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# Orality and Universality in Search of a Global Youth Speak in Translation

Tiffane Levick

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Thèse de doctorat en études anglophones (traductologie)

Tiffane LEVICK

**Orality and Universality:  
In Search of a Global Youth Speak in  
Translation**

VOLUME 1

Thèse dirigée par  
Pr. Clíona NI RIORDAIN

Soutenue le 30 novembre 2018

**Jury :**

Pr. Christine BERTHIN, Université Paris Nanterre (rapporteur)

Dr Leah GERBER, Monash University (rapporteur)

Pr. Duncan LARGE, University of East Anglia

Pr. Clíona NI RIORDAIN, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle-Paris 3

Pr. Bruno PONCHARAL, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle-Paris 3



# Résumé

## **Oralité et universalité : à la recherche d'un parler jeune global en traduction**

Cette thèse est le fruit d'un projet de recherche qui mêle la pratique et la théorie de la traduction. Divisée en deux volumes, elle étudie des questions liées à la traduction de l'argot tel qu'utilisé dans des œuvres de fiction. Le premier comprend un commentaire critique composé de trois parties, et le second une traduction en anglais du roman *Moi non* (P. Goujon, Gallimard, 2003). L'intrigue du roman se déroulant en banlieue parisienne, le commentaire explore la façon dont les jeunes adultes marginalisés peuvent s'exprimer par l'emploi de l'argot, une variété linguistique non-standard. Cette variété est souvent représentative d'un lieu précis et d'une identité particulière, participant à un ensemble de formes d'expression qui sert à distinguer la jeunesse marginalisée de groupes dominants. Une telle utilisation de la langue soulève des questions concrètes et abstraites quand on décide de la transcrire et de la traduire dans une œuvre de fiction. Souvent, le traducteur a recours à l'emploi d'une langue standard ou à l'utilisation d'un argot dit « équivalent ». La traduction proposée de *Moi non* s'inscrit dans une méthode alternative qui s'inspire d'un style informel ainsi que de procédés créatifs que l'on peut notamment employer dans le rap et dans l'élaboration de nouvelles expressions argotiques. Préférant éviter de situer la traduction dans une aire géographique spécifique, cette traduction invite à explorer les points communs de l'ensemble des parlars jeunes du monde anglophone. Ce projet représente ainsi une opportunité de vérifier la cohérence et la logique de cette démarche alternative de la traduction de l'argot d'un roman, et de la comparer avec l'approche empruntée par les traducteurs de textes similaires.

**Mots-clés :** traduction, sociolinguistique, banlieue, argot, rap, langue non-standard, oralité

# Abstract

## **Orality and Universality: In Search of a Global Youth Speak in Translation**

This thesis is the fruit of a research project which marries translation practice and theory. Separated into two volumes, it explores questions related to the translation of slang in fictional texts. The first volume is a critical commentary composed of three parts, and the second a translation from French into English of the novel *Moi non* by Patrick Goujon (Gallimard, 2003). Since the plot unfolds in the banlieue of Paris, the critical component investigates the way in which marginalised youth can express themselves through slang, a variety of non-standard language. Often representative of a specific place and identity, slang constitutes one of many forms of expression that contribute to setting marginalised youth apart from dominant groups. Such use of language raises a number of questions, both concrete and abstract in nature, when one decides to transcribe and translate it in a work of fiction. Translators often employ standard language to render this voice in the translated text or otherwise make use of an “equivalent” slang. The proposed translation of *Moi non* embodies an alternative method inspired by an overall informal style of writing, as well as by the creative devices employed in rap lyrics and in the creation of slang words and expressions. In an effort to avoid suggesting a specific setting outside of the banlieue, this translation seeks to identify and harness features of English shared by young people throughout the Anglosphere. This thesis thus represents an opportunity to ensure the coherence and the logic of this alternative approach to translating slang in an entire novel, and to compare this approach with that adopted by the translators of similar texts.

**Keywords:** translation, sociolinguistics, banlieue, slang, rap, non-standard language, orality

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# Terminology

The terms below are frequently repeated throughout the thesis, and I have chosen to provide a brief explanation to clarify the spelling, italicisation, or usage of each in the context of my discussions.

**Hip-hop:** In the various texts I cite in this thesis, the term “hip-hop” is spelt either as one hyphenated word or as two separate words. I have chosen to use the hyphenated form, but some quotes and titles will include the two-word version. When used at the beginning of sentences or in “The Hip-hop Movement”, the first H is capitalised but not the second, since I view it as one hyphenated word. Again, some titles and citations adopt a different form and capitalise the two Hs.

**Banlieue:** I have chosen not to italicise the word “banlieue” in this thesis since it has become a key term, borrowed in such a way that its foreignness need not be highlighted. The words “*verlan*” and “*cité*” are less frequently used and less central to the questions related to language use in the banlieue and as such have been italicised. In this way, the formatting decisions to distinguish foreign words in italics are consistent throughout the thesis, and the only French word not systematically highlighted is that which lies at the very core of the sociolinguistic questions raised.

**Author/reader:** The discussions of fictionalised slang in this thesis pertain mostly to its written form but this should not invalidate the applicability of most of the comments to the spoken slang used in film texts. Although cinema has its own codes, the slang used is also modified to a certain extent to fit the aesthetic needs of a fictional text. As such, the terms “reader” and “author” can be interpreted in a broader sense in many of my discussions to encompass the viewer and director/producer of film texts, where relevant. I will

address more directly the specificity of film texts and subtitles in Chapter 7 when analysing *Entre les murs* and *La Haine*.

I use three main terms in my analyses of translated texts to describe the way the translation is undertaken: approach, strategy, and technique.

**Approach:** According to the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*, one definition of the term “approach”, preceded by the abbreviation “fig.” is: “a way of considering or handling something, esp. a problem”. Approach is the most general and conceptual of the three terms I employ. It indicates the overall idea or intention governing a particular translation and is more abstract than the two other terms.

**Strategy:** The *OED* states that a “strategy” can be “a plan, scheme, or course of action designed to achieve a particular objective, esp. a long-term or overall aim”. In this way, the word is slightly more specific than approach, and describes the general but concrete plan of how to translate a text. I use the word strategy when describing the options available to the translator of slang as proposed within my typology.

**Technique:** Finally, the *OED* defines “technique” when used as a count noun as “a particular way of carrying out an experiment, procedure, or task, esp. in a scientific discipline or a craft; a technical or scientific method”. The techniques used in translation are therefore the more specific steps taken to translate a text, within a strategy, on a micro level. Such techniques might include modulation, transposition, or the use of relaxed syntax, for example.

# *Introduction*

This two-volume thesis is a combined practical and theoretical project in which I explore ideas related to the use and translation of non-standard language in works of fiction. The theories that I outline and the discussions that I develop in Volume 1 of the thesis stem in part from my own translation from French into English of a 200-page contemporary novel, contained in Volume 2: *Moi non* by Patrick Goujon, published by Gallimard in 2003. *Moi non* and the other fictional texts that I study in this thesis are set in the banlieue, the urban areas around Paris, or otherwise in areas of comparable social and economic disadvantage within Paris. A comprehensive exploration of the banlieue is offered in Chapter 6, but it is useful at this stage to draw attention to the symbolic and encompassing use of the term to refer to these areas in which language can be used as a means of agency or of assertion of group identity. I have consciously chosen to make use of the word banlieue throughout the thesis in its French form since it has a symbolic meaning in the French context that does not correspond with the geographic reality of terms available in English. This symbolic meaning is linked to the marginalisation of these areas whose treatment in the broader French landscape tends to vacillate between relegation and stigmatisation.

In this thesis, I am particularly interested in the way in which young people living in such areas of disrepute may choose to express themselves using slang, a type of language that is highly suggestive of place and of group

identity. As I explain in Part One, slang can be used by marginalised youth as part of an ensemble of forms of expression that set them apart from dominant groups in society. In this way, its use sways from standard practice and is often dissident, and it serves a number of functions as a form of accessible agency. As he develops a discussion around the idea of minority, Lawrence Venuti places emphasis on the way this term can be used to describe marginalised languages:

I understand “minority” to mean a cultural or political position that is subordinate, whether the social context that so defines it is local, national or global. This position is occupied by languages and literatures that lack prestige or authority, the non-standard and the non-canonical, what is not spoken or read much by a hegemonic group. Yet minorities also include the nations and social groups that are affiliated with these languages and literatures, the politically weak or underrepresented, the colonised and the disenfranchised, the exploited and the stigmatised.

(1998, p. 135)

Venuti’s reflection places underappreciated, overlooked, or ostracised forms of expression, through language and literature, at the heart of questions relating to minorities. Interestingly, the fact that his reference to minority groups comes second to these concerns surrounding language seems to suggest that he considers linguistic expression to be a means of identifying one’s position in society, rather than as a reaction to this position. Without disregarding the idea that a person’s way of speaking can be indicative of their social status, I will suggest in subsequent discussions thesis that the use of non-standard language can in fact constitute a means of establishing distance from the dominant group in society.

In his book *Les voix de la ville (Introduction à la sociolinguistique urbaine)*, Louis-Jean Calvet states that marginalised youth in urban areas often choose to accentuate and assert their distinctiveness from other groups through speech, appearance, and behaviour (2011, p. 273). He outlines a number of vectors through which their attitude is visible, namely slang, graffiti, rap, dance, clothing, and sport, which he labels semiological identity markers (ibid, pp. 273-274). These practices invite a correlation with the Hip-hop Movement which is ordinarily divided into four branches: dance, rap, graffiti, and DJing. This link is of particular relevance to discussions in this thesis since hip-hop culture is omnipresent in the banlieue and since the features of rap music and of slang can be seen to feed into each other. I will explore these ideas

further in Chapter 3 and as well as in the two final chapters when I discuss the influence of rap on the conception of Global Youth Speak.

The various theories and texts that I cite in this thesis will demonstrate that one of the many functions of slang is to allow its speakers to express opposition to standard language, and to its users. In this way, disenfranchised youth in the banlieue may consciously or unconsciously align themselves with their peers and against external authority figures. Since the use of slang can be, and often is, subversive, transcribing and translating it raises a number of questions of an ethical nature. As we will see, fictional texts constitute a platform from which the language used by young people in the banlieue can be performed for a broader public, and this performance allows their voices to be heard and their stories to be told. Throughout the thesis, I will return to issues of positioning and authenticity when deconstructing the representation of banlieue youth in fiction in an effort to understand better the choices made in the fabrication of their voice in French and in English. These questions pertain to the way in which the version of banlieue slang presented to audiences is filtered through the perspective of the initial text producers before undergoing a further stage of filtering when it is translated for audiences in the Anglosphere.

In a way, we might say that the initial production of texts containing banlieue slang that is offered to French audiences constitutes a form of intralingual translation. This is because the version of slang provided in fictional texts is, to a certain extent, shed of its complexities, allowing the language to be more easily digested by people unfamiliar with all of its features. It should be recognised, however, that the linguistic, geographical, and cultural gap between the audience and the actual people that the text portrays is necessarily widened in the case of interlingual translation. Since, as we will see, slang is generally specific to one location and one group of speakers, changing the language of a text in which it is used inevitably means effacing some of the suggestions of space and identity tied up in its original use. When grappling with the challenges that the functions of slang pose in translation, the translator must decide on a strategy that corresponds with the intended purpose of the translated text by determining which functions should be prioritised, and how.

Before developing the strategy that I used to translate *Moi non*, I underwent a phase of critical thinking influenced by my exposure to theory related directly or indirectly to the translation of slang, as well as by my reading or viewing of a number of translated texts containing slang. From this preliminary stage of strategy development, I established a hypothesis according to which it would be possible to render the slang of banlieue youth by avoiding an approach that might flatten or appropriate their voice. I was eager to prove that it was possible to identify and exploit the similarities between many different Englishes that exist around the world, convinced that the increasing availability of media from and possibility of exchange between different groups meant that features of language were spreading and being adopted by young people separated by space but united by familiar feelings of exclusion.

I have tentatively termed the strategy used to translate *Moi non* “Global Youth Speak”. The techniques used as part of this strategy bring to the fore features of relaxed and often non-standard speech shared by young people in similar situations throughout the Anglosphere. In harnessing these aspects of the English language, I have endeavoured to sculpt a distinct style of writing that remains credible as the voice of marginalised youth without the potential risk of suggesting an alternative setting outside of the banlieue. In addition, I have sought inspiration in the techniques used in the creation of slang and in the writing and performance of rap. This effort represented an intention to render the words and sentences creative and playful in a way that would allow readers to engage with the story presented. These factors, I believe, allow the slang of the foreign text to flourish when translated using Global Youth Speak, since the strategy exploits features of English that highlight how the language can be used in ways that deviate from the standard, without displacing the text, and without unsettling or boring the reader.

Although I am confident that Global Youth Speak can be a viable alternative for the translation of the other banlieue texts in my corpus, I do not by any means intend to claim that it is the most suitable strategy to translate all texts containing slang. The critical component of this thesis intends to examine and demonstrate the many functions and features of slang according to the context of its usage, and to explore a range of circumstances in which

one might have recourse to different choices to transcribe and translate the voice of banlieue youth. In this way, I have aimed to produce a study which combines an investigation of slang use in the broader context of its usage in the real world and in the world of fiction with the more specific instances of its usage and translation in the texts in my corpus. This approach forms part of an interdisciplinary aim to address the social implications of linguistic choices in context, encompassing relevant branches of theories of sociolinguistics and of hip-hop studies and applying them to the study of fiction in translation.

The particularity, and perhaps peculiarity, of this thesis is that it combines the analysis of published translations with a sort of self-analysis of my own translation. Translating *Moi non* as part of a PhD project was an opportunity for me to test a theoretical hypothesis in practice, and the critical component that accompanies the translation has allowed me to explore the feasibility and legitimacy of the strategy I implemented. Furthermore, in writing this thesis, I have been able to contextualise my translation within the body of work of fiction from which it emerges, as well as the theory that deals with the language this novel presents. The three banlieue texts that I analyse in Chapter 7 were translated into English by translators with whom I have not been able to exchange directly, and whose intentions or instructions I have therefore had to infer from the published text. Although it would be naive to purport that the details of the brief for a translation project can be extrapolated from the final text made available to audiences, without the possibility of accessing the drafts or the translator's notes, I have endeavoured to study these texts by taking into account the textual and extratextual forces at play in the translation process.

When analysing my own translation, I have sought to bear in mind the inherent subjectivity of my own position and to assess the result of my choices by considering them alongside the implications of the strategies implemented in the translation of parallel texts. My intimate involvement in the process has, I hope, enriched my approach to the analysis of the other texts in the corpus since I have experienced first-hand what is entailed in the translation of the language of marginalised youth. Additionally, my reading of these texts, source and translated versions, as well as my research into the use and translation of linguistic variety in fictional texts, puts my own work into perspective. I aim to

eschew dichotomies throughout my discussions to acknowledge the fact that there are many options available to the translator of slang. Furthermore, it seems important to recognise that the effects of these strategies will inevitably be perceived and distinguished differently by individuals in different contexts, which means that it makes little sense to argue that one strategy is necessarily always more suitable than any other.

Volume 1 of the thesis is divided into three parts, each containing three chapters. It is structured in such a way that the ideas presented build gradually towards an explanation and analysis of the strategy that I developed and implemented in the translation that is included in Volume 2. The theoretical underpinnings of the first chapters of the volume should allow readers to assess with more assurance the logic that led to the more concrete discussions in the second half of the thesis, as well as to the elaboration of my own strategy for the translation of banlieue slang. I offer an extensive exploration of ideas related to slang use precisely because these ideas were essential to the conception of my own strategy as well as to my investigation of the implications of the use of other strategies to translate slang.

In Part One, I deal with theories related to how and why young people in a situation of marginalisation might have recourse to a type of language that deviates from that which is spoken, written, and imposed by dominant groups in society. As part of this overview, I investigate ideas related to how slang has been used in the past, how it can be defined and differentiated from other types of standard or non-standard language, and how the age and location of speakers of slang might influence its formation. I also consider how slang is altered when it is transcribed and transferred into fictional texts. The final chapter of this first part of Volume 1 offers an overview of the Hip-hop Movement, presenting ideas that put the use of slang into context alongside other forms of expression that might be used by marginalised youth. Additionally, it demonstrates the points at which slang and rap can be seen to intersect and overlap. These ideas become especially relevant in the final chapters of the thesis when I outline the influence of the features of rap on the style I developed to translate *Moi non*.

Part Two takes the sociolinguistic theory from Part One and applies it to the question of translating this type of language when it appears in fictional

texts. I begin by exploring general theories of translation that address concrete aspects of the formation and function of texts as well as the way in which translation fits into a broader notions of culture and systems. These discussions are followed by theory dealing specifically with the translation of linguistic variety, heterolingualism, culture-bound lexis, and rap, which can be applied more directly to the translation of banlieue fiction. The typology for the translation of slang that I propose in Chapter 5 of the thesis forms the transition between the theory presented in the first half of the thesis and the case study that fills the final chapters. Before analysing a selection of banlieue texts and their translation(s) into English, I close Part Two with a chapter that considers the social tension of the banlieue and the ways in which this tension can be conveyed by young people through their language choices.

The third and final part of this volume of the thesis proposes an in-depth analysis of four different banlieue texts. In Chapter 7, I outline the state of banlieue fiction translated into English before turning my attention to three of the most critically and commercially successful works available in English: the 2003 novel *Kiffe kiffe demain* by Faïza Guène, the 2006 novel *Entre les murs* by François Bégaudeau as well as the 2008 film adaptation of the same name directed by Laurent Cantet, and, finally, Mathieu Kassovitz' 1995 film *La Haine*. I examine the features of each text in French and how these features as well as the reception of these texts in France and the role they are expected to play in the Anglosphere might have influenced the choices made to bring them into English. Chapters 8 and 9 deal specifically with my own translation of Goujon's *Moi non*, the fourth banlieue text under study. After providing an overview of the story and style of the novel in Chapter 8, I explain the reasons for which I decided against adopting the strategies outlined in my typology and used to translate other banlieue texts. This is followed by a more comprehensive exploration in Chapter 9 of the strategy that I did use, supported by examples and explanations. The denouement of these discussions invites readers to reflect further on the concepts and arguments I have presented by examining their application within the translation of *Moi non* I offer in Volume 2.

***Part One:***

***Slang and Rap***



## Introduction to Part One

In order to produce a comprehensive analysis of the options available in English to translate the specific variety of French used by disenfranchised young people living in and around the banlieue, it is useful, and necessary, to embark firstly on an exploration of what defines and characterises this language. Part One is thus intended as a response to these questions, referring to theories of sociolinguistics put forward both in English and in French. I will use as a point of reference the idea that the use of non-standard language, and of slang specifically, by members of minority groups constitutes a means of expressing, asserting, and performing their identity. The literature on slang available in French and in English reveals the distinct haziness of its definition; no two scholars share the same idea of the concept that lies behind the term. Indeed, Bethany K. Dumas and Jonathan Lighter, editor of *The Historical Dictionary of American Slang*, consider that “we are all sure it exists, most of us are sure we know what it is, and many of us are sure that everyone else agrees with us” (Dumas and Lighter 1978, p. 5). Their musings suggest that it is advisable to proceed with prudence in any attempt to pin down a definition of the term, and this suggestion is reinforced by the plethora of conflicting definitions in scholarly works, as well as by the range of other terms that attempt to describe and categorise this type of language.

In the first chapter of this part of the thesis, I will look more closely at a number of the various definitions and descriptions proposed for the English term slang and the French *argot*. I will endeavour to dissect a number of aspects of this debate before settling on a selection of terms that will allow me to analyse more confidently the type of language used in fictional representations of the banlieue in French and in their translations into

English. I will pursue the discussion in Chapter 2 by looking at the functions of the type of language, focusing on the importance of its youth and urban aspects, as well as at how this type of language is formed and how it spreads. I will also look at the ways in which we might establish a distinction between different levels of slang, building on the ideas advanced by a number of specialists of slang and sociolinguistics. Before closing the chapter, I will develop a discussion of the implications of slang when used “in real life” as opposed to in fictional texts. In Chapter 3, I will outline the origins and development of rap music and then study the way in which lyrics can be formed and performed. This investigation will assess how rap interacts with slang to serve similar functions of rebellion, novelty, and group identity.



# Chapter 1: Theorising Slang

The first chapter dedicated to youth language in this thesis will study ideas stemming from theories of sociolinguistics. I will commence the discussion by presenting different definitions of slang and demonstrating how it can be seen a non-standard variety of language. In the second section of the chapter, I will unpack the ideas of power and prestige associated with language use and, in doing so, explore how the adherence to or of rejection of linguistic norms might come to symbolise a person's place in society. Finally, I will close this chapter with an exploration of the various terms that are frequently used to describe or label slang. These definitions and deliberations will enable a more informed consideration of how slang is formed and of how and why it might be used by marginalised youth. Beginning the thesis with these ideas will allow us to interact more confidently with the concrete examples of the slang featured in the banlieue texts under study, both in their original form and in their translation into English.

## 1.1 Defining Slang

When attempting to define slang in English, scholars often refer to the definition of the term proposed by the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* which considers that slang is “language of a highly colloquial type, considered as below the level of standard educated speech, and consisting either of new words or of current words employed in some special sense”. This definition provides a useful springboard from which to ricochet reflections on the characteristics and functions of slang. The idea of register is manifest in this definition and suggests that the use of slang indicates a strong degree of informality in communication. It is also useful to note the insinuation of novelty in the definition; the *OED* suggests that in order for lexis to be labelled as slang, either the words themselves must be new, or they must be used in an unconventional manner. Finally, I would like to highlight the rather loaded

addition of “educated” used to qualify the notion of standard language, since, as we will see, it is not uncommon for speakers of the standard variety of language to equate a person’s use of non-standard language with a lack of education.

For definitions of the word *argot* available in French, we can turn to the *Grand Robert de la langue française* and the *Trésor de la langue française*. The first entry for *argot* in the *Grand Robert* draws on historical uses of slang to define the term as a means for miscreants of preventing outsiders from understanding their exchanges. The dictionary’s second entry extends this definition from miscreants to state that it is a “language particular to a profession or group of people”<sup>1</sup>, and the third entry stipulates that it is a coded or secretive way of speaking<sup>2</sup>. The three entries therefore focus primarily on the way that slang enhances group identity or cohesion. The *Trésor de la langue française* also proposes three definitions for *argot* which explain how the term has been used previously, and how it is used today. The second entry features the past and present tense to distinguish between the origins of this type of language as a means of communication between miscreants and its use today as employed by underground groups and ex-criminals. The third definition is of the derived use of the term, extending to the language employed by members of particular social or socio-professional groups seeking to display their affiliation to a specific group and distinguish themselves from the majority of speakers<sup>3</sup>. The way these dictionary entries define *argot* and slang

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<sup>1</sup> All English translations of citations originally in French that I include in French in the footnotes are my own unless otherwise specified.

<sup>2</sup> 1. *Usage langagier propre à un milieu de malfaiteurs, destiné à l'origine à garantir la discrétion des échanges, et comprenant, soit un lexique particulier, soit des procédés traitant les mots connus de tous* / 2. *Langage particulier à une profession, à un groupe de personnes. Dictionnaire des argots, de G. Esnault. Argot parisien. Argot boulevardier. Argot militaire. Argot des écoles. Argot sportif. Argot des maçons, des typographes, des séminaristes. L'argot de l'École polytechnique.* / 3. *Langage convenu, secret.*

<sup>3</sup> “A. *Autrefois. L'ensemble des gueux, bohémiens, mendiants professionnels, voleurs.*  
B. *Langage de convention dont se servaient les gueux, les bohémiens, etc., c'est-à-dire langage particulier aux malfaiteurs (vagabonds, voleurs, assassins); aujourd'hui essentiellement, parler qu'emploient naturellement la pègre\*, le Milieu\*, les repris de justice, etc.*

C. *p. ext. Langage ou vocabulaire particulier qui se crée à l'intérieur de groupes sociaux ou socio-professionnels déterminés, et par lequel l'individu affiche son appartenance au groupe et se distingue de la masse des sujets parlants. Argot parisien; argot d'école, de la bourse, du journalisme, etc.*”

as they have been used in the past and today invites further exploration of the changes in these uses.

Having opted in this thesis to focus on the similarities between the definitions proposed, I choose to see the French term *argot* and the English term slang as general terms that are essentially synonymous. Making such a choice, within the parameters of this project, allows for a more framed discussion of the manner in which this type of language has been and continues to be used to serve a number of functions, that speakers can harness to express opposition to what Jean-Pierre Goudaillier refers to as the social, political, religious, and moral taboos propagated by the “legitimised forms of language” (2002, p. 5)<sup>4</sup>. Goudaillier reminds us that all languages have always possessed and will always possess a constantly evolving “*dimension argotique*”, what we might term in English a “slangy dimension”, a way of speaking that allows (groups of) speakers to conceal and code their communication (ibid, p. 6)<sup>5</sup>. Goudaillier expands on this idea of the use of slang to conceal and code as he cites a number of examples of groups using slang to serve a number of purposes at different points in history. He mentions in particular the way that the idea of “brotherhood” was cultivated through the shared language used among criminals in the 15th century, reproduced by François Villon in his ballads, and demonstrates how groups seeking to communicate furtively and inconspicuously can rely on slang to ensure that their exchanges remain indecipherable to outside authorities, especially when organising dissident movements (ibid).

Goudaillier’s colleague Denise François-Geiger also writes about the history of slang and states that the term *argot* appeared in French usage in the 17th century; before that the terms *jargon* or *jobelin* were used. François-Geiger points out that *argot* was primitively used to describe the community of criminals and beggars and then became used as the term describing the language they used, a type of language that was intended to be secretive and unintelligible by outsiders (1975, pp. 24-25). As I will explain when discussing

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<sup>4</sup> “Toute langue possède une dimension argotique ; en effet, toute société humaine fonctionne avec des interdits, des tabous, entre autres, d’ordre social, politique, religieux, moral, qui sont véhiculés par la (ou les) forme(s) légitimées(s) de la langue.”

<sup>5</sup> “Toute langue a bel et bien toujours eu, génère continuellement, et aura toujours un registre argotique, qui permet la mise en place de stratégies de contournement, voire aussi de cryptage, de masquage.”

the characteristics and functions of urban youth language, the ways that slang has been used in the past by diverse groups to hinder penetration on the part of external parties continue to form an integral part of this type of language today.

Interestingly, François-Geiger stresses in her considerations of the history and use of *argot* that there is not one unique *argot* but many *argots* (ibid, p. 24). Her assertion might be seen as an effort to differentiate between a general type of slang available to the vast majority of speakers of a language, and more specific slangs that take on a more coded or cryptic aspect. Such forms of specific slangs could be considered as being reserved to speakers from more restricted groups, inaccessible to the broader community, and this function of slang as a tool for foregrounding inclusion and exclusion is an idea to which I will systematically return when investigating the use and translation of urban youth language in particular. I will also revisit her distinction between the specific slang of subgroups and the more general slang of a broader group of language users.

To conclude the discussion on definitions of slang, I would like to refer to the definition proposed collectively by a group of scholars in the book *Global English Slang: Methodologies and Perspectives* in which a number of writers explore the traits and usage of different slangs from around the world. These scholars state that:

Slang is informal, non-technical language that often seems novel to the user and/or listener, and that challenges a social or linguistic norm. It can also imply complicity in value judgements and thus play a performative role in defining personal or group identity.

(Coleman 2014, p. 30)

Their attempt to reach consensus acts as an incitement for further discussions broaching the key notions mentioned here, focusing specifically on how certain features of slang, in this case informality and novelty, allow speakers to address directly or indirectly ideas of alterity, belonging, and identity. As I continue to dissect the implications of the use of the type of language most commonly referred to as slang or *argot*, it will be most useful to concentrate on the ways in which diverging definitions are bound by the assertion that this way of speaking constitutes a form of non-standard language. This leads to an exploration of what is meant by the term “standard” when used to describe

language, and an examination of how slang differs from other types of language also deemed to be “non-standard”, and also commonly used to describe slang or slang-like language. Before delving into a discussion of what separates standard and non-standard language, I would like to outline how these categories are broached in sociolinguistic terms.

## **Sociolinguistics and Variation**

The theoretical framework of sociolinguistics, according to Françoise Gadet, considers languages in terms of their instability and their internal heterogeneity (1997, p. 3). Since, as Sali A. Tagliamonte reminds us in her book *Variationist Sociolinguistics*, “speakers make choices when they speak and they alternate among these choices” (2012, p. 3), the theories of sociolinguistics aim to provide us with the tools to understand the factors influencing a person’s language choices. These factors include the time and place of speaking, a speaker’s social background, and the activities in which they participate, and we can group the concrete linguistic manifestations of these factors into a number of varieties which constitute the way of speaking shared by a specific group of people (Gadet 1997, p. 7).

Gadet works around theories advanced by William Labov and Pierre Bourdieu to propose a number of varieties of language under the umbrella term of sociolinguistic variation. She believes that all traits that might divide a society or instigate conflict or opposition are susceptible to constitute axes of variation (ibid, p. 5). The way that she considers these varieties can be compared with Tagliamonte’s ideas, and she classifies them as (a) regional, or diatopic; (b) social, or diastratic<sup>6</sup>; (c) demographic (depending on sex, age, ethnicity); (d) stylistic and situational, or diaphasic; (e) temporal, or diachronic; and, finally, (f) inherent (ibid, pp. 3-7). When basing descriptions of language in use on this model, we must bear in mind the inevitable intersection between each type of variation mentioned; a person’s speech

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<sup>6</sup> Gadet states that these variations enable a separation of people within a same geographical region by their social class, but insists that a categorisation in terms of class risks being overly simplistic since the notion of class itself is too intricate to allow unequivocal classification.

cannot be reduced to one simple category or classification, since the complexity of language (and of its users) defies such oversimplification.

Analysing the speech of young people in this thesis, specifically banlieue youth French as it appears in literature, both in French and in translation into English, will bring to light the interaction between these numerous axes of variation that Gadet outlines. This is because the time and place of a specific utterance necessarily affect, and in turn may even be determined by, diverse aspects of the speaker's background, defining traits, and personality. Furthermore, it seems important to recognise that the vast majority of language speakers are capable of alternating between different varieties based on the context and on their multifaceted identity. That said, the language used by marginalised youth is generally considered to be a type of "non-standard" language, a category of language to which I will return in the next section.

Groups of people who share similar linguistic habits are often described as belonging to "speech communities" or "linguistic communities", terms "widely used by sociolinguists to refer to a community based on language" (Hudson 1996, p. 24). Much like in the discussions of slang and *argot*, the definition of these terms proposed by some scholars is contested by others, since their views diverge on exactly which social and cultural characteristics of language link speakers of a language (ibid, pp. 24-26). In their introduction to *Standard English, the Widening Debate*, Tony Bex and Richard J. Watts declare that "the development of local varieties of English has been a way of marking out national identities" (Bex and Watts 1999, p. 3). This statement reminds us that, intralingually and at a national level, the use of linguistic markers specific to a group of speakers from one country acts as a means of asserting the particular identity of that national group on an international scale, and its difference from other national groups who speak the same language. According to this notion, speakers of English from the United States of America, for example, necessarily speak a different "local" variety of English from that which is used by speakers in another country in the Anglosphere.

The idea of national varieties of English can be further narrowed to cover the concept of variation within one national variety, so that the idea of "local" becomes more precise. In this way, we can see that distinct forms of language coexist to varying degrees in one national variety of language. I will

revisit this discussion when advancing the specificities of my approach to translating slang through the establishment of a “Global Youth Speak”, focusing on what binds, rather than on what divides, different varieties of youth language in English across geographical and cultural borders. Bex and Watts extend their discussion of ways of classifying an individual’s way of speaking by further deconstructing sociolinguistic approaches to analysing language based on social class or geographical areas. They state that it is dangerous “to assume that social groupings are stable and easily described” (ibid, p. 8). Similarly, Dwight Bolinger ponders the impossibility of assigning the label of a sole group to speakers, asserting that “there is no limit to the ways human beings league themselves together for self-identification, security, gain, amusement, worship or any of the other purposes that are held in common” and concluding that “there is no limit to the number and variety of speech communities that are to be found in society” (1975, p. 333 in Hudson 1996, p. 26).

The multiplicity of personal identities within speech communities incites parallels with the arguments advanced by Judith Butler who unpacks what she sees as the overly-simplified category of “women”. Butler insists that “it would be wrong to assume in advance that there is a category of ‘women’ that simply needs to be filled in with various components of race, class, age, ethnicity, and sexuality in order to become complete” (1990, p. 15). Her reflections remind us that human beings are complex creatures whose feelings and affiliations are constantly fluctuating. Not one aspect of a person’s self, be it gender, language, or another of the “components” Butler mentions, can fully determine their identity, or be used as a category in which to class them as equal or equivalent to all other members of that group. Both Bolinger and Butler are apparently warning us against assigning broad labels to individuals, advocating a cautious attitude to discussions that seek to unite people who share certain qualities in an indivisible aggregate.

Such a conclusion is reaffirmed by George Steiner, who states that “no two historical epochs, no two social classes, no two localities use words and syntax to signify exactly the same things, to send identical signals of valuation and inference. Neither do two human beings” (1998, p. 45). Steiner’s words accentuate the relevance of individual and fundamentally personal frames of

reference that influence the way in which people use and interpret language. Echoes of his words are heard through Richard Anthony Hudson who dwells on the importance of concentrating on the individual in sociolinguistics, stating that “no two speakers have the same language because no two speakers have the same experience of language” (1996, p. 12). Hudson pursues this discussion to explain the factors influencing the level of conformity or individualism in a person’s language use. He states that the former is more likely in communities in which speakers have a high degree of contact among one another, and where there is agreement on linguistic norms, which he states is the case for close-knit communities or cultures where the language is highly standardised, such as English or French (ibid, p. 13).

