while retaining the focus on the translating subject. Once again, the three objects (event, text, and translator) are intertwined, and while this does not diminish the merit of such

proposals, it does trigger a desire to describe the dynamics of this intertwining more clearly.

Over the past twenty years, research derived from Even Zohar's Polysystems theory such as Toury's proposals for a descriptive approach (Toury, 1995), studies loosely identifiable as the "Manipulation group" (Hermans, 1985), research in post-colonial translation, or studies that look at gender issues in translation, have all contributed to a heightened awareness of the fact that translation is not only about language and texts but also involves important issues of cultural difference, ideology and power. However, while putting translation on a par with other acts of rewriting (Lefevere 1992) has allowed for a better understanding of literary and ideological manipulation through translation, these initiatives have often demonstrated *ipsorum factis*, in the statements and examples which they give, a persisting "cultural narcissism" (Venuti 2019), i.e. an ethnocentric approach to translatability, and most importantly, a view of translation as the transfer of a stable original object (the source text) that is ontologically invariable – which is surprising considering how many of these same scholars have also relied on post-structuralist theories that deny the existence of such a stable origin. This state of affairs underlies Lawrence Venuti's criticism of "instrumentalist" approaches that involve the assumption of an "invariant" of translation supposedly residing in the source text (Venuti, 2013 and 2019), a perspective which has indeed lead scholars not only to ask the wrong questions, but to contradict the historicity of translation events in their own statements.

The multiplicity of the objects studied by translation scholars puts into question the monolithic expression "history of translation" itself, which not only obscures the protagonists, but grammatically compounds events and texts, a fact which French scholars can avoid by distinguishing between "le traduire" and "la traduction." I would argue, however, that if we write about the specific type of transposition that is translation, and everything that such an event involves, we are describing the conditions of translatability, and in the case of past translations, we are therefore writing a history of translatability. It should be noted that translatability is here not proposed as the opposite of untranslatability in the false dichotomy that continues to be put forward by translation scholars. Indeed, as this article will show, when translation is seen as translatability, that binary opposition is not valid: the terms cannot and should not be opposed since they belong to different belief systems, the one stating a stable (sometimes even metaphysical) unvarying origin of textual meaning, and the other refuting that ontology with the post-structuralist argument of *différance*, which refers to the source text as the moving, fluctuating framework in which the sign becomes the sign, following Derrida's idea that "there is neither sign nor symbol but a becoming-sign of the symbol," and that the source text is therefore always already inscribed with other meanings and texts, in other words, it is a dynamic and variable trace.

The term translatability is pervasively used by Wolfgang Iser in *The Range of Interpretation* (2000), a demonstration of the ways in which past and present hermeneutics continue to contribute to our understanding of what interpretation

The role of para-texts in the conflict of interpretations and translation involve. As it seems difficult to argue that a translation is anything else than the written trace of an act of interpretation, Iser's claim that interpretation should be studied as translatability is here taken to entail that translatability can, and should, be studied as interpretation. This means that a history of translatability, rather than a history of translation, is bound to bring about insights that can allow for the introduction of clearer concepts to support our investigations and further our understanding of translation and translations.

2.2. Historiography as the translation of events

As Michel de Certeau wrote, historiography is a quasi-oxymoron:

L'historiographie (c'est-à-dire « histoire » et « écriture ») porte inscrit dans son nom propre le paradoxe – et quasi l'oxymoron – de la mise en relation de deux termes antinomiques : le réel et le discours. Elle a pour tâche de les articuler et, là où le lien n'est pas pensable, de faire *comme si* elle les articulait. (de Certeau, 1975: 11, my italics)

De Certeau's aim was to uncover the relationship between discourse and the reality it describes, and he also referred to historiography as an “écriture conquérante” or “la colonization du corps par le discours du pouvoir” (de Certeau 1975: 9), a sociological perspective that recalls Jerome's metaphor of the translator who “did not bind himself to be chained to the literalism of an inadequate culture, but, like some conqueror, [he] marched the original text, a captive, into his native language” (Robinson, 2002: 26). It also brings to mind other metaphors that have been applied to translation as a cannibalistic, colonizing, effacing or penetrating activity.

With *L'écriture de l'histoire*, de Certeau does for history, anthropology, ethnology and sociology what Jacques Derrida did for linguistics, philosophy and the humanities in general: instead of proposing a new philosophy, Derrida's oeuvre consists of deep analyses and observations that concern the *discourse* deployed in discussions of the objects described, how this discourse is constructed, and how by deconstructing it we may gain new insights in the things we study. In the case of de Certeau's historiography, it is the study of writing as historical practice, “l'étude de l'écriture comme pratique historique” (de Certeau, 1975: 10) that is examined. From this perspective, when we investigate the historical practice of translation, in other words, when we look at translatability *a posteriori*, we are investigating a reality that is already a discourse embedded in a myriad of discourses. Inevitably, this creates a need for a “grammatological” (see Derrida 1997, especially Part I, 1-87) investigation into the discourse of the history of translation, with the aim of finding more precise and efficient concepts to deal with the objects and events we encounter – to which this paper aims to contribute. Many authors have set out on this post-structuralist approach with results that have enlightened us about translator subjectivity, about the colonizing discourses of translation, or about gender roles in translation, and while Marilyn Gaddis-Rose indicated on the back of Robinson's *Who Translates?* that this is not the “mainstream” (Robinson, 2002: no page) in Translation Studies, post-structuralist approaches have certainly contributed to uncovering the illusion of transparence, the translators'

invisibility and a number of other perspectives that contribute to making it the interdisciplinary field of research it is today.

2.3. Para-texts in the history of translatability

2.3.1 *A para-grammatology of translatability*

Para-texts, that is, the texts that accompany the source text and the translation and live “alongside”¹ them, both before, during, and after the subject matter is transposed from one language into another, are inevitable and necessary sources of information for any of the above-mentioned perspectives and approaches, since, apart from the translations, they are our principal sources of information concerning past conditions of translatability. Para-texts allow us to reveal what affected the translator’s choices, they provide information about the translator’s life, other works, other works in translation, schooling, competence, literary background and influences, while they also allow us to document and explain the conditions of the arrival and reception of a translated text, both in terms of literary canons and in terms of translational norms and horizons. Moreover, their ineluctability in our analyses of past translations is rooted in the fact that they are intertextuality interwoven with the source text and the translation they accompany.

