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Meaning in (Translated) Popular Fiction: An Analysis of Hyper-Literal Translation in Clive Barker's *Le Royaume des Devins*

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Weaveworld's French counterpart *Le Royaume des Devins* has been accused of being unintelligible by some French-speaking readers and the French translation has, in general, received more negative reviews than has the English version.[1] From this reception, one can assume that there must be something significant lost in the translation. An analysis of the English and French versions reveals little variation between the two texts. But since translation is a cultural exchange, the hyper-literal translation of Barker's text results in an imposition of English aesthetics on the French linguistic style that impedes this exchange. Barker's text is betrayed by the emphatic prominence of its foreignness. Very little effort is made to domesticate the text, a transformation that is essential to the reception of a piece of popular fiction; cultural meaning of specific idioms, including profanity, is either lost when translated literally or reduced by the constraints of literary acceptability. *Weaveworld* is a particularly interesting case study since it is a text in which the author diverts from his previously established genre. Barker transitions away from horror toward dark fantasy and uses the visual cues of the peritext to prime the reader toward this transition. These cues are absent from the French translation, which would prove problematic for any readership but especially for a foreign reader. These factors—the lack of priming visuals to alert the reader to the genre shift, and the hyper-literal translation that increases foreignness and reduces domestication—contribute to the negative reception of *Royaume*.

Domestic and Foreign Reception

The goal of a popular text in translation is, according to Susan Bassnett in her article "Translating Genre," not just to be "received in another literary system" but to be accepted by the genre-based community to which it claims membership (87). For *Royaume*, this community is based on Barker's established status in France as a horror author. Prior to the translation of *Weaveworld*, Barker's collection of short stories *The*

[1] To be clear, this analysis is concerned with the reception of *Royaume* in France.

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Books of Blood Vol 1-6 and his novel *The Damnation Game*, both of which adhere to the horror genre, had been translated and positively received by the French reading community.[2] This is problematic for the reception of *Weaveworld* because it is Barker's first experimentation with the fantasy genre, which conflicts with the preconceptions of his French reading community. As Lawrence Venuti explains, "the interests that bind the community through a translation are not simply focused on the foreign text, but reflected in the domestic values, beliefs, and representations that the translator inscribes in it" (366). Thus, any divergence from the type of novel his reading community is expecting may be rejected if not properly domesticated by the translator. In his analysis of differing linguistic and literary polysystems, Itamar Even-Zohar provides some hints as to why domestication is key to the successful reception of an English-language text in the French literary system. He finds that "the French cultural system, French literature naturally included, is much more rigid than most other systems" and, subsequently, less accommodating (245-6). This rigidity most likely emerges from the rigorous grammatical and syntactical structures of the French language, combined with the notion that the English and French literary systems are in direct competition with each other. Being on the same hierarchical stratum of the world literary system spectrum makes it particularly difficult for an English text to gain acceptance unless it adheres to the explicit and implicit linguistic norms of the French literary system.[3] Indeed, Antoine Berman

[2] *Books of Blood* is published under the title *Livre de Sangs* in France, while the translation of *The Damnation Game* is titled *Le Jeu de la Damnation*. The majority of reader reviews for *Royaume* considered in this article cite the superior quality of both of these novels, as compared to *Royaume*, contributing to their surprise at their inability to understand and enjoy *Royaume*.

[3] Each literary system would have a unique set of linguistic norms adhered to by the texts produced within this system to varying degrees of rigidity. Antoine Berman notes that "these 'norms,' which vary historically, never specifically concern translation; they apply, in fact, to any writing practice whatsoever" (296). Any attempt to list such norms would inevitably be inadequate, a failed attempt to capture the historical specifics of an ephemeral group of readers; however, for practicality, the set of norms to which I am referring here can be envisaged as akin to a certain culturo-linguistic logic that dictates the ways in which information is presented and received. Such logics dictate the creation of meaning and interpretation (i.e., shaping the linguistic circumstance in which a series of events or a turn of phrase may be considered humorous or tragic, for example). These dialectical logics are (often unconsciously) privy to the native speaker (and to a particular ideological and social class and readership, accustomed or attracted to a particular genre of texts—in this case, British expatriate horror fantasy popular fiction) and are employed by the translator. The effectiveness of the translator's transformation of the source text into a comprehensible and receivable text for the target language and literary system is measured by its acceptance into or rejection from that system. My emphasis here is on the acknowledgement of a unique set of norms within *any* given literary system, which a foreign text needs to negotiate in order to be accessible to the target reading community, and not the precise identification of the specific norms of the French literary system.

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contends that languages of cultural importance are most readily translated into more minor languages but "are also the ones that put up the strongest resistance to the ruckus of translation" (286). To meet the challenge of gaining acceptance, particularly in a target language of equivalent authority, an English text must be sufficiently domesticated, infusing French aesthetic and French culture into the source text, and readily digestible by its reading public, providing the reader of popular fiction exactly what he or she expects.