Despite the obvious shortcomings of the many labels we assign to groups of people, the concept of a speech community allows us to appreciate how one language can comprise a number of ways of speaking, depending on how the wider group of language speakers in question is divided into smaller groups. Although it will be useful to bear in mind that the boundaries of each speech community are necessarily blurred, and that a person might identify more with one group than with another at a particular time, in a particular place, speaking with a particular person or about a particular topic, we can see how the ideas being expressed in one language may take on a number of forms, or varieties, depending on the speaker’s background and on the context of utterance. Grouping people together in such a manner, while recognising the malleability of the labels they are assigned, enables a more sound insight into the threads that weave together the fabric of shared speech habits. These ideas will be of particular importance in light of the version of the language used by young people in the banlieue as it is presented in the texts analysed in Part Three.

## **1.2 The Status of Standard Language**

Since slang deviates from the standard variety of a language, the concept of standard language merits attention in this thesis, especially in terms of the legitimacy it is attributed. Again, it is useful to turn to the *OED* as a starting point for a discussion of what constitutes standard language. Entry 9 indicates

that the noun “standard” refers to “an authoritative or recognised exemplar of correctness, perfection, or some definite degree of any quality”, and provides two examples of the use of the word to refer to language. Interestingly, both of these are taken from a French rather than Anglophone context, and they equate standard language with literary French (Racine) or with the norms of the Academy. Through its definition and supporting examples, the *OED* suggests that standard language is to be seen as the ideal way of using language, superior to other forms of speech. How the status of the standard language is less clear. In France, it might be said that this role is assumed by canonical writers and the Académie française, though these should be seen as but two of many means of communicating linguistic prestige. In the Anglosphere, the situation is markedly less clear.<sup>7</sup>

According to Julie Coleman, the concept of Standard English varies according to geographical location and social context (2014, p. 18). This idea is affirmed by Bex and Watts who build on Braj Kachru’s concept of the three circles of English (inner, outer, expanding) to describe how English is used in various national contexts. Bex and Watts believe that Kachru’s model “[...] brings into sharp focus the problems of writing about ‘Standard English’ as though it were a single variety” (1999, p. 5). They encourage a reflection on the question of which national English should be considered as standard since “[...] notions of ‘Standard English’ vary from country to country, and not merely in the ways in which such a variety is described but also in the prestige in which it is held and the functions it has developed to perform” (ibid, p. 5). Their declaration is of a piece with the previous discussion addressing the intricacy of speech communities. Since the texts under study in this thesis are set in France and translated into English, it will be useful to consider how non-standard language use is perceived in each language, and how the existence of different Englishes influences the idea of the standard variety of the language within the Anglosphere.

The significance of language norms in France in particular can be explored through the work of Anthony Lodge who, in an article entitled

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<sup>7</sup> “1742, R. West *Let.* 4 Apr. in T. Gray *Corr.* (1971) I. 190 [Racine's] language is the language of the times, and that of the purest sort; so that his French is reckoned a standard. / 1839, H. Hallam *Introd. Lit. Europe* IV. vii. 507: The Academy... rendered this dictionary the most received standard of the French language.”

“Authority, prescriptivism and the French standard language”, asserts that “prescriptive attitudes to language seem to be more deeply ingrained in France than in many other speech-communities” (1991, p. 93). In his discussion, Lodge borrows the concept of “*sur-norme*” from Juliette Garmadi, used here to describe the set of “instructions” enforced on speakers of French, requiring them to choose among the possibilities their language allows, arising from the “*norme*”, the options that conform to what is deemed by the powers “above” to be the most appropriate and acceptable (ibid, p. 95). Lodge purports that the “*sur-norme*” is more strongly present in France than in other communities. In an article appearing in the French Review dealing with the language used in marginalised areas of France entitled “*La langue des faubourgs et des banlieues : de l’argot au français populaire*”, Albert Valdman evokes these same ideas when he states that a persistent tradition in France defines “*le bon usage*” or Standard French as the cultivated speech of the “*bonne bourgeoisie parisienne*” (2000, p. 1179)<sup>8</sup>.

In his article, Lodge also points to the role of the Académie française in the communication of language norms. He states that the setting-up of the body in 1635 had clear social and political repercussions, thus holding it at least partly responsible for these prevailing attitudes to language (1991, p. 102). If we visit the Académie’s website, Article XXIV of the “*Statuts et règlements*” document that they propose provides an overview of the body’s goals: “The primary function of the Academy will be to work with all possible care and diligence to provide our language with definite rules and to render it pure, eloquent, and fit to discuss the arts and science”<sup>9</sup>. We notice in this statement that the purity and eloquence of the French language are deemed to be of paramount importance.

The existence of the Académie has translated into a concerted effort to promote the reputation of the French language as one of elegance, purity, and sophistication, both inside and outside of France. Under the sway of the Académie, the way a person speaks becomes reflective not only of their

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<sup>8</sup> “*Une tradition tenace définit le bon usage ou français standard comme le parler cultivé de la bonne bourgeoisie parisienne.*”

<sup>9</sup> “*La principale fonction de l’Académie sera de travailler avec tout le soin et toute la diligence possibles à donner des règles certaines à notre langue et à la rendre pure, éloquente et capable de traiter les arts et les sciences.*”

command of the language, but of their status, since an ability to speak French in accordance with the rules set forth by the Académie indicate an ability to conform to the norms of the *élite*. While these codes might facilitate communication, they also suggest the power of authorities to enforce a particular way of speaking; *their* way of speaking. Whether one chooses to see the Académie as an authority which has real influence over language usage, or as a body that merely records language as it is spoken by a specific group, the fact remains that this group is the dominant social group and that their codes are used as a yardstick against which to evaluate linguistic quality in society more broadly.

Elsewhere in his article, Lodge quotes Einar Haugen who reflects on the concept of the linguistic norm by stating that “to choose any one vernacular as a norm means to favour the group of people speaking that variety; it gives them a prestige as norm-bearers and a head start in the race for power and position. If a recognized *élite* already exists with a characteristic vernacular, its norm will almost inevitably prevail” (1966, p. 109 in Lodge 1991, p. 96). Such a reflection reinforces the argument that people who feel socially marginalised might have recourse to a nonconformist use of language to express their discontent. Goudaillier draws attention to the manner in which language can be used as a form of both enforcing and challenging, or violating, norms. These norms, Goudaillier suggests, are disseminated by the “legitimate” form/s of a language, and any group seeking a means to circumvent the imposed social order may resort to transgressive use of language (2002, p. 5).

Since language constitutes a means of communicating marginalisation to certain groups, it seems logical these groups should retaliate through their own use of language. In doing so, they take ownership over the only resource they share with dominant groups and therefore express their agency. Indeed, both the elite and the marginalised have access to language, and both can wield it to express and communicate different forms of power. The marginalised populations of the banlieue do not have the power or resources to undermine the authorities on a daily basis, and so they use the language of these authorities in such a way as to suggest its misuse; an offence that is at once offensive and inoffensive; although such use of language is frowned upon and openly lambasted, it can be neither forbidden, nor punished.

When discussing the translation of banlieue texts into English, it is important to consider the perception of standard and non-standard varieties of language in the context of reception. This is particularly interesting when one takes into consideration the fact that English is spoken in a vast number of national contexts within which non-standard varieties of language hold a different reputation when compared with the prestige attached to the standard variety. Furthermore, it should be recognised that different national Englishes may be considered with more or less regard in the eyes of different audiences depending on the history of and the relationship between specific speech communities. As we will see in Part Three, the English-language version of the banlieue texts under study is generally aimed at one of two broad national audiences: the US or the UK.

In translating *Moi non*, I have attempted to eschew as far as possible the various associations of prestige attached to these two Englishes by harnessing features of the language common to young speakers of the language all around the globe. I have nonetheless sought to reproduce in English notions of the distance between standard and non-standard varieties of French that is conveyed in the source text. At the same time as I recognise that certain levels of stigma may be attached to slang and rap in different parts of the Anglosphere, I also believe that works of fiction such as *Moi non* strive to highlight the innovative qualities of non-standard language and exploit the opportunity to share features most likely to garner positive attention and praise from people who may otherwise be reluctant to see their value. This point will be explored in greater detail when I discuss the ways in which deliberate fictional recreations of slang might deviate from the spontaneous speech of young people in “real-life” settings.

## **Conformity and Power**

The acknowledgment that particular situations exist in which a speaker might not use the standard variety of the language for various reasons, opting consciously or unconsciously for forms of non-standard language, invites an exploration of what defines and characterises particular ways of speaking. It is useful to consider how labelling slang as non-standard risks suggesting

conformity to or acceptance of the stigmatisation of deviations from the linguistic norm. Following Bente A. Svendsen, adopting labels that are traditionally anchored in a structural variety approach “might contribute to upholding a distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ wherein the alleged speakers of the purported ‘lect’ are subjectified in Foucault’s (1975) sense, as being the Other, as a speaker of this deviant (‘from a ‘standard’) (and exotic?) way of speaking” (Svendsen in Nortier and Svendsen 2015, p. 8). However, in the context of this thesis, acknowledging the reality of the stigmatisation of non-standard forms of language and admitting and discussing the broader perception of slang as a form of non-standard language is vital since it helps us to temper our understanding of why young people in marginalised situations have recourse to this type of language. It also helps us to understand how slang users are viewed by proponents of standard language, and how the inclusion of slang in fictional texts might confirm or contest certain opinions on its validity, as I will discuss in Chapter 2.

In what James Milroy calls “standard-language cultures”, he believes that “the awareness of a superordinate standard variety is kept alive in the public mind” (Milroy in Bex and Watts 1999, p. 18). He explains the effects of this perception of the standard by affirming that there is a tendency to equate the standard language with correct usage and his views echo the definition of standard proposed by the *OED*. Milroy is of the opinion that “this notion of correctness has a powerful role in the maintenance of the standard ideology through prescription” (ibid, p. 18). Expanding on this idea of authoritarian approaches to standard language, Milroy comments that it can often constitute an instrument of power and he says that in such cases “language is not seen as the possession of the communities that use it [...] but as the property of small elite groups who have a moral duty to pronounce on moral behaviour” (ibid, p. 21). Finally, he argues against prescriptive attitudes to language use and questions the credentials of its advocates, stating that “language must meet the communicative and social needs of all its speakers, and not only those of the guardians, whose qualifications to judge ‘correctness’ are often highly dubious anyway” (ibid).

It seems pertinent to draw parallels between the hegemony of the standard language and the concept of norms. Gadet informs us that the norm

is applied according to social and not linguistic criteria (1997, p. 9) and that the dominant social groups determine the worth of a particular way of speaking. She explains that value is bestowed on forms of speech by these dominant groups within which are found “legitimate” speakers (ibid, p. 8)<sup>10</sup>. Gadet refers to the work by Labov that advances the idea that a broad linguistic community comprising people using contrasting language varieties does not employ the same forms but shares the same norms in relation to the language. She responds by stating that there are uses that everyone recognises as having value, and others that everybody judges to be stigmatised (ibid, p. 7)<sup>11</sup>. Gadet maintains that members of a sociolinguistic community are aware of the existence of variation and able to judge the variety used by other speakers, even if this is done without substantial reasoning. In addition, she contends that members of speech communities are further capable of surpassing the simple differentiation between grammatical and ungrammatical to distinguish between what is more or less correct, and to assign a value judgement in accordance with their views (ibid, p. 7).

Gadet’s reflections on the nature of norms in relation to sociolinguistic variation invite a reflection on the ways in which forms of language that deviate from the norm may be seen as illegitimate, and on the reasons why people might be inclined to attribute a particular status to these ways of speaking. It is particularly important to note that these judgements are ascribed from a position of authority, by members of the dominant socioeconomic group, upon groups with significantly less agency. This top-down dynamic calls for further exploration of the interplay between language and power, considering the repercussions associated with language use as a means of exclusion. Such forms of exclusion can be applied to each and every individual without access to the codes of the particular variety of language being used, whether they be members of the aforementioned dominant socioeconomic groups or rather of marginalised groups deploying language creatively and cryptically, potentially in response to their perceived position on the fringes of society.

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<sup>10</sup> “[...] une forme est valorisée parce qu’elle est l’apanage des groupes sociaux dominants parmi lesquels se trouvent des locuteurs légitimes.”

<sup>11</sup> “Il y a donc des usages que tout le monde reconnaît comme valorisés, et d’autres que tout le monde juge stigmatisés.”

Among the many criticisms of slang is the complaint that its speakers simply do not master the rules governing the use of standard language (see in particular Béthune 2011, p. 166)<sup>12</sup>. This criticism may in fact hold some truth for a number of slang users. Indeed, it is difficult to determine to what extent the deviation from linguistic rules which defines a lot of slang use can be attributed to a conscious desire to play with language and stray from the imposed norm, rather than to a sheer absence of understanding of the language being manipulated. Further, it is difficult to know what proportion of slang users are merely playing the part of parrots, mirroring the language coined by other, more confident wordsmiths, without the actual inclination to rattle and agitate the codes of standard language through any sort of new linguistic innovation. Although this point is pertinent, and well-founded, it is of more benefit to acknowledge that slang users who may not necessarily be seeking to express their rebellion through non-standard language use still imply their rejection of the standard model, and of those championing it, through their choice to adhere to an alternative model.

Additionally, it is important to consider the extent to which all users of language in its standard and non-standard forms are completely conscious of how their linguistic choices contribute to the image that they project of themselves. These thoughts can be supported by the words of Rita Felski, who insists that:

While we never own language, we are able to borrow it and bend it to our purposes, even as aspects of what we say will continue to elude us. We are embodied and embedded beings who use and are used by words.

(2008, p. 31)

The borrowing and bending of words may in fact be enacted in a somewhat automatic by all language users. Even if they are incapable of describing the features of the slang they speak in technical terms, it seems fitting to suggest that people whose speech is characterised by slang are at least aware of how their use of language might contribute to distinguishing them from speakers of the standard variety of their language. In this way, the use of non-standard language becomes a marker of identity and of difference. The way in which

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<sup>12</sup> “*Se demander si cette maltraitance linguistique est le résultat d’une volonté délibérée ou la conséquence d’une déficience d’apprentissage et de maîtrise de la langue comme le font, certains commentateurs, des deux côtés de l’Atlantique, ne semble guère pertinent.*”

people manipulate language betrays aspects of their self to others, even if both the speakers and the listeners are not necessarily able to explain how specific characteristics of their language correspond to the broader purpose of its use. As we will see, writers who choose to include slang in fictional texts generally have a stronger grasp of the features of the non-standard form of language they use, and translators of these texts need to be able to dissect the features used by these writers to enable them to develop adequate techniques to reproduce them in the target language.

Echoes of the reflections on the relationship between language and power are found in thoughts advanced by Pierre Bourdieu who insists that all forms of linguistic exchange necessarily constitute the communication of symbolic power relations, through which we can observe the ratios of power operating between speakers or their respective groups (1982, p. 14). Bex and Watts reinforce an association of standard language with superiority when they state that few of the authors of the chapters in their book on the debate around standard language “would deny that the standard is the prestige variety” and explain their use of the qualifier “prestige” by stating that standard language “is accorded a degree of respect within society as a whole” (1999, p. 7). They further argue that people calling for standard language practices are players in the process of standardisation, defined as being “driven by spokespeople who have successfully articulated a particular set of social values” (ibid, p. 13).

Arguably, the disenfranchised youth who have recourse to slang use this type of non-standard language precisely to rebel against the reign of prescriptive approaches to standard language, and the discrediting views of non-standard forms. Trudgill confirms this hypothesis by referring to people, especially women, who might rely on the symbolic capital of language to compensate for their inferior economic power (Trudgill 1972, pp. 182-183 in Tagliamonte 2012, p. 34). Young people living in disenfranchised areas obviously share this lack of economic power since many of them are unemployed or involved in black market activities, or otherwise financially dependent on their parents who, more often than not, are themselves in an unfavourable financial situation.

The way in which marginalised speech communities band together linguistically to assert their identity and difference from the dominant group can be likened to the notion of the gang. Louis-Jean Calvet sketches a discussion of the gang by building on the ideas proposed by Frederic Thrasher who studied the gangs of Chicago and asserts that the gang may be regarded as an interstitial element in the framework of society, and ganglands as an interstitial region in the layout of the city (1994, p. 31). He elaborates on this idea of interstitiality by affirming that the young people who are members of the gangs he describes find themselves between two cultures and two languages. These young people do not completely understand their parents' culture and barely speak their language, both of which Calvet describes as forming part of the "minority", and, at the same time they have not managed to fully penetrate the culture of the soil on which they live (ibid, p. 32)<sup>13</sup>.

According to Calvet, this situation of in-betweenness triggers different behaviours, namely economically in petty crime and culturally in the asserting of identity. He believes this assertion leads to four distinct avenues of expression: musical (e.g. rap), graphic (graffiti and tags), clothing, and linguistic (ibid, pp. 32-33), a taxonomy that bears a likeness to the branches of the Hip-hop Movement, to be explored in Chapter 3. Given that the characters in the texts under study in this thesis employ non-standard language, their way of speaking is unmistakably a little esteemed way of speaking. Indeed, the fact that slang is deemed to belong to a level "below" that of standard speech has long incited negative attitudes towards its usage.

In his book *Slang: To-day and Yesterday*, Eric Partridge explains that slang had once been viewed as an inferior form of language, quoting John Camden Hotten, compiler of an English-language dictionary of slang in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, who protests against the way in which the term is interpreted to represent "those lowest words only which are used by the dangerous classes and lowest grades of society" (1933, p. 3). Partridge develops his discussion on the reputation of slang by affirming that it has evolved with time but maintains that slang still tends to be stigmatised in certain circles. He states that "[...] in

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<sup>13</sup> "Les gangs sont en effet formés de jeunes entre deux cultures, entre deux langues, celle, minoritaire, de leurs parents (culture qu'ils ne possèdent pas tout à fait, langue qu'ils parlent peu) et celle, majoritairement, de leur pays d'accueil (qu'ils ne possèdent pas encore, ou imparfaitement)."

educated English, words and phrases and syntax are judged, not by their vitality or their expressiveness [...], but by their conformity to “standard”; grammar tends to stagnation, the adoption of new words and fresh shades of sense is frowned upon, and, in short, the creative impulse is only too generally and only too frequently stifled” (ibid, p. 24). It is apparent here that Partridge advocates a more flexible approach to language use than that which is prescribed through the supposed supremacy of standard language, and that he considers this mentality as a curb to linguistic evolution.

The literature on slang and on non-standard language more generally indicates that the term “standard” when referring to language usually denotes the written form of a language, determined and spoken by the dominant social group. Bex and Watts draw attention to the fact that the division between oral and written is problematic since it does not take into account the situation of usage and the identity of the person speaking. They are eager to point out that “people’s spoken and written patterns vary according to function” (1999, p. 8). Although it might be objected that, in terms of situational context at least, we could opt to see the broad category of “oral” language as referring to conversational language between friends, and not, for instance, to an academic lecture or political speech, it is nevertheless crucial to acknowledge that the specific characteristics of the language used will necessarily differ drastically depending on who is speaking. Bex’s and Watts’ assessments of the way individuals speak remind us that factors such as the person’s education, personality, social class, and profession, as well as the topic of conversation in question, will bear upon the way that language is deployed.

I will return to this opposition between written and oral forms when discussing the trend which refers to slang as a primarily oral form of language. For now, I will conclude by reiterating the concept of situational variation, according to which the context of speaking will necessarily influence, and to a certain extent determine, the mode and manner of expression. Overall, the common thread in these descriptions of the definitions and repercussions of standard language might be boiled down to the idea of linguistic domination and to the multiple identities of speakers. It would seem that the fact that the notion of the *standard* variety of language is generally equated with the *correct* variety, to which the *educated* section of society holds the codes and keys,

indicates that the use of standard language is a marker of higher status and a tool for communicating prestige and power.

### **1.3 Naming Slang**

More complex labels, which stem from the binary separation between standard and non-standard forms of speech, span specific types of sub-categories. Useful information concerning the numerous categories of non-standard language in particular can be found in Flexner's preface accompanying the *American Dictionary of Slang*. Flexner appears to establish a clear distinction between standard and non-standard language, but the boundaries between each of the non-standard types of language he proposes are blurred. Thus, he establishes five labels to categorise the vocabulary of the English language: (1) standard usage, (2) colloquialisms, (3) dialects, (4) cant, jargon or argot, and (5) slang, and subsequently provides a definition for each (1975, p. vi).

In reference to colloquialisms, Flexner affirms that they are “familiar words and idioms used in informal speech and writing”, and so suggests that their use is inappropriate in more formal situations, such as “polite conversation or business correspondence” (ibid, p. vi). The differences he establishes between the third (dialects) and fourth (cant/jargon/argot) categories can be summarised by stating that dialect consist of words, idioms, pronunciations, and speech habits peculiar to specific geographical locations, whereas cant, jargon, and argot are the familiar idiom or technical talk used and understood only by members of particular subgroups (members of a certain class, interest or age group, for example, in the case of cant, of a profession for jargon, and of criminals for argot). Flexner establishes a further contrast between these categories and slang by asserting that the use of these former categories of non-standard language is reserved to specific subgroups whereas slang can be “used and/or understood by a large portion of the general public” (ibid, pp. vi-vii). His musings show clear similarities to François-Geiger's distinction between general and specific slangs, an idea I will explore at length in Chapter 2.

I have made a conscious choice to adopt the term slang as a sort of umbrella term to cover the broader category of non-standard language into which urban youth speech fits. Despite my preference for this more general term, alongside even more generic terms “speak” or “language”, often used with the qualifying words “youth” and/or “urban”, it is clear that the specific traits of the concept denoted by the term slang are contested among scholars. Distinctions have been made between slang and other types of non-standard language (as we saw and when the term slang is used, it is systematically described using a variety of terms that draw attention to specific aspects of what characterises its formation and use. Since many of these terms can be likened to, or at least discussed within, the model of sociolinguistic variation, it will be useful to explore the nuances of each of these terms. These deliberations will enable a more informed consideration of the characteristics of the language used by young people in urban areas and subsequently feed into a more detailed discussion of the functions of slang.

## **Register**

Frequently used to qualify the language used by young people, the adjectives “informal” and “colloquial” evoke the concept of register, a notion that can be likened to the idea of situational variation. Marie Sylvine Muller shares this view, stating that she interprets register as the “linguistic variations determined by the characteristics of the speaker and the situation of utterance” (Muller in Bensimon 1996, p. 49)<sup>14</sup>. Richard Anthony Hudson, however, asserts that the term is used to refer to “varieties according to use”, preferring to see the “user” as determining dialect (1996, p. 45). It may be most useful to consider register as indicative of the way people choose to express themselves using the particular variety depending on the situation and on with whom they are speaking. However, as we will see, there may be a greater or smaller number of registers within one variety of language, depending on the extent to which this variety is considered to be independent from the standard variety of language. A speaker’s range of options for expression is therefore dependent

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<sup>14</sup> “*J’entends par registre les variations linguistiques déterminées par les caractéristiques du locuteur et la situation d’énonciation.*”

not only on their mastery of different varieties of one language, but on their ability to switch between registers within each variety.

In her book *Le Français ordinaire*, Françoise Gadet dissects the notion of register and calls into question the lack of consistency in its use. She begins her discussion by stating that the most common application of the notion concerns the manner in which lexis is treated in dictionaries, and highlights that what is colloquial in one dictionary might be categorised as vulgar in another (1997, p. 11). She further draws attention to the lack of consideration of the context of utterance and of the particularities of the person speaking. In addition, Gadet laments the tendency to limit discussions of register to lexis, arguing that lexis cannot be separated from other elements of language (phonology, intonation, morphology, syntax, lexis) (ibid, p. 1). Gadet here draws attention to the fact that words are not used in isolation and indicates that she believes that it is reductive to assume that the use of lexis alone is sufficient to determine the overall register of an utterance. Her thoughts can be likened to the way in which vocabulary is considered by many scholars to be the most salient feature of slang, as I will explain in Chapter 2.

For a more concrete representation of register, in English, we might turn to Peter Newmark's "Scale of Formality". In Queneau-style, Newmark takes one utterance and offers alternatives expressed in a variety of manners, the message unchanging while the formality of each surface structure is altered.

Officialese	The consumption of any nutriments whatsoever is categorically prohibited in this establishment.
Official	The consumption of nutriments is prohibited.
Formal	You are requested not to consume food in this establishment.
Neutral	Eating is not allowed here.
Informal	Please don't eat here.
Colloquial	You can't feed your face here.
Slang	Lay off the nosh.
Taboo	Lay off the fucking nosh.

(1988, p. 14)

Newmark places his "Scale of Formality" within a broader discussion of "stylistic scales", complemented by scales of emotion and intensity and a

discussion of how language might be employed in accordance with the function of the text at hand (ibid). Tagliamonte draws a link between register and style, differentiating between the two by defining the latter as “the linguistic repertoire of an individual speaker” while stating that the former “refers to how an individual performs in particular contexts or social settings” (2012, p. 35). Her distinction implies that register is indicative of a person’s linguistic skills, whereas style is representative of a speaker’s choice. In other words, she suggests that register is fixed while style is more wavering and contingent on a person’s desire to perform in a particular manner. I will return to considerations of style and performance in transcribed versions of youth language when discussing the way in which slang is used in literary contexts.

A discussion of register would be incomplete without considering the fact that, the terms in French “*registre*” and “*niveaux de langue*” are used almost interchangeably, inviting a reflection on the status and authority attributed to certain manners of speaking; in essence, the higher the level of language, the more legitimate the speech<sup>15</sup>. This assertion is bolstered by the use of terms such as “high” and “low” to describe register which further contribute to ideas of the status and superiority of certain forms of language, suggesting that a high register is more valid means of expression. These qualifying terms find parallels in the associations of prestige automatically established in relation to the standard variety of language, yet it seems important to point out that, unlike with the stigma that is sometimes attached to the use of non-standard language which often is even deemed to be substandard, a person’s use of a lower register will not necessarily prompt value judgements. In fact, using a lower register is simply indicative of the level of formality considered appropriate in or called for by certain circumstances.

Following on from the idea according to which register can be likened to situational variation, we can consider in greater detail the qualifying terms “informal” and “colloquial”, often used synonymously, and, as previously stated, frequently present in descriptions of slang. The distinction between colloquial language and slang proves difficult to elucidate, and Louis-Jean

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<sup>15</sup> For a discussion on the different terms in French used to describe diastatic and diaphasic variation (namely “*niveau*”, “*registre*”, “*style*”, and “*genre*”) see Gadet’s article “*Niveaux de langue et variation intrinsèque*” in *Palimpsestes* 10 1996, pp. 20-21

Calvet asserts that the contact zone between the two is “blurred” (1994, p. 12<sup>16</sup>). When speaking of register, Flexner states that colloquialisms are “familiar words and idioms used in informal speech and writing”, suggesting that their use is inappropriate in more formal situations, such as “polite conversation or business correspondence” (1975, p. vi). Flexner differentiates colloquial language from slang by asserting that the former is “understood and used by almost everyone in the United States” and he draws attention to the social function of slang as a means to establishing a sort of “fraternity” between interlocutors (ibid, p. vi).

If we adopt Flexner’s reasoning, it would seem that colloquial language acts purely as an indication of register in social settings, whereas slang suggests a certain complicity between users, an idea that I will explore in greater detail in the discussion on the various functions of slang. To express the difference between slang and colloquial or informal language in simple form, it is useful to return to the model of sociolinguistic variation through which slang can be seen as a combination of different types of variation. Colloquial or informal language, on the other hand, is more reflective of register, thus allowing us to consider it as constituting a type of situational variation.

What emerges from these reflections on what differentiates colloquial ways of speaking from slang is the idea of inclusion, and by extension of exclusion, since colloquial language is not necessarily deviant, and that it is not a coded form of language. Fabrice Antoine confirms such an affirmation when he states that colloquial language is “not cryptic, not unconventional, nor exclusive: while it is certainly playful, like slang, this is not its primary function, which is economic and democratic” (2004, p. 12).<sup>17</sup> Using colloquial language, therefore, cannot be equated with an act of rebellion and it does not serve as a separator between different social groups since the database of colloquial language is open and available to all speakers. Although it may share some of the same functions of slang that I will detail in Chapter 2, notably in the softening of the seriousness of a statement or in communicating intimacy or complicity between speakers, it is not in any way a coded form of language, and

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<sup>16</sup> “*La zone de contact entre argots et langue familière est floue.*”

<sup>17</sup> “[*La langue familière*] n’est pas cryptique, ni inconventionnelle, ni exclusive : elle est, comme l’argot, volontiers ludique, mais ce n’est pas sa fonction première, qui est économique et démocratique.”

effectively constitutes a particular register of the standard language. Slang, therefore, may be said to share many of the same features of a broader category of colloquial language, though in a non-standard, and more complex and complexified form.

## **Orality**

Although the term “orality” may be used when referring to slang, it is essential to recognise that this term refers to the mode of expression of a type of language rather than to the language itself. This being said, in much of the literature on slang, scholars refer to its use, and the use of non-standard language in general, as being more widely exploited in spoken than in written language, a fact which warrants investigation. Flexner, for instance, asserts that non-standard language is largely absent from dictionaries, and that its presence is more common in speech than in writing (1975, p. vi). The texts analysed in this thesis feature a written form of slang, a fictionalised representation of youth speak. This transposition from oral to written speech, a transfer of language across mediums, in subtitles as in dialogue and narration exploiting the voice of young slang users, engenders a number of changes in the characteristics of characters’ speech, for technical as well as stylistic reasons. I will explore questions relating to voice and representivity in the next chapter of this thesis when exploring the complexities of this transfer and the various factors that contribute to determining the final shape of slang when it appears in fictional texts, in written but also spoken form.

It could further be argued that, with the rise of written forms of informal communication via SMS and, increasingly, social networks and online chat or messaging platforms, orality is transcending mediums and appearing more and more frequently in written forms, leading to a fusion of the oral and written. Tagliamonte hints at this fusion when exploring the role of Instant Messaging (IM): “IM is simply mirroring the emerging tendency for all writing to become more speechlike” (2012, p. 337). This means that, even if one agrees that slang is primarily an oral form of communication, its use in written language is frequent. An analysis of the differences between the slang used in written and oral mediums is beyond the scope (and needs) of this thesis, but it

is worthwhile reflecting on the broader inclusion of the features of informal oral language in non-standard speech, on the way in which these features might be added to written texts to increase the illusion of reality and authenticity, both in a text's original version and in translation.

To draw a more concrete picture of what these features of orality actually look like, we can turn to Carolina P. Amador-Moreno and Kevin McCafferty, who, in their introduction to an edition of the journal *Sociolinguistic Studies* dedicated to orality, list a number of features of spoken discourse (which incidentally seem especially indicative of interaction), including: false starts, overlapping, incomplete sentences, elisions, reformulations, interruptions, turn-taking, backchannelling, hedges and stammers, repetitions, pauses and silences, and hesitation (2001, pp. 3-4). They also refer to work done by Maria Palma-Fahey on the use of vocatives in film dialogues, stating that they are used to “signal levels of social distance, power and solidarity, protecting the level of intimacy between characters” and that the specific vocatives chosen to do so vary depending on the culture in question (*ibid*, p. 7). This is a point that will be vital to bear in mind when analysing translational choices, since the way in which orality is represented, as well as the various aspects of a character's relationships and identity that it conveys, necessarily differ depending on the language being spoken, or written. Such differences will inevitably have an impact on the way in which the translator chooses to reproduce in the translated text the features of orality present in the source text.

### ***-lects***

Terms ending with the suffix “-lect”, namely sociolect, dialect, and idiolect, are frequently used to discuss slang. The term sociolect may refer to the speech habits particular to a specific social group, dialect to that of geographical groups, and idiolect as a person's individual manner of speaking. These broad definitions clearly evoke aspects of the model of sociolinguistic variation. While such terms provide a worthwhile yardstick to tighten our grasp of the defining features of a person's way of speaking, we must recognise that there is evident convergence in different *-lects*, in much the same way as

there is overlap between different types of variation. If we consider an idiolect, for instance, it is clear that this cannot exist in isolation because a person's individual and idiosyncratic way of speaking is necessarily influenced by factors including their age, social class, and the situation of speaking. Svendsen espouses this line of reasoning, considering the use of *-lect* terms to characterise the slang of young people to be simplistic. She stresses that it should be seen as a variable form of language, complex and not rigid, and states that "there is a risk for constructing the 'lect' as too homogenous, as a whole, as a single, quantifiable entry, as if it is a specific, more or less fixed way of speaking, without variation" (Svendsen in Nortier and Svendsen 2015, p. 3). I have opted against adopting *-lect* terms to describe the language used by disenfranchised youth in the texts and translations studied in this thesis since I believe that these terms are at once too broad and too reductive to embody the vast range of factors that influence their use of slang.

### **Cant, Argot, Jargon**

In the discussion of non-standard language earlier in this chapter, I cited Flexner who stresses that slang should not be confused with the other subcategories of non-standard language that he mentions: dialect, cant, jargon, and argot (1975, p. vi). He differentiates these types of non-standard language from slang by insisting that the terms that make up the vocabulary of these categories are used only within specific subgroups, stating that words and expressions from these groups can be regarded as slang only when they become popular enough to be used and/or understood by a large portion of the general public. However, Flexner concedes that the language preserves certain qualities of its original use, in that it is only "fully" comprehensible to certain members of the population (ibid, pp. vi-vii). Thus, there is overlap between the two categories, with slang comprising the least narrowly-used features of cant, jargon, and argot. Writing in French, Denise François-Geiger differentiates between *argot* and *jargon* by stating that *jargon* is restricted to the terms specific to a job/field, which leads us to deduce that although *argot* can be used by the members of a profession or field, its use is extended from subjects dealing with work to more general topics (1975, p. 26). In all, these affirmations again provide matter for the seemingly irresolvable debate on the extent to

which certain types of slang may be construed by people who do not form part of the specific group using them; on the idea of “slang” versus “slangs”, as it were.