In “Pour une sémiologie des paragrammes” (Kristeva, 1969: 113-146), Kristeva discusses this interweaving of discourses, with reference to Bakhtin’s heteroglossia and the dialogic and carnivalesque nature of poetic discourse, and borrows Ferdinand de Saussure’s concept of anagrams to arrive at the notion of a “science paragrammatique” (ibid.). While Kristeva’s focus was on poetic language, her words apply just as well, or even more so, to the duo translation-source text:

La science paragrammatique doit donc tenir compte d’une ambivalence : le langage poétique est un *dialogue* de deux discours. Un texte étranger rentre dans le réseau de l’écriture : celle-ci l’absorbe suivant des lois qui restent à découvrir. Ainsi dans le paragramme d’un texte fonctionnent tous les textes de l’espace lu par l’écrivain. (Kristeva, 1969 : 120)

Roland Barthes, who calls this dialogic nature of text “pluralité stéréophonique” (Barthes, 1984: 75), also refers to para-texts as “les écritures doubles, qui contiennent un dialogue avec d’autres textes, et postulent une nouvelle logique” and points to Kristeva’s expression “paragrammatismes” to refer to such writings (Barthes, 1984 : 165n). However, “paragrammatism(s)” may lead to confusion with the pathologies of syntactic aphasia and agrammatism, while “para-texts” or “paragrammata” seem more appropriate terms to fill in the semantic space I am outlining. In a nudge to Derrida’s *Of Grammatology*, we could therefore refer to the ideas on translation discourse that are proposed here as pertaining to a para-grammatology of translatability.

While the focus of this paper is primarily on the role of para-texts in interpretation, the aim is no longer to simply underline their central role as sources of information, but to show *how strong* their influence can be when it comes to translatability and how the para-texts’ own translatability determines the reception and conditions the intention of the translation they accompany. It

The role of para-texts in the conflict of interpretations seems obvious and logical that this is all the more relevant in the history of translatability, where our objects of investigation are tied together with their para-texts as a textual and discursive whole. Making para-texts an integral part of the discourse is vital not in the least because para-texts are often the factor that determines whether a subject matter will live on after its translation, or not. Indeed, as this article will show, translatability amounts to events of historical contextualization via a register and integration in a canon, and in the case of translated texts, the discourses that accompany and condition this contextualization and integration obviously constitute a major part of the information to be considered.

2.3.2 *Effacement and oblivion*

Additional proof of the importance of para-texts is the role which some of these paragrammata have played in the effacement and oblivion of certain texts – while at the same time being the only factors that allow the recovery of these same events of translatability. The *Edict of Galerius* constitutes an eloquent example of a text that was obliterated² and at the same time managed to live on through para-texts, and also highlights how such texts, once they are unearthed and re-established, still do not find their a place in the new register. As Christian Stein explains, the *Edict of Toleration*, also called the *Edict of Serdica*, promulgated by the emperor Galerius a few days before his death in 311, constituted a very important moment in the early stages of Christianity:

Après presque 300 ans de criminalisation et de persécutions, la décision de Galère était donc remarquablement importante et méritait de passer dans l'histoire comme une des dates essentielles de l'essor du christianisme. (Stein, 2010: 77)

However, while it precedes Constantine's much better-known "Edict" of Milan (in fact an agreement between Constantine and the emperor of the Balkans to stop persecuting Christians, and not an *Edict of Toleration* as such), only specialized historians of Antiquity are aware of its significance. Stein claims that contemporary school manuals, university courses and even scholarly texts continue to name the 313 "Edict" (i.e. Constantine's) while at the same time effacing the actual *Edict* of 311. The reasons for this erasure and the "persistance contemporaine de cet oubli" (Stein, 2010: 78) are the fact that the first *Edict* had been produced by an emperor who is mostly remembered for the severe persecution that preceded his *Edict of Toleration* on the one hand, and the central position of Constantine as the first emperor to convert to Christianity, on the other. Stein also refers to the extremely powerful "cultural inertia" (Stein, 2010: 79) that causes such effacements to continue today, without, however, further defining or explaining this concept. What the present article will therefore also illustrate is that this "inertia" is always much stronger when the initial effacement is realized through powerful para-texts, or para-texts written by figures of power, i.e. figures that are in a dominant cultural, political, moral, or social position.

Paul Connerton proposes slightly more precise expressions than "cultural inertia" to refer to "seven types of forgetting" (Connerton, 2008: 60-71) and discusses events similar to the effacement of Galerius' *Edict* as cases of

“repressive erasure” (Connerton, 2008: 60), which he defines as the kind of erasure that “can be employed to deny the fact of a historical rupture as well as to bring about a historical break” (Connerton, 2008: 60). The examples he gives show both the lasting force of such acts of repressive erasure, and their need for powerful or culturally prominent agents working together to be established in the first place – which brings us back to de Certeau’s idea that history and historiography are acts of colonization of the past by the discourse of power.

3. Wolfgang Iser: “We interpret, therefore we are” (Iser, 2000: 1)

3.1. The register

In order to improve our understanding of the role of para-texts in translatability, this discussion finds solid grounds in what Wolfgang Iser tells us about interpretation, because large parts of Iser’s overview of interpretation constitute arguments for the legitimacy of the issues discussed here. A history of translatability covers the entire range of the processes involved in translatability and will thus raise questions on who the translating subject was and how the translation lived on once it had been transposed into its new register. The term register is a useful concept that features prominently in Iser’s work, where its function for translation is described as “nothing but the bootstraps by which we pull ourselves up toward comprehension” (Iser, 2000: 6), and it will here also come to replace the tenuously stable, unidirectional and homogenous expression “target culture” and the slightly more specific but just as unsubstantiated concept of “target literature,” because the register includes the inherent duality of translatability. As Iser explains it:

The register into which the subject matter is to be transposed is dually coded. It consists of viewpoints and assumptions that provide the angle from which the subject is approached, but at the same time it delineates the parameters into which the subject matter is to be translated for the sake of grasping. (Iser, 2000: 6)

In a history of translatability, the “framework into which the subject matter is transposed” (cf. *supra*) is diversified and dynamic, because “registers not only change but are also fine-tuned in each act of interpretation” (Iser, 2000: 6). This is highly significant when we study cases of past translatability since this duality, or reciprocity, “indicates that interpretation takes place within historical situations that we cannot get out of” (*ibid.*). Any transposition into the register is therefore inevitably a historical and dynamic event, for two reasons. First, because the register is “dually coded” as we have just seen, and second, because the traffic goes both ways, since, “As the register is bound to tailor what is to be translated, it simultaneously is subjected to specifications” (Iser, 2000: 6). Translatability, then, discusses events in their historical context, and the register emerges as an apt and more accurate expression than “target literature” or “target culture” in accounts of the conditions of translatability.

