BORIS VIAN: (non) CONFORMIST

The translation of two collections of short stories in a theoretical context

PART A

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Statement of originality

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University's Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

Signature: ............................  Date: .................................
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## Part A Table of Contents

### Acknowledgements

### Table of contents

1. Table of contents  
2. Abbreviations of short stories  
3. Preface  
4. Introduction

#### 0.4. Text Choice and Edition

5. Chapter One. Researching the Author: link to translation

#### 1.1. Vian in a Socio-historical Context

#### 1.2. Autobiographical Detail in the Texts

1.2.1. Characters

#### 1.2.2. Backdrop

#### 1.2.3. Pursuits

#### 1.3. Authorial Stance

1.3.1. Aspects of Non-conformity

#### 1.3.2. Manifestation in the Text

#### 1.4. Beyond Biography

6. Chapter Two. Determining a Translation Strategy

#### 2.1. Theoretical Considerations

2.1.1. Skopos Theory

#### 2.1.2. Polysystems

#### 2.1.3. Translational Action

#### 2.1.4. Translation-oriented Text Analysis

#### 2.1.5. External Factors
2.2. Comparative Translation and Critique 65
   2.2.1. “Re-creation of a Recreation” 65
   2.2.2. L’Écriture vianesque: traduction de la prose 68
2.3. Boris Vian: translator 72
   2.3.1. Vian on Vian 73

Chapter Three. Translation Issues: lexical 79

3.1. Proper Nouns 80
3.2. Neologisms 93
   3.2.1. Derivation from French “Phonetic Spelling” 93
   3.2.2. English Words “Frenchified” 95
   3.2.3. Derivation from a Semi-recognisable French Word 96
   3.2.4. Portmanteau Words 101
   3.2.5. Neologisms Based on Liaison 103
   3.2.6. Vocalic Suffix Addition 105
3.3. Word Plays 106
   3.3.1. Based on Initialisms and Acronyms 106
   3.3.2. Based on Homophony 108
   3.3.3. Based on Polysemy 110

Chapter Four. Translation Issues: syntax 116

4.1. Conformity in Vian’s Syntax 117
4.2. Shift 124
   4.2.1. Grammatical Shift 125
   4.2.2. Positional Shift 128
4.3. Syntax, Shift and Semantics 134

Chapter Five. Other Translation Issues 150

5.1. Phrasal Manipulation 150
   5.1.1. Modified Expressions 150
   5.1.2. Disguised Expressions 154
   5.1.3. Hidden References 155
5.1.4. Abridged Verbal Constructions 157

5.2. Stylistic Features 159
  5.2.1. Register 159
  5.2.2. Repetition 165
  5.2.3. Poetics 168

5.3. General Features 170
  5.3.1. Grammatical and Cultural Differences 170
  5.3.2. Compulsory Rewording 175
  5.3.3. Miscellaneous 176

Conclusion 182

Bibliography 197

1. Relating to Boris Vian 197
   Works signed Boris Vian 197
   Works signed Vernon Sullivan 197
   Translations by Boris Vian 198
   Translations of Boris Vian 199
   Books on Boris Vian 200
   Articles 201
   Websites 203
   Miscellaneous Material 203

2. Relating to translation theory, literary translation and grammar 203
   Books and journals 203
   Articles 207
   Websites 213

3. Miscellaneous 213
   Books, magazines and other material 213
   Unsigned articles from websites 215
   Other websites 216
Abbreviations of short story titles in *Le Loup-garou* and *Le Ratichon baigneur*

**In *Le Loup-garou***

“Le Loup-garou” (“LG”)
“Un Cœur d’or” (“Cœur”)
“Les Remparts du sud” (“Remparts”)
“L’Amour est aveugle” (“Amour”)
“Martin m’a téléphoné …” (“Martin”)
“Marseille commençaient à s’éveiller” (“Marseille”)
“Les Chiens, le désir et la mort” (“Chiens”)
“Les Pas vernis” (“Pas”)
“Une Pénible histoire” (“Pénible”)
“Le Penseur” (“Penseur”)
“Surprise-party chez Léobille” (“Léobille”)
“Le Voyeur” (“Voyeur”)
“Le Danger des classiques” (“Danger”)