## **Youth Language**

As the title of this thesis indicates, I have sought to establish through translation a “global youth speak” in English. At this stage of the discussion, it will be useful to devote several paragraphs to the specific age bracket implied by the term “youth”, as well as to the ways in which the language used by youths differs from that used by “adults”, since, as Tagliamonte reminds us, it can be argued that “language use is intrinsically correlated with speaker age” (2012, p. 43). The *OED* offers the following definition of the term youth: “the time when one is young; the early part or period of life; more specifically, the period from puberty till the attainment of full growth, between childhood and adult age”. Although “growth” here is no doubt intended to indicate physical maturity, it invites a reflection on the question of intellectual and emotional growth and maturity, prompting closer scrutiny of the nuances of the term. Rather than delimiting youth with numbers, it is perhaps more productive to consider the age group primarily in terms of the attitudes and behaviours that bind its young members. Jannis K. Androutsopoulos seems to support such an approach to youth in her article “Research on Youth-Language” when she states that “adolescence is not merely a biological age, but a social institution, which is specific to the modern era, and is usually conceived of as a transition period between childhood and adulthood” (in Ammon and Dittmar 2005, p. 1496).

The literature dealing specifically with young language suggests that adolescents and young adults tend to want to set themselves apart from adults, largely by rejecting the standard language and adopting a dissenting form of language. In essence, young people refuse the salient norms in favour of conforming to another set of norms, instituted by their peers. Bex and Watts implicitly draw the contours of youth by suggesting that the period comes to a close by the age of 30: “the use of standard or prestige forms peaks between the ages of 30 and 55 when people experience maximum social pressure to

conform to the norms of the standard language” (Bex and Watts 1999, p. 47). We can see a complementary opposition to this practice of conformity in Janet Holmes’ assertion that it is during adolescence that people most commonly have recourse to the use of what he terms “non-prestigious linguistic features” when these features do not form part of the standard language (1992, p. 184). She adds that this period is “when peer group pressure not to conform to society’s norms is greatest” (ibid).

Hints of Holmes’ perspective can also be found in the words of Aurore Vincenti, who, in her preface to *Les Mots du bitume*, affirms that young people have “the impertinence required to consciously defy the sacrosanct dictionary” (2017, p. 13)<sup>18</sup>. In the same book, Alain Rey puts forward the irrefutable falsity of the idea of a “youth language”, since young people are continually ageing (ibid, p. 19). He posits that it might be possible to believe in a type of “language of a generation” but claims that such a way of speaking is also impossible to grasp entirely since the people speaking it are constantly changing their way of expressing themselves (ibid)<sup>19</sup>. In spite of the evolution in the concrete characteristics of the language they speak, it would seem that what unites their expression is a distinct desire to deviate from norms, and to embrace therefore a non-standard variety of language.

As well as evolving over time, the specific form of youth slang spoken by young people will also change according to an individual’s affiliation to a specific section of the broader category of youth. In their book *Word Up*, Mark McCrindle and Emily Wolfinger devote their third chapter to “Youth Slang” and state that “a young person’s choice of slang is quite often an extension of the particular youth subculture he or she belongs to or identifies with” (2011, p. 53). McCrindle and Wolfinger list a number of subgroups within the broader youth group: skaters, emos, goths, hip-hoppers, indie/hipster, valley girls, and “riot grrrls” (ibid). Although this categorisation appears somewhat incomplete and dated, since subgroup titles and youth affiliation are constantly evolving, their emphasis on the intricacy of the wider youth culture reiterates my earlier

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<sup>18</sup> “*La jeunesse a l’impertinence requise pour défier, en conscience, le sacro-saint dictionnaire.*”

<sup>19</sup> “*Il est vrai qu’on a aussi parlé de ‘langage des jeunes’, mais comme les jeunes ne cessent de vieillir, règle inéluctable, cette définition est toujours fausse, sauf à croire à un ‘langage de génération’, impossible à saisir, car ses interprètes humains changent, sans cesser de s’exprimer.*”

caution towards labels and their limitations, because no one group can be entirely homogeneous. Visibly, “youth language” becomes more intricate when sorted into smaller sections whose speakers may share the broad motivations for the use of slang but who also seek to align themselves with a specific stance, perhaps even seeking to stand in opposition to other subgroups within the category of youth.

A number of additional, more specific labels are also employed to describe the language used by young people in urban areas. Ben Rampton lists several of these in a chapter of Bente A. Svendsen and Jacomine Nortier’s book *Language, Youth and Identity in the 21st Century*. His chapter is entitled “Contemporary urban vernaculars”, the term he proposes in preference to other terms such as “multiethnic urban heteroglossia”, “local multiracial vernacular’, “(contemporary) urban speech style”, or the rather cumbersome “late modern urban youth style” (in Nortier and Svendsen 2015, pp. 24-44). Rampton quotes Labov, for whom vernacular is “the style in which minimum attention is paid to the monitoring of speech” (Labov 1972b, p. 208, in Nortier and Svendsen 2015, p. 25). We might question this viewpoint when studying more closely the types of slang and rap whose creation and implementation require significant linguistic dexterity. As we will see in Part Three, writers who choose to include features of slang and rap in their texts generally take the richest and most impressive aspects of these forms of expression as part of an effort to produce a stylistically-interesting and engaging piece of fiction.

Rampton further advocates for the use of the term vernacular to describe urban language styles (in Nortier and Svendsen 2015, p. 26). He argues that “if we continue to refer to them with an accessible and well-known term like ‘vernacular’, we can help to ensure that very widespread styles like these are now recognised as an established part of the mainstream, not only in sociolinguistics but maybe also in the public imagination more generally” (ibid, p. 43). I have not adopted Rampton’s term in this thesis since it forms part of an array of terms used to describe urban language and does not mention specifically the idea of youth. Consequently, I have preferred to prioritise the term “youth” when describing the language of the young people in the texts featured in my case studies, and concurrently to remain broad in my general discussions of slang. I feel that this is particularly important since this thesis

falls within the scope of translation studies and therefore does not claim or seek to shift any paradigms in sociolinguistics as such. Rather, I aim to draw on the most applicable of these theories in order to offer an observation of the salient traits of the speech of disenfranchised youth in urban areas, and subsequently an exploration of the possibilities for reproducing these features in another language through translation.

## **Urban Language**

The presence of the term urban in the labels classifying the language of young people living in urban areas suggests that the geographical context in which these young people are speaking is especially worthy of consideration when discussing their linguistic habits. It might indeed be argued that my failure to include this term in the title of the thesis represents an oversight, but, by the same token, this absence beckons a questioning of the extent to which the language used by young people actually differs depending on location. Answering such a question with any certitude would require extensive data collection and analysis, meaning that it is more judicious to consider the significance of urban environments by focusing on how their layout affects linguistic sharing and overlap: the fact that cities are highly-condensed spaces patently allows new speech to spread quickly. In addition, such places are distinguished by a strong presence of foreign languages and cultures resulting from immigration, which have an indisputable effect on the language spoken daily by the people living in them.

The characteristics of urban spaces necessarily render them fertile ground for innovation in language use, and it seems reasonable to suggest that it is precisely within such environments that young people find inspiration to coin the expressions that form such an integral part of the language they speak. Gadet believes that it is in the language of young speakers in particular that we recognise a difference in linguistic performance influenced by the presence of “new populations in big cities” (2017, p. 27). Louis-Jean Calvet supports these hypotheses when he reminds us that urban spaces constitute a place of convergence for people from diverging foreign backgrounds and by extension for different languages (1994, p. 15). He goes on to state that urban

environments represent more than a space where languages coexist since that they are also the site where coexistence is negotiated and managed (ibid, p. 19)<sup>20</sup>.

The distinct manifestations of linguistic fusion observed in the non-standard forms of language deployed in the city may be said to arise from this existence of different languages in one space. Calvet takes the example of Paris, explaining that this is a city in which people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds communicate in French as a shared, common language. He shows us how cross-fertilisation occurs through speakers' diverse backgrounds that have a pronounced impact on the variety of French they speak, since it is necessarily influenced by not only their own mother tongue but by those of the people with whom they are speaking (ibid, p. 262). This reasoning can arguably be applied to any area in which there is a notable instance of immigration and furthermore seen as a contributing explanation for the presence of foreign vocabulary and expressions in the local population's working language. Calvet is nevertheless keen to point out that these "melting pot" and integration aspects of the city also make of it a place which fast tracks the process of separation between different groups (ibid, p. 17)<sup>21</sup>. His observation takes us back to the way in which language can be, and is, divisive, when used as means of agency for young people belonging to marginalised groups wishing to assert their identity and dissidence, and it also reminds us how language is a means of exercising power for the dominant socioeconomic group.

It is important to note that while urban environments may be the birthplace of various neologisms or new forms of expression within specific varieties, the implementation of linguistic innovation created in such places is not restricted only to urban areas. Indeed, the expressions developed in big cities may subsequently be seized by people living outside of these areas, thanks largely to the spread of language through (social) media. The marginalised youth whose voice is presented in the fictional texts of the corpus do live in an urban environment, but it may be argued that certain aspects of

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<sup>20</sup> "[...] *la ville est plus qu'un lieu de coexistence des langues, elle est un lieu de gestion de cette coexistence.*"

<sup>21</sup> "[...] *la ville est à la fois un creuset, un lieu d'intégration et une centrifugeuse qui accélère la séparation entre différents groupes.*"

their way of speaking can be found in other varieties of youth language practised in places outside of metropolises. This question of usage can be related back to the broader concept of linguistic variation, since we know that a speaker's language choices can be influenced by a number of factors. In some instances, therefore, geography might play a defining role in determining a person's expression, whereas in other cases it could be their social situation.

### **Terminology Adopted for Thesis**

The vast range of terms used to describe youth language invites a cautious approach to the application of any label and, as I have endeavoured to emphasise, it needs to be recognised that a great number of factors will necessarily influence and determine an individual's way of using language. If we study the language of the marginalised youth of the banlieue, we can see the significance of a number of extralinguistic factors that bind their choices, namely age, location, and social relegation. Outside of the banlieue, young people who feel particularly marginalised might wish to associate themselves with banlieue youth by using banlieue slang. In such contexts, the non-banlieue youth might share fewer extralinguistic circumstances with their geographically distant peers than those which are common to marginalised youth within the banlieue. However, as we will see in Chapter 6, not all young people living in the banlieue necessarily feel a need to use banlieue slang. This chapter has demonstrated that speech communities are complex and made up of speakers whose linguistic wants and needs vary according to a number of factors.

Bearing in mind the confusion surrounding the term slang and the blurred boundaries between the various terms studied, I have chosen to analyse the language used in the texts in my corpus by relying largely on the model of sociolinguistic variation, acknowledging the inevitable overlap and interaction between different forms of variation. Analysis requires terminology, and despite the evident pitfalls of broad labels, the use of various terms provides us with a helpful set of defining characteristics and parameters through which to understand language use. In this thesis, the broad term slang will therefore be most often adopted to describe the language used in source

and translated texts, accompanied occasionally by the qualifying terms “banlieue” or “youth”. In order to understand the driving forces behind the widespread use of slang in the banlieue and what connects this type of language to other links in the chain of youth speak, it is vital to study the functions that they serve. To this end, Chapter 2 will explore how slang is formed to fulfil the needs of its speakers and how (and why) it can be used in fictional texts.



## Chapter 2: Practising Slang

This second chapter devoted to slang is of a more concrete nature and aims to explore the form that slang takes when it is used by young people in marginalised urban areas. As such, I will draw on linguistic concepts to frame my discussion of the functions of slang, and of how slang is formed to serve these functions. This will be followed by a consideration of how slang spreads and for how long it lasts. I will close the chapter by studying the way in which the features of slang that writers choose to include in a work of fiction may be altered from their initial form to suit the fictional format.

### 2.1 Functions, Features, and Formation of Slang

In his article discussing the type of language used in the banlieue around Paris, Albert Valdman laments the general tendency to forget that language is not purely a means of communication. He reminds us that it serves other functions since it also acts a means of expressing feelings, of adding colour to our speech, and of positioning ourselves among diverse social groups<sup>22</sup>. Slang in particular serves a number of specific expressive functions. Now that I have established through an examination of the most salient works on slang what it is and what it is not, it is worthwhile reflecting on what slang does, and why it exists. Before enumerating fifteen functions of slang, Partridge builds on work by other slang scholars to propose that slang is a means of expression that emanates from a desire to secure through language an increased vivacity as well as an increased sense of intimacy, and that this type of speech acts as a tool to connote the speaker's personality (1933, p. 4). Partridge's own ideas of the fifteen reasons for slang point to a number of functions, namely those of playfulness, wit and ingenuity, novelty, surprise, reducing seriousness,

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<sup>22</sup> “L'on a tendance à oublier que la langue ne sert pas qu'à communiquer mais qu'elle permet aussi d'exprimer ses sentiments, d'imprimer une certaine coloration à la parole, de se situer parmi divers groupes sociaux, pour ne pas mentionner qu'une partie des effets énonciatifs.”

communicating complicity and belonging, and, finally, exclusion (ibid, p. 5)<sup>23</sup>. In light of the specific characteristics of the language used in the texts of the corpus, to be discussed in further detail in Chapter 6, it will be helpful to consider in more depth several of these functions.

When writing about the language used in the banlieue of Paris, Stella Linn states that this sociolect serves three primary functions: that of the creation of social cohesion and group identity (“we code”), that of opposition, excluding members of an outside world, specifically authority figures (“they code”), and, finally, that of recreation, since young people find it particularly amusing to play with language (2016, p. 2). Valdman echoes these ideas when he states that the language used in the banlieue can be cryptic, playful and expressive, and a means of expressing identity (2000, p. 1188). Linn’s and

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<sup>23</sup> Partridge lists fifteen reasons for the use of slang, stating that these constitute a minimum:

1. In sheer high spirits, by the young in heart as well as by the young in years; ‘just for the fun of the thing’; in playfulness or waggishness.
2. As an exercise either in wit and ingenuity or in humour. (The motive behind this is usually self-display or snobbishness, emulation or responsiveness, delight in virtuosity).
3. To be ‘different’, to be novel.
4. To be picturesque (either positively or – as in the wish to avoid insipidity – negatively).
5. To be unmistakably arresting, even startling.
6. To escape from clichés, or to be brief and concise. (Actuated by impatience with existing terms.)
7. To enrich the language. (This deliberateness is rare save among the well-educated, Cockneys forming the most notable exception; it is literary rather than spontaneous.)
8. To lend an air of solidity, concreteness, to the abstract; of earthiness to the idealistic; of immediacy and appositeness to the remote. (In the cultured, the effort is usually premeditated, while in the uncultured it is almost always unconscious when it is not rather subconscious.)
9.
  - a. To lessen the sting of, or on the other hand to give additional point to, a refusal, a rejection, a recantation;
  - b. To reduce, perhaps also to disperse, the solemnity, the pomposity, the excessive seriousness of a conversation (or of a piece of writing);
  - c. To soften the tragedy, to lighten or to ‘prettify’ the inevitability of death or madness, or to mask the ugliness or the pity of profound turpitude (e.g. treachery, ingratitude); and/or thus to enable the speaker or his auditor or both to endure, to ‘carry on’.
10. To speak or write down to an inferior, or to amuse a superior public; or merely to be on a colloquial level with either one’s audience or one’s subject matter.
11. For ease of social intercourse. (Not to be confused or merged with the preceding.)
12. To induce either friendliness or intimacy of a deep or a durable kind. (Same remark.)
13. To show that one belongs to a certain school, trade, or profession, artistic or intellectual set, or social class; in brief, to be ‘in the swim’ or to establish contact.
14. Hence, to show or prove that someone is not ‘in the swim’.
15. To be secret – not understood by those around one. (Children, students, lovers, members of political secret societies, and criminals in or out of prison, innocent persons in prison, are the chief exponents.)

Valdman's comments complement the theories of sociolinguistics I outlined previously on the use of slang outside of a banlieue-specific context. Such theories propose a range of reasons for the use of non-standard language and slang, and several of these are of particular relevance to the present study. In addition to addressing the three functions described by Linn, I will also look at the function of competition since it is of particular importance in *Moi non*, as it is in many of the other works under study. It is clear that the characters are quite concerned with their linguistic prowess, specifically in terms of their wit and ability to outshine their peers in *concours de vanes*, or "ribbing competitions", as well as in rap battles, and their efforts point to the performative nature of language use.

## **Rebellion and Exclusion**

Since the standard language is, generally speaking, established and enforced by dominant groups in society, deviating from the norm, and refusing to adhere to the model of standard language through the use of dissenting forms of language, can and does provide for marginalised minority groups a means of expressing discontent and dissatisfaction. Goudaillier points to this idea of slang being "the linguistic manifestation of a revolt that is above all else social", achieved through the manipulation and appropriation of a number of traits of the dominant language, twisted to create a new way of speaking<sup>24</sup>. Among the various ways of responding to relegation outlined at the beginning of this section, the expression of dissent and rebellion through language use seems to be a form of reaction available to people deprived of resources often more difficult (and costly) to obtain. Tampering with the features of language widely deemed to be non-negotiable therefore provides young people with a cost-free and concrete means of demonstrating how they can take real ownership over what is not supposed to be theirs.

Dominant groups might choose to equate this form of linguistic shake-up on the part of marginalised individuals' with a lack of understanding of the

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<sup>24</sup> "L'instillation d'un grand nombre de traits spécifiques, qui proviennent du niveau identitaire, dans le système linguistique dominant correspond alors à une volonté permanente de créer une diglossie, qui devient la manifestation langagière d'une révolte avant tout sociale."

rules of language. Such judgement raises, as outlined earlier, an additional set of questions, and I will revisit this idea at several points in the thesis when considering the relationship that is established between the characters of a text and the audience through the use of non-standard language in fictional texts. How and why, exactly, young residents of the banlieue rebel against the sway of standard French will also be explored in greater detail in Chapter 6. At this stage, it is important to expand on the use of slang as a vector through which young people can express their affiliation to a particular marginalised group.

It can be argued that the rebellious functions of slang are intricately linked with a linguistic performance of identity since, as Valdman points out, young people growing up in a socio-economically disadvantaged area often make the choice to affirm their difference through unique linguistic behaviours (2000, p. 1190)<sup>25</sup>. Indeed, if speakers make the decision to colour their language with the conventions of the slang used by a particular group, deviating from the norms of the standard language, they are effectively communicating their affiliation with this group. Since the slang of one group necessarily differs to a certain extent from that of another group, countless ways of constructing, arranging, and pronouncing the words and expressions they use are unique, and these characteristics reinforce the distinctiveness of a particular group in relation to others. What is more, as David Lepoutre insists in *Coeur de banlieue*, mastering slang is indispensable and a rite of passage for speakers wishing to become part of their chosen peer group (2001, p. 134)<sup>26</sup>.

As well as demarcating different subgroups, it is apparent that slang can also serve to exclude members of outside groups who will not completely understand the language being used. In her book *Slang and Sociability*, Connie Eble states that “for hearers who are outside the group, slang is like nonsense words” (1996, p. 98). These “hearers” might belong to rival subgroups, or to members of the dominant linguistic group. Members of a particular community expressing their belonging to that community also communicate implicitly that when their speech falls on ears unable to decipher

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<sup>25</sup> “Evoluant dans un milieu socio-économique défavorisé, ces jeunes [...] affirment leur identité par des comportements linguistiques qui leur sont propres.”

<sup>26</sup> “[...] maîtriser le verlan et savoir manipuler les mots à loisir, posséder l’argot, connaître les ‘finesses’ du langage obscène et des ‘gros mots’, parler haut et fort et se faire entendre en toutes circonstances, pouvoir s’exprimer rapidement et de façon percutante, tout cela est nécessaire pour être intégré au groupe des pairs.”

its meaning, these ears belong to outsiders. The speech of members of a particular subgroup speaking among themselves could therefore appear impenetrable to the onlooker, or on-hearer, as it were, who may not understand the conversation, just as members of a subgroup may intentionally use slang while directly addressing a non-member to communicate distance. Lepoutre considers this particular technique when he discusses his encounters with adolescents in the banlieue who deliberately use the coded lexical slang of *verlan* to confuse and exclude (2001, pp. 156-157).

Bearing in mind this possibility for outsiders to construe slang terms, it may be more opportune therefore to see this technique as a means of asserting one's affiliation to a particular group. Literary translator William O. Desmond would no doubt commend such a decision, since he is of the opinion that contemporary slang has lost much of its cryptic function (in Antoine 2004, p. 25). What is more, it could be argued that the increased availability of slang dictionaries (*Urban Dictionary*, *The Online Slang Dictionary*, and *Wiktionary* for English, in particular, and *Le Dictionnaire de la zone*, and *Bob : L'autre trésor de la langue* for French, for example) and discussion forums online also facilitate the decoding of slang, though without ensuring the credibility of outsiders who attempt to master and adopt the slang of a particular group.

We might also consider the possibility of the use of slang as a form of self-exclusion. Louis-Jean Calvet describes this tendency when he states that:

When a group is socially excluded, when it finds itself marginalised or rejected, its members sometimes feel a surge of pride, marking the boundaries that separate them from other by glorifying the specificity of their group, as if deliberately setting themselves apart.<sup>27</sup>

(2011, p. 273)

He links this to the phenomena of rap and of *verlan* and declares that these act as a mode of expression for young people who find themselves in between two cultures and languages, giving rise to an "interstitial culture" harnessed artistically or linguistically for the purposes of asserting their identity. The groups marginalised in society assert in a way their difference and rejection by

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<sup>27</sup> "Lorsqu'un groupe est socialement exclu, qu'il se trouve marginalisé ou rejeté, il a parfois une sorte de sursaut d'orgueil et marque lui-même les frontières le séparant des autres en glorifiant sa spécificité, comme s'il se mettait volontairement à part."

accentuating it through their speech, appearance, and behaviour (ibid). I will also return to the ideas of exclusion broached here when exploring the implications of the use of slang in literature in terms of the reader-text relationship since the reader may or may not be part of the group to which the characters using slang in a literary work belong.

## **Competition and Novelty**

Since the use of slang to express belonging to a group can be seen as a means of performing identity, such a performance requires linguistic nimbleness if speakers intend for their speech to impress. Lepoutre broaches the idea of a speaker's deployment of language to assert his or her verbal prowess in the context of insults and ribbing (2001, pp. 173-203). We see here how the notion of group identity is complexified as aspects of an individual's idiolect come to add further zest to the slang he or she implements. Within a subgroup, therefore, we see struggles for recognition as individuals seek to trump the verbal achievements of their peers. In addition, we may also see how members of one subgroup can seek to bolster their collective identity in opposition to another group in an effort to establish difference, thus instilling and enhancing rivalry. Reflections of such verbal sparring can be found, as previously stated, in rituals such as rap battles or comeback competitions where speakers vie for credibility and authority.

Triumph in such competitions, whether officially through awards and titles or implicitly through the approval and admiration of one's peers, requires rhetorical skills to allow speakers to produce speech that comes across to listeners as clever and convincing. As in rap, such rhetoric often finds its essence in an innovative, creative use of words achieved through the unusual manipulation of language seen in, for example, unexpected collocations, figures of speech, and wordplay. We might, in common with English lexicographer and slang specialist Jonathon Green, see slang as a source of enjoyment:

I see slang as Freud would see the Id. In other words, the unrestrained side of ourselves. Slang is the pleasure principle. It evokes it in language, lets us get it out there. It has no morals, it has no party, it has no religion, it's just in it for the kicks.

(2012, online)

Slang, it can be argued, provides entertainment for its producer and its consumer in such a way that it reveals a person's ability to outperform their verbal rivals.

Much like the overlap between different types of sociolinguistic variation, slang is not uniquely motivated by one sole function; rather, its use can be motivated by a variety of factors. This brief exploration of several of the functions of slang has demonstrated that they are distinctly linked and interdependent. Innovation, for instance, allows for playful use of language that stands in opposition to the standard language and therefore communicates a sort of dissent. Furthermore, this defiant use of non-standard language also contributes to the creation of an opposing group identity through a non-standard form of language characterised by liveliness and constant renewal to ensure that it remains fresh and, to a certain extent, indecipherable, unable to be “decoded” by members of outside and/or authority groups.

### **Slang as Lexis? Slang or Slangs?**

In much of the literature available on slang both in English and in French, scholars advance the idea that its composition is largely restricted to lexis. We might attribute such a trend to the fact that lexis is the most dynamic aspect of language, constantly evolving alongside the more stable syntactical and grammatical building blocks of language. The definition proposed by the *OED* cited at the beginning of Chapter 1 gives prominence to the place of words in slang, but it states that slang “[consists] of words” and does not specify that it is restricted to it. Despite this broader conceptualisation of the term, it is common to read work by scholars who argue, if not explicitly then at least through the language used to describe slang, that this category of language is defined primarily by its vocabulary. As a first port of call, we can refer to the work of Fabrice Antoine who insists that slang borrows its phonology and grammar from colloquial language (2004, p. 11)<sup>28</sup>. Meredith Doran focuses

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<sup>28</sup> “[...] *l’argot emprunte sa phonétique et sa grammaire à la langue commune sous une forme généralement dite ‘populaire’.*” and “[...] *l’argot est un lexique parasite qui se nourrit de la langue commune.*”

even more expressly on the role of lexis in youth slang, confident that “the most notable feature of contemporary youth language is its lexicon” and citing *verlan* as the most well-known source of terms, combined with borrowings from different languages and dialects of importance for banlieue youth (2007, p. 500).

We might also refer to Albert Valdman who builds on views advanced by Pierre Guiraud (author of *L'Argot, Que sais-je ?* 1958) and Lazare Sainéan to underline that slang is not a language in its own right since it is restricted to lexis and generally does not concern grammar nor phonology (Valdman 2000, p. 1183)<sup>29</sup>. His ideas are supported by numerous other theorists, notably Françoise Gadet, who, when writing about diatopic (geographic) variation, refers to previous work by Gaston Tuillon and states that these regional variations are 95% lexical and only 5% grammatical (1997, p. 4), as well as by Denise François-Geiger, who also asserts that slang is not a language but a lexis (1989, p. 5)<sup>30</sup>. François-Geiger goes as far as to say that colloquial language, in its spoken form, provides a linguistic structure, specifically syntactic, into which slang terms can be inserted (*ibid*, p. 7).

The common thread in the views put forward by these scholars can be found in the argument that slang is essentially lexical and that the terms making up its vocabulary are inserted into informal sentences that make use of relaxed syntax. Partridge’s declaration that slang “flourishes best” when used in colloquial speech confirms such a deduction (1933, p. 4). A number of scholars differentiate between slang and coded forms of language, suggesting that the vocabulary of slang can be harnessed by any member of the speech community, regardless of their affiliation to any subgroups. Valdman, for example, puts forward this viewpoint, stating that slang proper functions as a lexical reservoir from which speakers of all classes can select terms in order to make their vernacular speech more expressive (2000, p. 1182)<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> “Guiraud et Sainéan soulignent que l’argot n’est pas à proprement parler une langue puisque ce phénomène se réduit en général au lexique et n’interpelle, en général, ni la grammaire ni la phonologie.”

<sup>30</sup> “Lorsqu’on parle d’argot, il faut avant tout préciser qu’un argot n’est pas une langue mais un lexique.”

<sup>31</sup> “Aujourd’hui, l’argot proprement dit, c’est-à-dire à l’exclusion de ses formes codées, fonctionne comme un réservoir lexical dans lequel puisent les locuteurs de toutes les classes sociales pour rendre leur parler vernaculaire plus expressif.”

According to Valdman's notion of the difference between slang and other forms of coded language, slang operates as a sort of lexical database available to all people, regardless of their social affiliation or class. His ideas are developed by François-Geiger, who suggests that there is a type of generalised, common slang which can be used by the wider community (1975, p. 27). We might further infer that this inclusive type of slang is accompanied by exclusive varieties of a more impenetrable type of speech. Such reasoning would indicate that the language used by the young people living in the banlieue could and should be qualified as a "coded form" of language, at least to a certain extent since it cannot always be entirely understood by all members of all sections of society. I will explore this idea in greater detail in Chapter 6 of the thesis, as well as when analysing the banlieue texts in Part Three.

The assertion that slang terms can be used by all speakers in a speech community also invites a questioning of how credible a person might sound when uttering some slang words. If we are to adhere to this distinction between slang in its genuine form and its coded form, and if, as Valdman insists, there exists a reservoir of slang terms accessible to all speakers, it must be recognised that these terms are born from the specific language of sociolinguistic subgroups. The implications of the usage of these terms are inevitably modified when pronounced by people belonging to other subgroups. In addition, the members of these other subgroups have arguably little knowledge of the context in which these terms arise, and their using of them may therefore be interpreted as either illegitimate or reductive, effacing the original significance of the vocabulary.

### **Lexis and Beyond: How is Slang Formed?**

Developing an awareness of the features that constitute the concrete formation of slang, both in English and in French, is vital in this thesis for the simple reason that the analysis of the translation of slang forms relies heavily on the ability to identify and (re)produce these features in both languages. It would therefore be imprudent to claim that a familiarity with the features of slang in both languages is not necessary for the analysis of a source text and, subsequently, the corresponding translated text. It would be even more

imprudent to suggest that it is possible to translate such language without mastering the nuances of its construction. My exploration of the contextual reasons motivating the usage of slang, and the effects engendered by its appearance in speech and in fictional texts, must therefore be accompanied by an investigation of what slang looks like in more concrete terms.

It is frequently underlined in the literature on slang that pinning down the origin of a slang term is generally quite difficult; some might even say that it is impossible. This fact is often attributed to the idea that slang depends on metaphors or illusions that usually bear connections with events occurring at the time of its entry into language (Partridge 1933, p. 31). McCrindle and Wolfinger state that it is rare to find in the playful language used among peers coinages that refer to “mundane activities” (2011, p. 60). Rather, they argue that youth slang is significantly more likely to refer to more exciting activities (e.g. parties, drinking, fighting) and feature terms that “express approval or disapproval of something or someone and to classify other people, situations and scenarios” (ibid). Overall, we can see that slang as lexis seems to travel fast and is inserted into the speech of people all over the world who may not be aware of the period or point of departure. The fact that it is difficult to know when and where and by whom a term or expression was coined contributes to the blurring of boundaries of groups using slang terms once they are in circulation, a fact that will be useful to bear in mind when exploring possible strategies for its translation. This is especially true when attempting to determine the risk of a suggested displacement through the use of an “equivalent” slang in the language of translation.

Running through the various explorations of the formation of slang is an emphasis on the way in which slang tends to play with words to deploy language in an unusual and often unexpected manner, alluding therefore to the function of novelty and playfulness previously evoked. This importance of the stylistics of slang is reflected in Partridge’s reminder that “slang is undoubtedly concerned quite as much with the presentation of the idea as with the idea itself” (1933, p. 36). While scholars of slang consistently point to the creativity involved in its formation, they are also eager to remind us that slang words are formed in much the same way as words belonging to the standard variety of language. Connie Eble deduces the linguistic make-up of slang words

that she provides from her study exploring the slang used by college students in the US. She purports that slang terms are rarely coined, that they are variations of old words, either in terms of a change in form, or of a change in meaning, advancing that “almost all new words recycle words or parts of words that are already in the language” (1996, p. 25). Slang, then, might be seen as a creative manipulation of existing language.

As well as internal reworkings of terms and phrases in the language being spoken, Eble also cites borrowings from foreign languages as a source for slang word (ibid). This is repeated by Partridge who points to the possibility for cross-pollination in language as a result of openness to and receptiveness of other languages: “hospitality, whether to native coinages or to foreign arrivals, is the hall-mark of slang” (1933, p. 21). Flexner is another of the slang scholars who allude to this idea when he lists in his reflections on slang three cultural conditions that contribute to the creation of a significant slang vocabulary: (1) the hospitality to or acceptance of new objects, situations, and concepts; (2) the existence of a large number of diversified subgroups; and (3) the democratic mingling between these subgroups and the dominant culture (1975, p. x). We see that he extends the relevance of receptiveness to other languages to include the varying forms of one language spoken by different groups of a single, wider speech community, which leads us to ponder how slang spreads intralingually between speakers of a same language.

Partridge offers an additional source for slang words by stating that new interpretations of old words can result from misunderstandings, and also mentions the clipping and shortening of words (1933, p. 21). What is more, he believes that in the metaphors and wordplay visible in slang we can establish connections to certain ideas and semantic fields and argues that slang terms relating to sex, drinking, and money are the most prolific (ibid, p. 29). Eble offers a more detailed and concrete exploration of the process of word-building by outlining in particular the phenomenon of compounding, or when two words are added together, the way that different particles in phrasal verbs can change their meaning, the use of prefixes and suffixes, and, finally, the techniques of shortening, clipping sounds and blending (1996, pp. 26-34). She also identifies the role of functional shifts, or of words being adapted to alternative grammatical categories. Although she qualifies her words by stating

that this method is not always of great relevance in the English language due to its suppleness, since so many words function in several grammatical categories, she concedes that this does still happen, in cases where a noun might be used as a verb, for example (ibid, pp. 33-35).

Outside of studies concerned exclusively with the formation of slang in English, it is worthwhile considering some of the salient features of youth speech across languages, and across the globe. Recognising the specific defining and the broader binding trends in the composition of slang is a particularly valuable venture in the context of translation, since a translator is necessarily concerned with the identification of parallels between languages when seeking to produce a comprehensible, credible version of the original slang in the language of translation. To that end, we can refer to Gillian Lathey who cites Jan van Coillie in the chapter “Translating dialogue and dialect” of her 2016 book *Translating Children’s Literature*. Van Coillie undertook a study of the speech patterns of teenagers in English, Dutch, and German and identified a number of “typical linguistic markers that apply to most languages”, including: intensifying language, insults and swear words (as vocatives), neologisms and playful language, informal language, slang, special greetings, words from foreign languages, and clip words (abbreviated nouns or adjectives) (van Coillie 2012, p. 219 in Lathey 2016, p. 76).