3.2. The liminal space

Another important concept that underlies Iser’s take on translatability is the idea of a liminal space, by which he describes the difference that comes into

The role of para-texts in the conflict of interpretations existence when the subject matter enters in interaction with the register. Indeed, translation creates a difference and performs a “division between the subject matter to be interpreted and the register brought to bear” and “Its intent will be realized through the manner in which that difference is to be coped with” (Iser, 2000: 6). Iser’s liminal space seems to bear resemblance to Derrida’s *différance*, which (among other things) refers to the constant deferral of meaning that is always already being renegotiated. Iser proposes to call this permanent renegotiation the liminal space, liminal “because it demarcates both the subject matter and the register from one another, as it does not belong to either but is opened up by interpretation itself” (Iser, 2000: 6). Indicating that the liminal space constitutes a movement of dynamic and conflictual interaction, Iser further states that

Caused by interpretation, the liminal space is bound to contain a resistance to translation, a resistance, however, that energizes the drive to overcome it. Thus interpretation also turns into an attempt to narrow the very space it has produced. (Iser, 2000: 6)

While the liminal space also reminds us of Venuti’s application of Jean-Jacques Lecercle’s “remainder” to translation (Venuti 2013: 37-38) and of Jean-René Ladmira’s “dissimulation” (Ladmira, 2015: 197-198), the above also confirms the appropriateness of Ricoeur’s take on the “conflict” of interpretations (Ricoeur 1969), since the liminal space is where resistance to translation is (to be) overcome, while interpretation itself is a confrontation that aims to reduce difference and narrow the liminal space.

3.3. Genres of interpretation

Iser also shows that there cannot be *one* theory of interpretation or one single hermeneutics, since interpretation is bound to be different for different types of subject matter: “If interpretation is primarily a form of translatability, it clearly depends on what is translated” (Iser, 2000: 6). In *The Range of Interpretation* Iser therefore distinguishes three types of subject matter and their corresponding types of interpretation: firstly, “certain types of text, such as holy or literary ones” (Iser, 2000: 6) that need to be “understood, or whose understanding is to be applied, or whose hidden constituents have to be brought to light” (Iser, 2000: 7), secondly things that are “nontextual, open-ended, or beyond the reach of one’s own stance” (Iser, 2000: 8) and that need to be “translated into terms that allow for an interchange between what is foreign and what is familiar” (ibid.), which amounts to “translating entropy into control” (Iser, 2000: 8), and thirdly, “incommensurabilities” (ibid.) like God or the world or humankind, in other words, “experiences of something whose existence appears to be incontrovertible but that exceeds knowability” (Iser, 2000:8) and that are translated into language.

The fact that for each of the three genres of interpretation “the interpretive intent regarding the subject matter to be translated will be exposed to change” (Iser, 2000: 7) further underlines the historicity of interpretation/translatability, as well as supporting the claim that there is no single interpretation,

... there are only genres of interpretation, marked off from one another according to the manner in which translatability is executed. Such a process varies not only in relation to the subject matter but also in the way in which the liminal space is coped with in every interpretive act. (Iser, 2000: 7)

Once again moreover, the traffic goes both ways, since interpretation is genre-determined but the genre is determined by the way interpretation happens, i.e. “the salient features of the respective genre are marked not least according to how the liminal space is negotiated” (Iser, 2000: 7). Lastly, in a conclusion that echoes De Certeau’s idea that contemporary historiography is a form of reality writing itself, Iser adds that

Furthermore, if interpretation has to cope with the liminal space resulting from something being transposed into something else, then interpretation is primarily a performative act rather than an explanatory one, although more often than not performance is mistaken for explanation. (Iser 2000: 7)

While translations are the first place where translation scholars study the performance of interpretation taking place, Iser’s work thus requires us to give a very prominent place to commentary, i.e. para-text, which, to continue Iser’s reference to speech act theory, is the first *performance* of the liminal space, because it is where interpretation happens, before the transposition into another language begins.

4. The role of para-text in the conflict of interpretations

As Iser demonstrates, the main function of any type of commentary is to temporarily fix the interpretative authority over a text, and to pause the conflict of interpretations, or put a (temporary) stop to “the shifting of authority” (see below), and this will largely determine whether or not a text is included in the canon of the genre in question. While Iser discusses this in the framework of closed or sealed canons, such as those that govern religious texts, the point here is that interpretation as translatability focuses our attention on the liminal space and on the ways in which translatability negotiates this space. This is the conflict of interpretation, which Iser describes as follows:

Because the register posits the terms into which the given text has to be translated, it simultaneously opens up the liminal space between the text and the terms concerned. [. . .] Authority is divided among the canon, the reading given to the canon, and the register that sets the terms by which the canon is transposed into human life. Do we have several authorities, is there continual borrowing, or is authority forever shifting without having a definitive location at all? There is no need to answer these questions, for the shifting of authority is caused by the liminal space, whose basic indeterminacy makes authority float among canon, reading, and register. (Iser, 2000: 21)

The negotiation of the liminal space in fact coincides with canonization since “What is actually said by the text is discarded in favor of what the text is supposed to mean, and such a procedure implies that canonization of a text is, in the final analysis, the specific reading given to it” (Iser, 2000: 17).

In the case of a literary canon, which is “basically open because new authors can be added to the stock of classical writers” (Iser, 2000: 28) the role of para-text is therefore primordial, and not only because of the sheer fact that it is

The role of para-texts in the conflict of interpretations the first liminal space in which translatability is set in motion. Indeed, plenty of historical examples show that “the conviction prevails that a commentary made on the work of such authors is a definitive statement, although in fact it is partial insofar as it is a translation of a canonized text into a historically conditioned situation” (Iser, 2000: 29).

The shifting of interpretative authority and the power with which interpretative authority is established and/or reinforced in para-texts such as commentary becomes even more important when it comes to translations, since these texts are *sui generis* not able to shift towards any other type of interpretative authority, because, being written in a foreign language, they are not directly available to the community that shapes the canon and sets the register. This makes commentaries such as prefaces, forewords, and translator’s prefaces, afterwords and notes to the edition of a translation the most excellent place for the intention of translatability to be established (or not), and for the interpretation to be slanted (or not) in favor of the canon, because “any inconsistent canonical elements have to be eliminated by the best possible reading” (Iser, 2000: 18).

5. Canonization, abeyance and pseudo-canonization

With these ideas in mind, I will now proceed to outline three recurring outcomes to para-textual translatability, in the shape of three stereotypical situations where powerful para-text accompanies a translation at the time of translatability. These situations will first be described in abstract terms, after which I will give a concrete example of the first two situations, that is, each of the two extremes of the scale of paratextual translatability, namely canonization and abeyance. The third situation, pseudo-canonization, concerns a well-known and often discussed case of translatability whose workings and impact I have already illustrated elsewhere.