Reception of *Weaveworld* by English-speaking readers, while mixed, has been generally positive. Barker's most adamant critic S. T. Joshi has even said that "*Weaveworld* is a very interesting experiment, even if it does not have very much in the way of philosophical or even aesthetic substance" (132). In online reviews of *Weaveworld*, the average UK rating is 5/5 (*ciao.co.uk*), while the average American rating is 4.5/5 (*amazon.com*).[4] American readers either deny Barker's genre shift—"first and foremost, this is a horror novel. What else should we expect from the author who gave us the visceral terrors of Hellraiser?" (Cartimand n.pag.), or deflect it —"This is, on a primitive level, a fantasy book. However, don't judge it by that genre" (Flaschka n.pag.). UK users praise Barker's explorations into fantasy—"Barkers [sic] fantasy stuff by far exceeds his horror work" (corkeyboy n.pag.)— or recognize the transition as the natural evolution from his short stories—"The talent for making the impossible seem acceptable, that Barker first displayed in his Books of Blood [sic], lifts this novel out of the run of the mill fantasy genre [...] Even if you don't like fantasy read this, if you do read fantasy then see how it should be written" (collinlivingstone n.pag.). These readers are evidently Barker fans, yet their emphasis or non-emphasis on his adherence to genre classification speaks to the importance of genre in popular fiction as a means to guide reading choices. This phenomenon is somewhat problematic for Barker, who, after decades of writing dark fantasy, continues to be identified as a horror author. He complains in the foreword of the 2010 reprint of *Books of Blood*: "I'm uncomfortable being viewed as the 'Horror Guy,' invited out of seclusion at the season of pumpkins and campfire tales to talk about the Dark Side, while the passions that fuel my current work go undiscussed" (vii). For

[4] The overall scores for *Royaume* do not differ drastically from those of *Weaveworld*; however, only the reviews from *amazon.fr* claim incomprehensibility as a concern with this text. The overall scores from English readers reflect a trend of high scores, whereas those for the French readers are an averaging of high and low scores.

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Barker, *Weaveworld* is, as Joshi identified, "a different mode of writing altogether," Barker's first move away from that horror-guy reputation (133). While the discomfort around the genre transition from horror to dark fantasy is not directly articulated by French-speaking readers, many express an inability to understand the text at all.

The primary complaint in the French reviews of *Royaume* was not the shift away from the horror genre, although this was mentioned in a number of reviews, but the sheer incomprehensibility of the text. For brevity, I will only highlight two complaints taken from online postings. Blogger Thom's most revealing statement concerns the intelligibility of the text—not of the words but of its purpose and meaning:

> Vous ne manquerez pas de me faire remarquer que je ne vous ai toujours pas dit de quoi de ça parlait. Le problème c'est que je n'en sais rien ! [...] et la fin est spectaculaire – à défaut d'être intelligible. [...] Et, donc, [je] n'ai pas compris le livre. Enfin si, il y a un passage que j'ai compris : «*Parfois Mimi dormait. D'autres fois, elle était réveillée*.» (n.pag.)[5]

Weaveworld is not a difficult read for an English-reader, and the language used in *Royaume* is concise and direct in a way that an English-reader would find straightforward. While Thom's critique could be easily dismissed if it were an anomaly, the presence of other similar criticisms lends validity to the claim of unintelligibility. Cruisader: Obsédé par la lecture says

> Oh Clive, cher Clive qu'as-tu fait ??? [...] D'ailleurs je suis doublement arrogant puisque je fais ici une chronique sur un livre que je n'ai pas compris. Mais lorsque je dis que je n'ai pas compris, je veux dire que je n'ai vraiment rien compris, ni le fond, ni la forme, ni la plus simple ébauche de personnages, d'atmosphères etc. J'ai nagé tout le long des presque huit cent pages pour fermer le livre et me demander s'il y avait un quelconque intérêt à écrire ce genre de «choses» incompréhensibles et impénétrables… (n.pag.)[6]

[5] 'You've probably noticed that I haven't told you what the book is about. That's because I don't actually know! [...] and the end is spectacular—despite being completely unintelligible [...] And, well, [I] just didn't understand the book. In the end, there was only one line that I fully understood: "At times, Mimi slept. Other times, she was awake.'" Unless otherwise cited, all translations are my own.

[6] 'Oh Clive, dear Clive what have you done??? [...] Admittedly, I am doubly arrogant for criticizing a book

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Clearly, Barker's message is not being transmitted in the translation, which indicates a disconnect between the cultural meaning in the source text and the cultural meaning in the target text. A comparative analysis between the English and the French versions of the novel reveals that very little has changed in terms of content, taking Venuti's concept of the invisible translator to its extreme. *Royaume* reads as a direct translation akin to what a computational, word-for-word translation program would produce, creating a reading experience wherein the translator is, in effect, effaced. Indeed, this is the problem.[7] No attempt has been made by the translator to transmit or transform Barker's message into something understandable to the foreign readership.