Fabrice Antoine adopts a similar approach to identifying similarities in slang across languages and makes a list of linguistic traits outlined by Jean Tournier, including affixation (adding a prefix or a suffix to a word, for example, to create a new one), back-formation (removing part of a word to create a new one), compounding (joining two entire words to make a new one, amalgamation (joining two morphemes to create a new word), onomatopoeia, conversion (changing for example the part of speech of word to give it a new meaning), truncation or clipping, and the formation of acronyms or abbreviations (2004, p. 17)<sup>32</sup>. To this list, Antoine adds deformation and wordplay, and later departs from a complex and detailed lexicographical description of these techniques and characteristics of slang to suggest that the lexis of slang functions and is formed in much the same way in both French

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<sup>32</sup> *Préfixation / Suffixation / Dérivation inverse / Composition / Amalgame / Onomatopée / Conversion / Troncation / Siglaison / Emprunt*

and English and that its formation is similar (ibid, pp. 31-32). I will build on these ideas in the second and third sections of this thesis when broaching the specificity of the composition of slang spoken by young people in the banlieue and of the selections made by translators working to recreate these characters' voice, sifting through the string of sources and options available to them in English, but it is at present useful to consider the means by which slang is spread, and how long it remains in circulation.

## **2.2 Spread and Lifespan of Slang**

Language is constantly evolving, bringing with it new ways of expressing old ideas, or ways of expressing new ideas, as exemplified by the numerous lexical additions to the *OED* made four times per year. Flexner asserts that the temporally variable nature of vocabulary in particular, with new words constantly being formed and old words constantly changing form or usage, can be largely explained by situational context. He believes that it "is impossible for any living vocabulary to be static" since "language always responds to new concepts and developments with new words" (1975, p. vii). Slang words, in particular, are routinely qualified as ephemeral, evolving more rapidly than terms from a language's standard lexicon. Eble sets up a difference between "general vocabulary" and slang terms when she states that "slang items enjoy only a brief time of popularity, bursting into existence and falling out of use at a much more rapid rate than items of the general vocabulary" (1996, p. 13).

This transience of slang is often attributed to its cryptic and playful aspects, since there is a constant need to change and reinvent to avoid terms becoming known by people outside of the subgroup determining the slang. This tendency is confirmed by Partridge who points to novelty as a reason for the regular reinvigoration of slang since its users perceive a distinct desire to "escape from the old, accepted phrase" (1933, p. 19). Hudson reiterates this viewpoint when he says that "adolescents aim to be different from all previous adolescents, which gives rise to the constantly changing picture of teenage slang" (1997, p. 15). Young slang speakers therefore seek to set themselves apart not only from the dominant group/s in society, but also from previous speakers of the variety they use.

In an effort to explain how and why some slang terms might enjoy more longevity than others, Flexner names aptitude and usefulness as criteria for determining the longevity of slang terms (1975, p. ix). His thoughts are echoed by Partridge who seems to agree, stating that, when a slang term is fashionable or a sort of buzzword, it is “doomed to rapid extinction” (1933, p. 19). In the *Concise Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, based, on Eric Partridge’s *Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, editor Paul Beale expresses his surprise at the way in which many slang words he encountered had aged:

[...] a surprise that emerged for me in editing Partridge’s work was to find how old some of our everyday slang really is. While many terms from earlier C. 20 already have a dated air, [...] a multitude of others more vivid, familiar and still in current use, were coined as early as C. 17, but because of their racy flavour and their informality, they are still regarded as slang today.

(1990, p. vii)

Beale seems to point to “racy flavour” and “informality” as qualities likely to increase the lifespan of slang.

In an episode of the France Inter radio programme “*Le Téléphone Sonne*” dedicated to youth speak (“*Le Langage des jeunes : êtes-vous à la page ?*”) in October 2016, lexicographer Alain Rey was eager to inform listeners that a significant portion of the elements of the slang spoken by young people in the banlieue enters fairly quickly into the vocabulary of colloquial French, spoken by the broader population. He believes that this phenomenon occurs firstly via the schoolyard, and secondly because young people grow up (Demorand 2016, online). When young people grow up and continue to use aspects of the slang they employed as youths, this slang necessarily ceases to be youth slang and enters into a broader vocabulary. It could perhaps be deduced from this that people’s linguistic habits evolve with their age and socioeconomic situation. A person continuing to use the slang of their youth, however, once the pimples have made way for wrinkles, may indeed be attempting to tighten their clutch on the passing of time in a sort of linguistic refusal to accept the inevitability of growing old, through a nostalgic revival of what was in vogue when they were young.

Goudaillier also offers an explanation of the transition that slang words made from slang to everyday language. Among the countless examples he

provides are “*cambrion*” and “*loufoque*”, which he states now form part of the language’s standard vocabulary. Goudaillier establishes a distinction between slang forms and informal (“*populaire*”) forms of the French language, stating that these two categories eventually come to overlap after a period (2002, p. 7). As he describes the process by which slang words become part of the official language, Goudaillier identifies a number of steps, beginning with the transition between specific slang to general slang allowing the slang words of a particular subgroup to enter into the vocabulary of a broader body of slang words, before a transitional period in colloquial language that leads into the standard or even academic language (ibid)<sup>33</sup>. Goudaillier’s and Rey’s comments further echo the distinction made by certain scholars between “slang” and “slangs”, whereby words having seeped into a broader, more accessible repertoire constitute this form of general slang used by a vastly more significant number of people than the slangs of subgroups. Once again, this debate is symptomatic of the blurred boundaries between slang and colloquial language.

Flexner’s reflections from the 1960s indicate that words spread from subgroups to the dominant culture by their introduction through television, radio, movies, newspapers, and popular literature as well as through interaction with people belonging or having belonged to subgroups (1975, p. ix). I will return in particular to this role of popular cultural, and in particular music, in the dissemination of slang terms when we come to consider the intricate links between rap and slang. Almost sixty years later, we might extend Flexner’s classification of vectors for the spread of slang to include the various forms of expression and communication available online, notably social media.

The diverse and widely available modern means of communication necessarily quicken the speed at which slang is spread in the 21st century, while the documentation and definition of slang terms is also increasingly facilitated. The existence of these technological advances encourages us to think about the resulting effects on the cryptic function of slang. For instance, an outsider

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<sup>33</sup> “*Les formes argotiques et les formes non légitimées dites “populaires” de la langue française se rejoignent et c’est une des raisons qui ont permis alors aux mots des argotiers, des jargonneux de tel ou tel ‘petit’ métier de passer du statut d’argot particulier à celui d’argot commun avant même de transiter par l’intermédiaire de la langue familière vers la langue française circulante, voire la langue académique, celle que l’on peut aussi écrire, y compris à l’école.*”

motivated by a desire to imitate members of specific subgroups and eager to learn slang terms may be granted access, via technology, to tools that facilitate this linguistic acquisition. We might question, though, the extent to which their implementation of the slang learned would appear credible to “native speakers”, similar to the struggles of person speaking an acquired foreign language to appear authentic. These ideas further echo my previous reflections on the impressions of authenticity projected by a person’s performance when using a particular type of language, which I will again explore in relation to the way in which slang appears in literature, and how its presence can be translated convincingly into another language.

### **Can Slang be Global?**

In the various definitions and discussions of slang to which I have made reference in this thesis, it is clear that this type of non-standard language can assert the particularity of one group in relation to others and affirm the subgroups’ status as dissenting from the dominant group. Although scholars’ views are divided on the decipherability of slang to non-members of the subgroups using it, and on the demarcation of the groups by which it can be used and understood, I have sought to establish that certain elements of the slang of subgroups make their way from these largely impenetrable systems to the standard language of the broader speech community at varying speeds. Following these affirmations, I would like to shift the focus now to how we might find overarching ties between the different slangs of various subgroups, and to what extent we might plausibly suggest that the shared underlying objective of these forms of language in use might override the differences in their specific characteristics. This discussion, and those that have preceded it, will be crucial to Part 3 when I outline the reasoning behind the approach I adopted to translate *Moi non*. It will also contribute to showing how my approach differs to the strategies exploited by the translators of comparable works.

Discussing the use of slang in the book *The Corner*, set in Baltimore, Jonathon Green states that if the story were set in another American city within the same social circle in the same sort of context, one in which drug trafficking

was common practice, the slang would be different, but not radically so (2012, online). Such a reflection might lead us to infer that there are salient features of the overall structure common to different forms of dissenting language, regardless of the specific characteristics of the language that change depending on the form being used by a particular subgroup,. In a similar vein, Connie Eble states that the slang used by the group of students she examined for the purposes of her study does not differ radically from the slang used by other groups:

[...] there is no reason to believe that in fundamental characteristics of form and effects, the slang of students at the University of North Carolina is appreciably different from the slang of other American college students – or of truck drivers, hospital workers, lacrosse players, street gangs, or any other group that chooses to use a distinctive vocabulary as a means of social solidarity.

(1996, p. 1).

As Eble extends Green’s affirmation by broadening the conditions for similarity from comparable context (drug trafficking with Green) to “social solidarity”, she suggests that the mere existence of a desire to express group affiliation indicates similitude in terms of the “form and effects” of slang.

We might contemplate the applicability of this and Green’s theory to an even broader context that surpasses the geographical borders separating individual countries. Hence, we might postulate that, regardless of the linguistic particularities of the slang used by members of a collective in a specific geographic location, the people using these forms are manipulating the standard language of their country in a socially-comparable manner. The underlying features binding these forms could therefore be seen to outweigh their differences. According to this hypothesis, the slang used by a group of people speaking English in the United Kingdom, for example, could be compared with that used by a similar group of people speaking English in New Zealand, bearing of course in mind the inevitable differences in language brought about by the differing national contexts, as previously discussed. Advancing such a hypothesis, however, must be done with caution since I would not want to ignore or understate the importance of their singularity. Rather, this hypothesis seeks to acknowledge the distinctiveness of each slang while underlining the common characteristics that can facilitate and foster understanding and communication between subgroups. Highlighting the

shared intentions and functions of different slangs serves to draw attention to the shared opposition to the standard language and the dominant social group enforcing linguistic norms in different contexts.

With the constant technological advances facilitating physical and virtual travel, it is useful to consider the impact that contact between people of different backgrounds has on the way they communicate. We might see this contact as having an effect on the way people communicate with people from cultures and locations other than their own, as well as the way they communicate “among themselves”, speaking with members who share their background. Although the change in interlocutor no doubt influences a speaker’s linguistic choices depending on the circumstances, especially in terms of the extent to which s/he makes (or conversely does not make, as the case may be) a conscious effort to be understood by somebody who may not hold the same linguistic codes, beyond this gap in shared reflexes, it is interesting to reflect on the extent to which exposure to different linguistic options propels a speaker towards adopting new ways of speaking. Such linguistic adoption might take the form of borrowing, or of appropriation, with foreign terms and expressions engendering the coining of new terms and expressions.

In her chapter of *Language, Youth and Identity in the 21st Century*, Bente A. Svendsen refers to Labov’s statement on the way that the “mass media” can shape language. Labov states that “language is not systematically affected by the mass media, and is influenced primarily in face-to-face communication with peers” (Labov 2001, p. 228). As we approach the end of the 2010s, it seems fitting that such a statement would be rephrased in the light of technological developments since there is no doubt that the very nature of face-to-face communication itself is perpetually being changed and transformed. The internet is putting people in touch with “peers” who do not, and indeed may never, share the same geographical space, making in-person communication impossible.

Although Tagliamonte claims that “people adjust their use of certain linguistic variants according to where they live, who they are surrounded by, and who they also wish to emulate” (2012, p. 36), people’s access to other people’s variants through the internet is widened in a sense, and

simultaneously narrowed in another, since the filtering parameters online allow people to delimit their sphere of influence, linguistic in this case, with more deftness. Emulating a particular section of society through language is, as I have shown, arguably a more straightforward process with the rise of new ways of producing and consuming speech that are in constant development. I do not mean here to focus on the ways in which a person may or may not appear credible when adopting the speech habits of others, but rather on the ways in which this exposure to foreign terms and expressions can change and shape a person's use of language.

My ideas are reinforced to a certain degree by Svendsen and by Canadian linguist J.K. Chambers: Svendsen asserts that “increased mobility, tourism, as well as technological advances such as the Internet, mobile phone and new social media have decreased global distance and created an extensive flow of cultural expressions, money, goods and people” (in Nortier and Svendsen 2015, p. 3) and Chambers offers his own views on mobility by stating that it “causes people to speak and sound more like people from other places” (Chambers 2003, p. 73). It seems appropriate to deduce from Chambers' affirmation in particular that increased contact between different people from different places does indeed have a transformational impact on language. Additionally, we might extend, or, in effect, narrow this reasoning so that it is applied to the slang of young people in urban areas. I will revisit these ideas in subsequent discussions of how increased contact between young people contributed to the elaboration of my approach to the translation of *Moi non*, since I argue that globalisation has led to a partial blurring of boundaries between different varieties of youth speak in Englishes across the globe, at least to enough of an extent to warrant the harnessing of the most salient shared features for use in fictional texts.

### **2.3 Slang in Fictional Texts**

Before embarking on an exploration of the particularities of rap music and hip-hop culture and the inherent intertwining of slang and rap, I would like to examine the ways in which the slang used in literature might depart from the slang used in “real life”. Stella Linn describes the type of language

used in literary texts as a “literary sociolect”, adopting the term put forward by Gillian Lane-Mercier in 1997, and beckoning a consideration of how the language used in literary texts is perhaps a form of linguistic pseudo-realism; a simulation of “reality”, of the way people speak in the “real world” (2000, p. 45). Though many literary critics may advocate an approach to reading that shies away from scrutinising the background and identity of the author of a text, when the use of slang is involved, it seems worthwhile to question at least the extent to which the author masters or has access to the type of language spoken by the characters depicted. Such a question is relevant to this study in terms of how it helps us to determine more confidently the credibility of the attempt to reproduce the voice of marginalised youth in a work of fiction.

Endeavouring to understand the author’s angle is also of a general importance in ethical terms, since it helps to decipher the reasons for which they have decided to offer a version of a particular voice to audiences. It may also shed light on how their motivations might influence the shape of the final version of the slang used. Mikhail Bakhtin brings the question back to the author’s intentions, stating that “a particular language in a novel is always a particular way of viewing the world, one that strives for a social significance” (1981, p. 333). When considering an author’s choice to include the slang of a specific group in a work of fiction, we might apply Bakhtin’s line of reasoning to suggest that the work of fiction inevitably seeks to be bestowed with a particular pertinence outside of the realm of fiction so that it acts indirectly or directly as a form of representation of the real-life group portrayed.

According to Partridge, when slang is used in literature, critics generally state that its presence serves to strengthen the author’s style (1933, p. 20). Responding to this claim, we might wish to reflect on the level of prestige that is actually attached to literary works in which slang makes an appearance, or at the very least to consider how these works are reviewed and discussed by critics, and what position they occupy in the canon. When analysing the presence of slang in the texts under study in this thesis, it is of further importance to take into consideration the way in which the author positions him/herself (or is positioned by external agents, such as editors) in relation to the characters depicted: that is to say, to consider if the non-standard language of marginalised groups is presented in the first or the third person; if it is

presented only in dialogue and differentiated from the “literary” language of the narration; if it is explicitly or implicitly filtered through the voice of standard language speakers and so an “imagining” of the voice rather than a reproduction of it. Beyond the text itself, it is also interesting to study aspects of the paratext, both in terms of its presentation through the peritext and the conversation surrounding the work which involves directly the author (and potentially the translator), in the form of interviews or direct quotes. This is particularly relevant in terms of the level of disclosure that the author or the editorial team might provide when discussing the intended legitimacy of the minority voice projected.

Alluding to the differences between written and spoken slang, Denise François-Geiger believes that slang is primarily intended to function on an oral level and that written slang is necessarily a secondary form intended to reproduce, a process that inevitably involves alteration (1975, p. 8). She further states that an author does actually write “in slang” but in a polished or relaxed style, especially in terms of syntax, where transcribed slang terms are inserted (*ibid.*, p. 9). Though her argument is interesting, it might find itself quickly dismantled by the use of slang in texts when it is presented in ways that deviate from such a perception. As will be seen when analysing the texts chosen for study in this thesis, slang can appear in a range of circumstances in literary texts, and the intensity and presumed credibility of its presence necessarily vary depending not only on the author’s intentions (conscious or unconscious, stated or unstated) but also on the stylistic tools at their disposal.

Sara Ramos Pinto is of the opinion that, when dealing with slang in literature, “the degree of linguistic mimicry depends on the author’s aesthetic, narrative, thematic, stylistic or functional objectives” (2009, pp. 291-292). Her views may be developed to encompass not only the writers’ conscious or stated objectives, but the sphere of possible interpretations offered by the text, which is clearly much more difficult to ascertain. It seems important in particular to reflect on the extent to which the author (and/or translator, where relevant) has the capacity to represent the speech of the groups and individuals depicted, and the methods used to acquire and reproduce the specific features of their way of speaking. It would be reductive to argue that if the author is an “insider”, if s/he is a “native speaker” of the particular slang transcribed for readers in

the fictional text, the transcription will be more natural and credible. Rather, it is more judicious to take into account the author's exposure to or mastery of the slang while also considering his or her mastery of the codes of the medium of production. In this way, we can see how the final version might constitute a convincing written form of the chosen slang which corresponds to the norms of the fictional genre at hand.

Pursuing this line of reasoning, when analysing the texts under study in this thesis, it will be useful to ask if the producer of each text is a member of the speech community to which s/he gives a voice, and indeed to what extent this is significant or relevant. Such a question gives rise to further considerations of the broader issue of agency and legitimacy in expression. We might ask such questions as: Who has the right to speak for whom? In what circumstances? With what level of disclosure of the author's relationship to the groups and individuals depicted? If a person has the skills and means to produce a text which gives voice to powerless or marginalised populations, should s/he make use of this platform and opportunity if it means that some of the specific features of this voice are somewhat inaccurate? These questions encourage an overall assessment of the benefits of providing a flawed voice as opposed to no voice at all, if it allows for an otherwise unheard plight to be heard by a wider audience in some form, and I will revisit them, explicitly and implicitly, when exploring the traits of the texts in my corpus, both in their original version and in translation.

It is important to acknowledge within the scope of this thesis the irony of the use of non-standard language as a form of rebellion. Arguably, marginalised youth exacerbate sentiments of scorn on the part of speakers of the standard variety of language when using slang, because speakers of the standard language, as a general rule, consider this non-standard way of speaking to be inferior to their own. Viewed in this light, the inclusion of slang in literary and cinematographic texts can constitute a form of validation of this type of language, since it allows the words and expressions to travel. This seems particularly true of texts that provide a toned-down, more "accessible" form of slang for audiences, suitable for broader consumption. Strategies harnessed to soften slang may render a text intelligible enough for audiences to actually engage with a version of the language spoken by marginalised

youth, showing that slang can be a vital tool for the creation of valuable, viable art. Indeed, it does not seem unreasonable to suggest that aficionados of the standard language would also be art enthusiasts, equipped with the understanding that unconventional approaches to producing art represent the first steps in innovation and new ways of creation.

When broaching the topic of how non-standard language can be presented to audiences in fiction, Alexandra Assis Rosa establishes a distinction between “characterising” and “non-characterising” discourse, stating that the former “tends to concentrate in dialogue representation” and that the latter is what defines narrator discourse, written in the standard variety (2015, p. 5). The use of characterising discourse, then, is a tool used in character development to provide or suggest information about a character’s identity, and potentially about the group to which this character belongs. Such a stylistic choice on the part of authors effectively mitigates the opposition between standard and non-standard forms of language. Arguably, it also serves to assert the importance and value of non-standard language, since the author opts to ascribe enough importance to a particular variety to warrant its adoption by instilling its features throughout the text.

Another stance is put forward by Anthony Pym who posits in his article “Translating Linguistic Variation: Parody and the Creation of Authenticity”, a discussion as brief as it is dense, that the producer of a text generally uses one of two options when presenting linguistic variety: authenticity or parody, both of which tend towards the extreme. Pym asserts that these manifestations of variety are “created in the rapid shift away from an established norm”, and goes on to define this notion of norm as being “established within individual cultural products or genres of products” (2000, p. 74). Pym’s explanations of parody incite the inference that the strategy is characterised by an absence of realism since the text producers harness the most readily identifiable, often stereotypical, features of the language variety in question. Authenticity, on the other hand, can be associated with an attempt to convince audiences of the veracity of the representation of the variety being used. Pym draws a parallel between what he labels as the “aesthetics of authenticity” and the “aesthetics of detail”, since an abundance of more or less opaque features of a variety appears to indicate to the audience that “the linguistic result must surely be

the same thing” (ibid, p. 71). It seems reasonable to deduce from these reflections that displaying, or attempting to display, authenticity in the representation of linguistic variety contributes to conjuring up an illusion of realism, thus convincing the audience that the text they have been offered is plausible and an accurate representation of the reality it seeks to portray.

The question of the intelligibility of the slang presented in texts destined for “outsiders”, for people who do not speak or understand the language spoken by the marginalised youth portrayed, establishes a multi-faceted reader-text relationship. It can be related to the question of positioning, since the way in which the slang is presented and pitched to audiences, both inside and outside of the text, may help these audiences to gage the supposed authenticity of the language to which the work is exposing them. The fact that audiences do not ordinarily have access to this type of language undoubtedly means that they are ill-equipped to determine if the words offered to them could conceivably be produced by the young people the text claims to represent, or indeed if these young people would agree with or approve of the way in which their voice is being wielded.

This inability on the part of readers to ascertain the accuracy of the slang used in the texts of this corpus is, as I will show, compounded in translation, since the detachment and distance between the characters and the reader is even greater than in the original, and foreign readers further lack much of the contextual cultural baggage afforded to readers of the original through geographical proximity. Felski argues that “while we do not usually mistake books for persons, we often think of them as conveying the attitudes of persons, as upholding or questioning larger ideas and collective ways of thinking” (2008, p. 32). The way in which a book, or indeed a film, is presented to audiences might therefore influence their inclination to interpret the text as a means of confirming or denying particular aspects of a certain (socio)linguistic reality.

The authenticity of the linguistic variety used in fictional texts also intrigues Ramos Pinto, who postulates that precision is of little relevance. She states that “too much accuracy can compromise the reader’s understanding of the character’s speech” and that dialects and accents, when used in literary texts, are generally “literary re-creations that are only marginally concerned

with accuracy” (2009, p. 290). Linn points out that writers of fiction usually do not wish to exclude their audiences, who are unlikely to form part of the group to which the novel’s characters belong (2000, p. 9). To ensure that comprehension is not compromised, Ramos Pinto argues that “authors generally take advantage of linguistic stereotypes easily recognised by the average reader” (2009, p. 290), a strategy we could align with Pym’s concept of parody. This approach allows them to use language as a tool for characterisation since certain linguistic varieties are automatically associated with certain social or geographical group. As readers, we should bear this in mind when responding to literary representations of slang: the language presented on the page is arguably intended to inspire associations with a particular group (or subgroup) of people, and these associations are no doubt facilitated through the use of the most salient features of this group’s way of speaking which are not necessarily, then, reflective of their general speech patterns. It seems likely that such features may also be exaggerated in writing, to further assist the process of recognition on the part of readers. These ideas are particularly pertinent to translation as the translator tries to ponder linguistic options that allow for the recreation of a reader-text relationship that, in some way, reflects the original.

By way of closing, for now, the discussion on the ideas of accuracy and illusion in fictional texts, it seems pertinent to point out that audiences do not often appear to be overly concerned with accuracy. Indeed, if they are sufficiently engaged, they are likely to take the words presented to them as true representations of the context they are depicting. A parallel example in the realm of visual arts might be found in the reception of Emanuel Leutze’s 1851 painting *Washington Crossing the Delaware*. The immense popularity of this work seems to suggest people are not particularly bothered by the fact that the scene presented contains numerous historical inaccuracies, since the scope and the general aesthetic qualities of the final object prove sufficient to captivate and convince people of its artistic value. A more accurate version of the event painted by Mort Kuntzler is not as well-known or revered as Leutze’s iconic work, suggesting that what determines the value of a piece in the public eye is the artist’s ability to produce an impressive work that appears realistic enough to suppress questions about its accuracy, or at least to render such questions irrelevant.

To compound this issue, the fact that the work is a visual representation, an imagining of sorts, of an event to which the painter was not privy (Leutze was born in 1816 and Washington crossed the Delaware River in 1771), beckons further questions of legitimacy. We might ask if an artist can produce art based on something not experienced directly and relate this question to the adage “write what you know”. Based on the reception of Leutze’s painting (and of some on the works in the corpus, to be discussed in the second and third parts of this thesis), if ethical concerns are sidelined, the perceived legitimacy of a work depends largely on the artist’s talent, and specifically on their capacity to create an illusion of reality while conforming to the artistic codes of their genre, rather than on the exactness of the situation portrayed. Audiences may however feel more inclined to investigate the accuracy of works further when the situation in question is of a more foreign nature, such as in the representation of the voice of marginalised or foreign voices, especially when the paratext of this work is designed to convince the public that it will provide them with unprecedented access to what is otherwise inaccessible. The extent to which curious readers or viewers, members of “outside” groups, will be able to ascertain of accuracy of the work, however, remains questionable.

## **Features of Slang in Fiction**

More material examples of the manifestations of the features of orality and slang exploited in fictional texts, especially when written, are advanced by Assis Rosa who lists a number of features of spoken language exploited by authors in literature. These are: “simulation of non-linguistic signs (silences, sounds of laughter); graphic signals of paralinguistic signs (intonation, volume); forms of address; literary nonstandard accents and dialects; a predominance of phatic, expressive and conative functions (Jakobson 1960) revealed by the use of exclamations, questions, expletives, imperatives, repetitions, emphatic structures, and the use of the words “yes” and “no” (Chatman 1978, p. 202 and Chapman 1994)” (Assis Rosa 2015, p. 214). We can refer to the reflection offered by Norman Page to contextualise the use of these features:

The writer of dialogue [...] seeks to create by the use of one medium the effect of language used in another, and if there is a means by which this can be

accomplished, however incompletely, it is certainly not by the slavish reproduction of the features of actual speech.

(1988, p. 11)

In effect, his thoughts extend the concept of dialogue to encompass that of orality more broadly. The features of spoken language that a writer (or translator) decides to incorporate in a written text, then, are selected based on their perceived credibility and accessibility, or recognisability. Generally, this is done with the aim of allowing readers to penetrate the language to an extent that enables engagement with the work.

It is also worthwhile at this point of the thesis to consider the inevitable limits to a writer's (or translator's) ability to render orality in written texts, regardless of the linguistic variety being harnessed as the features of language that a literary text seeks to convey cannot be entirely reproduced in written form. The written words and symbols used to communicate orality are themselves necessarily artificial, but features including accent, pronunciation, speed, gesture, and body language are even more problematic. These might be suggested through the use of typographical techniques or buffering descriptive language that denotes their place and usage in the speech recorded, but such efforts to communicate orality remain, to a certain extent, contrived. I will look more closely at the various techniques used in written texts to reflect speech patterns when analysing the texts in the corpus and their translations/s, and consider the ways in which the decisions made in producing and reproducing these features of spoken language contribute to the functions of identity and belonging inherent in the use of slang. It will be of further interest to analyse the approach to authenticity adopted in cinematographic texts, and the disconnect between the oral and written visible in subtitles, as well as through the divergences between the written dialogue of a screenplay and the spoken language used in the film.

Towards the end of his article, Pym proposes a hypothesis based on his reflections on the manifestation of variety in fictional texts, according to which “non-standard varieties are used in cultural products to create distance between sender and received, and this distance may be in two dimensions, either towards parody or towards authenticity” (2000, p. 73). He amplifies this hypothesis by advancing that the distance established between sender and receiver results in positioning: in parody, “the sender and receiver side with

each other to distance a devalued third person”, whereas, through authenticity, the sender and receiver also side with each other, but with the aim of distancing an “upwardly valued third person” (ibid). For Pym, then, a concerted effort on the part of a text producer to concoct a credible representation of linguistic variety, through an abundant use of the variety’s features that does not seek to be entirely transparent and consequently to facilitate the consumer’s understanding, is tantamount to the communicating of a sort of veneration, or at least respect, of the speaker and/or group of speakers being portrayed.

Though this apparently binary idea of positioning is perhaps more complex than Pym can outline in the confined space of an article, and surely heavily dependent on the context of production as well as on the background and intentions of the text producer, his hypothesis encourages us to scrutinise more carefully the place assigned to linguistic variety in the texts under study here. In particular, it is vital to interrogate the use of language in terms of how it affects the way in which the audience perceives the characters portrayed, and, in turn, how, and why, the translation procedures applied to the variety might contribute to maintaining or modifying this perception.

### **Concluding Remarks on Youth Slang**

In exploring questions relating to the formation, features, and functions of the slang spoken by disenfranchised youth, I have sought to enable a better understanding of the broader context that determines the concrete characteristics of this type of language. I will amplify these aspects of the discussion when addressing the specificity of the setting of the works in my corpus. By considering how the texts under study tend to harness existing aspects of slang in an effort produce a version of this language suitable for fictional texts and more or less accessible to readers, I will observe the final product of a number of the processes I have outlined that contribute to the creation of “real-life” slang, seeking to reflect the voice of young people in the banlieue of Paris. This (socio)linguistic framework will also serve as building blocks to bolster the deliberations surrounding the various options available to translate this voice into English.

To close this section, it is useful to re-examine my earlier reflections on the ephemerality of slang as a factor that anchors it in a particular time and place, since this presupposes that slang loses its immediacy as soon as it is recorded on paper. Transcribing the speech of young people in any form, but especially in any type of fictionalised written form (or spoken in the case of cinematographic texts), is arguably a process that is both artificial and, to an extent, unachievable, at least to a degree that approaches complete accuracy. The various sources cited in this section have brought to light the fact that the linguistic repertoire of young people in urban areas is in an incessant state of turnover, with words and expressions constantly making their entrance onto centre stage. As I outlined earlier, it is difficult to know in advance how much time they will enjoy in the limelight before disappearing into the shadows, and perhaps ultimately being ushered into the wings. Although authors might try to predict which aspects of slang will stand the test of time and therefore use language they believe won't date too quickly, their predictions cannot always be accurate; they are not clairvoyant. And neither are translators, although they must grapple with the challenge of transferring the slang of the source text into their target language, while wondering to what extent they should attempt to anchor the translation in a specific time, and how best to go about this task to limit future impulses on the part of editors to have a text retranslated when the language used in the initial translation seems "dated".



# Chapter 3: Rap and the Hip-hop Movement

Devoting this chapter to a number of ideas linked to the creation and evolution of rap music will enable a more informed consideration of the broader context into which the lyrics and the language of rap fit. In what follows, I will draw on a number of publications written in English and in French that explore the history and current state of the Hip-hop Movement, before finally turning my attention to the language of rap and to the interplay between music and lyrics. The ideas presented in this chapter will subsequently feed into the more specific discussions relating to the texts featured in the thesis' case study. The reflections resulting from this section will also allow me to consider more comprehensively the implications of the various techniques adopted in linguistically uprooting these texts from their original setting through translation.

It should be noted that the domain of hip-hop studies is an intrinsically multifaceted area of study. This is exemplified by the *Cambridge Companion to Hip-Hop*'s inclusion of contributions from a number of fields such as ethnomusicology, music theory, sociology, political science, anthropology, theatre studies, dance, visual arts, journalism, film studies, and African-American studies. Reflecting on the range of angles from which scholars tackle issues related to hip-hop, the editor of this volume, Justin A. Williams, asserts that “hip-hop studies has become one of the most interdisciplinary fields in existence”, and that it is a “connecting point” for researchers from varied backgrounds (2016, p. 2).

Observations of this kind are particularly pertinent when considering the interdisciplinary nature of translation studies. In this thesis, the theories that I draw from diverse fields contribute to discussions on the implications of adopting different strategies when translating slang and rap in fictional texts. With regard to language in particular, this chapter will bring to light the ways in which rap and slang are inherently intertwined on a number of levels, from

the concrete factors of the way the lyrics and language are formed to the way that they are spread.

### **3.1 History and Context of Hip-Hop**

Rap music has its roots in the Hip-hop Movement which rose from the shaken streets of New York City's South Bronx in the 1970s. At once musical and verbal, it is one of the four branches of the movement, with the three others being DJing, breakdancing, and graffiti. Although it is not present explicitly in all of the texts in the corpus, many of the characters whose voices are presented in these texts, especially in *Moi non* and *La Haine*, are avid consumers and producers of rap music. As I will explain in Chapter 6, hip-hop culture plays an important role in the banlieue, as it does in many urban areas marked by marginalisation. This significance of hip-hop transcends individual tastes and habits in such a way that its influence is felt, directly or indirectly, by all young people living in these areas, regardless of whether or not they consume or participate in any of its branches.

The literature on hip-hop consistently affirms that the movement constitutes a means of socio-political expression for young and disenfranchised youth who want their voices to be heard. These affirmations are complemented in works on urban youth language since the movement is routinely cited as a means of expression, as well as of influence, for marginalised youth in urban areas. This is in line with the genesis of the movement, which is seen by many to surpass its various artistic forms to penetrate and influence the attitude and behaviour of its adherents. Hugues Bazin argues that hip-hop is characterised by a certain *état d'esprit*, a mindset determined by the continuous interaction between artistic expression and lifestyle, and he goes so far as to call it a "school of life" (1995, pp. 29-30). These views are reiterated by DJ Kool Herc, who, in the preface to Jeff Chang's *Can't Stop, Won't Stop*, puts forward the idea that hip-hop extends beyond the four commonly-cited branches to encompass further aspects of a person's appearance and behaviour. He argues that "[...] there are far more than those: the way you walk, the way you talk, the way you look, the way you communicate" (2005, p. xii).