5.1. Canonization

In the case of canonization, the para-text does not colonize the liminal space in any permanent or authoritative way, and interpretive authority is therefore not shifted but remains with the source text. The para-text contributes to positively slanting the liminal space, so that the canon which receives the translation can integrate it as a familiar object. This means that the presence of para-texts serves to direct the interaction between the subject matter and the register towards translatability. Such para-texts can be commentaries that are written either in the source language of the text or in the language it is transposed into, or both. The result is that just like the source text, the translation and its para-text become part of the hermeneutic circles that relay one another, in which new interpretations can overlap preceding ones and the subject matter’s interplay with the register is continuously repeated, in both languages. Incidentally, the relay movement underscores that as long as the intertextual nature of translatability is recognized, “the endless intertextuality and the plurality of meanings give no preference to the primacy of the first-comer” (Koskinen 1994: 449), which means that in this situation, interpretation

is open-ended. The text lives on in translation, i.e. canonization can and usually does occur.

5.2. Abeyance

In the opposite situation, the para-text colonizes the liminal space even before any translation into another language happens, and in such a way that it usurps authority over the liminal space, thus shifting interpretive authority from the original text to itself. Moreover, the commentary gives a negative slant to the translation, and diminishes the chances of the subject matter to successfully interact with the register of the foreign language (which I'll call foreign language X for the sake of clarity). With time, the text is no longer read in foreign language X, though it can continue to be accessible in the source language and/or in other foreign languages where interpretation has not been sealed off by the monopolizing para-text, thus ensuring some sort of continued, though remote, accessibility for the readers of foreign language X. Even further in time, the register of foreign language X, not having coped with new interpretations, becomes too far removed from the subject matter to effectively interact with it, while the only existing translation is anachronistic and no longer able to fill this potential liminal space. Furthermore, in such a situation, the translation and the para-text can give varying interpretations of the subject matter, i.e. they do not necessarily create the same liminal spaces, which further hampers translatability. The translation into foreign language X is now purely "philological," that is, it maintains a "lexicographical equivalence" (Venuti, 2013: 16) and serves to give glimpses of the subject matter, much like an unrevised automatic translation. This means that while the subject matter can be "read" in foreign language X, its interpretation, both in the para-texts and in the translation, has become too alien for the register to successfully interact with it, an alienation that can only worsen with time.

Such an outcome might be referred to as a state of abeyance, a term which I have chosen because it carries both the original legal sense of "waiting for a claimant" in English, and the French meaning of *être aux abois*, which seems appropriate to refer to the ways these texts are relegated to the dungeons of literary history because of the skewed para-text that accompanied their reception. Moreover, the Latin *badare* and the old French *baer* or *bayer* from which "abois" derives, mean "to desire, to long for" (Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2020: no page), and this desire is often metaphorically ascribed to translations that are stuck in time and waiting for a new version to bring the subject matter back into the hermeneutic circle of translatability.

5.3. Pseudo-canonization

There is a situation that bears the marks of both canonization and abeyance, but that is unique to translations, namely when it is a specific translation that colonizes the liminal space in a way that it usurps authority over the subject matter, often with the help of para-texts written at the time of translatability, usually by the translator himself. In this case interpretive authority is shifted from the original text to the translation, and the para-text contributes to granting the translation and the translator who wrote it the monopoly of

The role of para-texts in the conflict of interpretations interpretation. With time, however, the translation will have difficulty to continue to interact with the changed register, so that while the subject matter may continue to live on in the foreign language, the authority over its interpretation remains with the monopolizing translation, while the language of that translation is not adapted to new registers. This is the case of what has been called “great translations,” literary classics that were translated by famous (powerful) author-translators³, and whose subsequent translations and interpretations are resisted, ignored, or barred from coming into existence. While the register has changed, it can continue to interact with the subject matter, but the interaction is greatly hampered by the interpretation laid down by the great translation. This situation could be called pseudo-canonization, i.e. the canonization of a specific and highly intentional interpretation of a text that shifts hermeneutic authority to the translator, with the result that the subject matter is available, but only in an interpretation that has seized the monopoly of interpretative authority in a way that it excludes other interpretations. Due to its canonized status, the translation will not adapt to changes in the register, which inevitably occur when a translation ages.

The alienation caused by pseudo-canonization can be seen when scholars find elements in translated texts that colleagues who read the originals cannot see – because they are not in the source text. As I will not give a detailed example of pseudo-canonization here, I will shortly elaborate this situation in more concrete terms, before delving into the case studies that illustrate abeyance and canonization. Pseudo-canonization is what has happened, for instance, with the translations that Charles Baudelaire made of Edgar Allen Poe’s short fiction, texts on which several generations of French Poe readers have drawn conclusions about Poe’s writing that differ from what English-language readers find there. This includes Jean Ricardou, whose analysis of Baudelaire’s “Le scarabée d’or” finds elements of symbolism that do not feature in Poe’s “The Gold Bug” (Ricardou, 1971: 39-58 and Wallaert, 2004: 319-321), Tzvetan Todorov’s analysis of Poe’s “The Fall of the House of Usher” in which the author, unaware of Baudelaire’s additions and omissions, discusses elements in Baudelaire’s translation that lead him to the uncommon conclusion that Poe did not write fantastic tales (Todorov, 1970: 52-54 and Wallaert 2008: 68), or Jacques Lacan’s discreet downplaying of the fact that his idiosyncratic reading of “The Purloined Letter” is entirely based on Baudelaire’s translation – while Lacan at the same time accuses Baudelaire of betraying Poe in his choice of title for his translation (Lacan, 1957: 32) and of making “approximative” lexical choices (Lacan 1957: 27). Lastly, in the case of Poe’s work in French, the status of pseudo-canonization is further maintained by the fact that editors have only ventured to publish new translations of the parts of Poe’s work that Baudelaire had *not* translated. However, having already detailed the conditions of Poe’s pseudo-existence in France elsewhere, I will dedicate the remainder of this article to two cases of translatability that exemplify how a para-text either halts translatability (abeyance) or ensures it (canonization).

6. Abeyance in translation

6.1. The current untranslatability of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon

As I have indicated above, the term abeyance is here proposed to refer to a situation in which a skewed para-text causes long-term suspension in translation and a halting of translatability. The case of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's work in the English-speaking world is the example that will be used here to illustrate how abeyance is put in place and how forceful its effects can be.