Visual Cues of the Peritext

The presence or absence of visual cues addresses the first issue of reception: genre. The visual aspects, almost all of which are omitted from *Royaume*, direct the reader toward the appropriate reception of *Weaveworld* as a fantasy/adventure novel. The removal of such priming cues is a critical error whose consequence is evident in the negative reception of *Royaume*. The most prominent change is to the cover done by Tim White.[8] The illustration for the back cover is completely absent, which negates the framing affect of the front and back cover, and the border is omitted from the front cover, which negates the association with tapestry:

that I never fully understood. And while I say that I didn't understand the story, I want to be clear that I really didn't understand anything about this book, not the premise/basis/foundation, not the form, I couldn't even grasp a simple outline of the characters, the setting, etc. I trudged through almost 800 pages to finish the book and in the end asked myself why anyone would write in a genre of 'stuff' that is incomprehensible and inaccessible...' (n.pag.)

[7] Berman describes this style of machinized translation as a non-literary translation wherein "only a semantic transfer" is achieved and only the "exteriority or instrumentality" of the source language remains (285).

[8] White is a sci-fi and fantasy artists whose illustrations have appeared in texts by the following well-known authors, to name a few: Terry Pratchett, Isaac Asimov, Marion Zimmer Bradley, H P Lovecraft and Stephen King.

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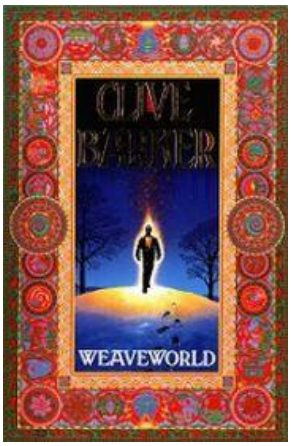
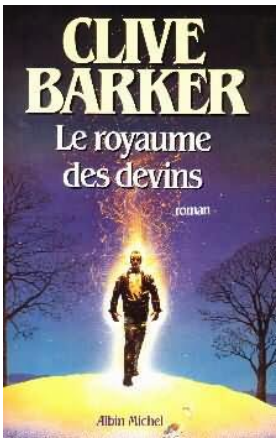


English Cover



French Cover[9]

As indicated in White's artist statement, his depiction of the carpet on the cover—especially its border—is of particular significance in alerting the reader to the nature of this novel:

> The book 'Weaveworld' [sic] by Clive Barker has at its centre a 'magic carpet' which is a world in itself. A struggle between good and evil for control spills out and into our world. Here in the front cover design an entity called Uriel has taken over the body of a victim to relentlessly pursue it's [sic] enemies called the 'Seerkind'—the forces of good. The artist chose the use of complimentary colours to give the picture a sense of movement *underlining the magic carpet theme*. [...] The roundels around the carpet edge hold facets from the story in small pictures. The outer edge has over 100 different creatures delineated. *These are the carpet's protective defence mechanisms*. ("Picture Gallery" 12; emphasis added)

The illustration points to the fantastic elements of the novel—the presence of magic and the trope of a magic carpet in need of protection—and expresses the genre shift. The cover for the French version, which features Uriel, the figure that is representative of evil in the novel, is also quite similar to the cover for *The Damnation Game* (1985) and its France equivalent (1988), Baker's horror novel published just two years earlier, and deceives the reader into thinking that *Royaume* is no different:

[9] Both covers are viewable at http://www.clivebarker.info/weaveworldbib.html.

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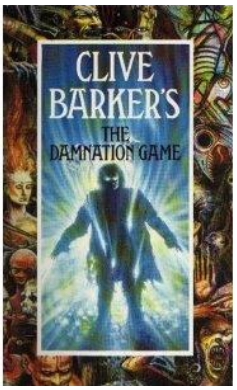
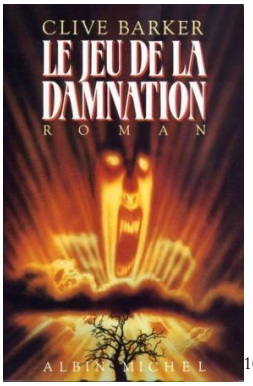
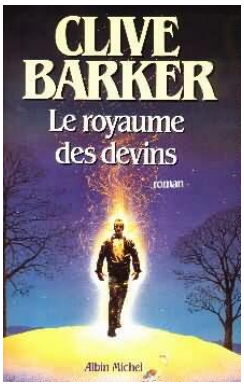




[10]



In his book, *An Introduction to Bibliographies and Textual Studies*, William Proctor Williams claims that "the title page can also be viewed as the book's public face, which, through the arrangement, selection, and emphasis of its features, can imply how the book was to meet and court its potential readers" (40). By emphasizing fantastic elements, the English cover foregrounds the introduction of fantasy to Barker's oeuvre for the English-speaking reading community, but by reducing the cover to an image readily associated with Barker's previous horror novel, French-speaking readers are primed for a horror reading.