We can also turn to Louis-Jean Calvet who, as we saw earlier, views rap as exemplary of the interstitial culture of young people in urban areas of high immigration. Calvet discusses the rise of rap in France at the end of the 1980s and states that it originates from the young people, the “*blacks, blancs, beurs*”, living on the outskirts of big cities in disadvantaged neighbourhoods grappling with unemployment or trouble at school (2011, p. 273). As he links rap to the marginalisation of these young people, to racism, and to the failure of the left (in particular in relation to immigrants’ right to vote), Calvet states that it is accompanied by other semiological markers sharing the same identity function. These markers are: graphic productions such as tags and graffiti; an “extremely acrobatic” form of dancing; clothing choices following fashion; linguistic forms (slang, accent, and *verlan*); and sport (especially basketball, whose stars are American and black, according to Louis) (2011, pp. 273-4). Calvet asserts that these markers are by no means French inventions, having originated in the United States where they were born out of similar social and political problems linked to immigration (*ibid.*, p. 274). From these ideas, it is clear that slang and rap music represent two of many possible avenues for response to marginalisation that young people might choose to take.

The conception of rap music is widely attributed to Clive Campbell, better known as DJ Kool Herc, who hosted parties in the Bronx in the 1970s and developed the technique of repeating the liveliest parts of songs for dancers. With the help of Coke la Rock, the MC at his parties who began speaking over these sections of the music, Kool Herc brought a new genre of music to the fore. Many years of oral, literary, and musical traditions built up to the development of rap music in the 1970s and, before delving into a more detailed description of how this process unfolded, I would like to explore the various historical forces that preceded it. Adam Bradley’s epigraph “while rap may be new-school music, it is old-school poetry”, found in the introduction to his book *Book of Rhymes: The Poetics of Hip Hop* reflects the fusion of music and poetry that rap brings to life, and he specifies that this fusion sprawls across many centuries and sources:

Hip-hop’s first generation fashioned an art form that draws not only from the legacy of Western voice, but from the folk idioms of the African diaspora; the musical legacy of jazz, blues, and funk; and the creative capacities conditioned by the often harsh realities of people’s everyday surroundings.

(2009, pp. xiv-xv)

This perspective is confirmed by Alice Price-Styles in her chapter of the *Cambridge Companion to Hip-Hop* entitled “MC Origins: Rap and Spoken Word Poetry” when she traces the history of spoken word poetry and rap in the 20th century and flags the interweaving of rap and poetry. Her own rather poetic lines read: “just as the boundaries between genres of music ebb and flow, the lines and limits between rap and poetry are likewise fluid and open” (Price-Styles in Williams 2015, p. 11), and this is a connection to which I will dedicate greater attention later in the chapter. Price-Styles shows how rap is seen by some as a natural progression of African-American oral forms, linking rap to such forms as “talking blues”, or songs featuring strict rhythmic speech over free melodies, and oral storytelling which she describes as “integral element[s] of communication within African communities” (ibid).

More recent sources of inspiration for rap music can be found in 20<sup>th</sup> century poetic forms, inside and outside of African-American communities. In particular, Price-Styles mentions jazz poetry and cites such poets as Langston Hughes in the 1920s who experimented with poetry by writing in accordance with the rhythm of jazz songs, as well as free-form jazz poetry in the Beat Generation (ibid, p. 13). She also shows how poetry has been used as a means of political expression, especially during the 1960s when spoken word poetry was harnessed as a form of protest during the civil rights movement (ibid). We can draw parallels between this political use of poetry and the complex situation of impoverishment that led to the birth of the Hip-hop Movement in the Bronx. It is clear that the movement’s subsequent rise to notoriety outside of its place of birth has retained much of the political energy that defined its genesis within a specific environment of social upheaval.

The Bronx had become ravaged by unemployment and poverty when the Hip-hop Movement materialised in the 1970s, the turbulent atmosphere brought about by a series of governmental projects and policies that saw “middle-class whites” desert the area (Chang 2005, pp. 7-18). Their departure was followed by the arrival of poor African-American, Puerto Rican, and Jewish families in neighbourhoods where “public housing was booming but jobs had already fled” (ibid, p. 12). Chang states that youth unemployment had reached levels between 60 and 80% in the South Bronx by the middle of the

1970s and attributes the emergence of hip-hop culture to the resulting boredom and frustration of youth in the area: “[...] if blues culture had developed under the conditions of oppressive, forced labour, hip-hop culture would arise from the conditions of no work” (ibid, p. 13). The ideas that Chang raises make it clear that hip-hop became a source of solace for people seeking to escape the bricks of hardship that they felt had been laid on their shoulders by an oblivious elite. Bazin reiterates the motivations for the beginning of a movement in a climate of social breakdown, apparent through the existence of drug trafficking, the destruction of the family unit, violence, and segregation (2001, pp. 24-25).

Since the 1970s, the Hip-hop Movement has allowed a message of misery, but also of might, to break out of the Bronx and to be shared with a wider audience across the United States and across the globe. The shifts in the face and features of hip-hop that the rise and spread of this movement have brought about are of particular relevance to this thesis since, as we will see, the influence of rap music and hip-hop culture is strongly felt in the French banlieue. When aspects of hip-hop culture are featured in texts set in the banlieue, explicitly or implicitly, their presence raises a number of questions related to what we might see as a form of “back-translation”. This idea of back-translation is especially interesting when we consider how hip-hop culture has been moulded to fit the French context. As I will explain in Chapter 5, recognising the origins of the movement by translating it back into the Bronx might in effect entail the risk of disregarding the way in which French youth have adopted and adapted the branches to meet their own wants and needs.

## **Hip-hop and Politics**

The inauguration of hip-hop as a means for young people to express their anger within an urban environment marked by tension and unrest, perhaps also as a sort of legacy of the various artistic movements associated with social and political causes that preceded it, has continued in varying degrees throughout the movement’s expansion. The verbal medium of rap music in particular allows MCs to put words and a beat on their troubles, and further gives consumers the possibility of identifying with the problems

expressed in the music they listen to. Lester Spence confirms the idea that rap music is suitable for political use when he states that it is “not only the most consumed aspect of hip-hop but it is arguably the easiest form to infuse with politics” (2011, p. 5). Further attention to the link between rap and political expression is provided by Justin A. Williams who states that “[...] hip-hop becomes a political voice for some groups, as well as an outlet to create new hybrids from local and more mainstream forms” (2016, p. 6). He posits that hip-hop is able to give “voice to the voiceless” and to empower marginalised communities who are “disadvantaged by unequal arrangements of power” (ibid).

According to rap scholars, the feeling of invisibility is palpable on the part of young people who make up the minority groups on behalf of whom many rappers speak. Laurent Mucchielli’s views in particular on the use of rap as a fundamentally political form of expression tie in with Williams’ ideas. Mucchielli believes that these young people do not feel betrayed, but rather “radically unheard by the national institutions supposed to assure and protect the same rights for all citizens”<sup>34</sup>, and in a similar vein he suggests that rap songs provide youth from relegated neighbourhoods with a means of verbalising their criticisms (1999, pp. 4 & 1)<sup>35</sup>. He goes on to discuss how rappers see themselves as spokespeople and representatives of their social class<sup>36</sup>, which supports the idea that rappers are aware of the fact that their art-form is at least partially political. He states that rap music is a form of revolt against social inequalities in a world corrupted by money, as well as a “denunciation of injustice, domination, and oppression” (ibid, p. 3)<sup>37</sup>.

When writing about the expression of identity in contemporary French rap, Lorenzo Devilla points to the link between rap and the social situation in

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<sup>34</sup> “[...] les rappers se sentent non pas trahis mais radicalement inentendus par les institutions nationales censées ouvrir et protéger les mêmes droits pour chaque citoyen.”

<sup>35</sup> “Tel qu’il s’est développé en France depuis la fin des années quatre-vingt, le rap [...] constitue non seulement un phénomène social, mais encore une prise de parole éminemment politique. Dans ces chansons, s’exprime en effet la critique voire la révolte d’une partie de la jeunesse des quartiers relégués.”

<sup>36</sup> “Expression politique d’une jeunesse marginalisée” -- “Issues des banlieues pauvres de la région parisienne ou d’autres grandes agglomérations, composés parfois en majorité de jeunes issus de l’immigration, formés dans la seconde moitié des années 80, les rappers se conçoivent eux-mêmes comme des porte-parole, des représentants de leur milieu social.”

<sup>37</sup> “Une révolte contre des sociétés inégales et corrompues par l’argent [...] une dénonciation de l’injustice, de la domination et de l’oppression.”

which the artists find themselves. He refers specifically to the banlieue, stating that these areas around Paris have been systematically associated with marginality and exclusion since the 1980s, and that rappers denounce this spiral of spatial and social segregation (2011, p. 78)<sup>38</sup>. Rap in the banlieue, he says, is a “veritable alchemy of words that evoke a multicoloured reality” and the depiction of urban life in lyrics allows listeners to better understand life in the *cités* (ibid, p. 33). If we subscribe to his analysis of the most frequent themes elicited as being drugs, unemployment, precarity, racism, sex, and violence, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that the life in the *cités* that they describe is quite bleak (ibid).

Such suggestions of bleakness are apparent to varying degrees in the different texts in the corpus, and I will return to a more comprehensive consideration of the complexities of the context of the banlieue in Chapter 6 and in Part Three of the thesis, studying how the setting influences the style of the texts and the issues that come into play when exploring how this style can be emulated or reproduced in English. Language in rap lyrics provides a means of aestheticising the difficulties that define much of the life of those living in the banlieue. The creative and playful language used to portray these young people’s misfortunes can be seen as a platform from which to share these stories, since arranging the words aptly and acutely arguably allows them to travel further, reaching broader audiences than those who might be motivated enough to devote attention to the hard, and harsh, facts.

The political aims and concerns believed to be at the heart of the Hip-hop Movement can be reconsidered in light of how its different branches have evolved since their inception. M.K. Asante Jr writes at length about the way in which the use of the movement has shifted over the years, and regrets that “although hip-hop was founded on the principles of rebellion, over the past decade it has been lulled into being a conservative instrument, promoting nothing new or remotely challenging to mainstream cultural ideology” (2008, p. 10). The perceived political stagnation of hip-hop should be studied in the broader context of the commercialisation of hip-hop.

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<sup>38</sup> “Depuis les années quatre-vingt, la banlieue est systématiquement associée à la marginalité et à l’exclusion (Duchêne, 2002). Les rappers dénoncent dès lors cette spirale de la ségrégation spatiale et de la relégation sociale dans laquelle glissent les “quartiers”, devenus de véritables “ghettos”.”

## **Commercialisation of Hip-hop**

When hip-hop culture started to gain notoriety outside of the Bronx, prompted in part by the release of rap songs on commercial radio at the end of the 1970s, its potential to generate wealth and fame became apparent. DJ Kool Herc's introduction to Chang's book takes on the form of an impassioned plea to hip-hop artists. Kool Herc asks them to return to the core values of hip-hop and to reject the commercialisation and monetary aspects of the movement, to recognise their identity as role models and their influence on fans, to "keep in right" and not "keep it real", a mantra he believes to be a "fad" (in Chang 2005, p. xii). Asante Jr also takes a rather negative stance on the integrity of the movement as it now stands, stating that "rap music, hip-hop's voice box of values and ideas, has drifted into the shallowest pool of poetic possibilities" and that "most of today's hip-hop betrays the attitudes and ideals that framed it" (2008, p. 5). He posits that the lack of ownership over a movement founded in the past has caused a number of young people to disown the label "hip-hop generation" (ibid, p. 5).

Both Kool Herc and Asante Jr believe that hip-hop was created as a tool for expression and social change, and Asante Jr argues that it constituted "a revolutionary cultural force that was intended to challenge the status quo and the greater American culture" (ibid, p. 8). He explains that a growing body of passionate individuals eager to return to the original purpose of hip-hop has been growing beneath the commercial surface of hip-hop since the 2000s and adopts the term "post-hip-hop" to describe the new generation's current search for a "deeper, more encompassing understanding of themselves in a context outside of the corporate hip-hop monopoly" (ibid, p. 7). This could be likened to Kool Herc's description of a small group of people within hip-hop who are "taking advantage of using hip-hop as a way to deal with serious issues, as a way to try to change things before tragedy strikes" (in Chang 2005, p. xii). He would like to see an increase in the number of people using rap in particular as a way to "start a dialogue with people" and "talk about things going on in the neighbourhood" (ibid).

Although Kool Herc regrets the increase in commercial interest in hip-hop for how it has led to what he sees as a lack of integrity, he also indirectly lauds the people who may have engendered an increased visibility of the

movement. By seeping out of the streets of the Bronx, he believes that hip-hop was able to spread to people all over the planet. He points to the widespread value of hip-hop, suggesting that it rises above social and geographical demarcations, since even though it holds a reputation as a means of expression for young people in disenfranchised urban areas, he argues that it allows young people everywhere to come to grips with their immediate and extended surroundings: “[hip-hop] has universal appeal. It has given young people a way to understand their world, whether they are from the suburbs or the city or wherever” (ibid, p. xi). It also seems important to emphasise the fact that despite the tendency to associate hip-hop culture almost exclusively with young people, its producers and consumers are not exclusively of, or under, a certain age.

Ideas relating to the widespread distribution of hip-hop are particularly interesting when considered in relation to the way in which literature featuring the voices of marginalised youth is not read exclusively (if at all) by young people in the same or similar situations. Rap music, though, is arguably a more popular and accessible form of expression than literature for young people, and has the fortunate appeal of being widespread and “cool”. In this way, it might be seen as the ideal means of advertising products and of disseminating political messages and specific ways of speaking. Artists are evidently aware of what garners popular acclaim and some agree to produce music that sells. Paul Silverstein refers to this phenomenon when describing the hip-hop scene, and market, as “an ambivalently-structured space” in which rappers “engage in processes of self-commodification” (in Durand 2002, pp. 49-50).

Such self-commodification might find an outlet in conforming to widespread stereotypes which appear to comply with images of perceived authenticity, which may not actually reflect the reality of the life of the artists or the people they seek to represent. An example of black artists portraying African-American groups in this way is provided by Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar in his book *Hip-Hop Revolution*. He states that “[...] in hip-hop today, poverty and a “hood” life of crime are considered more authentically black than going to college” (2007, p. 25). Later in his book, he talks at length about how this can be attributed to “the market’s fixation on black pathos in hip-hop music” which leads to overly-simplified depictions of black people: “whether called the

‘badman’, ‘bad nigger’, or ‘real nigga’, the commercially successful artists in hip-hop universally adopt narrow expressions of racialised imagery that valorise hypersexuality, misogyny, and violence” (ibid, p. 179). Ogbar therefore insists that it is the market that reinforces and glorifies unrealistic images of marginalised groups in a bid to increase sales. We will see in Parts Two and Three of the thesis that a concern with marketability plays a central role in the creation and translation of works of fiction featuring the voice of marginalised groups.

### **The Reputation of Hip-hop**

The commercialisation of hip-hop is closely linked to the profanity and misogyny with which the lyrics of a number of rap songs are spattered. These characteristics of rap lyrics have contributed to establishing negative reactions from people not involved in the production or consumption of hip-hop culture, especially adults. Mucchielli states that the criticisms can be sorted into two categories: firstly, many believe that rap has little musical value and is characterised by “ultra-repetitive rhythms, often devoid of all harmony and melody”, while others focus on the violence that dominates the portrayal of these groups in the media (1999, p. 61). We can see here that critics are visibly repelled both by the music itself and by the people performing it. The link between the reputation of marginalised youth and their chosen forms of expression is a key question in this thesis since the texts under study aim, to varying degrees, to make the voice of the disenfranchised youth of the banlieue accessible to a broader audience. This is true for the original French texts read or viewed by people in France outside of the banlieue as well as for the translated versions in English shared with speakers of English outside of France and all over the world.

It is worth reflecting on the link that is often made between youth delinquency and hip-hop, since the fact that both materialise in neglected urban areas of significant density seems to plant a seed in the public’s mind, suggesting that the two go hand in hand. If we consider the devastating financial conditions of the Bronx, we can see that young people living there not only found outlets in the creative aspects of hip-hop culture, but that many of

them also engaged in criminal activity. Chang explains that over a period of four years, between 1973 and 1977, there were as many as 30 000 fires lit in the Bronx, and labels them “the fires of abandonment” (2005, p.15). It seems clear that they represented a cry for help, a call to arms of sorts, to direct the authorities’ attention to the chronic nature of the problems. In fact, we might draw parallels between the banlieue riots that I will discuss in Chapter 6 and the Bronx fires, since both movements were driven by disenfranchised and dissatisfied groups. In both cases, rather than attributing increased crime to poor living conditions, many people tend to associate the behaviour with various aspects of the perpetrators’ ethnic and/or social background.

It can be argued that these various forms of negative judgement faced by marginalised youth often extend to a tendency to overlook the value of the artistic and linguistic ways in which they choose to express their frustration and distance from dominant groups. As such, it is the negative aspects of slang (e.g. lack of mastery of the codes of standard language) and rap (e.g. offensive lyrics and simplistic musical arrangements) that dictate their reception, rather than the innovative ways in which they deviate from norms to create new forms of expression. These negative judgements are not a recent phenomenon, and Ogbar is eager to remind us that the association of hip-hop with objectionable behaviour on the part of marginalised youth has been seen in various other movements. He states that “[...] like jazz in the 1920s or rock and roll in the 1950s, hip-hop has been maligned, attacked, and blamed for various social and cultural dangers to American youth” (2007, p. 178). In terms of influence of hip-hop culture on young people’s behaviour, many hip-hop scholars claim that critics have trouble understanding that young people are able to differentiate between art and reality. More specifically, Ogbar refers to data to show that the violence of rap music “has not led to the rise of criminality or educational collapse on any macro level” (ibid, p. 180). The fact that so many adults forming part of the dominant social group seem to be dismissive of rap music, considering it to be a worthless art-form, might call into question the broader reach of the Hip-hop Movement. It cannot be denied, however, that the genre has risen to global prominence. Adam Bradley goes so far as to say that hip-hop, including its musical branch, has “become one of the most vital cultural forces of the past century” (2009, p. xiii).

The success of an art form that arose from a situation of destitution and discontent bears witness to the power of the medium and its ability to transcend boundaries, barriers, and borders. Even if the specific situations in which people find themselves differ, the overarching themes are similar enough for young people to find common ground and unit in some way through the music. The popularity of rap among young people has not gone unnoticed by adults seeking to tap into the techniques used by MCs to sell a message or a product. Though it would appear that marginalised youth find themselves ignored when it is inconvenient for authorities to listen to them, they become the targets of specific campaigns when their support may be of use. In Sam Bridger's 2011 documentary *How Hip Hop Changed the World*, we learn that politicians and marketing companies use hip-hop as a means of projecting an appealing image to young people. The various examples presented show how politicians use the slang of rap, and marketing campaigns incorporate street art styles into their logos, all in an attempt to appear accessible and "hip" (2011, film). This, again, beckons questions of credibility since we might query the plausibility of "outsiders" partaking in hip-hop culture in the eyes of "insiders".

The line of enquiry overarching these deliberations can also be applied to the ethics and visibility of adopting the voice of marginalised groups in fictional texts. The tangible techniques of representation implemented necessarily dictate in part the extent to which this voice is understood, as well as how it is perceived, by the audience. Asante Jr alludes to these broader notions of authenticity and representation when referring to the distortion of reality entailed in the production of the image of hip-hop that is offered to audiences. He argues that "although for the hip-hop generation, 'keeping it real' became the ultimate barometer of one's character, the post-hip-hop generation realises that because we do not control how 'real' is constructed, defined, and disseminated, this image is not real at all" (2008, p. 24). His words implicitly establish an "us" versus "them" dynamic, according to which the "us", members of marginalised groups, who in this case are producers of hip-hop, express doubts about the integrity of the "them", of members of groups with the power to dictate the dissemination of hip-hop to the world.

## **Recontextualising Hip-hop**

Having considered a number of issues related to the rise and spread of rap music, I would now like to address briefly the dissemination of the genre across borders both in and out of the Anglosphere. It seems pertinent to begin this discussion by considering the question of hip-hop as a “black movement”. Reiland Rabaka is among the scholars who posit that the Hip-hop Movement was born out of black, African-American, youth culture: “while mainstream American history, culture, and politics have undoubtedly impacted rap music and hip-hop culture, black ghetto youth have been, and remain, the primary producers and practitioners of hip-hop music and culture” (2013, pp. 33-4). Ogbar shares these views but both he and the scholars he cites overtly contest any connection to other sources of stimulus, notably Jamaican toasts (2007, p. 12). He refers in particular to Imani Perry who comments on the “blackness” of hip-hop by stating that “hip-hop music is black American music. Even with its hybridity: the consistent contributions from nonblack artists, and the borrowing from cultural forms of other communities” (Perry 2004 in Ogbar 2007, p. 12).

Ogbar’s extensive documentation of how hip-hop contributed to the evolution of the “black image” reveals the extent to which many disagree on the question of using art to defend the black cause, and on how this defence should be articulated (ibid, pp. 20-23). This issue reveals the subjectivity inherent in representing minority groups in art offered to wide audiences since there is no consensus on how best to shape their voice and story in a format that is at once accurate and accessible. Even if we choose to see hip-hop as an exclusively black movement, and specifically black American, it must be recognised that rap music has been seized by people across the globe. Furthermore, both rap music and slang have found their way into works of fiction and the way in which these texts present the language of marginalised youth in its transcribed version has an impact on how these young people are perceived by “outsiders”.

When discussing the development of the Hip-hop Movement, it is also beneficial to consider the way in which the four branches have spread from their original context of creation to permeate foreign settings. Devilla applies the term of “recontextualisation” to this geographical shift and states that this

process is of relevance to both in terms of the themes that rap addresses and the linguistic forms it mobilises or creates (2011, p. 77). From the various case studies presented in *How Hip Hop Changed the World*, we learn that MCs around the world can engage in an appropriation of other artists' language and material when creating rap music. The artists sharing their stories in the documentary describe how UK MCs initially rapped in an American accent in an attempt to emulate the art in its original form before eventually finding their own voice in what became known as grime, "a hybrid of UK garage, dancehall, and hip-hop" (2011, online).

The birth of grime in the UK serves to illustrate that artists can question their sense of legitimacy when attempting to adopt the conventions of an art-form conceived in a foreign environment, despite the existence of a common language. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the evolution of hip-hop in the UK involved a unification of several genres, meaning that rap music eventually came to represent a source of influence for the creation of a new form of expression. It should be noted that rap is still practised by British artists outside of the grime movement in a way that is more comparable to that of the original American form. However, the music that these British artists produce is necessarily distinct from that which is crafted by American rappers, for the simple reason that the two contexts of production are not identical.

This idea of comparison is reinforced by the argument put forward by Ogbar who posits that the "hip-hop landscape in the United States may never be mirrored exactly in other places" (2007, p. 181). Ogbar attributes this impossibility to the "vast differences in economic, political, and cultural institutions" that exist between the United States and other nations (ibid). These questions will be useful to bear in mind when considering the ramifications of emulating existing aspects of the forms of expression of a specific group when translating a text from one language to another. Arguably, the differences visible in the rap music produced in the United States and the United Kingdom are compounded when this music crosses linguistic borders, as is the case for French rap.

The characters in the French novels and films I analyse in this thesis are able to engage in hip-hop thanks to its arrival in France in the early 1980s, and the way that the genre evolved after its introduction into the country has meant

that France is now recognised as the second biggest market for rap in the world after the USA. Most of its artists can be found in and around Paris and Marseille, and especially in the banlieues of these two cities (Durand 2002, p. 76). Although the sites of production of French and American rap share salient similarities in terms of social tension and economic destitution, Bazin argues that it is not possible to compare the French banlieue with American ghettos, specifically in relation to their history, reminding us that the two contexts are distinct (1995, p. 25)<sup>39</sup>. He does, however, point to the common purpose of hip-hop in both climates to provide minorities with the possibility “to construct a field of intervention”, and describes the movement as an attempt to find meaning in despair (ibid, pp. 26-27)<sup>40</sup>. This idea of the function of the genre in different contexts will be explored in subsequent sections of the thesis when considering how the role that a text is intended to play can determine the concrete features it displays. I will also consider how these features are altered when a text is translated depending on a number of factors, notably the tools and resources available to the translator, both linguistic and extralinguistic.

A common thread that runs through the two bodies of literature on hip-hop in the United States and in France can be seen in the diverging descriptions of the demographics in each context. In essence, the American “ghetto” indicated as fertile ground for hip-hop production is depicted as a “black-only” area, whereas the French banlieue or *cité* is seen to be more ethnically diverse. Asante Jr refers to the ghetto as being composed of “all types of people” who share the “common denominator” of being “economically poor and African-American” (2008, p. 34), and Alain-Philippe Durand invokes the early rap groups and artists in France, indicating that it is “impossible to indicate a clear-cut ‘ethnic integrity’ among these artists” (2002, p. 5). Durand confirms the difference between the two sets of rappers: “in the United States, the great majority of rappers are African American [...] while in France they are of varied ethnic origins” (ibid, p. 5). I will return to a more detailed discussion of the demographics of the banlieue in Chapter 6, but it will be useful to bear in mind that the profile of people engaging in the art can and

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<sup>39</sup> “*L’histoire des banlieues françaises n’est pas comparable à celle des ghettos américains.*”

<sup>40</sup> “*Mais que nous partions des Etats-Unis ou de la France, ces recherches se rejoignent par une tentative de donner aux conditions de vie actuelles une réponse et un sens dont une Histoire serait la mémoire et le témoin.*”

does vary depending on the context of production. Arguably, what links these people is their impression of oppression and their desire to have their voice heard.

### 3.2 The Language and Performance of Rap

Having explored a number of issues surrounding the rise and mobilisation of the Hip-hop Movement, I would like to turn now to a discussion more focussed on the linguistic and musical form of rap music. DJ Kool Herc's decision to begin experimenting with the rhythmic sections of songs was a key factor in the creation of rap music since these garnered the most enthusiastic reactions from people present at the parties he hosted. The first of these parties to feature the technique took place on August 11, 1973, and it is described by Justin A. Williams as "the universally-agreed 'big-bang' moment for the birth of hip-hop music" (2016, p. 1). The early years of hip-hop have come to represent a subject of fascination for many, including Laurent Rigoulet, who composed a novel of creative non-fiction chronicling the beginnings of rap in the Bronx in the 1970s. In the blurb that features on the back of his novel, *Brûle*, Rigoulet describes how Kool Herc demonstrated his turntable technique at the 1973 party:

He started looping the rhythmic sections, the breaks: the parts that made the crowd go wild when he played them and wild when he didn't. He would put two copies of the same record on the turntables. When one part finished on one side, he would start it again on the other. The rhythm stretched on, the intensity rolled along, the heat didn't subside. He swore he didn't practise, didn't rehearse anything. It was all instinct. He didn't use headphones, no need for anything that fancy. He had it in his blood.

[...]

He called it "The Merry-Go-Round". He would wait until two in the morning, the fieriest time of the night, and set off his loop, adding speed to speed, echoes to echoes, trance to trance, turning the ground beneath the dancers' feet into a rubber floor for them to bounce on, a place of immense audacity and heroics, a place to take flight, a place of twists and somersaults.

As we discover in *Brûle*, and as outlined in Chang's *Can't Stop, Won't Stop*, when Kool Herc developed the technique that consisted in capitalising on the breaks of particularly lively songs, MC Coke La Rock began "dropping"

words over the instrumentals, sparking a desire to emulate his practice among other partygoers. Rigoulet's blurb continues:

Suddenly you couldn't hear the singing anymore, you stopped listening to it. People spluttered and spat words over the extended instrumentals. A blank page opened up in front of us, a sea for us to cross, wet sand to leave our footsteps in. Coke La Rock wouldn't let go of the microphone, and others were screaming out for it. They gathered around him, despite the orders and the threats, hustled around the turntables, jumped onto the stage, stomped their feet – there were so many of them that the floor threatened to cave in.

The trend caught on and gathered steam quickly, the practice becoming widespread and leading to the rise of rap music. Williams refers to the importance of the conception of rap music within a festive environment when he states that “hip-hop originally existed, and still exists, as a party accompaniment, a soundtrack to dance, and a force for pleasure” (2016, p.1). The fact that rap music is intended to entertain audiences underscores the importance of its form: MCs seeking to share and spread certain ideas through their lyrics need to ensure that their music remains pleasing to the ears of people listening to it.

## **Rap and (Slam) Poetry**

The significance of the potential for rap music to please its consumers is highlighted in the introduction to *The Anthology of Rap* which insists on the relationship between poetry and rap. Bradley and DuBois state that “good rap lyrics are poetically interesting because they have to be; they have little in the way of melody or harmony to compensate for a poor lyrical line” (Bradley and DuBois 2010, p. xxxiv). The rap specialists are keen to stress, however, the importance of recognising rap as a genre in its own right, certainly inspired by but distinct from various forms of poetry. Although rap music is linked to the tradition of Western lyric poetry, to the American songbook, and to African-American oral traditions (especially toasts, signifiers, and dozens), it is a unique form that has its own features. Rap might also be associated with other types of performed poetry, grouped together under the umbrella term “spoken-word poetry”<sup>41</sup>, especially slam poetry. Both slam poetry and rap were

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<sup>41</sup> For a definition of the term “spoken word”, we can turn to Adam Bradley's and Andrew DuBois' description in *The Anthology of Rap*: “The term *spoken word* – which over the years

established as a means of expression for people seeking a creative means of giving words to their troubles, but each emerged out of distinct contexts: rap out of the Bronx, and slam poetry out of “audience-judged competitions held in white working-class Chicago bars during the mid-1980s” (Bradley and DuBois 2010, pp. xxxi-xxxii). Perhaps the most significant difference between the two forms of expression lies in the fact that rap is combination of a beat (or music, in some instances) and lyrics, whereas slam relies uniquely on the poet’s voice. As such, rap is often qualified as “rap music”, and slam as “slam poetry”.

A link between the two forms of expression can be found in their performative, and often competitive, nature. Marc Kelly Smith, the founder of slam poetry, insists on the importance of audience involvement in slam competitions. He states that “slam poetry is *performance* poetry, the marriage of a text to the artful presentation of poetic words onstage to an audience that has permission to talk back and let the performer know if he or she is communicating effectively” (Smith and Kraynak 2009, p. 5). Slam is therefore dependent on interaction and audience participation since it requires the listener to engage actively in the art for the poem to come to life, and to communicate their approval directly to performers. The performance of slam poetry is less public and widespread than that of rap music, no doubt because it is less commercial and mobile, and because it relies more heavily on language. Indeed, the fusion of words and music that rap entails seems to make it more appealing to a wider audience, and especially young people. Additionally, the fact that it is recorded and readily available all over the world makes it a more accessible and consumable form than slam.

In spite of the differences in their visibility and popularity, both slam and rap seek to render poetry accessible and appealing in what we might see as an anti-elitist pursuit of democratising art. Smith argues that the goal of slam is “to inspire people from all walks of life to listen to poetry, appreciate and respect its power, and ultimately to take the stage and perform their own original works” (Kelly and Kraynak 2005, p. 10). When he notes that slam strives to give people the tools to create their own art, we can see that the production side of the genre is vastly less exclusive than rap. Although the

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has been used to describe everything from radio broadcasts to beatnik poetry readings – loosely encompasses both modes of expression [rap and slam poetry]” (2010, p. xxxii).

possibility of consuming and engaging with rap music is arguably open to everybody, many of the ideas raised in the previous section of this chapter imply that rap is more likely to be seen, at least from a non-commercial perspective, as pure and worthy of attention when it is created by artists who embody the aspects of marginalisation that governed its conception.

Slam poetry has perhaps been shielded from the commodification that rap has undergone because of its lack of commercialisation. This has meant that the emphasis seems to be placed on its performance at events that seek to bring people together to share their art. Slam is not a “business” in the same way as rap might be, and as such involves less conflict and glorification since money and fame do not hold as much weight. Smith shows how this has allowed slam to flourish in community events that bring together people who represent what he calls an “astonishing mosaic of diversity”:

Men and women of all ages, all races and nationalities, all socio-economic brackets, and from every occupational niche of society gather together at [slam competitions] to share their poetry, their performances, and the joy of creating and being part of the slam family.

(Smith and Kraynak 2009, p. 25)

Both in rap and slam, performance is prioritised in such a way that importance is given to the spoken word rather than the written word. Kelly believes that this aspect of slam in particular has contributed to restoring the tradition of performed art to poetry, which he believes was “neglected in America and most of Western Europe during the twentieth century” (Smith and Kraynak 2009, p. 19). In the following section of this chapter, I will concentrate on the features of the rap lyrics as they appear on the page, ultimately reaching fruition when performed over a beat.

## **Features of Rap Music**

The previous sections of this subchapter have demonstrated how rap songs are a unique form of poetry. Adam Bradley and Andrew DuBois explain that a rap song is a particular type of lyric poem organised into verses, with each generally containing sixteen lines (2010, p. xxxi). When rap lyrics are transcribed, they are usually arranged to comply with 4/4 time, meaning that each line, which we might also call a musical measure or a bar, contains four

quarter-note beats (Bradley 2009, p. xix). Bradley states that this measure is comparable to the literary poet's metrical foot: "just as the fifth metrical foot marks the end of a pentameter line, the fourth beat of a given bar, the fourth [quarter-note] beat of a given bar marks the end of the MC's line" (ibid, p. xx). It is not a straightforward task, however, to transcribe lyrics according to this musical measure, since rap lyrics are not as strictly structured as many types of formal poetry. This is largely due to the fact that rappers can alter their timing and syllabic stress to make the lyrics fit their performance.

Rap songs are characterised by a distinct rhythm and complex rhyme schemes that contribute to what is commonly referred to in the hip-hop scene as "flow". Bradley defines flow as "an MC's distinctive lyrical cadence, usually in relation to a beat. It is rhythm over time" (2009, p. 6). Flow, then, is the force that breathes life into the music; the added touch, one might say, that distinguishes rap from many other forms of expression, written or performed. The first half of Bradley's *Book of Rhymes* is divided into three chapters which deal with what he seems to deem the most significant aspects of rap lyrics: rhythm, rhyme, and wordplay. Interestingly, the first two chapters each concentrate on only one aspect of rap music, whereas the third deals with more than a dozen stylistic devices. This seems indicative of the importance of the performance of rap lyrics, since rhythm and rhyme have the most bearing on the acoustics of a rap song when an MC voices them through a microphone. The stylistic devices of rap music are implemented to achieve full effect when performed, aloud, "with a vocal delivery that ranges from sing-song to conversational", and as such rely heavily on sound (Bradley and DuBois 2010, p. xxxi).