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865) is considered to be a founding figure of socialism in France, and internationally speaking he is also regarded, along with Bakunin and Kropotkin, as one of the founding thinkers of anarchism. In France, Proudhon's work is currently being re-read and discussed more than ever before, as evidenced by Edouard Jourdain's research and latest work, *Proudhon contemporain* (2018) which brings to bear Proudhon's ideas on a variety of current issues such as social justice, equality, and human rights. Beyond academic circles, this renewed French interest in Proudhon is also obviously found in the activities of the *Fédération Anarchiste*, but also among other anti-capitalist movements such as the ZADs⁴.

In the English-speaking world, however, as Jesse Cohn and Shawn Wilbur wrote in 2010, "of the thirty-nine texts collected in fifteen volumes of Proudhon's complete works, only four have ever been translated into English, so the only glimpses of his more ambitious "theoretical" work available to us [. . .] are in *Selected Writings of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon*, a collection of scattered quotations" (Cohn & Wilbur 2010: no page). This striking absence of one of anarchism's most influential thinkers from the English-language canon was significantly improved upon in 2011, with the publication of Iain McKay's *Property is Theft - A Pierre-Joseph Proudhon Anthology*, but as McKay states, the situation is still that "Sadly, very little of Proudhon's voluminous writings has been translated into English" (McKay, 2011: 79). In sum, as Berry confirms, the current situation remains one where "much of what has been said about Proudhon has been based on ignorance and received ideas [. . .] However one of the problems hitherto for those wishing to return to the sources to see for themselves what Proudhon actually wrote has been the lack of English translations of most of his works" (Berry, 2011: no page).

6.2. The Para-Textual Cause of Proudhon's Abeyance in English

The fact that English language readers cannot share in any Proudhon revival because the work is not fully available in English presents a clear case of abeyance in translation, and can be entirely imputed to a para-text that had the force of an atomic destruction. Indeed, Marx's well-known commentary on Proudhon's *Système des contradictions économiques ou Philosophie de la Misère*, which Marx sarcastically entitled *Misère de la philosophie*, seems to have ensured that Proudhon's entire oeuvre and ideology continue to be largely absent in English, with the bulk of his texts "probably waiting for their translators" (Wilbur, 2014: no page). The story of how Marx's para-text caused this international state of abeyance deserves to be told here.

Marx's *Misère de la philosophie* (1847) is considered to be one of his major works, where he lays the foundation of the ideas he would continue to put forward in his later writings. At the time when Marx published it, he was a little-known German philosopher who was considered to be no more than an international rabble rouser, while Proudhon was about to be elected to the French *Assemblée*, a well-known figure in French politics, and widely viewed as the front man of what would become French socialism. He had been on friendly terms with the young Marx, who admired him and had presented him as the French incarnation of the working class' march towards socialism (Menuelle, 1993: 129). However, when Proudhon refused Marx's proposition to become the French correspondent of an international bureau of information, in a letter in which Proudhon also criticized Marx's authoritarianism – the letter consisted of “une leçon morale et [...] une attaque sévère de l'autoritarisme de la pensée marxiste qui ne laissaient plus aucun doute sur l'opposition de Proudhon tant à Marx qu'à ses theories” (Menuelle, 1993: 100) – Marx turned on his mentor and set out to destroy him. Interestingly, *Misère de la philosophie* contains both praise and severe condemnation of Proudhon, which is explained by the fact that Marx had begun writing it *before* he read Proudhon's work, so that “il n'y a pas de scission nette, au sein de l'ouvrage, entre les réflexions favorables et celles hostiles à Proudhon” (Menuelle, 1993: 104), an element that would contribute to concealing Marx's malevolent intentions.

In fact, Marx's *Misère de la philosophie* does a lot more than present unfavorable opinions about Proudhon's work, it is “a hatchet-job of epic proportions” (McKay, 2011: 70), by which “Proudhon's fame is used to get people to read the work of an unknown radical thinker” (McKay, 2011: 70), that is, Karl Marx. Iain McKay summarizes the nature of the “hatchet” as follows:

So we find Marx arbitrarily arranging quotations from Proudhon's book, often out of context and even tampered with, to confirm his own views. This allows him to impute to Proudhon ideas the Frenchman did not hold (often explicitly rejects!) in order to attack him. Marx even suggests that his own opinion is opposite of Proudhon's when, in fact, he is simply repeating the Frenchman's thoughts. He takes the Frenchman's sarcastic comments at face-value, his metaphors and abstractions literally. (McKay 2011: 71)

The fact that Marx's commentary ended up, in the long run, completely overshadowing the very existence of Proudhon's thought, can be ascribed to several causes. Firstly, by the time Marx's *Misère* became more widely read, 20 years after its publication, people were no longer reading Proudhon as widely as before, while communism had begun its ideological steamrolling and the International Workingmen's Association had begun to spread Marx's ideas throughout the Western world. Secondly, *Misère de la philosophie* is a finely executed sample of what Barthes politely calls an “illusion référentielle” (Barthes, 1984: 168), a case in which “l'historien pretend laisser parler le référent tout seul.” Indeed, throughout *Misère de la philosophie* Marx feigns objectivity, even claiming to let the referent, Proudhon's *Philosophie de la misère*, speak for itself, while the opposite is the case. Thirdly, being occupied with more urgent business, Proudhon never bothered to grant the attack a riposte in writing, though he was fully aware of it, confirming to a friend: “J'ai reçu le libelle de M.

Marx, en réponse à la Philosophie de la Misère : c'est un tissu de grossièretés, de falsifications, de plagiats..." (quoted in Menuelle, 1993: 120), and annotating his own copy of *Misère de la philosophie* with indignant exclamations and comments. Fourthly, since Marx and Proudhon's friendship was well-known, people never suspected Marx's desire to destroy his mentor, and the negative subjectivity, plagiarism and incorrect portrayal of Proudhon's work entered history completely undetected.

6.3. The force of a para-textual "hatchet job"

McKay's *Anthology* comes, for the first seven chapters of Volume I of the *System of economic contradictions* (rather than the *System of Economical contradictions* as the title of Benjamin Tucker's translation) with editorial notes that deal with a series of Marx's distortions of Proudhon's ideas. A single case of Marx's purposeful omissions suffices to understand the extent to which Marx's text was to colonize the liminal space of Proudhon's interpretation both in France and on an international scale. In a passage where Proudhon describes the miners' strike in Rive-de-Gier to explain how "power" or "the established order" deals with collaborative strikes, he denounces the status quo in the following terms:

And the reason, which it would be vain to try to brush aside, is that competition is legal, supply and demand are legal, joint-stock association is legal, and all the consequences which flow directly from competition, joint-stock association, and free commerce are legal, whereas workers' strikes are ILLEGAL. And it is not only the penal code which says this, but the economic system, the necessity of the established order. *As long as labour is not sovereign, it must be a slave; society is possible only on this condition.* That each worker individually should have the free disposition of his person and his arms may be tolerated, but that the workers should undertake, by combinations, to do violence to monopoly society cannot permit. (McKay 2011: 221-222, my italics)⁵

As McKay indicates, "Marx selectively quotes this passage, omitting the key phrase and so utterly changes Proudhon's intention" (McKay 2011: 222 note 33), and one need only to reread the above passage *without* the italicized phrase to understand how Marx's omission of a key sentence allowed him to put forward the absurd notion that Proudhon would have been *against* labour strikes. The forceful impact of this specific false accusation continues to be felt, as can be gleaned from the comments section on Jourdain's podcast, "Pourquoi il faut lire Proudhon aujourd'hui" (Jourdain, 2019: no page), where even French viewers reiterate the myth that Proudhon was against strikes.