The reader reacts to "not the text as sign (consisting of signifier and signified) but the text as signifier" (Williams 71); hence, the visual cues of the text alert the reader to the appropriate mode of reception for the book. When reconciling the title with the cover image, the English version alludes to an alternative (or fantastic) world, the presence of a carpet or a woven tapestry, and the fabled weavers of fate. The French version lacks any of these potentials and could elicit the assumptions that the man is one of the *devins* ('soothsayers') from the title, which contradicts the characterization of Uriel within the novel. The message of the French cover page remains unclear because the signifiers from the English cover are only partially transmitted, resulting in an unintelligible message to the potential reader. According to Williams, reading is determined by that which precedes it (72); an unintelligible cover will lead to an unintelligible reading.

The external expurgation of visual ornamentation continues into the internal peritext. Inside *Weaveworld,* illustrated borders, a table of contents and artistic illumination of the

[10] Both covers are viewable at http://www.clivebarker.info/damnatbib.html.

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typography all serve to promote the fantastic elements of the novel to be read as an epic and ancient tale. The inclusion of a table of contents assists the reader in understanding the layout of the book; "in addition to its obvious purpose, a list of a book's contents serves a bibliographical one. [...] The list of contents accounts for every page, from first to last, including blank pages" (Williams 47). The table of contents prepares the reader for the manner in which the novel will unfold. Elaborate borders used to dramatize and decorate the different partitions of *Weaveworld* create visual continuity. The borders, illustrated by White, contain primitive creatures (amoeba, slugs, snails, lizards, crustaceans, etc.), arguably representing varying stages of evolving, accented by lightning bolts. The typographical illumination of the first letter of each chapter, shaped from ephemeral clouds and accented with lightning bolts, invokes a feel of ancient mysticism. Moreover, chapters are numbered using Roman numerals, a feature that is also lacking in the French version, which uses only the Arabic number system. The use of "specific font [...] identifiable ornaments" is deliberate and meant to enhance the reading (Williams 48). Through the above-listed visual cues, "the concept of text is expanded beyond wording to include non-linguistic features [...] consisting of both linguistic codes and bibliographical codes [... ;] there is no denying that such bibliographical features as typography, layout, format, and paper have signifying functions" (Williams 73). In all cases, visual artistry guides the appropriate reading. The omission of fantastic ornamentation within the novel and from the cover removes such cues from *Royaume* and has without doubt affected its reception.

Domesticating Foreignness: Literalness and Cultural Communication

Bassnett explains that the lingering "belief in the superiority of the original text over any other versions" results in the tendency for the translator to "feel compelled to preserve the foreignness of the source text in the translated counterpart" (87). While foreignness serves well the purpose of preserving and propagating marginalized artistry in translation, when the source culture is not marginalized, a better strategy is to allow the original to be transformed by the target language. Prioritizing the target culture reduces the competitiveness of the original which increases the receptivity of the foreign intrusion in the target literary system. John Milton senses the exclusive nature of foreignization in his article "Translation and Popular Culture" when he says, "I believe that the tradition of foreignizing translation, with translators emphasizing the reproduction of the aesthetic qualities of the original in the translation is, to a great

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extent, the product of this strong elitist strain in modernism" (99). Readers of popular fiction are not seeking aesthetic experimentation or artistic enlightenment; they seek entertainment, enjoyment, escape. Works of popular fiction benefit from prioritizing the target culture over the source culture. Excessive foreignness in a popular text serves only to alienate the reader while domestication will create cross-cultural communication.

In popular fiction, the translator has a responsibility to create a reading of the foreign text that the target audience will enjoy. Venuti describes the (im)balance required to produce a pleasing text that targets a large audience: "The domestic inscription in the translation extends the appeal of the foreign text to a mass audience in another culture. But widening the domestic range of the appeal means that the inscription cannot include much of the foreign text" (370). Therefore, for a text to become popular in a target language, its foreignness must be suppressed. Through the process of domestication, a translator of popular fiction "negotiates the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text by reducing them and supplying another set of differences, basically domestic, drawn from the receiving language and culture to enable the foreign to be received there" (Venuti 359). By being "inscribed with domestic intelligibilities and interest" that speak to the common reader, the text can be readily absorbed into the mainstream literary system of the target culture (Venuti 359). In his seminal essay, "The Task of the Translator," Walter Benjamin explains that "the task of the translator consists in finding that intended effect [*Intention*][11] upon the language into which he is translating which produces in it the echo of the original [...] where the echo is able to give, in its own language, the reverberation of the work in the alien one" (177). The translation of a popular novel cannot function as a mere exercise in identifying matching equivalences across language systems, but rather as an attempt by the translator to re-contextualize the source text in the target language in a way that is culturally representative of—yet linguistically different from—the original.