Bradley and DuBois state that rhyme is the aspect of rap music which is most often recognised but that it is more complex than many people would believe, employed "in full and slant, monosyllabic and multisyllabic forms at the end of and in the midst of the line" (Bradley and DuBois 2010, p. xxxi). The most facile rhymes are therefore not the most striking rhyming schemes that appear in rap songs, since unusual and internal rhymes are often more representative of the craft of many MCs. This idea of the unusual is especially noteworthy. Indeed, many rap songs seek to subvert listeners' expectations, and this is also apparent in the use of wordplay. Bradley is of the opinion that

“rap’s wordplay creates surprising figures of speech and thought that bind words and ideas in unexpected ways” (2009, p. 91). The chapter that he devotes to wordplay in his book mentions many devices that rely on sound, such as homophones, homonyms, alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia, and various forms of internal repetition. He also includes examples of figurative language and rhetorical devices, such as personification and metonymy, which contribute to surprising and entertaining listeners. In this way, many rap songs are able to satisfy the needs of people wanting to hear pleasing sounds as well as those more interested in the poetic qualities of the lyrics.

Since many rap lyrics involve a creative manipulation of language, the final shape that they take is necessarily determined by the linguistic tools available to the MC. In this way, the writing of rap lyrics is as much concerned with playing with language as it is with the meaning of the final words selected. This means that the message will be modified in some way if the lyrics are translated into another language, at least if the translator decides to translate the lyrics by making use of the stylistic devices of rap. I will argue in the third part of this thesis, when commenting on my own translation of the rap lyrics in *Moi non*, that the creative use of language in the original form of rap music requires a creative approach to its translation. The examples I provide from *Moi non* will also demonstrate how the presence of rap music in many texts can surpass explicit passages of lyrics to permeate the writing style more generally through flow.

Before addressing other issues related to the language of rap music, it is important to note that the stylistic effort apparent in lyrics varies depending on a number of factors, especially on the market targeted. While some songs might resort to facile devices such as overdetermined rhymes and simplistic analogies to achieve effect, others may revel in language by seeking more complicated rhyme schemes, sounds, and structures. Criticism regarding the lack of imagination seen in rap lyrics are no doubt directed at the former type of songs. Christian Béthune explains that listeners also often complain about the abstruseness of the lyrics, insisting that they simply cannot understand what the rapper is saying (2011, p. 164). He believes that some listeners’ gripes might be mitigated if rap music were more widely recognised as form as poetry,

because, much like a poem, a rap song requires several attentive readings (or listenings, as it were) to be better understood (ibid).

The (im)penetrability of rap music can be linked to the varying coded nature of different slangs, as outlined in the first two chapters. In fact, rap music can be more or less accessible depending on the level of marketability sought, with some songs designed to be understood only by initiates. The same insider-outsider dynamic is also part of broader hip-hop culture. A hip-hop artist's name, for example, the graffiti artist in particular, often remains undisclosed to outsiders, a phenomenon that Bazin describes as the mental barrier between insiders and outsiders, the "threshold" between people who know their name and people who don't (1995, p. 41)<sup>42</sup>. In this way, the technique of identification recalls how subgroups are able to exclude and establish their own group identity through the use of slang.

### **The Language(s) of Rap: Cross-Fertilisation**

When exploring what defines rap music linguistically, studying the words and forms most prevalent in the work of MCs, it is worthwhile considering the art-form as a means of spreading and popularising certain words, expressions, or modes of speaking. Rappers can use their music as a tool to make a mark and then see that mark propagated in broader society until their words become the words of the masses. This tendency echoes the trends mentioned in the discussion on the spread of aspects of urban youth language, since rap itself constitutes one of the ways in which innovative language enters into the linguistic repertoire of many people. Rap therefore represents a vector through which discontent may be communicated both in content and form, and, as such, acts as a sort of agency for people whose plight may otherwise fall on deaf ears.

Not only do the issues broached in rap lyrics draw attention to the struggles faced by those who are pigeon-holed and relegated to the sidelines on a daily basis, the creative deviations from standard language that run

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<sup>42</sup> "Le membre du hip-hop ne pose pas la rue comme seuil entre espace privé et espace public mais entre le réseau de personnes où l'on est reconnu (généralement par un pseudonyme) et la société civile. Les notions d'intérieur" et d'extérieur" ne balisent pas une frontière physique mais mentale."

through the lyrics embody in themselves a form of rebellion. In deforming the standard language, rappers help to make their non-standard variety of language the new standard for a larger group of people. This trend is affirmed by Durand who states that “in utilising samples from other expressive genres [...], French rap groups effectively normalise the *argot* (slang) of the *cités* as unmarked in contrast to the contextually marked speech forms of mainstream France” (2002, pp. 55-56). Rap lyrics therefore constitute an effort to subvert the tendency to see the standard form of language as the superior form.

The linguistic innovation distinguishable in rap lyrics that finds its way into the general usage of a language points further to the capacity of rap to shape language. In an article published in *Le Parisien* in 2016, lexicographer Alain Rey responds to the question of whether the success of rap is a “good thing for the French language” by affirming that it is, indeed, since “without this type of music, [the language] would be mummified” (2016, online)<sup>43</sup>. He also associates the vivacity of a language with the creativity instilled in it, which he believes is fostered through rap. This view is shared by Bazin, who refers to the way in which language allows people to feel a sense of belonging and to develop a collective identity, while providing a form of recognition, communication, self-affirmation, and protection (1995, p. 47)<sup>44</sup>. Much like slang, rap music can act as a form of reaction to marginalisation and potentially lead to a range of complementary benefits. In fact, we can see in this instance how the soft power of the dissenting use of language by disenfranchised youth can be a response to the harder power exerted, at least symbolically, by the standard variety of language spoken and supported by people who possess more tangible forms of authority and agency.

The influence of foreign languages on rap lyrics is another aspect of the art-form worth exploring, especially in light of the foreign linguistic sources of inspiration for slang. Béthune asserts that a number of rappers can justly be considered to be “fine linguists”, even those whose academic performance would garner little praise (2011, p. 106). He believes that this label is warranted

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<sup>43</sup> “Est-ce que le succès du rap est une bonne chose pour la langue française ? / Oui parce que sans ce genre de musique, elle serait momifiée.”

<sup>44</sup> “La langue représente le plus fidèle reflet de la vivacité d’une culture. Elle développe comme les autres éléments culturels, un sentiment d’appartenance, une identité collective, une reconnaissance, la possibilité de communiquer, de s’affirmer et de se protéger.”

not only by the masterful manipulation of stylistic devices that the writing of rap lyrics entails, but also by the simple fact that rappers often speak several languages and wield their multilingualism as a poetic device in a way that affirms their identity (ibid). Devilla is also interested in the part that foreign languages play in the composition of rap lyrics. He points out that rap continues to be practised essentially by young immigrants or the children of immigrants, stating that the art-form is systematically associated with these culturally and/or socially uprooted populations (2011, p. 76). The fact that rap is practised by people from diverse, and often marginalised, backgrounds is therefore significant not only from a social and political perspective, it also has an impact on the lyrics that these MCs produce: their varied cultural and linguistic backgrounds are attested to in the rich and innovative use of language within many rap songs.

In the rap music produced in France, English is one of the foreign languages that often makes its way into lyrics, despite the fact that it is neither a minority language on a global scale nor is it directly associated with French MCs' backgrounds. When elaborating on the presence or influence of foreign tongues in French rap, Devilla points out that the use of Anglicisms can be attributed to two factors. Firstly, he hints that this is a sort of homage to the origins of rap music in an Anglophone environment, and, secondly, that it is due to a desire to pledge "allegiance" to a "global village culture", heightened by young people's increasingly constant access to online resources (ibid, p. 81). His ideas consolidate the argument that young people who find themselves in similar situations, or who seek to identify with people in specific situations, will have recourse to similar modes of expression. As I will argue in the concluding chapters of the thesis, this notion is reflected in the effort to harness and give value to the linguistic similarities in young people's speech that led to my approach to the translation of *Moi non*.

## **A Performative Text**

The dual nature of rap as a written and performed text is particularly relevant to this thesis since the rap lyrics found in the corpus are presented uniquely in written form, but ultimately intended for performance. The reader

is not privy to these performed versions of the lyrics on the page and is instead compelled to imagine how the live renditions might sound. The effort that is required of the reader might be likened to Anne Ubersfeld's notion of the "*texte troué*" in reference to theatre texts which she sees as being incomplete, filled with holes, since they demand the director's and actors' assistance to bring them to fruition (Ubersfeld 1996, p. 19)<sup>45</sup>. It is the MC and the music or beat accompanying the lyrics that enable them to come to life in performance.

Kyle Adams also insists on the importance of recognising the fact that "the music is composed and recorded before the text is written" since this means that the "meaning of the text is often secondary to the way in which it interacts with the underlying music" (2008, p. 2). He alludes in particular to the manner in which the sound of the lyrics overshadows the lyrics themselves. The examples he provides lead us to consider the performative nature of rap music, since lyrics in essence act as a sort of skeleton from which MCs depart to create a final vocal product, ephemeral in its live version (ibid). This view of the text as a malleable set of words is echoed by Adam Bradley, who reminds us in *The Book of Rhymes* that an MC is able to alter and play with standard pronunciation in performance to stress and accentuate certain parts of the lines. As a result, it is not always indispensable to use the same number of syllables in each bar throughout an entire song, so long as the verse "balances its linguistic weight in such a way that it can be performed without awkward pauses, gasps for breath, or other infelicities" (2009, p. 27).

The performative aspect of rap is also worthwhile considering in terms of the (un)fixed nature of the text on the page. Since rap lyrics are written to be performed, they will necessarily be modified at least partially when given a physical voice. The performer is under no obligation to present the lyrics to the audience exactly as they appear on the page, which means that rappers are able to personalise the performance to leave their own individual mark on the text. Since the use of rap in *Moi non* stretches beyond the passages of rap lyrics themselves, complemented by the techniques of rap that imbue the style throughout and give the writing a distinctive rhythm, Bradley's comments can be also applied to the narration and the dialogue. What is more, clear parallels

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<sup>45</sup> "[...] *comme tout texte littéraire, mais plus encore, pour des raisons évidentes, le texte de théâtre est troué.*"

can be drawn between the way that MCs play with the written word in performance, having already pushed the boundaries of language in the lyrics on the page, and the way that young people in general play with the standard variety of language in their unique speech. I will return to these ideas when dealing with concrete examples from *Moi non*, explaining how the suppleness of language when used in the original text was respected and reproduced in translation.

## **Concluding Remarks**

Rap music rose literally from the ashes of the burning Bronx and stemmed from a desire to make art in times of distress. Its forms and functions have changed over the years, making it a diverse and multifaceted genre, but it continues to allow marginalised youth to express their woes in a confident and creative cast that is more or less accessible to “outsiders”, depending on the specific shape it takes. The inclusion of a written version of rap music in fictional texts with the imagined intent of being performed allows readers to reflect on the duality of the lyrics. It also, perhaps, provides readers with a better grasp of the visual aesthetics of a form focussed primarily on sound and rhythm.

The inclusion of slang and rap in literary texts is not only a way of increasing the visibility of this way of speaking, but it also endows the language of marginalised youth with symbolic value, and power. Since the power of a variety of language is inscribed in its status, the standard variety has greater or lesser status depending on who is using it and to what end, and in what context. Based on the literature reviewed in this part of the thesis, it is apparent that slang holds relatively little prestige in the minds of standard language speakers. We can therefore see the merit in providing non-standard varieties of language with a platform, of a frame in which to flourish, whether they be read in fictional texts or seen in films viewed by a vast audience. Significantly, these texts are produced by people deemed to be talented enough to have their work published. This means that the aspects of the language offered to audiences are symbolic of the most remarkable features of slang and rap. The producers of these texts are among the most competent wordsmiths, equipped

with the tools to showcase in a work of fiction the aspects of these forms of expression most likely to impress audiences who may be unfamiliar with or otherwise dismissive of their intricacies.

The translation of texts that provide a platform for this way of speaking acts as a means of further extending the exposure to the voice of marginalised youth since the audience receiving this voice is broadened. The task of translating this voice, however, gives rise to a range of further questions relating to the myriad manners of undertaking such a task. As we will see, there is no one, ideal way of performing this task. The translator must weigh up the intimidating list of pros and cons, grappling with the implications of each strategy, before settling on what seems to his/her subjective consciousness to be the most appropriate choice for the text at hand in the specific context of translation and publication. The next two parts of the thesis aim to explore these issues.



***Part Two:***

***Translating Slang in***

***Fiction***



## Introduction to Part Two

The sociolinguistic discussions of the first part of the thesis that explore issues related to the use of slang in the context of its initial production will, I believe, enable a more confident analysis of the form that this slang takes in translated texts. My reasoning is reinforced by Anthony Pym who states that “in order to say anything remotely intelligent about the translation of variety, we would have to know what varieties are doing in cultural products in the first place” (Pym 2000, p. 69). To know what these varieties “are doing”, it is vital to bear in mind not only the functions of their use “in real life”, but also the function, disclosed or undisclosed, conscious or unconscious, that this language serves when included in a fictional text. In this vein, Pym argues that it is vital to determine why the text producer opted to incorporate features of a specific variety since it is precisely the function of the variety used that needs to be considered, respected, and reproduced in the translated text (ibid).

Pym posits that the translator’s main concern should lie in imitating the shift from the norm that takes place in the original: “when translators are confronted with the markers of a variety, the thing to be rendered is not the source-text variety [...], [but] the variation, the syntagmatic alteration of distance, the relative deviation from the norm” (2000, p. 70). Beyond this statement, he does not acknowledge the existence of endless means of communicating the idea of deviation in the translated text, nor does he acknowledge that it is inconceivable that all individuals will agree on what might be deemed the most appropriate choice. Rather idealistically, he suggests that “if those shifts can be rendered, as is usually the case, then the markers may be said to have been translated, and no complaint should ensue” (ibid). However, many complaints are quite likely to ensue in all instances of

translation, especially when a form of language as loaded with layers of meaning as slang is involved.

It seems safe to say that few translators would deny the utility of attaining a thorough understanding of the source text before translating it, but the next step in the process is the point at which the process becomes less straightforward. Indeed, the question of how exactly one might go about respecting and reproducing the function of a particular variety of language in the translated text, once this function is thought to have been deciphered, is a question that divides not only translators but also scholars of translation, and non-specialist readers. I will commence this second part of the thesis with an exploration in Chapter 4 of the challenges involved in translating slang and rap as they appear in fictional texts and of the main options available to and used by translators. In Chapter 5, I will propose an outline and analysis of five separate strategies for translating slang, before turning my attention in Chapter 6 to the banlieue of Paris. This examination of the banlieue will consider the context surrounding the production of a number of fictional texts featuring the voice of young residents of the banlieue. Alongside Chapters 4 and 5, it will pave the way for the third part of the thesis in which I will concentrate more specifically on the translation of banlieue texts.

## **Chapter 4: Translating Slang in Fictional Texts**

To open Part Two of the thesis, I will shift the focus to translation theory related directly or indirectly to the translation of non-standard language. I will begin by outlining a number of concepts that I find relevant to the translation of the voice of banlieue youth, including Antoine Berman's *Tendances déformantes*, functional theories of translation, the cultural turn in translation studies, and systems theories. These discussions will enable a consideration of the purpose and performance of texts in specific contexts and explore how the decisions made in the translation process can have a cultural impact at the same time as they are influenced by external systemic forces. I will devote the second part of the chapter to theories that have been put forward more specifically on the translation of linguistic variety, of heterolingualism, and of culture-bound terms, so that my own typology can be contextualised within the broader body of literature on the topic. Finally, I will provide an overview of the little theory available on the translation of rap. This last section of the chapter will take on particular importance in Part Three when I explain how the features of rap influenced my elaboration of the strategy of Global Youth Speak.

### **4.1 General Translation Theory**

The general reflections on the functions of slang and how it relates to other forms of non-standard language outlined in the first part of the thesis have contributed to building the foundation for more specific discussions focusing on the features of the language used by marginalised young people living on the outskirts of Paris. Before turning to these discussions, it is useful to consider the challenges faced by and the options available to the translator of texts characterised by a distinct presence of urban youth slang in particular, as well as of those featuring non-standard language and orality more generally.

A number of translators and scholars of translation have expressed views on these issues, but there is a relatively limited amount of scholarship dedicated solely to the translation of youth slang. It will therefore be prudent to examine work written on the translation of different types of non-standard language that share similar functions as the type of language used by young people in marginalised areas, while also drawing on broader translation theory.

## **Deforming Tendencies**

In Antoine Berman's 1985 essay "*La Traduction comme épreuve de l'étranger*", translated into English under the title "Translation and the Trials of the Foreign" by Lawrence Venuti in 2000 and included in his *Translation Studies Reader*, Berman posits that translation is an "*épreuve de l'étranger*" or a "trial of the foreign", if we adopt Venuti's translation, in two ways. Firstly, translation presents a challenge for the target audience, since it aims to encourage readers to open themselves up to the foreignness of the original text, and, secondly, translation challenges the source text, since it removes the text from its linguistic home turf in order to place it in a new, foreign setting (1985, p. 67). For Berman, the "ethical aim" of translation is to "receive the Foreign as Foreign", and he proposes a series of what he calls "deforming tendencies" to assist in the analysis of translated texts, so as to reveal how translation can betray this ethical aim (ibid, p. 68). These twelve tendencies are:

1. rationalisation
2. clarification
3. expansion
4. ennoblement
5. qualitative impoverishment
6. quantitative impoverishment
7. the destruction of rhythms
8. the destruction of underlying networks of signification
9. the destruction of linguistic patternings
10. the destruction of vernacular networks or their exoticisation
11. the destruction of expressions and idioms
12. the effacement of the superimposition of languages

(Berman 1985, p. 71, Venuti's translation in Venuti 2000, p. 288)

The thoughts that Berman offers in relation to the tenth item on his list, “the destruction of vernacular networks or their exoticisation”, are at once intriguing and troubling in their bleakness. He explains that effacement and exoticisation are commonly-used options in the translation of vernacular and laments the drawbacks of each approach (Berman 1975, p. 77). When speaking specifically of exoticisation, he states that it is often seen through emphasis in the use of italics or elements added to a translated text that conform to common stereotypes of the source culture, but is particularly critical of the use of a local vernacular in the language of translation to render the foreign vernacular. This criticism takes the form of a confident and categorical dismissal of the procedure:

Unfortunately, a vernacular clings tightly to its soil and completely resists any direct translating into another vernacular. *Translation can occur only between “cultivated” languages.* An exoticisation that turns the foreign from abroad into the foreign at home winds up merely ridiculing the original.

(Berman 1985, p. 78, Venuti’s translation in Venuti 2000, p. 294 (original emphasis))

I will revisit this criticism when considering the implications of the use of an “equivalent” slang in translation, but the italicised, emphasised assertion that “*translation can occur only between ‘cultivated’ languages*” merits attention here since Berman seems to indicate that it is impossible to achieve a satisfactory result when translating vernacular. Such a suggestion is no doubt provoked in part by the negative nature of his framework, since he does not actually provide a corresponding affirmative analytic; no viable solutions are proposed to circumvent the undesirable ramifications of resorting to the effacing or exoticising strategies he mentions. This might leave readers with the impression that perhaps such solutions do not exist, at least in Berman’s eyes.

This thesis aims to complement Berman’s reflections on the translation of vernacular by investigating the translation of slang in particular in greater detail. When studying and unpacking the repercussions of adopting a small selection of strategies, it will become clear that some of these strategies are seen to render “the relative deviation from the norm”, to use Anthony Pym’s words again, more effectively than others, for a number of reasons. However, it becomes apparent that this vision is inherently subjective and depends

largely on the personal preferences of the person judging the translated work, as well as on the role the translated text is destined to play in the receiving culture. In my exploration of the strategies chosen for study here, as well as in the more specific analysis of some of the texts in the corpus, I will refer back to several of Berman's deforming tendencies while also taking into consideration the aspects of particular approaches to the translation of slang that are seen by many, readers and critics alike, in a more favourable light.

## **Functional Theories**

The perceived or stated function of the use of slang in the text is of course related to the broader function of the text itself. Much has been written about the function of text in translation theory and it is important to consider the work of the scholars who contributed to establishing the "functional" branch of translation studies theory. According to Munday, functional theories allow for the dethroning of the source text, since the translated text is judged in terms of the ways in which it fulfils the function defined by the body commissioning the translation, and not uniquely in terms of the ways it corresponds to the source text (Munday 2008, p. 83). They see translation as "a purposeful activity", the process and result of which are influenced by a number of factors and players. While functional theories stress the importance of the purpose of the translated text, indicating that its functionality is key and necessarily influences the way that the issues involved in the translation process are resolved, they do not fully disregard or dismiss the importance of a coherent relationship between the source text and the translated text.

Katharina Reiss' work in the field of translation studies aims to outline the types of techniques that might be implemented to translate texts based on their text type and variety. She proposes a three-stage "phase of analysis" to ascertain the function of the source text (in Venuti 2000, p. 163). In doing so, she identifies three text types and advises that the translator should first determine the type by asking the rather wordy question "which basic communicative form is realised in the concrete text with the help of written texts?" (ibid). *Informative* texts, she states, communicate content alone, while *expressive* texts communicate artistically-organised content, and *operative*

texts communicate persuasive content (ibid). Reiss clarifies that there may be “mixed forms”, in texts that combine more than one of these communicative forms, and also adds a “hyper-type” for texts which incorporate other non-written types of communication, which she labels the “multi-medial text type” (ibid, p. 164).

The second stage of analysis entails identifying the text variety, or the “super-individual act of speech or writing”, a phenomenon that Reiss asserts is not confined to any one language or culture while conceding that “the habits of textualisation, the patterns of language and structure often differ from one to another to a considerable extent” (ibid, p. 165). She insists on the importance of establishing the variety of the source text, implying that an awareness of the features of varieties in each language is paramount to avoid “naively adopting SL conventions”, since this will “endanger the functional equivalence of the TL text” (ibid). The third stage of analysis requires the translator to study the style of the source text “in order to clarify in detail, firstly, what linguistic means are used to realise specific communicative functions, and, secondly, how the text is constructed” (ibid, p. 166).

A translator may or may not adhere to the notion of functional equivalence and may or may not deem it possible for two texts to operate in equivalent manners in (at least) two distinct contexts of reception. In any case, it is difficult to deny the value of a familiarity with the formal conventions frequently used in texts composed using the languages from and into which a text is being translated. This familiarity does not necessarily signify stringent respect of the conventions dominant in the context of reception while completely casting aside those used in the source text. Rather, it can aid the translator and anyone analysing a translation to decipher the extent to which the source text conforms to the habitual conventions of the various relevant subsections of the source culture of which it is a product, as well as how open the receiving culture is to deviations from the norm. This discussion can be linked to the body of work concerning the perceived worth of translated texts in the receiving culture and throughout the world, as well as the role played by norms in translation; ideas which I will discuss later in this chapter.

Reiss’ colleague and compatriot Hans J. Vermeer uses the term “skopos” to designate the aim or purpose of a translation. He states that the

skopos and method of translation “must be adequately defined if the text-translator is to fulfil his [or her] task successfully”, and goes on to argue that “a source text is usually composed originally for a situation in the source culture” and that the translated text “is oriented towards the target culture, and it is this which ultimately defines its adequacy” (in Venuti 2000, pp. 221-223). For Vermeer, this fact gives rise to the possibility for divergence between the function of the source and that of the translated text; the two texts need not share the same skopos (ibid, p. 223). We might extend his theory to posit that it is actually impossible for the two texts to share the same functions, and therefore that the aims will necessarily be at least slightly different. A change in language involves a change in audience, and the two receiving cultures, of the source and translated text, will approach the text from distinct angles. In all cases, it is apparent that the translator should be aware of the intended role to be played by the text once it is released into the receiving public, and that all translation projects require at least a basic brief, written or internalised, which details the skopos of the task to be undertaken.

The model of “translatorial action” that is proposed by another scholar contributing to the functionalist theories of translation, Justa Holz-Mänttari, conceptualises translation as a purpose-driven activity that is outcome-oriented. The model likens the task of translation to a form of intercultural communication requiring the crossing of intercultural barriers. Holz-Mänttari identifies six distinct parties who play a role in interlingual translation: the initiator, the commissioner, the source-text producer, the target-text producer, the target-text user, and the target-text receiver (1984, pp. 109-11 in Munday 2008, p. 78). Such a model situates the translated text within a wider sociocultural context and places the translator within a network of other players, each influencing the decisions made by the translator and the final outcome of the “translatorial action”. As with the theories of Reiss and Vermeer, the scope of Holz-Mänttari’s work warrants amplifying in the broader context of discussions relating to factors of a more systemic nature that have an impact on the way translation is undertaken. There are indeed many more players in the process of translation than the translator alone, but it should be recognised that these other players make decisions based on various overarching criteria of which they may or may not be directly aware.

Christiane Nord's various contributions to functional theories of translation intend to provide practical tools for translators and teachers of translation that enable them to analyse the source text and devise techniques to undertake its translation. In a similar vein to her functionalist colleagues, Nord places the receiving audience firmly at the centre of concerns and affirms that "every translation is intended to achieve a particular communicative purpose in the target audience, and if we analyse who the target audience will be and what they may need and expect, we might be better able to deliver a product that suits their needs and expectations" (2005, p. 133). Notably, she establishes a binary division in strategies of translation, purporting that a translation is either *documentary* or *instrumental*, intended either to communicate specific information about the source text and culture, or to stand as "a communicative instrument" in its own right, fulfilling the same or a similar function for a particular target-culture readership or a general target-language audience" (ibid, p. 142).

Nord differentiates her proposal of opposing strategies from the dichotomies developed by other scholars, such as Cicero (orator/interpreter), Luther (Germanising/translating), Nida (functional and dynamic equivalence), and Venuti (domestication/foreignisation), stating that neither of the two strategies should be considered to be "better" or "more appropriate" than the other, and that it "all depends on [...] the conclusions the translator draws from the brief or information they receive from the client about what kind of audience the translated text is addressed to and which purpose or purposes it is supposed to fulfil" (ibid). Whether or not these and other binary oppositions proposed by scholars of translation studies are seen to be prescriptive or descriptive in nature, a logical and more constructive approach might be to envisage each pair of opposing strategies as two ends of a spectrum. In this way, the terms could be considered in each case to be broad concepts which can and should be broken down into more nuanced degrees that run along an extended scale.

An approach such as this allows us to tackle the task of analysing a translated text with the understanding that it is not necessarily possible to classify the techniques used as one of two options. Furthermore, refusing categorical binary oppositions contributes to fostering an acknowledgement

that various choices might be more closely aligned with one of the two poles in different parts of the text. In other words, within one translated text, we can see a combination of techniques that correspond to an overarching strategy sitting at both ends of the scale (some decisions might be seen as foreignising, for example, while others could be classed as domesticating). It will become evident in Chapter 5, as well as in the analyses provided in Part Three, that translations of texts containing slang rarely use only one strategy. Rather, translators tend, with varying degrees of awareness, to establish their own unique strategy that embraces techniques one might employ in a number of approaches.

It is clear that the language of the translated text cannot fulfil the exact functions of the language of the source text, especially when the use of a specific type of language in a fictional text is intended to suggest a number of aspects of the identity of the characters and the place they occupy or are attributed in society. Functional theories allow us to recognise the possibility of circumventing this apparent shortcoming of a translated text by asserting its independence and its individuality. In this way, the translated text can be seen as a new original that has undergone a subjectively-performed transposition from one language to another, one audience to another, according to a specific brief. This argument for individuality is embedded in the work of Antoine Berman who, despite being seen as a “source-oriented” theorist of translation, insists on this necessity for a translated text to function as a text in its own right when he states that a translation must fulfil the basic requirement of being able to stand alone as a piece of written work in the receiving language, and to stand alone as a veritable text (1995, p. 65)<sup>46</sup>. At the same time as the translated text is conceived to stand alone, however, the translator should be wary not to “erase” completely “the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text” (Venuti 1995, p. 188). Avoiding such a result is, of course, a prickly process, as we will see when considering the translated texts in the final chapters.

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<sup>46</sup> “Tenir a ici un double sens : tenir comme un écrit dans la langue réceptrice, c’est-à-dire essentiellement ne pas être en deçà des “normes” de qualité scripturaire standard de celle-ci. Tenir, ensuite, au-delà de cette exigence de base, comme un véritable texte.”

Despite the various gaps and flaws identifiable in the work relating to functional theories of translation, these theorists have encouraged a constructive attitude towards undertaking and analysing translations that insists on a thorough engagement with the functions and features of the original text. This heightened awareness of the aims and mechanics of the source text enables a more informed assessment of the most appropriate strategy to adopt in translation and/or of the appropriateness of the techniques used to achieve the intended purpose of the translated text. We can build on these functional theories to encompass issues of a more systemic nature, acknowledging that the various factors seen to impact the way a translation is approached and undertaken (e.g. the text type, the text variety, the style of the text, the purpose a text serves in its original context and in the receiving culture for translation, the players involved in the process, etc.) are all fundamentally influenced by more abstract factors engrained in the system that produces and receives these texts. Nord alludes to this idea when she says that “situations are not universal but are embedded in a cultural habitat, which in turn conditions the situation” (2006, p. 134), and the “cultural turn” in translation studies might be seen as a means of addressing this apparent absence in previous theoretical enterprises.

### **The “Cultural Turn” in Translation Studies**

The discussion of the power ascribed to various intralingual varieties of a language that permeates Part One of the thesis can, and should, be extended in this second part of the thesis to encompass the complexity of interlingual relations across different languages and cultures. This endeavour involves studying the way that a language, and the culture it represents, is perceived in foreign cultures, since this perception will no doubt contribute to shaping the form of a text when it is translated. Once an idea of this image has been ascertained, it is useful to ask if the translated text is intended to confirm or to contest foreign readers’ potential preconceived ideas of the language and culture being represented in the translated text, as well as the extent to which the culture of reception allows for space to perform any sort of contestation, an intention that can be linked to the *skopos* assigned to the translated text.

According to Michaela Wolf, “[...] the “cultural turn” resulted in an enduring expansion of the frames of research and the elaboration of broader questions which enabled the inclusion of historical perspectives and contextual information in the discussion of translation procedures and translation as cultural products, thus foregrounding the macro-context of translation” (2012, p. 131). Wolf asserts that the beginning of the cultural turn in translation studies was heralded by Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere, who write in the introduction to the collection of essays they edited in 1990 entitled *Translation, History and Culture* that “there is always a context in which the translation takes place, always a history from which a text emerges and into which a text is transposed. [...] Translation as an activity is always doubly contextualized, since the text has a place in two cultures” (1990, p. 11).

Edwin Gentzler and Maria Tymoczko also endorse the idea that the cultural turn was initiated by Bassnett and Lefevere. In their introduction to *Translation and Power*, they cite the two scholars’ frustration with the attention the majority of translation studies scholars were affording to the analysis of “minute literary and linguistic differences” (2002, p. xiii). They further express a desire to “*explain* the shifts that occur in translation, not just by poetic devices but by ideological forces as well” (ibid). Despite Wolf’s, Gentzler’s, Tymoczko’s, and many other scholars’ assertions regarding the genesis of the movement, it is important to acknowledge that the presence of the cultural angle and its overtones were visible in the work of scholars writing before the beginning of the 1990s, including Antoine Berman and the members of the Tel Aviv School, as well as the contributors to Theo Hermans’ 1985 anthology *The Manipulation of Literature*. Arguably, these scholars provided the momentum that Bassnett and Lefevere needed to inaugurate in full form what has become known as the “cultural turn” in translation studies.

More recent developments have also seen the consideration of other disciplines within the field, as well as the use of translation as a vector for studies in other domains. Bassnett refers to this trend in her preface to the fourth edition of *Translation Studies*, affirming that “the development of Translation Studies in the 1990s can best be seen as the establishment of new alliances”, further citing links with gender studies, corpus linguistics, and post-colonial theory as examples of such alliances (2014, pp. 10). Her thoughts are

supported by Michaël Oustinoff, who asserts that translation is a multidisciplinary field of study that involves all disciplines in the humanities (2007, p. 22)<sup>47</sup>. These links between translation studies and other sections of academic thought are also of interest to Cristina Marinetti, who relates the cultural turn in translation studies to a broader movement in academic research. For Marinetti, “[...] the cultural approach also reflects a more general shift in epistemological stance in the humanities and beyond, from ‘positivism’ to ‘relativity’, from a belief in finding universal standards for phenomena to a belief that phenomena are influenced (if not determined) by the observer” (2011, p. 26).

Wolf identifies even more recent trends in translation studies with discussions moving towards a closer consideration of the place of translators and of translation in society and she draws on Bourdieu’s theories, especially on the notion of the habitus (2012, pp. 133-134). She cites Bourdieu’s definition of habitus as “[a] system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of *perceptions, appreciations, and actions* and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks, thanks to analogical transfers of schemes permitting the solution of similarly shaped problems” (Bourdieu 1968, p. xx in Wolf 2012, p. 135). Linking this notion to translation studies, Wolf argues that it is of particular relevance “because it helps trace the interaction between (translation) text analysis and social analysis” (2012, p. 135).