This is just one out of thirty-odd instances of Marxist falsification documented in the editor's notes, and as McKay points out, the plagiarism begins with the reversed title, since that too is an idea Marx copied from Proudhon, who wrote in *Système des contradictions économiques*: "Modern philosophers, after collecting and classifying their annals [. . .] saw, not without surprise, that the history of philosophy was the same thing at bottom as the philosophy of history" (McKay, 2011: 79).

6.4. English translations of Proudhon

Proudhon's work was translated into English by the American philosopher and anarchist Benjamin R. Tucker (1854-1938), but these texts only represent a

The role of para-texts in the conflict of interpretations small – though important – part of Proudhon’s work. McKay’s *Anthology* presents these translations in edited form, which, however, does not mean that they have been adapted to a contemporary linguistic register. The result, as far as the Tucker translations is concerned, is a corpus of literal translations that generally speaking do not have syntactic fluency and lack lexical accuracy – on top of the more frustrating fact that they contain a great many omissions, since Tucker did not translate Proudhon’s texts fully but left out entire paragraphs and sections. Moreover, in many places there are major terminological inaccuracies in the Tucker translations: to give just one example, the French *peuple* and *nation* are conflated, as the translation does not always make the distinction and frequently gives “nation” for both terms.

In “A note on the translations” McKay briefly lists his editorial corrections of Tucker’s translations and says that these interventions aim “to bring their meaning more in line with the original French” or “popular usage” or “to bring them up to date” (McKay, 2011: 82), in order to match the terminology with new translations of other parts of Proudhon’s work. This means that while the Tucker translations still perform their basic function by allowing the subject matter to be transposed, Tucker’s nineteenth-century idiolect remains largely unchanged. Indeed, as McKay also indicates, his editorial interventions only apply to “certain parts of the translations,” and they do not significantly improve the generally antiquated tone, unidiomatic syntax, or questionable lexical choices. McKay ends the brief overview of his revisions by saying that he takes full responsibility over “any errors that may occur in the text” (McKay, 2011: 82), without specifying which type of “errors” he had in mind, but since he dedicates his *Anthology* to his daughters with the words “May it show the importance of being bilingual!” I take the dedication to suggest that the “errors” which he has edited are not enough to allow Tucker’s translations to interact with a contemporary register in a way that would allow Proudhon to be read again in English.

In short, Proudhon’s main work is only partially available in English translations that have not grown along with the English-language register, and while the Tucker translations are certainly enough to make the subject matter they transpose partially available to the English reader, there is clearly a desire for a new translation to match the contemporary register. However, the sheer size of Proudhon’s work makes editorial changes to the old translations an extremely lengthy and risky undertaking because, as Wilbur writes, Tucker’s translations “provide us with at least the beginnings of the sort of shared lexicon that could guide subsequent work” (Wilbur, 2014: no page), which is a double-edged sword, since the old terminology might prove to hamper further absorption into a contemporary register.

6.5. Theorizing abeyance

The case of Proudhon’s abeyance in English neatly corresponds to Iser’s description of how monopolies of interpretation shift authority away from the text, filling the register with assumptions and prejudices that bar it from

interacting successfully with the subject matter at a later stage, and precluding the relay movement of interpretation:

Whenever presuppositions of the register are superimposed on the subject matter, the liminal space is colonized by the concepts brought to bear. Such a colonization converts interpretation into an act that determines the intended meaning of the subject matter. When this happens, interpretation ceases. The colonization of the liminal space therefore sacrifices translatability and with it the chance to embrace more than was possible before the superimposition. (Iser, 2000: 151)

This is abeyance in translation, a situation in which, for a given language and its speakers, a text is only available either in the foreign language in which it was written or in a version from a different time, a situation which is very frequently created by a para-text that preceded or came alongside the translation, and which colonized and sealed off the liminal space of interpretation. In other words, abeyance in translation is a state where translatability ceases because the discourse of a more powerful entity has sealed off the liminal space of interpretation. Obviously, when abeyance happens to texts that are very voluminous, like Proudhon's complete works, translatability is hampered even further by the fact that the current register, which, let us not forget, has not evolved through the relay of liminal spaces, continues to be affected by the force of the initial para-text.

7. Translatability and canonization

7.1. Frantz Fanon: introduction

On the opposite end of abeyance there are situations where a text and its translation are integrated and incorporated in the source and target canons, with para-texts that not only contribute to this canonization from the outset, but also continue to ensure that the liminal space of interpretation remains open and new interpretations, translations and readings can take place.

An example of this comes with another revolutionary French author and political thinker, Frantz Fanon, whose thoughts on slavery, colonialism, decolonization, and racism are of interest at a time when Black Lives Matter and other anti-racist movements have brought these burning issues to the fore once again. The current interest in Fanon's ideas in France was shown only a few days before these paragraphs were written when a quote of his featured on the French news website *Médiapart*, citing the conclusion to *Peau noire, masques blancs*, which described the situation in Indochina in the 1950s: "Ce n'est pas parce que l'Indochinois a découvert une culture propre qu'il s'est révolté. C'est parce que « tout simplement » il lui devenait, à plus d'un titre, *impossible de respirer*" (Fanon, 1952: 224). A quick perusal of recent French media discussions shows that Fanon's thoughts on racism, colonialism, decolonization, and imperialism continue to be a focal point of reference.