In his book *Translation: An Interpretive Approach*, Jean Delisle elucidates that translation is about finding equivalent meaning, not equivalent terms: "translating a message is an attempt to achieve perfect identity of meaning by pairing one language's concepts with another's" (27). Acceptance in the target culture is contingent on the cultural readability of the translated text not just in terms of the words and phrases on the page but whether

[11] Benjamin's insertion in the original text.

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those words and phrases express the same contextual information as their original counterparts. This type of matching is, of course, essential to communication across linguistic systems. Delisle elaborates that linguistic expressions "do not always have agreed-upon equivalents in the target language. Consequently, the translator cannot rely on his knowledge of the linguistic system alone to match the idea in the original text with a generally accepted and sanctioned form in the target language" (89). The translator must be familiar with the contexts from and into which he is translating. Intercultural communication results when the translator transcends a mere

> lexical and grammatical analysis [wherein he would] mechanically replace each signifier in the original statement by a signifier from another language intuitively selected as an equivalence. Such transcoding might produce a formulating that was grammatically correct, if the signs were arranged according to French rules for combining, [...] but it would not be semantically appropriate. (Delisle 55)

According to Anthony Pym, the translator must create a mapping through cognitive space between the meaning of the signifier in one language to the signifier(s) in another language that points to the same meaning on a cultural level, so that the authorial intention of the original, as indicated by the author's particular choice of diction, is preserved in the translated text (91). This does not mean a literal translation but rather "the act of re-verbalizing concepts using the signifiers of another language" (Delisle 60) or, as Franco Moretti calls it in his article "Evolution, World-Systems, *Weltliteratur*," a "reformulation from one language into another" (406). A popular text that is transformed by the target language as well as the target culture will have a greater likelihood of being received in the target literary system. The extent to which a translator is able to bring a novel alive for a foreign reader is dependent on his mastery of its essence, its core, the foundation that user Cruisader complained he was not able to grasp. As Delisle makes pedagogically clear, "translation is a re-expression, not of signs, but of concepts or ideas. This alone makes it possible to bridge the gulf between languages, despite the fact that one linguistic code cannot be transposed into another" (56). This bridging can occur only through the appropriate actions of the translator who "is a rewriter who determines the implied meaning of the target language text, and who also, in the act of rewriting, re-determines the meaning of the original," as described by Andrea Kenesei in her book, *Poetry Translation through Reception Cognition* (46). The translator is an active hermeneutical agent who is able to rearticulate the fundamental

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essence of the source text in the target language in a way that is understandable and communicative of the original.

However, in *Royaume*, reformulations are extremely limited, surfacing only on occasion. As a rare example, consider the following idiomatic reformulation: "Get the fuck off me" (*Weaveworld* 462) is translated as "Lâche-moi, bordel" (*Royaume* 443). Although the literal translation is not at all the same (release me, whorehouse),[12] the emotional emphasis and semantic message of both phrases are equivalent. Unfortunately, this type of transformation within the translation is almost nonexistent. For the most part, the translation provided by Jean-Daniel Brèque is literal. Consider Barker's original passage: "What might have been a race of mystics was suddenly a pack of wild dogs, the colours they swam in degenerating into the grey and umber of a sick man's shit" (*Weaveworld* 184), which is literally translated almost word-for-word in *Royaume* as "Ce qui aurait pu devenir une race de mystiques devient soudain une meute de chiens enragés, et les couleurs dans lesquelles ils nageaient dégénérèrent pour acquérir la nuance gris et ombre de la merde d'un malade" (*Royaume* 184). Such a literal translation is stylistically problematic because of its foreignness.

The stylistic elements of a translation require the most attention. The linguistic method used to convey the message—the style—must be altered by its inherent reliance on linguistic form, which will differ in different linguistic systems. This is because "plot is largely *independent* from language: it remains more or less the same, not only from language to language, but even from one sign system to another [...] Style is however nothing *but* language, and its translation—*traduttore traditore*—is almost always an act of betrayal" (Moretti 406). Thus, in order to resolve what Moretti called the "struggle between the story that comes from the core and the viewpoint that 'receives' it" (406), the translator of popular fiction must domesticate stylistic elements. In the case of *Royaume*, the stylistic representation is its ultimate failing and contributes to the reader's inability to understand elements from the plot. My comparison reveals that Brèque is adamant in preserving the English style of writing as opposed to letting it be absorbed and transformed by the French language. The result is an Anglicization of the French

[12] *Bordel* is literally translated as *whorehouse*; however, when it is used as an interjection, as it is in this case, it is an expression of anger and exacerbation more forceful than the English interjection *for fuck's sake*. I have chosen to emphasize the difference in the literal translation in order to emphasize the contrast between the translations of interjections and profanity with the rest of novel's content.