These advancements in discussions about translation allow us to understand that translators do not work in a vacuum; the prism through which they engage with the piece of work to be translated and perform its translation is ultimately affected by their background, life and work experience, and by their involvement in the two cultures (source and target), as well as by the place that translation holds in society more broadly. In this way, we can identify the role of extratextual forces in translation that also determine the perceived functions of the source text and the functions assigned to the translated text. Again, it will be vital to bear these details in mind when studying more closely the various strategies used in the translation of non-standard varieties of

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<sup>47</sup> “[...] *la traduction est un objet d’étude pluridisciplinaire, faisant intervenir l’ensemble des sciences humaines.*”

language since they may shed light on the motivations for adopting one strategy rather than another. More specific theorising on the role of systems in translation has been proposed by a number of theorists, and I will focus in the next section of the thesis on the work of a small selection of these scholars, beginning with the descriptive theories of Itamar Even-Zohar and Gideon Toury, before moving on to consider the work of André Lefevere and of Pascale Casanova<sup>48</sup>.

## **Translation and Systems**

In the late 1970s, Itamar Even-Zohar and Gideon Toury sought to shift the focus in the study of translated texts from the text itself to considerations related to the system in which the text is inserted. Even-Zohar's polysystem theory purports that translated texts form part of a system within the literary system, which is therefore a polysystem since it is composed of numerous subsections. He argues that it is possible to observe correlations between different translated works based on how these works are selected for translation, and on the "specific norms, behaviours, and policies" in translation determined by the relationship between translation and other sections of the literary system (in Venuti 2000, p. 193). According to Even-Zohar, translated literature may adopt a fluctuating position within the receiving polysystem, between central and periphery, at any given time. When translation occupies a central position, it contributes to shaping the centre of the system, the approach to translation and the techniques used are often innovative, and the distinction between translated and original works is not necessarily made. In instances where a literary system is globally weak or peripheral, emerging, or reinventing itself, translation can play a decisive role at the core of this system to reinvigorate the models and features used, and foreign source texts are usually chosen based on how they might correspond to the direction being taken in the receiving culture (ibid, pp. 193-194).

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<sup>48</sup> Although a number of other scholars offer valuable material about the role of norms and systems in translation (notably Jiří Levý, Andrew Chesterman, and Theo Hermans), for the sake of space, I have selected the scholars and works with ideas that seem to be the most representative of the major works available, and those which allow for constructive contrastive discussion.

On the other hand, if translation occupies a peripheral position in the literary polysystem, strategies and techniques are likely to be more conservative and conform to existing models and norms, and translation does not hold “positive correlations with original writing” (ibid, p. 195). Even-Zohar points out that within a culture’s literary polysystem, “translation is itself stratified”, meaning that translations from some languages and of some genres, for example, will occupy a more or less central position within the system, but that “the ‘normal’ position occupied by translated literature tends to be the peripheral one” (ibid, pp. 195-196). He does however insist that all polysystems differ at least slightly, often significantly, and uses France as an example of a literary polysystem that is “more rigid than most other systems” (ibid, p. 196). The fact that French literature has traditionally held a central position in the European macro-polysystem has also meant, according to Even-Zohar, that translated literature in France assumes “an extremely peripheral position” (ibid).

This statement might be developed with the addition of other contributing factors, such as the persevering appetite for new literature among French readers and the number of residencies and programmes accessible and available to emerging writers in France, and perhaps a more general sense of pride associated with the richness of French literature in France. However, it seems important to bear in mind that this perceived peripheral position of translated literature in France is relative to the position of translated literature in other contexts. Although the presence of translated literature may be more central in other cultures where the production of “original” literature is less substantial than in France, a study of the figures indicating the percentage of translated works constituting the literature on the market in different countries would perhaps incite a calling into question of the use of the adverb “extremely” to qualify the peripheral position of translated literature in France, as well as the correlation Even-Zohar establishes between its position in France and in the USA (“the state of Anglo-American literature is comparable”) (ibid, p. 196).

According to a 2015 report published by Literature Across Frontiers, translated literature constitutes 15.9% of the market in France, compared with 19.7% in Italy, 33.19% in Poland, 12.28% in Germany, and 3.13% in the UK and

Ireland (Büchler and Trentacosti 2015, p. 9). Statistics published in 2008 by the Conseil Européen des Associations de Traducteurs Littéraires are similar<sup>49</sup>, and the Three Percent project launched by the University of Rochester in 2007 confirms the 3% figure for the UK and Ireland is also applicable to the US (2018, online). While the percentage of translated literature available for purchase in France, therefore, is lower than in other countries, it is significantly higher than in the UK and the US. It is also worthwhile noting that literature written in English is the most widely translated into other languages, and that translations into English from European languages are primarily from French (Büchler and Trentacosti 2015, pp. 5 & 9).

Though beyond the scope of this thesis, it would be interesting to undertake a study that examines these figures in more depth. In this way, the number of works of certain genres translated might indicate the receiving culture's taste for a particular style of foreign book depending on the language in which it was initially written. Furthermore, one might attempt to establish a link between the types of works available in translation and the way that these texts are translated; to confirm or to contest, for instance, the prevailing views in the receiving culture on the aspect of the source-culture context depicted. I will broach this point briefly when considering how the banlieue is discussed in Anglophone media, and how the voices of producers of various translated texts can see their voices harnessed so that they become spokespeople for the issues described within their texts. However, these questions warrant further study in more comprehensive projects that examine how these trends are apparent in other genres and in other languages, and if there are overarching correlations across different contexts and cultures.

Even-Zohar's colleague Gideon Toury relates the notion of norms reflected in the strategies and techniques used in translation to the broader concept of polysystems. Essentially, Toury takes the macro-level nature of Even-Zohar's work and applies it on a more micro scale to the approach to translation visible within texts translated in various contexts. For Toury, norms constitute the middle ground between "relatively absolute" rules, and idiosyncrasies: the two extremes of what he labels a scale of socio-cultural constraints in translation (in Venuti 2000, p. 199). He states that, according to

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<sup>49</sup> The most significant discrepancy is for Germany, said here to be 7.2%.

trends, the prevailing norms in translation can shift on this scale further towards the end of idiosyncrasies (which are more subjective in nature) or of rules (more objective) (ibid). Toury supports his theorising by referencing the work of sociologists and social psychologists who regard norms as “performance instructions” for particular situations that communicate “general values or ideas shared by a community” in terms of what is deemed to be right and wrong, and adequate and inadequate (ibid).

According to Toury, there are two types of norms: *preliminary*, which determine the choice of text to be translated, and *operational*, which dictate more precisely the way in which the translation is undertaken (ibid, pp. 202-203). He further argues that norms are probably “dependent on the position held by translation – the activity as well as its products – in the target culture”, a statement which establishes links with Even-Zohar’s polysystem (ibid, p. 204). The extent to which a translator may engage in “non-normative behaviour” can vary, according to Toury, depending on the system in which the translation is undertaken; a fact which, he argues, solicits “intriguing questions such as who is ‘allowed’ by a culture to introduce changes and under what circumstances such changes may be expected to occur and/or be accepted” (ibid, p. 206).

These questions that Toury leaves unanswered are among the most striking raised in his work. Although the case studies presented in Part Three do not claim to draw any specific or categorical conclusions based on these questions, the angle that I adopt when analysing the texts in the corpus reveals distinct correlation between the choice of banlieue texts to be translated and the strategy adopted to translate each text. By all accounts, it is clear that the banlieue texts chosen for translation do not, in the words of Lawrence Venuti, “[challenge] the contemporary canon of foreign literature” available in English (1995, p. 148). Preliminary and operational norms can be seen to be tightly linked when it comes to prioritising the production of a version in English of the banlieue texts that seem to have the most potential to appeal to broad audiences. Beyond the selection of texts, we will see how various aspects of the reputation that precedes a text’s production in English can influence the strategy adopted in translation. By reputation here, I am referring to such ideas as the success that the work encountered in France before being released into

the Anglosphere, the media attention it was afforded prior to its release, and its existence in other mediums (for instance, if the translation of a book is published after the release of its film adaptation).

The line of inquiry established by Toury and Even-Zohar in translation studies has proved an invaluable springboard from which other scholars have been able to make further contributions that orbit around off-shooting ideas. One such scholar is André Lefevere, who in his 1992 book *Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* states that it is the Russian Formalists who introduced the concept of system into modern literary theory, since they view culture as a system (1992, p. 11). Culture in this sense is thus defined as:

[...] a complex “system of systems” composed of various subsystems such as literature, science, and technology. Within this general system, extraliterary phenomena relate to literature not in a piecemeal fashion but as an interplay among subsystems determined by the logic of the culture to which they belong.

(Steiner 1984, p. 112 in Lefevere 1992, p. 11)

This explanation positions literature as a subsystem within the macro “system of systems” (or what Even-Zohar would call a polysystem) that is culture; a subsystem that interacts with, influences, and is influenced by other subsystems. Lefevere believes that there are forces at play both inside and outside of the literary system to ensure that the relationship it shares with other subsystems remains peaceful (Lefevere 1992, p. 14). He calls this a “double control factor” and states that “the first factor tries to control the literary system from the inside within the parameters set by the second factor” (ibid).

The factor that Lefevre mentions inside the system is represented by the “professionals”, or the critics, reviewers, teachers, and translators, and he names the control factor outside the system “patronage”, or the “powers (persons, institutions) that can further or hinder the reading, writing, and rewriting of literature” (ibid, p. 15). He specifies that patronage is “usually more interested in the ideology of literature than in its poetics”, leaving the poetics to the “professionals” (ibid). For Lefevere, the system “acts as a series of ‘constraints’ in the fullest sense of the word, on the reader, writer, and rewriter” (Lefevere 1992, pp. 12-13). He offers two choices to translators: either they “adapt to the system” and remain “within the parameter delimited by its constraints”, or they “oppose the system” and “try to operate outside its

constraints” (ibid, p. 13). Reading this ultimatum within the broader context of Lefevere’s reflections, it is clear that he is simplifying matters here for effect, and that this binary choice he claims is available to translators is determined by a series of more complex factors of a systemic nature.

To conclude this section, I would like to examine briefly several aspects of Pascale Casanova’s book *La République mondiale des lettres*, translated into English as *The World Republic of Letters*. In the reflections she develops dedicated to the role of translation in the international and various national literary systems, Casanova complexifies and fleshes out the notions framing the writings of Even-Zohar, Toury, and Lefevere, bolstering her arguments with numerous examples of cases in which translation has played an instrumental role in the reception of a work abroad. Following Casanova’s reasoning, when a major language is the source language, with texts translated into minor languages, translation represents a means of diffusing internationally the central literary capital, extending and reinforcing the power and prestige of the great literary countries; whereas when it is the target language, with texts translated from minor languages or from little-valued literatures, it becomes a way to annex the works translated in such a manner that it benefits the central resources (2007, pp. 133-137). At the same time, Casanova points out that it is only through translation into a major language that these works can gain notoriety on an international scale.

For Casanova, the road to international notoriety is paved with a delicate dose of conformity, since aspiring writers daring to dream of entering the canon are granted this privilege only if their work is validated by what Lefevere refers to as the patronage. Casanova offers the following reflection on the knottiness inherent in a process which places dominated, emerging writers firmly within the clasp of the canon’s custodians:

In order to achieve literary recognition, dominated writers must therefore yield to the norms decreed to be universal by the very persons who have a monopoly on universality. More than this, they need to situate themselves at just the right distance from their judges: if they wish to be noticed, they have to show that they are different from other writers – but not so different that they are thereby rendered invisible. They must be neither too near nor too far.

(1999, p. 218 in DeBevoise’s translation 2007, p. 156)

Writers seem to be faced with the unfortunate feat of deciphering from the literary trends de rigueur the extent to which they should deviate from formal

and thematic norms in a way that will satisfy the criteria of those who hold the key to their success. In a context where readers seem hesitant to take the plunge into the foreign waters of translated literature, as indicated by the percentage of translated works available in English, one might be inclined to apply this reasoning to the techniques used in translation. This attitude is, as we have seen, supported by the arguments advanced by Toury and Even-Zohar: when the position held by translated literature in the receiving culture is fragile, the translation style is more likely to correspond to the norms dominant in that culture, no doubt since the foreignness of the work entering a particular literary system is a step in the direction of the distance Casanova describes between dominated writers and the “judges”.

Casanova focuses primarily on the interpretation and manipulation of the style and themes of the extensive range of foreign works she cites within the receiving culture, without delving deeper into the texts themselves to study the more specific aspects of the way in which they were translated. The reader of *The World Republic of Letters* may be left wondering, then, if the choice of certain words or turns of phrase over others in the translation has an impact on the reception of these works, or if it is the decisions determined by what Toury has termed the preliminary rather than operational norms, that play the most significant role in influencing their use in the foreign context into which they are introduced. One might also be inclined to reflect on the extent to which the choices in the elaboration of the paratextual elements of translated works, both the peritext and the epitext, were made in a conscious effort to vehicle a particular image of the source culture or to situate the foreign context within the receiving culture in a manner that Casanova describes as “ethnocentric”.

In a 2016 interview, Tim Parks expresses views that reveal parallels with the ideas evoked by Casanova. He argues that the “quality” of a text and the finer details of its translation are largely irrelevant since it is the subject matter of the text being translated that dictates the relevance it is attributed by the receiving audience, thanks either to the “topical” aspects it communicates in relation to the source culture or to its more general political or ideological themes. In essence, Parks points to a sort of homogenising of global literature that aims to create and feed “an international community” of book readers through the dissemination of content that can be “dropped into the

international conversation” (in Doust 2016, p. 41). In particular, Park’s references to the Nobel and Booker Prizes as evidence of an international validation of literature are borne out in Casanova’s discussion of how the activity of “consecrating institutions” is at once positive and negative, since the way in which a foreign text is received is dependent on the norms and values of the person judging it.

## **4.2 Literature on the Translation of Variety**

Without discarding the more general theories of translation that I have applied to the translation of slang up until this point of this chapter, I would now like to review the work of scholars who have dealt more specifically with the translation of linguistic variety and of orality and who have focussed on questions relevant to the texts in my corpus. I will continue to relate these ideas to the theories of translation and sociolinguistics that have framed the discussion thus far. Throughout my analyses of the texts in the corpus, I aim to harness the ideas and theories put forward by scholars whose work relates to functional, cultural, and systemic approaches to translation. The angle from which I approach the texts under study should therefore allow for a comprehensive consideration of the textual and extratextual forces at play before, during, and after the translation process.

Since literary translators are often faced with texts in which certain characters speak in dialect, many scholars, and translators, have addressed the difficulties involved in translating both the denotative and connotative meaning inherent in the use of a specific linguistic variety in the source text. Eugene Nida is one such scholar, writing of the translation of dialect that “the problem for the translator is to find in a foreign language a dialect with approximately the same status and connotations”, lamenting that the dialect selected in the language of translation is rarely “fully successful, for the values associated with a particular dialect are often highly specific” (in Brislin 1976, p. 55). Reflections such as this often address the translation of variety when it appears in dialogue rather than when it is the primary voice of the narration,

and they appear in works of a more general nature, either as secondary comments and considerations, or within individual chapters<sup>50</sup>.

Such speculations stemming from wider reflections on other issues in translation are accompanied on a more interdisciplinary level by studies that have tackled the translation of orality. According to Paul F. Bandia, this research has been undertaken in terms of the materiality of orality within studies “in various areas such as (post)colonialism, gender and cultural studies, intersemiotic and intercultural communication studies, or film and media studies”, and on a metaphorical level, in the context of interculturality and transnationalism when dealing with such issues as “the representation of otherness or alterity, marginalised identities, minority or subaltern language cultures” (2015, pp. 125-126). Within translation studies, scholars have harnessed issues in the translation of orality within postcolonial translation research<sup>51</sup>. These works are complemented by others which have addressed the power dynamics of translation into and out of minority languages, rather than varieties, as well as in national contexts where there is tension between the dominant national language and another marginalised language<sup>52</sup>.

The list of works devoted more specifically and comprehensively to the translation of non-standard varieties is vastly shorter than those outlined above. These works are generally in the form of essays and articles, often based on conferences, found in various collections or journals, or else appearing independently within works addressing other related issues. In what follows, I will summarise and scrutinise a selection of the relevant sections of these works, focusing specifically on the typologies for the translation of linguistic variety that have been elaborated by three scholars. In addition, I will consider work on the translation of the layering of different voices and languages within one text as well as of culture-specific terms. The ideas that I address in this

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<sup>50</sup> Gillian Lathey, for example, devotes an entire chapter of her 2016 book *Translating Children's Literature* to “Translating dialogue and dialect”.

<sup>51</sup> Among others, we could turn to the numerous works offered by Gayatri Chakravorty, *Postcolonial Translation: Theory and Practice* edited by Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi in 1996, *Changing the Terms: Translating in the Postcolonial Era* edited by Sherry Simon and Paul St-Pierre in 2002, and *Translation in a Postcolonial Context* written by Maria Tymoczko in 2006

<sup>52</sup> Notable examples of books related to such circumstances in Canada and in Ireland are by Annie Brisset (*A Sociocritique of Translation: Theatre and Alterity in Quebec, 1968-1988*) and Michael Cronin (*Translating Ireland. Translation, Languages, Cultures*).

chapter will feed into the typology that I propose in the next chapter, through which I aim to contribute to filling the lack of any extensive exploration of the implications of various strategies implemented in the translation of slang.

Federico Federici believes that approaches to the translation of linguistic variety can be categorised in two ways. Translators, he says, are either conservative or experimental:

When translators do not attempt to force the norms, they are conservative in respecting the target language expectations and avoid challenging it with non-standard variants. [...] When translators try to reveal the differences in the source language, [...] they are experimental.

(2011, p. 10)

Beyond this broad classification of approaches, the typologies I outline below display varying degrees of complexity in terms of the strategies and techniques proposed for the translation of linguistic variety, hinging more or less on conservative or experimental approaches, suppressing or stressing difference within or between the language and culture of both the source and translated texts.

### **Typology 1: Brigitta Eglund Dimitrova**

Brigitta Eglund Dimitrova's model for the translation of variety in her 1997 article "Translation of Dialect in Fictional Prose – Vilhelm Moberg in Russian and English as a Case in Point", is the first that I will consider here, since, chronologically, it is among the earliest typologies dedicated specifically to variety that I have found. It also has the merit of being quite clear and simple, factors which have allowed other scholars to expand and develop Dimitrova's work. At the beginning of her discussion of the translation of the dialect in one chapter of a Swedish novel into Russian and English, Dimitrova highlights that "no comprehensive survey exists of the translation of dialect in fiction, but other researchers have noted a tendency either to omit dialectal markers in translation, or to replace them with markers of colloquial language" (1997, pp. 62-63). Attributing this fact largely to editor involvement in translation and the desire to produce "normative" translations, she provides a list of examples from her case study. Although these examples that she offers are bolstered by very little analysis, Dimitrova provides a scale of translation

strategies and postulates that “any shift in translation will tend to go towards the right of this continuum” (ibid, p. 63):

variety with specific regional origin	variety with general regional origin or rural origin	variety with specific social origin	marked colloquial language	neutral language	marked written/elevated language
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Dimitrova’s continuum indicates that it is language which carries indications of a character’s belonging to a specific geographical group that holds the least prestige, less so than language which betrays a character’s social class. Such a judgement would likely encourage objections, since the stigma attached to language suggestive of a particular class or region may vary depending on where this judgement is coming from.

## **Typology 2: Alexandra Assis Rosa**

The second typology that I would like to present can be found in the work of Alexandra Assis Rosa who has written several articles about the translation of variation and/or of orality. In her article “Translating Place: Linguistic Variation in Translation”, she follows on from Dimitrova’s theorising to propose a more comprehensive typology for the translation of linguistic variety. She begins by specifying that the translation of form is not particularly problematic but that it becomes challenging to translate linguistic variety when an effort is made to reproduce the connotative values of the variety used:

[...] the difficulties arise when a translator tries to replicate both the form and contextual meaning (communicative and socio-semiotic) of a pseudo-accent or dialect from a literary source text in order to indirectly characterise a character in another language, for another receiver, in another culture.

(2012, pp. 83-84)

After outlining a series of explanations (illustrated with charts) that present the complexities of sociolinguistic variation, she reduces Dimitrova’s six categories of language to four, with standard at the centre, followed by orality, then regional substandard, and finally social substandard (ibid, pp. 86-87).

Though her model also differs from Dimitrova's in that she places varieties with specific social rather than geographical connotations at the outer periphery, they both agree that the most common shift in translation is towards the centre, towards the standard and written variety of language: "the most pervasive strategy is for translation to bring into the centre occupied by the standard all less prestigious varieties located in the periphery of the circle and present in the source text" (ibid, p. 87).

Assis Rosa states that shifts in translation from varieties on the outside of her circle of prestige towards varieties at the centre can be labelled "centralising", and those towards the periphery "decentralising" (ibid, p. 86). When the translated text replaces the non-standard variety of language with a standard variety, the most extreme form of "centralising", this can be called "normalising" (ibid). In a more recent article, entitled "Translating Orality, Recreating Otherness", she reiterates the idea that normalisation is the most common strategy, and especially in "socio-cultural contexts still strongly marked by the written standard's power and prestige" (2015, p. 217). Decentralisation strategies are rare, she states, "usually resulting from a very strong ideological and/or political motivation, such as the influence of nationalist movements of the aim of increased translator visibility" (ibid). It would seem, then, that techniques contributing to a decentralising approach are used within a more target-oriented approach, when the translation is intended to reveal the foreign within the target language and culture, rather than that which is inherent in the source text.

To show how translators can enact shifts in language prestige towards the periphery or to the centre, Assis Rosa establishes four main techniques identified in the translations she analyses into European Portuguese:

- (1) **Omission** of linguistic markers signalling contextual meaning associated with less prestigious or substandard discourse;
- (2) **Addition** of linguistic markers signalling contextual meaning associated with less prestigious or substandard discourse;
- (3) **Maintenance** of linguistic markers signalling contextual meaning associated with less prestigious or substandard discourse;
- (4) **Change** of contextual meaning signalled by linguistic markers associated with less prestigious or substandard discourse (e.g. social becomes regional, regional becomes oral)

- (a) Change of a more peripheral substandard towards a less peripheral variety;
- (b) Change of a less peripheral variety towards a more peripheral or substandard variety.

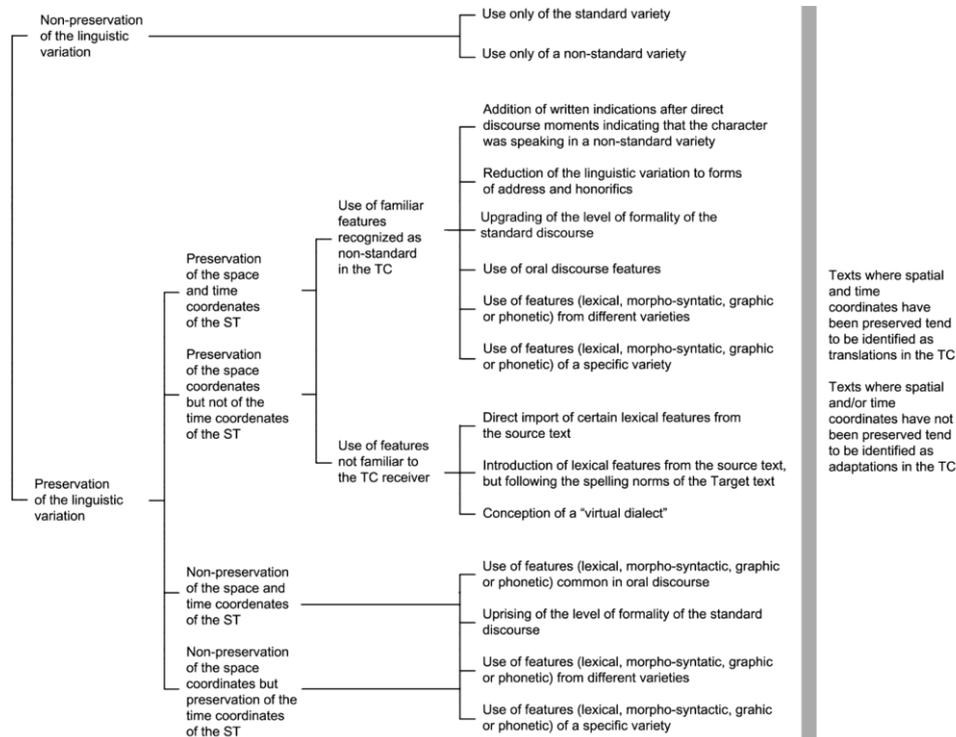
(2012, p. 85)

Each of these techniques can be related to aspects of Berman's deforming tendencies, most obviously "the destruction of vernacular networks or their exoticisation", but also "ennoblement" (and popularisation), since Berman agrees that shifts can take place towards more or less prestigious forms of language by using the source text as raw material to produce more "readable" translated texts that privilege meaning (Berman 1985, pp. 73-74). Arguably, these techniques also result in shifts that cause "the destruction of underlying networks of signification" since the use of linguistic varieties can convey, as we have seen, information regarding the character's place in society.

### **Typology 3: Sara Ramos Pinto**

The final typology I will outline in this thesis is another model based on the study of translations into Portuguese: Sara Ramos Pinto provides an even more comprehensive typology than the one put forward by Assis Rosa in an article entitled "How important is the way you say it? A discussion on the translation of linguistic varieties". Ramos Pinto states that strategies used to translate variety can range from total normalisation of the text to a recreation of a linguistic variety in the target text" (2009, p. 289). Throughout her article, she highlights a number of challenges faced by the translator of varieties, notably the difficulty (one might rather say impossibility) of identifying a variety in the language of translation with the same connotations, and the temporal gap between the setting of the work to be translated and the time of translation. She presents an extensive typology with fifteen options in total, developed from her analysis of a number of texts. Her model is elaborated from an initial four possibilities based on whether the translator decides to preserve or not "the spatial and/or the time coordinates of the source text", a decision which results in four primary possibilities (ibid, p. 294). If a text does not preserve the time and/or spatial coordinates of the source text, Ramos Pinto

states that these are considered to be adaptations rather than translations (ibid). The diagram depicting all fifteen options is reproduced below:



Ramos Pinto’s typology in table-form (Ramos Pinto 2009, p. 293)

When maintaining the geographical setting of the original text, the translator has to choose between using features of the target language that are either familiar or unfamiliar to the target audience (ibid). The six options outlined in the above table represent a gradient from most to least normalised language: starting with (1) complete standardisation with compensation in the form of “explicit indications of the variety spoken by the character”; (2) a sort of token inclusion of some features of the non-standard variety in the simple use of honorifics and forms of address; (3) elevating the formality of any standard language included in the source text to increase the distance indicated between the non-standard and standard language; (4) using features of oral speech to indicate lower prestige; (5) using features of different non-standard varieties, without choosing only one; and, finally, (6) using features of one specific non-standard variety (ibid).

Ramos Pinto posits that a translation that makes use of features of a variety from the language of translation runs the risk of jarring readers, who

could find the use of familiar, marked language on the part of foreign characters in a foreign environment overly incongruous (ibid). In such a case, the translator might opt for the use of features of language unfamiliar to the reader: (1) the direct import of certain lexical features from the source text; (2) the introduction of lexical features from the ST, but following the spelling norms of the TT; (3) the development of a ‘virtual dialect’ (ibid, pp. 295-296). The first two options, then, borrow directly from the source language and import the marked features, making more or less of an effort to communicate the meaning or significance of these features, while the third option involves the creation of a new variety within the language of translation using features that “will be strange to the target text reader” (ibid, p. 296).

One might see the thoroughness of Ramos Pinto’s typology as bordering on overly scrupulous, since it conveys a desire to account for all possible strategies and to categorise them comprehensively. Although she recognises that “a combination of different strategies is often found in the same translated text” (ibid), her framework does not appear to acknowledge that some approaches to the translation of variety might elude such precise categorisation. In fact, the attention to minute details that infuses the article, the prosaic writing style employed, and the use of technical terms such as “coordinates” are reminiscent of the impulse to apply scientific codes to the study of translation that dominated the field in the 1960s, most commonly associated with Nida’s *Toward a Science of Translating*, an impulse that was ultimately revealed to be flawed since language in use necessarily defies any sort of completely objective study. While the scientific angle of the typology is complemented in the more analytical discussion provided, stemming from her recognition that the presence of linguistic varieties in texts “adds meaning far beyond the lexical level” (ibid, p. 291), it is regrettable that she does not devote more attention to unpacking the implications of each technique, but this lack of analysis is perhaps due to the limited space afforded by a journal article.

## Heterolingualism and Translation

To supplement these typologies, I would like to consider briefly reflections related to the translation of heterolingual texts. Rainier Grutman defines heterolingualism as “the presence *in one text* of foreign idioms, in any form, as well as of varieties (social, regional, or chronological) of the main language” (1997, p. 37)<sup>53</sup>. Rainier explains that the presence of multiple tongues in one text does not necessarily reflect the reality of language circulation in society, but is usually implemented following a conscious choice on the part of the author to assign a specific status to speakers (2012, pp. 52-53). As such, sociolects are often used in dialogue, and exclusively by marginal characters, while the narration and the dialogue of the main character/s remain written in a more “classical” style (ibid, p. 53). He states that foreign languages are not habitually included in texts since not all readers are able to understand them, but that when they are included they orbit around one dominant language (ibid). Furthermore, their presence can consist in the occasional use of borrowed lexis or otherwise in the more extensive inclusion of entire sentences, paragraphs, and even pages written in the foreign language (ibid, p. 54).

The different texts in the corpus display varying levels of heterolingualism; in some, namely in *Moi non*, the standard variety of the French language has a minimal presence since the primary voices in the novel are those of marginalised youth: Hoch, Flex, and their friends. Though there are instances of a clash between two ways of speaking to different degrees in the various texts, these do not constitute a dominant or prominent presence. The implicit or explicit references to the marginalised status of the variety of French spoken by the young characters within the texts, however, and their inferior status when compared with “*le bon usage*”, with what is deemed to be the correct, appropriate way to speak French, warrants considering part of the literature dealing with the treatment of heterolingualism in translation, since this literature explores techniques employed by translators to render the voice of the Other produced in a foreign tongue.

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<sup>53</sup>“*La présence dans un texte d’idiomes étrangers, sous quelque forme que ce soit, aussi bien que de variétés (sociales, régionales ou chronologiques) de la langue principale.*”

Choosing to see slang as a “foreign idiom” also supports the argument that the transcription of this form of non-standard language in fictional texts already constitutes a form of translation, albeit intralingual. Moreover, the slang used by young people in the banlieue might itself be seen in some way as being “heterolingual” since it is composed of appropriated words and expressions from a number of varieties of the French language and from foreign languages. We might also draw links between heterolingual texts in their original version and those translated using a technique of borrowing, as will become apparent in Chapter 5, as well as with Berman’s twelfth Deforming Tendency, the superimposition of languages.

Grutman identifies four options for the translation of heterolingual texts: *non-traduction*, whereby the translator refuses to translate the heterolingual words or passages and therefore transposes them directly into the translated text without any changes; *effacement*, whereby the translator translates these words or passages into the target language; *restitution*, whereby the translator includes these words and passages but adds a translation in the body of the text or in a note; and, *déplacement*, whereby the translator translates these passages or words by using an “equivalent” deemed to communicate approximately the same distance from the target language as the original words or passages from the source language (2012, pp. 57-58). Distinct similarities can be drawn between these four options and the strategies appearing in the various typologies, including the one I will propose in the next chapter. As such, we might see *non-traduction* and *restitution* as constituting different forms of borrowing, *effacement* as a form of standardisation, and *déplacement* as a form of equivalence or replacement.

Although Grutman specifies that the concept of heterolingualism encompasses variety, his, and other scholars’ (Myriam Suchet in particular), considerations of the implications of the various strategies available to translate heterolingual passages are more directly (and almost exclusively) applicable to the translation of works containing other languages. I have therefore preferred to concentrate on typologies more overtly relevant to the translation of variety, while acknowledging that exploring the links between heterolingual translation and the translation of slang could form the basis of another study. The more complex nature of discussion and deeper level of

analysis embedded in the works of Grutman and Suchet in particular, as compared with many studies involving variety, would make such a connection especially fruitful since their reflections might act as a springboard for discussions of foreignising and estrangement strategies in writing and in translation. This might be realised through an effort to compare the challenge presented to readers when deciphering another language within a text and when understanding a particularly impenetrable version of a slang with which they are unfamiliar. The slang included in most of the texts in my corpus is, as we will see, not especially opaque, though some do contain isolated passages, especially of dialogue, that feature a fast-paced or heightened version of the slang used elsewhere in the text. This fact in itself reveals a certain stratification of the intensity of slang within these texts.

### **Translating Culture-Bound Terms**

Since the use of a linguistic variety anchors a text in a particular time and place, we might liken it to the specificity of translating the cultural references appearing in source texts. Terms considered bound to one culture have been (and continue to be) the subject of fervent discussion, resulting in a long list of strategies and techniques put forward by translators and translation studies scholars alike. In what follows, I will consider a selection of these definitions and typologies that bear likeness to the different strategies proposed to translate linguistic variety. The solutions proposed within these theories are obviously of a lexical nature and will therefore be of more relevance to those translators and scholars who regard lexis as the most important aspect of slang.

According to Colin Anderson “most [literary translators] apparently accept the need to keep foreign sociocultural references, unmodulated and to carry over unchanged into the TT culturally-marked lexical items, such as food terminology, currency terms or references to specific items of apparel” (2006, p. 114). Malcolm Harvey defines culture-bound terms more specifically as words which “refer to concepts, institutions and personnel which are specific to the source language culture” (2000, p. 358). To deal with culture-specific references, he proposes four techniques: (1) *functional equivalence*, or “using

a referent in the TL culture whose function is similar to the ST referent”; (2) *formal equivalence*, or “a ‘word-for-word’ translation”; (3) *transcription*, or borrowing, “reproducing or, where necessary, transliterating the original term”; (4) *descriptive*, or self-explanatory translation, where the translator “uses generic rather than culture-bound terms to convey the meaning” (ibid, pp. 359-368). Although the examples he provides throughout his article are from legal texts, these techniques can also be applied to fictional, aesthetic texts. The repercussions of adopting each technique will obviously differ in a literary context from that of a legal document, as is the case with any change in text type or kind, but the basic procedure remains the same.