7.2. Sartre's para-text

Fanon's first major work, *Peau noire, masques blancs* (1952) was not warmly received in France, as his condemnation of systemic racism in French society, particularly among the intellectual elites and in the armed forces, was obviously

The role of para-texts in the conflict of interpretations always a controversial message. It was undoubtedly his connections to prominent members of the French leftist intelligentsia of the day, and most of all his friendship with Sartre and his inclusion in Sartre's network that helped his work gain the prominence it had by the time of his death. Fanon, who had always been greatly inspired by Sartre, asked Sartre to write a preface to his last work, *Les damnés de la terre*, and a meeting between the two men was arranged during which they talked and exchanged ideas for three days straight. In *La Forve des Choses*, where Simone de Beauvoir gives a brief account of Fanon's life and ideas, the author reveals how strongly Sartre and Fanon agreed and how much they had in common (de Beauvoir, 1963: 619-634). Fanon died not long after this meeting, in 1961, and by the mid-sixties his work became more and more widely read in France, where people were clearly taking up Sartre's firm injunction to "Read Fanon" (Fanon, 2004: Iii).

7.3. Fanon in English

Fanon's books were first translated into English in the nineteen sixties, with Constance Farrington's translation of *Les damnés de la terre* (1952) coming out as *The Wretched of the Earth - The experiences of a black man in a white world*, in an edition that included Sartre's translated foreword. *L'An V de la revolution algérienne* (1959) was translated as *A Dying colonialism* by Haakon Chevalier, and in 1967 Charles Lam Markmann translated *Peau noire masques blancs* (1961) as *Black Skin White Masks - A Negro Psychoanalyst's Study of the Problems of Racism & Colonialism in the World Today*, which came with a foreword by the post-colonial theorist Homi Bhabha. Lastly, *Pour la revolution africaine* (1964) was translated by Haakon Chevalier as *Toward the African revolution* in 1969.

The titles of the works in translation are enumerated here because they clearly point to a slanting of Fanon's work towards the American ideological canon of the time, and the subtitles that were added reveal a polarizing tendency in the way Fanon's work was approached in the US. This would allow for Fanon's ideas to be more easily adopted into the American anti-segregationist literature of the 60s, and Fanon's work quickly gained a prominent place in the ideology of the Black Panther movements in the US (both East and West Coast). This different reading of Fanon seem to be at least partly attributable to the nature of the translations, which were felt to have neglected the philosophical foundations of Fanon's thought:

C'est que le traducteur Charles Lam Markmann avait systématiquement gommé la phénoménologie de Fanon, qui le reliait à l'orbite de Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, Jeanson et *Les Temps Modernes*, afin de lui faire pénétrer plus facilement le champ discursif des Etats-Unis, où dominait le manichéisme Noir/Blanc qui sous-tendait la ségrégation raciale. (Arnold, 2006: 130)

These comments are borne out by the criticism on the translations, both on Farrington's *The Wretched* and Markmann's *Black skin*, which is mainly aimed at a homogenizing and generalizing tendency that had the effect both of obscuring Fanon's Antillean specificities, as well as replacing his phenomenological approach by a symbolism and essentialism that was inconsistent with the author's philosophical bearings:

En traduction anglaise, le cinquième chapitre de *Black Skin, White Masks* s'intitule « The Fact of Blackness » là où Fanon avait écrit « L'expérience vécue du Noir ». Les critiques post-colonialistes, qui pour la plupart travaillent à partir de la traduction anglaise, véhiculent ainsi un essentialisme étranger à la pensée de Fanon et le trahissent à chaque fois qu'ils le citent. (Arnold, 2006: 130)

This observation is confirmed by Fanon's American biographer Charles Macey, who considers the first translations of Fanon's work, in this case Markmann's *The Wretched of the Earth*, so unreliable that any commentary based on these texts should automatically be deemed irrelevant:

This dehistoricization has been partly the result of Charles Markmann's flawed translation of *Masks*, which rendered very specific historical reference into generalities. Candidly, Macey suggests that the recent crop of books and articles on Fanon contain very little of relevance to a biographer. (Stanton, 2002: 245)

However, just because it was translated with a bias towards the ideological canon of civil rights and segregation, Fanon's work was widely read in English, and it is considered to have had a significant impact on the black civil rights movement of the 60s. This is also shown by the prominent place Fanon's ideas held in *The Black Book*, a pamphlet-sized manifesto that functioned as a "bréviaire du parfait révolutionnaire afro-américain de la fin des années 1960" (Arnold, 2006: 119-120). In short, the first movement of translatability of Fanon's work into English resulted in a first canonization, and the register of the time produced a type of interpretation that suited the ideological canon into which the subject matter was to integrate. While the first translation could be said to have produced a pseudo-Fanon, this is not a case of pseudo-canonization, because what was canonized from the start was the subject matter but not the textual qualities of the translations in themselves.

7.4. Fanon's renewed translatability

With recent anti-racism protests filling streets around the world during the three months that preceded the writing of this paper, Fanon's ideas have also gained a renewed international interest, especially in the US, where his thoughts on the processes of colonization and slavery are being reexamined through a globalized perspective. The relatively recent publication of new translations of both *Les Damnés* and *Peau noire*, respectively in 2004 and 2008, were therefore timely events, and they were made by Richard Philcox, the translator of the entire oeuvre of the Nobel Prize winning Antillean author Maryse Condé. Philcox's version of *Les damnés de la terre* comes with three types of para-text that all help the book to successfully interact with the current register: the original "Preface" by Jean Paul Sartre, a new foreword by Homi Bhaba that re-contextualizes Fanon and re-contextualizes Sartre's interpretation of the book (especially what was perceived as Sartre's focus on violence), and an afterword by Philcox entitled "On Retranslating Fanon, Retrieving a Lost Voice" (Philcox in Fanon, 2004: 241-251) that will excite the envy of genetic translation scholars for the wealth of genealogical information it contains about the translation: Philcox explains how he discovered Fanon and understood him over the years, and not only presents insights in his own translation strategies, but also

The role of para-texts in the conflict of interpretations discusses the personal, psychological, ideological and cultural mediators that underlie his choices, both in selecting the works for translation and in translating them. He also discusses the ways in which Fanon's thoughts have been "pulled in all directions by postcolonial scholars, made to fit their ideas and interpretations," which, as he explains, is why he "crusaded for a new English translation of Fanon" (Philcox in Fanon, 2004: 244).