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language where the curt and direct style of the English language creates an odd reading in its French formation. Unfortunately for Barker's *Weaveworld*, Brèque's inability to contend with the (im)balance necessary to convey the source text in a way that privileges the target linguistic system has resulted in an ill-received, incomprehensible translation of the novel.

Brèque's obsessively literal translation is a disservice to the original because of its inability to properly convey meaning. As Berman affirms, it is not the words themselves that carry particular value, but rather "what *makes sense* is their linkage" (293). Transformation in translation is necessary to cross-cultural understanding as well as reception, particularly for popular fiction. Benjamin articulates the inability of the literal translation to convey the essence of the original novel:

> Fidelity in the translation of individual words can almost never fully reproduce the meaning they have in the original. For sense in its poetic significance is not limited to meaning, but derives from the connotations conveyed by the word chosen to express it. [...] Thus no case for literalness can be based on a desire to retain the meaning. (178)

The choice of diction and the manner of expression in one language will not carry the same connotation in another; in attempting to preserve this connotation—especially significant in the use of vulgarities—the literal translation will always fail. For example, Barker's idiom "Fuck the carpet" (*Weaveworld* 181) is translated as "Que le tapis aille se faire foutre" (*Royaume* 181). Brèque's choice does not convey the frustration of the message nor the speaker's disdain for the carpet. On the contrary, the French version is a very pompous and elaborate expression of the equivalent English idiom 'carpet, go fuck yourself,' which also fails to convey the emotional resentment that the original contends: the idea that the carpet is no longer a significant or important priority. Unlike the transformative example where the idiom *lâche-moi* articulated "the spirit of the message" (Delisle 98), this expression, which translates as 'that the carpet go ahead and fuck itself,' conveys neither spirit nor message and is not believable dialogue in English or in French because it does not originate from the target culture. In the *lâche-moi* example, "the domestic inscription is made with the very intention to communicate the foreign text," to convey the same emotional intention of the expression (Venuti 373); whereas with this case, the literalness of the translation has eclipsed the intended

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meaning. The hyper-literal translation does not allow the source text to be transformed or re-written in the target language. Not only does this type of translation violate the requirement for domesticity in the popular translation, but it also inhibits the transference of meaning across linguistic systems because the Anglicized French does not communicate the cultural connotation that could be achieved through the use of culturally and contextually equivalent French idiomatic phrases.

Lost in Transmission: Dialogue and Discourse

Stylistically, Barker uses idioms and accents to differentiate the intelligence and class levels of his characters, often as a tactic to express hierarchical distinction. Consider, for example, the following dialogue: the English "'Wouldn't be bad, would it?' he mused. 'Being a bird. Gettin' yer end away all spring, then fuckin' off to the South of France as soon as yer get a chill in yer bullocks'" (*Weaveworld* 16) is translated as "«Ça serait chouette, hein? dit-il d'un air songeur. Etre un oiseau. Passer le prinstemps ici, et puis foutre le camp sur la Côte d'Azur dès qu'on commence à se les geler.[»]" (*Royaume* 25). Oddly, Brèque maintains his word for word translation with one detrimental exception. The idiosyncratic dialogue, which serves to denote a lower status to the speaker (a labourer) is omitted in the French translation, leaving only *foutre* (fuck) as the remaining nuance. In the French version, not only is the British slang *bullocks* removed and, along with it, any testicular reference, but the concern of the speaker is generalized to his body freezing (se les geler), leaving only the signifier *les* as a dangling reference to the absent testicles.[13] According to Milton, "standardization, or Fordism, is an important factor in the production of 'factory' [commercial] novels and translations" and can include the removal of "sub-standard language and dialect" (104). Sub-standard language can range from idiomatic street-talk to vulgar profanity; removing the working class diction has the effect of making a character appear more intelligent.

Through standardized dialogue, the translation betrays the original. Lazer Lederhendler describes the impact that dialogue has on the overall meaning and message of a fiction novel in his article "Translating Fictions: The Messenger was a Medium" when he explains that the "fictional narrative's overall effect vitally depends on characterization, whose success in turn depends so much on the convincing

[13] The slang *couilles* is the French equivalent for *bullocks*. Its expurgation is further indication of this absence.