**In *Le Ratichon baigneur***

“Un Métier de chien” (“Métier”)
“Divertissements culturels” (“Divertissements”)
“Une Grande vedette” (“Vedette”)
“Le Ratichon baigneur” (“RB”)
“Méfie-toi de l’orchestre” (“Méfie”)
“Francfort sous-la-Main” (“Francfort”)
“Un Test” (“Test”)
“Les Filles d’avril” (“Filles”)
“L’Assassin” (“Assassin”)
“Un Drôle de sport” (“Drôle”)
“Le Motif” (“Motif”)
“Marthe et Jean” (“M&J”)
“La Valse” (“Valse”)
“Maternité” (“Maternité”)
“L’Impuissant” (“Impuissant”)
Preface

Vian studies as an area of academic research did not begin to flourish until the 1970s mainly because up until then his work was considered to be relatively minor, verging on marginal, more worthy of study at high school than at university. The following data based on academic articles, papers and theses from national and international contributors retrieved from the archives of the Vian Fond’action in Paris, shows that interest in Vian research tends to be cyclical in nature. Between 1960 and 1969, there were eleven contributions; between 1970 and 1979, there were forty-five; between 1980 and 1989, there were twenty-three; between 1990 and 1999, there were thirty-one; and between 2000 and 2009, the Fond’action added a further seventeen university contributions to its database. Most of these 127 works deal with thematic and stylistic issues, and seem intent on bringing a greater level of understanding to the man and his work through systematic analysis, which could be seen as an attempt to “normalise” and force into a mould a man who is not very often described as “normal” or “conformist”. In response to this endeavour, Yaguello says of Vian that he would be happy knowing that he had been spared the sight of his work under scrutiny by the universities.

Until now, only a very small amount of research has been undertaken in relation to Vian and translation. Within the archives of the Fond’action, only one piece specifically deals with this issue - *L’Écriture vianesque: traduction de la prose* by Magdalena Mitura, written in 2006 from the University of Krakow, which is a comparison of two Polish translations of *L’Herbe rouge* and of *L’Écume des jours*. Outside of the Fond’action, other contributions include a chapter in Marc Lapprand’s *La Vie contre*; a comparative study of two English translations of *L’Écume des jours*, entitled “Re-creation of a Recreation” by Sophie de Nodrest; Eva Donahoe from the University of Dublin has also worked on translation difficulties in *L’Écume des jours*; and Maria Freij has completed work on the collection of poems entitled *Je voudrais*.

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2 http://www.borisvian.org/fondation_05_travauxuniversitaires.php as at March 2011.
This work should therefore add substantially to the Vian canon, filling gaps in the translation of the short stories into English, as well as suggesting guidelines for the future translation of the extensive number of Vian texts, while at the same time increasing interest in the work and life of Vian in the English-speaking world. Taking advantage of existing translation theory, standard translation procedures and debate, and applying them appropriately to Boris Vian, someone whose life and work has essentially been defined as non-conformist, is the primary ambition of this thesis.

Another area to which the thesis aims to contribute is outlined by Snell-Hornby who supports the view of other recognised scholars that translation studies should develop its own model and conventions. She expands further on this because she also considers that linguistics and literature can be studied in terms of translation. Niranjana adds that literary theory and criticism, historiography, philosophy and French discourse analysis can also be discussed in terms of translation, while Harvey links translation to the study of homosexual culture, which is not without significance here because a number of stories reveal Vian’s attitude, albeit often satirically and ironically, to both male and female homosexuality, which some might consider to be era-specific. Therefore, by the very nature of the stylistic and thematic content of the stories, they may open up a broad-based discussion on a wide range of other disciplines, including comparative literature, cultural studies, modern languages, linguistics, translation theory, literary theory and criticism, and possibly media and gender studies, as well as providing a model that may be adapted to other forms of literary translation.

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