7.5. Adapting Fanon to a new register: canonization continued

Philcox then presents an overview of his translational choices, all of which point to an adaptation to the current register and a project which he describes as follows: "I felt that his voice had got distorted and he should be given a second chance to be heard" (Philcox in Fanon, 2004: 245). He analyzes Fanon's language use and discusses how he used recordings of Fanon's voice to train his ear as a translator:

And there is drama behind his voice born out of urgency as he worked against the clock. Knowing that *Les Damnés de la Terre* had been dictated to his wife during his final year, I used the oral tone I had captured over the tape in my translation of *The Wretched of the Earth* and endeavored to make it read more like an oral presentation with that earnestness of voice he was known for. (Philcox in Fanon, 2004: 245)

Philcox also explains how his manner of coping with Fanon's text was aimed at its integration into a contemporary register and the readers it represents: "I had in mind a young reader who would be swept along by Fanon's thoughts in the language of the twenty-first century. Without betraying Fanon I decided to tighten up the text, update the vocabulary, and retrieve his lost voice" (Philcox in Fanon, 2004: 246). He then discusses a number of lexical issues of which the most prominent is one "dreaded by all translators of French Caribbean texts: *négre*" (Philcox in Fanon, 2004: 247) and explains how he dealt with these issues. Finally, the afterword is a message to contemporary readers that acknowledges the role of the previous translation in relaying interpretation, but states this in terms of a double resuscitation of the author's voice and thoughts, and of the translation:

Translating a dead man means stepping very warily through a minefield littered with the debris of another time and another translation. But the very fact of looking back was a driving force to modernize the text and look ahead. In Fanon's case, translating the dead was a case of translating life itself. I felt I had to bring a dead translation back to life. (Philcox in Fanon, 2004: 250).

7.6. The role of para-text in fanon's translatability

As we have seen, the most recent editions of *The Wretched* include three types of para-texts that continue to ensure the translatability of Fanon's subject matter into a changed register and a different historical context, of which, incidentally, Fanon foreshadowed the outlines when he wrote *Les damnés de la terre*. This makes the new translation of *The Wretched of the Earth* with its three-way para-textual conjunction an excellent example of para-textually aided canonization. Philcox's words on resuscitating a dead translation support the idea that when canonization is open-ended and not based on a monopoly of interpretation, the subject matter can be "brought back to life" at any later point

in time. As events set in motion a new interplay between the existing canon, the register and the subject matter, translatability is rekindled, and a new liminal space is opened, which allows the subject matter to live on. However, this event rarely happens without para-texts triggering it or driving it on, and indeed, there is not a single publication of *The Wretched*, whether in Farrington's or in Philcox's translation, where Sartre's and Homi Bhabha's forewords are not added, while the current relevance of Fanon's ideas is underlined in Homi K. Bhabha's *new* foreword to the new translation of *The Wretched of the Earth*. Final proof of the actual translatability of Fanon into the contemporary English-language context is given by the world's largest online sales platform, where Philcox's *The Wretched* features as "Number 1 Bestseller" in the category "Algeria history" at the moment these lines are written.

We can conclude, then, that the first translations of Fanon's work, positively mediated to adapt to the ideological register of the civil rights movements of the sixties and seventies, were accompanied by para-texts that did not colonize the liminal space. These paratexts contributed to Fanon's canonization for a substantial period of time, and during this time the subject matter remained in an interplay with the canon that could be rekindled at any time in the future. This rekindling is precisely what is happening today, as modern translations of Fanon's two main works are allowing the subject matter to re-engage with a register that has adapted to the various interpretations of Fanon's work through time and can thus be re-integrated in the canon. Unlike what happened to Proudhon, whose oeuvre in English was buried by and under Marx's para-text which worked as the nail in the coffin of the Tucker translations, there was never a time when Fanon was not read in English, and the fact that in its first publication and translation *Les Damnés de la terre* came with a foreword full of praise by none less than Sartre, is very likely to have greatly contributed to that continued interaction, just as inversely, the noise made by Marx's tumultuous *Misère de la philosophie* managed to drown out any interest in Proudhon's work in English.

8. Conclusions: the role of para-text in the conflict of interpretations

The various ways in which para-texts influence the reception of a text in translation and the different situations I have described in this article may be seen as mere variations in degree, but it seems clear that the canonization of a text in translation will depend in the first place on the extent to which its para-text has colonized the liminal space of interpretation. Abeyance and canonization are the two poles between which these variations take place, and they are clearly situations where it is not the quality of the translation that determines the canonization of a text in a foreign language, but rather the dominant interpretation conveyed by the para-texts. The case of pseudo-canonization, though also referring to a state of suspension, is in fact outside of this scale, since it refers to a situation where it is not so much the subject matter but the perceived textual qualities of the translation that are enshrined and seal off the liminal space, causing a suspension that is perpetuated by the

The role of para-texts in the conflict of interpretations untouchable prestige of the “great translation” which, *de facto*, produces a state of untranslatability.

Similarly, the case of Proudhon’s abeyance in English makes it clear that the canonization of a text is quite impossible to maintain in a foreign language when a dominant para-text has negatively biased one of its interpretations and thus monopolized any potential liminal space. Vice-versa, when canonization in a foreign language is positively slanted by para-text, the way Sartre’s foreword worked for Fanon, that canonized status will be easily maintained. From a wider historical perspective, what this shows is that just as the writing of history effaces or glorifies events, para-texts can either obliterate or enshrine the texts they accompany and have a determining impact on their translatability by playing a primordial role in the conflict of interpretations.

Notes

¹ Oxford English Dictionary online: “para-, prefix: ancient Greek *παρα-* (before a vowel *παρ-*), combining form (in e.g. *παράδειγμα* paradigm n., *παράνοια* paranoia n.) of *παρά* ‘by the side of, beside’, hence ‘alongside of, by, past, beyond’, etc.,” no page.

² In fact, the text of the *Edict of Galerius* was reproduced in the work of two Christian authors who lived at the time of Galerius, namely Lactantius and Eusebius of Caesaria, who also documented the agreement between Constantine I and Emperor Licinius forged two years later (see Stein, 2010: 76).

³ For enumerations of French “grands traducteurs” see Cordingly, 2015: p. 7 or Berman 1990: all.

⁴ *ZAD* : *Zone à défendre*, zone to defend. The term is used in France, Belgium and Switzerland to refer to blockades by communities of activists, usually in geographical areas that are environmentally fragile and have been selected for infrastructural or commercial development projects.

⁵ “ Et la raison, que l’on voudrait en vain méconnaître, c’est que la concurrence est chose légale ; la société en commandite, chose légale ; l’offre et la demande chose légale ; et toutes les conséquences qui résultent directement de la concurrence, de la commandite et du libre commerce, choses légales : tandis que la grève des ouvriers et ILLEGALE. Et ce n’est pas seulement le Code pénal qui dit cela, c’est le système économique, c’est la nécessité de l’ordre établi. *Tant que le travail n’est pas souverain, il doit être esclave : la société ne subsiste qu’à ce prix.* Que chaque ouvrier individuellement ait la libre disposition de sa personne et de ses bras, cela peut se tolérer ; mais que les ouvriers entreprennent, par des coalitions, de faire violence au monopole, c’est ce que la société ne peut permettre” (Proudhon, 1846: 334-335, my italics).

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