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performance of dialogue, yet the translator is generally expected to make the characters express themselves with native fluency in a language which is not their own" (158). The standardized dialogue homogenizes Barker's characters and is semantically detrimental to the scene Barker creates in the bullocks example above, a scene that sets the tone for the remainder of the reading of the novel. In this scene, Barker's protagonist, Cal, is positioned above the two labourers on the edge of a wall and is coaxing his escaped pigeon back into his cage while a flock of birds circles above. The implied hierarchy is that Cal, like the birds, dominates over the rest of humanity, a race which is referred to as the Cuckoos by the Seerkind species who live in the Fugue (which is magically woven into the carpet). Cal is not your average Cuckoo, as indicated by his physically hierarchical positioning in this scene and reinforced by the inferior and vulgar language used by the humans below him. This scene is crucial because it is the first time that the Fugue makes itself known to Cal. He falls from his perch onto the rolled-out carpet and experiences a vision of the Fugue that the other humans do not share (*Weaveworld* 16-7). All of these actions and images set him apart from the rest of humanity, yet in Brèque's translation, the lingual separation is missing. The manipulation of dialogue by both Barker and Brèque is what Moretti described as "how the style evaluates the story and presents it to the reader" (406). Barker is symbolically elevating Cal above humanity and lowering humanity through his depiction of the labourers and their use of language. This distinction primes the reader's reception of the novel as a whole since this scene occurs so early in the novel, but in the translation, Brèque creates an anti-priming, leaving the reader without the same guidance that a reader of *Weaveworld* receives from Barker. By altering the stylistic representation of the characters, Barker's textual cues for the reader that indicate how to read his novel are removed.

The Standardization of Style

While the Anglicization, the lack of French-rooted vulgarity and the use of standardized language in dialogue are detrimental to the ease of reception for *Royaume,* these stylistic alterations may be the result of an imposed standardization. Venuti reflects on the restrictions imposed on popular translations when he says that "an accurate translation of a novel must not only reproduce the basic elements of narrative form, but should do so in roughly the same number of pages" (361). Brèque does indeed match the page numbers very closely, as can be seen in the citations I provide in this essay, but this confinement to the English page count forces him to reject the stylistic domestication

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necessary to its popular reception and adopt the shorter English style. According to Bassnett, within a particular literary system, there are "accepted ways of writing," and by extension, non-accepted ways too (91). The collective restrictions "can be seen not so much as fixed and rigid systems, but as a set of norms and expectations that have an impact on all literary production. They generate rules and conventions" for literary works within a particular linguistic system (Bassnett 91). Thus, Brèque must work within the norms of two literary production systems: that of French literature and that of French translations. His adherence to both systems is obvious in his editing of Barker's novel, which is actually no surprise since Barker is criticized by Joshi for having errors in his work (Joshi 136). Wherever perceived, Brèque has corrected punctuation or grammatical mistakes found in the English version. To provide a brief example, consider the following English and French passages: "Yet the memories were still potent" (*Weaveworld* 31) and "Et pourtant, les souvenirs étaient toujours puissants" (*Royaume* 39). In the English version, the coordinating conjunction *yet* is not offset by a comma, the correct punctuation. In the translation, Brèque has corrected this mistake by offsetting *et pourtant* in the correct manner. This level of detail speaks to the rigorous expectations of French writing, extended to translation, when it comes to correctness. Williams dictates that this type of editing results from the need to maintain a certain standard:

> Critical editors, then, must have some principle of construction, some basis or standard on which to judge the authority of the variant readings and states of the text and on which to make emendations. The standard may be aesthetic, leading to the construction of a text that satisfies some particular notion of literary excellence. (80)

For Brèque, this standard is imposed by the French literary system and affects more than mere punctuation.

The imposition of linguistic standards makes translating *Weaveworld* particularly difficult because of Barker's reliance on profanity to convey meaning. First, the connotation carried by particular profanities is not equivalent across languages; second, the usage of such profanity can vary from emphasis to literal meaning; and thirdly, the restrictions on the options available to translators can make it impossible to accurately convey the meaning and the vulgar diction. Robert Paquin's article on translating

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profanity, "(Bleep), You (Bleeping) (Bleep): Dubbing American Films into Canadian French," provides another lens through which to view Brèque's literal translation of idiomatic and profane phrases.[14] In his article, Paquin considers the self-conscious effort of film dubbing in Québéc to avoid sounding "too 'Frenchy'" in the Parisian sense, particularly in the use of slang and profanity (n.pag.). As Paquin recognizes,

> Sometimes the word (bleep) is only used to strengthen a statement, or to emphasize its importance or the seriousness of the speaker's intent, or his or her lack of vocabulary. In which case, the real meaning of (bleep) is not its lexical meaning [...] We must take into account cultural differences. (n.pag.)

But what tools are available to a translator who wishes to convey the cultural expression of profanity? Berman plainly states that languages like French, with sufficient linguistic authority (the cultivated languages), "censor" as a reaction to translation (286). Paquin refers to a "list of forbidden words" that restricts the options for vulgarity in translation (n.pag.); such a list could account for Brèque's overzealous use of *foutre*, which is used frequently as an expletive, verb or adjective. I presume *foutre* is allowable because of its abundant use in *Royaume* and since Paquin states that "'foutu' is allowed" (n.pag.), which shares almost the same definition as *foutre* (both being a vulgarity for sexual intercourse), and since both appear to be derived from the same root. Yet, the elaborate ways in which Brèque uses this allowable term seem contrived, the phrases in which they appear being too literally translated from the original. In his article, "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation," Roman Jakobson reiterates that translation is not and cannot be a one-to-one correspondence; he says that "translation from one language into another substitutes messages in one language not for separate code units but for entire messages in some other language" (183). Hence, it is not the words that carry the message but the message that carries the words. Jakobson affirms that achieving literal equivalency rarely results in communication since "there is ordinarily no full equivalence between code units, while messages may serve as adequate interpretations of alien code or messages" (183). The translation of a phrase is not a one-to-one mapping in which each word relates in equivalence to its literal translation but rather a process through which the message of the phrase is mapped to a phrase in another language that

[14] While Paquin's article is from a Québécois perspective, his analysis is relevant to both Parisian and Québécois translations if only because his emphasis is on the use of profanity rather than religious blasphemy.

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encapsulates an equivalent message. Restricting the linguistic options of the translator can impair his ability to choose appropriate substitutions from the target culture and consequently impair his ability to convey the message of the original.

This problem of identifying appropriate substitutions is not restricted to Brèque's translation of profanity, however, so it cannot be assumed that the literalness of his translation is a result of the restrictions of standardization. The underlying problem in Brèque's translation is the idea that sameness results in equivalence. According to Benjamin, "no translation would be possible if in its ultimate essence it strove for likeness to the original" (175). Likewise, Kenesei asserts that meaning is a necessary precursor to language, not a result of its usage and as such "the formation of meaning, the rendering of meaning to the text[,] must precede the linguistic transformation" (45). In this way, the act of translation is necessarily first an act of interpretation. Lederhendler brings all these concepts together to conclude that

> translation is essentially a reading, and no reading, whether within or across languages, can or should be identical to the original text or to any other reading of the text [... . T]ranslation [...] must unavoidably transform the mediated work if it is to come alive in another language. (152).

The call to transform in translation echoes Venuti's previously cited emphasis on the necessity of domestication to the acceptance of the target culture. The responsible translator must recognize that "interlingual translation cannot be isolated from multiple linguistic, literary, and cultural aspects" (Kenesei 43) and that "the meaning of [a] particular assemblage of words is a product of the dynamics of language use; it is not given by the language system alone" (Delisle 91). Consequently, the translator must take the foreign linguistic code and transform it into something that can be understood within the target culture. Bassnett outlines the consequence of this understanding on the translator who becomes

> a mediator, a negotiator, someone who has to show responsibility not only to the source, to the original author's work, but also to the target audience. The translator is therefore both reader and writer; s/he has to decode the text in one language and re-encode it in another, bearing in mind the different conventions and expectations of the second set of readers. Whatever equivalence might be,

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> once the process of decoding and re-encoding has happened, *it certainly cannot be sameness*. The translated text will be different, will be read differently, will be received differently because it exists in a different context. (88; emphasis added)

Thus, a translator who is able to separate the message of the original from the words used to convey it and reformulate that message into a communicative expression in the target language will create an easily receivable translation. Brèque, in his hyper-literal translation, neglects his responsibility to the target audience to communicate the message behind the linguistic signifiers of the original, which resulted in a French readership that was unable to comprehend Barker's novel, unable to extrapolate the meaning for themselves.

Conclusion

Translation of popular fiction is subject to restrictive standards that affect the ways in which the message of the original can be transmitted through the target language. Though the translator may strive "to liberate the language imprisoned in a work in his re-creation of that work" (Benjamin 180), it may be impossible for him to create a culturally communicable translation of the source text. That being said, an attempt should be made. It may be easy to dismiss Brèque or *Royaume* as an anomaly of the translation of popular fiction or perhaps even as yet another example of poor translation practices, without another example of Barker's work in translation to compare with. Yet, knowing that Brèque has been a recipient of the Grand Prix de l'Imaginaire on two occasions (1995 and 2008) for his work in translation and that he has translated many works by other popular artists such as Stephen King and Dan Simmons points the blame for this literary flop elsewhere. True, Brèque mimics Barker's style, which results in an Anglicized French novel, but it is the overall foreignness of the translation that reduces its acceptability with the French popular literature community. The novel is doubly rejected because of its divergence from Barker's previously established horror style. While the alteration on the cover results in visual cues that falsely guide the reader toward a horror-reading rather than a fantasy-reading of *Weaveworld*, it has the much more serious effect of abandoning the reader to figure out how to approach the novel. This would be a particular difficulty since a fantasy-centered reading opposes previously established Barker reading practices, a difficulty evidenced by the French-speaking readers' inability to even understand the storyline, let alone the message behind it.

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Overall, Brèque's translation has left the reader helplessly alone to decipher an appropriate approach toward the novel and a mode of reading that may or may not facilitate enjoyment or basic comprehension of the novel. In popular fiction, where readers read for enjoyment, domestication is the key to a novel's successful incorporation into the target literary system.

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