Reflections related more explicitly to literary translation are offered by Eirlys Davies who proposes, for her part, seven options for translating cultural references:

- (1) **Preservation**, which occurs when a translator decides to “maintain the source text term in the translation” (2003, p. 72)
- (2) **Addition**, or what we could term an “augmented” form of preservation, so using a borrowed item from the source text with intra- or extra-textual explanatory notes to facilitate understanding (ibid, p. 77)
- (3) **Omission**, which entails completely erasing an ambiguous cultural reference (ibid, p. 79)
- (4) **Globalisation**, or replacing the specific reference with a more general reference that will be understood by most people, regardless of their background (ibid, p. 83)<sup>54</sup>
- (5) **Localisation**, a technique that seeks “to anchor a reference firmly in the culture of the target audience” (ibid, p. 84)
- (6) **Transformation**, where the culture-bound term is “altered” or “distorted” in a way that does not correspond exactly to globalisation or localisation (ibid, p.86)
- (7) **Creation**, whereby translators invent a culture-bound term that does not exist in the original text (ibid, p.88).

Jean-Pierre Mailhac proposes two umbrella terms for the options available to the translator of culture-specific items: “cultural transplantation” or “exoticism” (Mailhac in Harris 1996, p. 174). In Venuti’s terms, the option to “transplant” might be seen as a form of domestication, since the significance of the original setting is erased and replaced by a setting in the receiving

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<sup>54</sup> This technique might be compared with Peter Newmark’s “functional equivalent”, whereby a “culture-free word” is used and the culture-specific word is “deculturalised” (1988, p. 83)

culture. A number of the strategies outlined above, proposed by both Harvey and Davies fall within this category, which we might liken to Ramos Pinto's idea that the translator is first required to choose whether or not to maintain the space and/or time coordinates of the source text. The second option, to exoticise, may on the other hand be seen a sort of foreignisation, since the reader is invited to travel through the vector of the foreign reference, though, of course, the question is more nuanced. All techniques to translate culture-bound terms, and to translate slang, require careful examination in context, considering the way in which the translator actually went about implementing whatever option it is s/he selected.

The evidence of the plethora of typologies that exist for the translation of variety and for the translation of culture-specific items, all proposing more or less significant variations of similar techniques, suggests that classifying translation choices as subjective and dependent on context and positioning is a challenging and conflict-creating task. This should be borne in mind when engaging in any reading or proposing of typologies and reflections related to language use. While no list of possibilities can claim to be exhaustive, all forms of investigation should seek to be as comprehensive and encompassing as possible. Furthermore, the investigators undertaking this research should embrace the immense value of diverse angles used to approach the issues discussed, recognising that the position of each translator and scholar can strengthen the analytical material available and enrich future studies.

### **4.3 Translating Rap**

Although hip-hop culture is omnipresent, explicitly or implicitly, in many texts involving marginalised youth living in urban areas and in the banlieue in particular, there is little presence of rap lyrics in the texts in my corpus<sup>55</sup>. Since this thesis is most concerned with the use of rap in fictional texts that are otherwise characterised by a marked presence of urban youth slang, my own ideas on the translation of rap in such contexts to the final

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<sup>55</sup> Rap features prominently in the soundtrack of *La Haine*, but the lyrics are not translated in the subtitles I analyse. This is ostensibly since the rap is used as background music and not performed by characters or integral to the plot.

chapters will be reserved largely to the sections of the final chapters in which I analyse examples of the rap lyrics and passages of rap-like narration that I translated in *Moi non*. A more specific, detailed study of rap translation might seek out examples of rap lyrics that are translated in more general works of fiction and establish a separate typology based on this research. In what follows, I will provide an overview of relevant theory on the translation of music, while acknowledging that there is little literature available on the translation of rap lyrics<sup>56</sup>. Another study might build on these theories by incorporating work undertaken by scholars of poetry or theatre translation, since these types of translation share comparable preoccupations in terms of the tension between sound and sense, and that between “page and stage”.

In the interest of brevity, this discussion will draw primarily on the work written by Johan Franzon on the translation of song lyrics, as well as on more general ideas found in functional theories of translation, and will also consider the ideas put forward by Emanuele Risso on rap translation in particular. In the abstract accompanying his article, Risso laments the lack of research undertaken on the translation of rap:

There are many studies on Hip Hop culture from a socio-linguistic point of view, but a theoretical debate about the translation of rap lyrics seems missing, even though rap songs, just like sung songs, can be included in a translation project in a number of circumstances, from audiovisual (i.e. dubbing and subtitling) to literary contexts (such as biographies and textbooks).

(2016, p.1)

One might attribute the lack of theoretical debate he mentions to the fact that the translation of rap lyrics is not an especially common task in translation. As I noted at the beginning of this subchapter, few texts set in the banlieue feature rap lyrics despite the importance of hip-hop culture in the characters’ lives. Outside of fictional texts, it seems quite rare for professional translators to be asked to translate rap lyrics. If lyrics were to be translated for people curious about foreign rap lyrics, a rough translation made for meaning should be sufficient to help people understand what they are listening to. In this way, priority is given to performance and to sound, since it is assumed that the listener’s appreciation of the musical form is brought about in listening to the

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<sup>56</sup> To the best of my knowledge, only two scholars have proposed papers on the topic: Stefania Taviano (2012, 2013) and Emanuele Risso (2016).

lyrics, sung and accompanied by instruments, rather than in reading them on the page.

Risso recognises the relevance of theory related to the translation of poetry to that of rap lyrics and outlines the typologies put forward by André Lefevere and Bruno Osimo. Lefevere in particular identifies seven strategies for the translation of a poem, quoted by Risso as “phonemic or literal, metrical or verse-to-prose, rhymed or free-verse, a version or an imitation of the source text” (ibid, p. 6). Among these seven strategies, Risso finds Lefevere’s metrical and rhymed translations to be the most pertinent for the translation of rap lyrics, possibly since rhyme and metre (beat) are so prominent in rap music (ibid, p. 11). Alongside the work on the translation of song lyrics presented by Johan Franzon and Peter Low, these typologies on the translation of poetry form the basis of Risso’s analysis of a number of rap songs. He provides three examples of rap lyrics appearing in audiovisual texts and one from a literary text, using these as a case study to show how translators may prioritise to a greater or lesser extent the reproduction of the features of rap music or choose to focus primarily on meaning. These examples lead him to distinguish three (quite broad) strategies for the translation of rap lyrics in subtitles in particular: rhymed translation, free-verse translation, and mixed translation (ibid, p. 27).

As he writes about the translation of music more generally, Franzon posits that there are five options for the translation of song lyrics: (1) leaving the song untranslated; (2) translating the lyrics but not taking the music into account; (3) writing new lyrics to the original music with no overt relation to the original lyrics; (4) translating the lyrics and adapting the music accordingly; and (5) adapting the translation to the original music (2008, p. 376). To render the five options that Franzon proposes more relevant to the translation of rap lyrics, we might choose to replace the word “music” in each of these options with “beat”. In this way, we acknowledge the fact that considerations of melody and harmony are of little concern in rap music since, as Bradley points out, the MC relies primarily on the beat (2009, p. xv). When translating rap lyrics, or prose infused with the features of rap music, it seems logical to suggest that the choice to adopt one (or a combination) of these strategies relies on two factors: firstly, the translator should consider the way

in which the song lyrics are presented in the source text, and, secondly, assess the purpose that these lyrics are intended to serve in the translated text. When rap music forms part of the soundtrack of a film, such as *La Haine*, it appears reasonable to expect that these lyrics will not be translated in the subtitles unless they are considered to be integral to the plot. If the rap lyrics are pronounced by a character in the film, we would expect the song to be translated, but the extent to which the features of rap are exploited in the translation may vary.

The fact that rap lyrics found in films are performed aloud and act as a complement to the characters' other activities might lead subtitlers to focus primarily on the meaning of the lyrics, especially if they are important to the story of the film. This may be because the audio-visual elements of the song's performance could be considered to be a form of compensation for the absence of attention to sound in the written version of the translated rap lyrics. Furthermore, the fact that viewers are aware of the performative use of the rap lyrics through dialogue may mean that they do not need to be presented with stylistically credible lyrics to believe that the characters are engaging in rap performance. This argument could also be applied to rap lyrics translated primarily for meaning when appearing in written texts, since the information in the narration or dialogue could be seen as sufficient to contextualise the presence of rap lyrics as a means of artistic expression. Additionally, even if readers are not necessarily rap aficionados, they are likely to have at least a broad familiarity with the features of rap music. As such, they should be able to imagine that the lyrics in the book would sound like the rap music to which they have been exposed when these lyrics are performed in the situation described.

Speaking from the experience of somebody who dedicated countless hours to the challenge of translating rap lyrics in a way that renders the translated version comparable in musical and stylistic features to the original lyrics, I believe it is reasonable to posit that another explanation for a preference to translate rap lyrics primarily for meaning lies in monetary concerns. It seems likely that the translator, or indeed the person commissioning the translation, would consider that the challenge of translating lyrics for both style and meaning is overly time-consuming and not

particularly cost-effective. This would be especially true for lyrics that are not deemed to be a central aspect of the story, which, as I will argue when discussing my own translations, should not be the case if the characters writing or performing rap also rely heavily on slang to communicate their distance from the standard language, and from its speakers. The next chapter will explore a selection of strategies available to the translator of texts that feature such non-standard language.



## Chapter 5: An Alternative Typology for Translating Slang

There is a tendency for the literature on the translation of linguistic variety to oscillate between quite vague speculations on the effects of different approaches on the one hand, with little in the way of extended analysis, and meticulously precise cataloguing of the options available on the other, complete with charts and graphs (see Alexandra Assis Rosa or Sara Ramos Pinto in particular). With the luxury of space that allows for more in-depth analysis afforded by the writing conditions of a PhD thesis, I aim to strike a balance between these two approaches. To do so, I will build on the theory outlined in previous chapters and propose a relatively thorough analysis of a selection of strategies for translating slang, before harnessing this analysis in my study of the texts in the corpus set in the banlieue. Consequently, I have identified five strategies that warrant further exploration: (1) *standardisation*, or taking the slang of the original text and replacing it with words and expressions from the standard variety of the target language; (2) *equivalence*, or replacing the slang of the original text with that used by a comparable group in a particular area of the target culture; (3) *invention*, or the creation of a new way of speaking in the target language; (4) *borrowing*, or the inclusion of borrowed terms of the slang of the source text, carrying them across in some way to the translated text, with or without implicit or explicit accompanying explanations; and, finally, (5) *non-specific colloquial language*, or translating slang through an informal register while exploiting features of relaxed oral speech.

I will dedicate this chapter to an exploration of the implications of each strategy, using concrete or hypothetical examples from French and English, and primarily from the banlieue, to illustrate my points. This specificity should not detract from the general applicability of much of the discussion to translations of non-standard forms of language from and to languages other than French and English. Perhaps the most rational way of approaching the

analysis of these strategies is to ask what is deemed to be the most important function of the slang in the source text, and what role the translated text is intended to play in the receiving culture, since this will help to elucidate aspects of the decision-making process that has preceded the final product.

## 5.1 Standardisation

Several of the scholars cited so far in the discussions have drawn attention to the tenacious tendency to “naturalise” texts in translation by deploying techniques to produce fluid, readable texts. Some of the most fervent objections to this practice have been advanced by Lawrence Venuti and Antoine Berman. Venuti begins his work *The Translator’s Invisibility* by lamenting the widespread inclination to assume that a fluent translation provides audiences with the “essential meaning of the original text” at the same time as it “conceals [...] the translator’s crucial intervention in the foreign text” (1995, p. 1), while Berman proposes that this practice is problematic since it defies what he defines as the ethical aim of translation: to receive the foreign as foreign (1995, p. 68). It follows logically that this aim involves avoiding appropriating or adapting the content and the style of the source text to suit the standards of the target language. In the case of slang, an effort to increase fluency may involve a sort of flattening of the non-standard, deviant aspects of the language, replaced by features of standard language.

As several of the typologies suggest, standardisation in translation may be performed to varying degrees, to which certain labels may be attributed. I do not place the same importance as Assis Rosa on differentiating between centralising and normalising strategies, since her use of the term centralising presupposes a hierarchy of linguistic variety which I have not established. This is a conscious choice, following the argument that such a hierarchy is necessarily unstable because the prestige assigned to different varieties of language differs depending on a number of factors. Among these factors, we might point to the personal preferences of the person making the linguistic value judgement, the characteristics of the specific system into which a text is released, as well as the volatility of labels placed on different ways of speaking and the constantly evolving nature of language. It is, however, worthwhile

clarifying that when I use the term standardisation, I am referring to a strategy that sees the non-standard language of the source text brought closer to the standard variety of the target language on the translated text. Although the extent to which this transfer is performed may differ, when it is clear that the language used in the translation more closely resembles standard language than it does any form of non-standard language, it seems plausible to suggest that a strategy of standardisation has been deployed.

If the communication of aspects such as dissent and identity through the use of slang is considered vital to be carried across from the source text in the translation, it does not seem unreasonable to posit that standardisation is not an appropriate approach. When standardisation is used, many of the functions of slang that communicate precise aspects of the speaker's background and identity are tempered at best, and effaced at worst. The suggestions of rebellion and belonging are among the ideas inherent in the use of slang that are most impacted. It is precisely against the dominant group who sets and enforces the rules of this standard language that marginalised subgroups using slang seek to rebel: their manipulation of the standard language clearly communicates their discontent and dissatisfaction.

If, on the other hand, the translator judges that there is sufficient suggestion of the functions of slang through other means, be it through audiovisual elements such as body language and tone of voice in the case of a film, or through surrounding content for a written text, standardisation might be judged a fitting choice. In such cases, one might argue that the use of slang holds less weight, since there are strong hints as to the characters' identity and belonging elsewhere in the text. This is especially true in the case of film, where the reliance of a text on language in communicating the setting is less important than it might be in a written text. In this instance, clarity of content may be favoured through easily-understandable language, particularly if one judges that the subtitles serve primarily as a form of support, intended to accompany extralinguistic features and to allow audiences to follow the story while appreciating the film's aesthetic elements.

These extralinguistic details may be viewed as a form of compensation for any stylistic loss incurred when the transmission of content is prioritised through the choice to use standard language. If it is considered important for

the audience to understand that the characters are using slang, the translator might have recourse to other forms of compensation to communicate this. It would require extensive analysis of translated texts using compensation to provide a comprehensive list of its possible forms, but aside from the existing content of the source text, we might think of paratextual additions to the text in the form of translator's footnotes, or explanations provided in a preface or postface, or perhaps through minor additions to the text that indicate, implicitly or explicitly, that slang is being used. It is worth noting that these acts of compensation are performed through content rather than through form (though different forms of formal compensation might be provided elsewhere in the text if standardisation is used at the same time as other strategies). This arguably indicates a sort of surrender to the impossibility of using language in a comparable manner in the both translated text and in the original.

In a chapter dedicated to the translation of dialogue and dialect within her 2016 book *Translating Children's Literature*, Gillian Lathey outlines the "cultural and pedagogical influences" at play for translators in the throes of translating slang (2016, p. 76). Though the examples she provides are drawn from translations of children's literature, the inferences she offers prove interesting matter for reflection around the role of the skopos attributed to a translation project. In books destined to be read by or to children, Lathey indicates that there appears to be a firm inclination to provide clean, standard language in an effort to protect and preserve the purity of these youngsters' developing linguistic palette (ibid). She refers in particular to specific eras in which translators were more tightly bound by the ropes of such censorship, quoting the HMSO Newbolt Report "The Teaching of English in England" published in 1921. The authors of this report chose to argue that the teaching of English in primary schools had been compromised by the "powerful influences of evil habits of speech contracted in home and street" and that translations at this time tended to adopt a "higher social register in translation than that used in the source text" (1921, p. 59 in Lathey 2016, pp. 76-77).

We might choose to place a positive spin on the application of standardisation in translation if such a strategy that renders the text more understandable also makes it more accessible and appealing. By removing the slang, the translator removes the comprehension barrier. Furthermore, even if

the notions of alterity and playfulness are attenuated, the text becomes immediately more marketable to a broader audience who may have been dissuaded by the opacity of slang. These readers no doubt benefit from the window that is opened for them onto the social situation embedded in the original text, albeit in what is arguably a simplistic and easily-digestible manner. It therefore seems plausible that a translator might have recourse to techniques that would standardise the style of the text in situations where a significant portion of the target audience is reluctant to read translated literature, which, as we have seen, seems to be the case in the Anglosphere, where approximately 3% of available literature is translated.

At the same time, we could also apply this reasoning on an intralingual level and ask the preoccupations with clarity should encourage the production of several versions of a text containing language that is difficult to understand. This procedure might involve, for example, subtitling in Standard English a specific dialect for international (or even national) audiences unfamiliar with the variety used in the film, or taking the slang of a novel and translating it into the standard variety of the same language. In such instances, the potential audience is immediately enlarged, which equates the use of linguistic standardisation with a will to widen the reception of a work. If such a strategy of internal standardisation is applied to, or envisioned for, the source text to be translated interlingually, it follows logically that it is this standardised version of the text that would be translated into the standard variety of the target language, providing that the objective for the interlingual translation is also to reach as many people as possible. The fact that intralingual standardisation is not widely used, and certainly not as extensively as interlingual standardisation in translation, would suggest that a source text is more highly esteemed than the translated text. At the very least, it demonstrates that source texts are regarded as fixed texts and if they contain non-standard language the reader is expected to make the necessary effort to understand what is being said, even if this may be foreign to them. The reader of a translated text, on the other hand, is coddled, protected from the additional layer of foreignness within the foreign text.

To relate this discussion back to systems and power relations, we can ask if it is more likely that the translator will standardise when the source

language has low prestige in the target culture, and, conversely, if the translator might be more experimental or creative when the source language has more prestige. The nature of the translated texts under study in this thesis calls for a consideration of the reputation of the characters and situations depicted, more so perhaps than that of the French language, which is not a minority language per se. Both in France and in the Anglosphere, marginalised young people in urban areas use slang (which incidentally might provide sufficient impetus for some translators to resort to the next strategy that I will outline, that of equivalence), a fact which may impel the audience to establish correlations between the characters portrayed in the French text and young people living in similar situations in urban areas in an English-speaking country. If these young people have a negative reputation, the translator (or the commissioner of the translation) might choose to use a standard variety so as to avoid any unwanted associations with such groups of young people in the target culture, in cases where the standard variety is particularly valued and the non-standard stigmatised.

Moreover, if the readership of translated French literature in the Anglosphere is assumed to be speakers of the standard variety of English, this impulse may be magnified. As the first part of the thesis revealed, speakers of the standard language often tend to look down on speakers of slang. Given the type of English-language publication having reviewed the works in this corpus (notably *The Guardian*, *The New Yorker*, and *The New York Times*), the assumption that readers of books translated from French are in fact members of a different group, of a higher social class, than the characters of the source text, does not seem farfetched. On the other hand, we might say that this is also the case for readers of the original text. The readership of a book published by Gallimard in France, for example, is unlikely to include a majority of people living in the banlieue, which would negate such an argument. Furthermore, the very fact that people are reading a foreign text is generally indicative of their receptiveness to literature that strays from the standard forms of their language, both in content and in form, which should mean that they are open to the use of non-standard forms of language. Ultimately, it is up to the translator, and the other players in the process, to determine what they believe to be the wants and needs of the target audience (and to weigh up the worth of

respecting such wants and needs) before deciding to adopt standardisation or to prioritise a different strategy.

## 5.2 Equivalence

Among the other strategies available, the second I would like to study is that of “equivalence”. By equivalence, I am referring to the substitution of the slang of the original text with a slang used in a comparable setting by a comparable group in the language of translation. Defining the degree of equivalence and deciding on a group to represent in the target language is by no means a simple or straightforward task, and, although one of the most popular strategies used in translation, this option is far from the safest. When offering to audiences a translated text that features a representation of the non-standard variety of language used by a specific group of people, the translator, and editor, undoubtedly wish to ensure that this voice is credible. Beyond the threat of “translatese” (or the production a text that “sounds too much like a translation”) inherent in any act of translation, it is exceptionally challenging to fulfil the goal of presenting a text that holds its own, is stylistically coherent, and that appears credible to audiences, when this text is characterised by the presence of slang in the source and in the translated text.

As we have seen, in commercial circumstances at least, the priority lies in offering to audiences a translated text that does not draw attention to its foreignness stylistically so that audiences become engaged with the story being told. This means that if a translator makes use of a specific slang deemed to be equivalent when translating a text set in the banlieue of Paris, the version of this slang that appears in the translated text needs to appear sufficiently natural and credible to the target audience for it to be received as the voice of the fictional youth of the text. The discussion of the different types of slangs in the first part of the thesis can be related to the translator’s choice of a specific slang, since many options are available depending on what kind and what degree of equivalence is sought. The translator may for instance decide to adopt easily-recognisable, exaggerated features of the chosen slang, which may be quite a “niche”, slang specific to somewhere in the Anglosphere whose geography and inhabitants share similarities with the French youth.

Alternatively, they may opt for a more general form of slang. This “general slang” could be inspired by the features of language used by young people in urban areas more broadly, from a less-specific location, perhaps on a national level, likely in the UK or the US.

The decision of what type of slang to use, and of how to use it, may be more or less influenced by the degree of opacity of the language of the original. If this style is particularly difficult to understand and establishes a considerable distance between the characters and the audience, the translator may wish to prioritise this opacity over other functions of the slang in the source text and harness features of a particularly coded form of slang used by a comparable group of people in the target culture (or otherwise use other techniques to achieve a similar effect, through borrowing or invention, for instance). To adopt Nida’s terminology, we might think of this approach as a type of “dynamic equivalence”:

In such a translation one is not so concerned with matching the receptor-language message with the source-language message, but with the dynamic relationship, that the relationship between receptor and message should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original receptors and the message.

(Nida 1964 in Venuti 2000, p. 129)

Nida makes the fairly straightforward statement that a translated text which uses dynamic equivalence should maintain a comparable distance between the text and the person receiving it. The task of deciding how exactly this result might be achieved, and the question of how comparable this distance can be, are less straightforward.

If the links between the characters in the source text and the chosen group of people in the target culture are thought to be sufficiently strong, the translator might feel more confident justifying the use of an equivalent slang. Given the links I have established between the Bronx and the banlieue, one might argue that using the slang spoken by young people in the Bronx may be a plausible option for translating the slang of the young people of the banlieue. Since English-speaking audiences would no doubt be more familiar with the socio-political context of the Bronx than with the banlieue, using this language might assist audiences in drawing parallels between the two settings and consequently allow them to engage more confidently with the French text.

We can see that while the application of this strategy of equivalence might garner praise in situations where it allows readers to draw parallels between a situation unfamiliar to them and one to which they are already exposed, meaning that they are able to engage more confidently with the text. It may, however, attract criticism when it suggests a setting that is completely detached from the original. Isabelle Génin speaks specifically of accents rendered phonetically in a text translated from English into French, but we can extend her logic to ask the same question of a translation that uses the slang of a particular place within the context of reception of the translated text: “Can the characters of *White Teeth* credibly stroll through the streets of London speaking with the accent of someone from Marseille or Lille?” (Génin in Antoine 2004, p. 71)<sup>57</sup>. In the same collection of articles, Marie-Sylvine Muller quotes the translator into French of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, Frédéric Roger-Cornaz, who states that he chose not to render the Derbyshire dialect present in several sections of the dialogue in a particular French dialect (in Antoine 2004, p. 74). Roger-Cornaz is regretful that his decision results in “impoverishment”, but believes that this loss is necessary. If Lawrence used dialect to give his story a more distinct sense of place and local colour, Roger-Cornaz considers it would be “betrayal” to remove these contextual suggestions through a translation that uses the dialect of Picardy or Normandy, for example (ibid)<sup>58</sup>.

Annie Brisset mentions the tendency in Quebec for dialect used in theatre to be translated into *joual*, the low-prestige, working-class dialect of the Montreal area. Before the 1990s, she clarifies that this strategy was applied as part of a broader approach to translation that involved taking all plays set in English-speaking Canada and transposing the story into a Quebec setting, adapting all proper nouns and cultural references (1990, p. 70). This can be likened to the option in Ramos Pinto’s typology whereby the translator might choose to not respect the space coordinates of the original text, resulting in

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<sup>57</sup> “Les personnages de *Sourires de loup* peuvent-ils de façon crédible arpenter les rues de Londres en parlant avec un accent marseillais ou lillois ?”

<sup>58</sup> “Plusieurs dialogues assez importants de ce livre sont écrits en patois du Derbyshire. Je n’ai pas tenté de les traduire en patois français. Mon texte subit de ce fait un appauvrissement regrettable mais, je crois, nécessaire. Car si Lawrence a employé le dialecte pour mieux situer son récit, pour lui donner plus de couleur et de saveur locale, il va sans dire qu’une traduction en normand ou en picard serait une trahison.”

what is generally known as an adaptation (2009, p. 293). It is also worth acknowledging that this trend was no doubt influenced by the tension between French- and English-speaking Canada, and adapting plays in such an overt manner represented a political gesture, an act of appropriation that allowed Quebec to assert its independence. Although this is a relatively extreme situation in which the original text is rehashed with more freedom than is generally seen in translation, and in which this foreign text becomes a tool expressly used for appropriation, it serves as an important reminder that the decision to adopt a specific strategy is rarely neutral, and often influenced by broader systemic or power-related issues.

Obviously in the case of Quebec theatre, the translations were made for the Quebec stage, and the transfer of setting from English-speaking Canada facilitates the use of *joual*. I would suggest that in such circumstances, where it was common for translations to be produced in this manner, and in a context where the audience is quite familiar with the dialect being used, the risk of incongruity is relatively low. If, however, the translated text is not directly displaced into another setting and the cultural and geographical references of the original are maintained, the audience may question the legitimacy of using a specific replacement variety and have trouble becoming engaged with the text and succumbing to the illusion of reality.

We can revisit here the idea of different levels of slang raised in the first part of the thesis, since the translator might choose to use a more general, accessible form of slang in their translation, rather than a slang of a more coded nature. In this way, when the audience is sufficiently exposed to the general slang adopted, especially if this slang is widespread and often used in comparable original texts in the receiving culture, the established norms may mean that the audience will not be bothered by the strategy of equivalence. However, such a conclusion leads us to question the necessity of producing more than one translation. For a text translated from French into English, the use of features of a British slang that appear marked to a speaker of American English would likely strike this American as odd, and imply that the voices in the text are British rather than French. For a speaker of British English, on the other hand, these features would arguably not appear marked, but entirely normal, and thus not hinder their ability to surrender to the version of a foreign

reality that the translated text presents. This line of reasoning obviously applies in the other direction, since it is ultimately a question of habit: if the reader or viewer is a native speaker of the English being used, they will likely find the use of a general slang of this English in the translated text to be completely natural.

The fact that the UK and the US are the dominant receiving markets for foreign works translated into English means that it is probable that when a text containing slang is translated using equivalence, a slang from these two Englishes will be used in the translation. It seems reasonable to suggest that native speakers of other Englishes have adequate exposure to the American and British voice in literature and in cinema that they are unlikely to object to the use of a slang from the US or the UK rather than from their native country. If, however, the version of the specific US or UK slang in the translated text makes use of stereotypical, exaggerated features of this slang well-known to people outside of the group and outside of the national context, the non-national audience might be inclined to make associations with the US or the UK rather than to the specific setting in France when reading the translated lines. At the same time, this may also be the case for native speakers of the English from which the slang is lifted: if the features used are especially marked, they may inevitably invite the identification of a group at home rather than abroad.

If this strategy is chosen, the translator visibly needs to identify the appropriate dosage of features of the chosen slang to incorporate in the translated text. This dosage is difficult to define and to dictate: the type and number of characteristics of the chosen slang will necessarily require adjusting and tweaking during the translation and revision process. This more practical aspect of the translation process can also be related to the broader question of credibility, and of authenticity. If it is decided that the translated text will include the slang spoken by a specific group of the language of translation, the translator should be familiar enough with the features of this slang to be able to produce a believable version of it or otherwise have alternative means of doing so. Exchanging with or using the services of “native speakers” of the slang employed in the translation is one possible way of trying to ensure its credibility. Sarah Ardizzone had recourse to this technique when translating

*Kiffe kiffe demain*. In interviews, Ardizzone has stated that she spent a considerable amount of time with young people in South Brixton in London to learn the lingo she would use to translate the novel. The note at the front of UK version of the translation, *Just Like Tomorrow* reads: “The translator would like to thank Cleo Sozandry and all the slangstas at *Live Magazine*”, indicating that Ardizzone relied on the help of “insiders” to ensure the credibility of her translation. According to its website, *Live Magazine* was (it closed in 2015) “a community of curious individuals grouped together because we love uncovering unknown truths”, and its contributors were young people of various ethnic backgrounds.

Among the other translators who have shared their techniques for honing the voice they are taking on in translation is Cathy Hirano, a translator of Japanese fiction for young people into English. Hirano states in Gillian Lathey’s book that she uses two methods when translating the voice of children into English. Her first source of inspiration is anchored in fictional parallel texts since, when translating, she reads American children’s books and watches American movies. To complement this first strategy, Hirano also seeks stimulus from her own personal experience, “closing her eyes, visualising American children, and imagining what they would say in such a situation” (Lathey 2016, p. 72). Lathey proposes additional options: consulting corpora of spoken language for the language of translation, reading aloud, reading aloud to an audience of a similar age and profile to the characters in the story, and consulting parallel texts in the target language featuring a similar voice (ibid, p. 89). She also mentions the possibility of using the services of an intermediary (ibid, p. 79).

Studying the reception of translated texts which use an equivalent slang may also prove to be an interesting exercise, especially in terms of how these texts are perceived in the years after their initial publication. If the translation were performed several or many years after the time of publication of the source text, the same questions of ensuring the accuracy of an “expired” slang might be posed. On the other hand, if the translation were written shortly after the release of the source text, we could need to return to the translated text a number of years after its publication to assess the way in it ages for readers; if it ages in a similar way to the original, or it appears to date more quickly.

Asking this question points again to the broader issue of the status of translation and of translation texts, since it is unlikely that one would consider the risk of slang aging in an “original”, untranslated text.

When choosing to translate slang through the use of a replacement slang, issues of an ethical nature accompany these concrete concerns of credibility. I raised a number of questions in Chapter 2 related to the positioning and intentions of a writer who decides to take on the voice of the Other in an original work of fiction. These questions can be extended to encompass the other Other whose voice is adopted as the basis for the voice of this original Other when it is translated using a replacement slang. We much ask such questions as: Would the real-life speakers of the slang used in the translated text agree to its being used in this context? Would they accept the parallels that might therefore be established between their situation and that of the characters (and their real-life counterparts) of the foreign text? Would they approve of the way an outsider chooses to present a written version of their voice in the translated text? Would they, and others, find this fictional representation of their voice realistic and not feel as though their speech has been rendered in a reductive or inaccurate manner? We might ask the people portrayed in the original text these same questions, especially since they usually lack the linguistic skills necessary to understand the translated version of the fictional version of their voice and to assess if the transfer has been performed in a way that they consider to be satisfactory. The multiplicity and complexity of such questions make it clear that the translator who decides (or is asked) to use an equivalent slang faces a number of risks.

Beyond questions of authenticity and credibility, the use of an equivalent slang may suggest that the translator considers the two cultures to be equivalent. Such a suggestion serves effectively to erase distinctiveness of the original setting and arguably prevents the translated text from fulfilling Berman’s eminent ethical aim of translation, in receiving the foreign as foreign. Furthermore, it is worthwhile acknowledging the increasingly widespread use of the English language across the globe. Although, as I stated in my discussion of standardisation, French is not a minor language, English is *the* major language, and choosing to adopt a replacement Anglophone slang in translation may be interpreted as a means of reinforcing the hegemonic

status of the English language, and of certain Anglophone cultures more generally. The intricacy of the issues relating to how to deal with the portrayal of minority groups in fictional texts, especially when the person presenting the voice is not a member of the minority group presented, place producers of these texts in a delicate, and perhaps daunting, position.

The challenges involved in giving a voice to fictional members of minority groups are compounded in translation, and especially where equivalence is sought. This is because, unlike the writer, the translator is not only an outsider of one group, of the minority group portrayed in the original text, but of two. Taking on the voice of a marginalised group within the culture of reception while casting aside the voice of the minority group portrayed in the original text can result in reactions ranging from absolute endorsement to impassioned condemnation. The degree of marginalisation of the group portrayed directly in the source text and the group whose voice is exploited in the translated text will necessarily influence the level of investment visible in these reactions, but it seems reasonable to suggest that the translator is treading on sensitive soil. Such a dilemma reminds us of the translator's vulnerability when dealing with the voice of the Other, and invites a consideration of the share of responsibility for the rendering of this voice among the translator and the other players in the translation process.

### **5.3 Invention**

If the translator reckons that standardisation is not a viable option for the translation of the linguistic rebellion and playfulness that defines the slang of the original text, and that equivalence invalidates the specificity of the original setting, s/he might consider inventing a new slang. This invented slang might be limited to lexis or imagined expressions imbedded in the existing linguistic system of the target language (or, more specifically, a variety of this language), or it may involve the construction of an entirely new linguistic system. Both of these methods necessarily entail considerable challenges, but it seems that the latter option verges on impossibility. In any case, it would represent colossal effort on the translator's part, as well as a great deal of audacity. If applied to the translation of an entire novel or film, this invented

slang would need to establish enough logic to allow the audience to understand the language being used.

It seems more likely that if a translator chooses to venture down the avenue of invention, s/he might aim to base this new slang at least on the basic grammar of the target language, if not on a specific slang within the target language. When inventing this slang, the translator might choose to source words and expressions from the slang of the source language and bring them into the invented target-language slang through literal translations or through direct borrowing. The new slang might also contain entirely new words built through inspiration from the etymology of certain slang terms in the original text, or through a combination of these slang terms and slang terms in the target language. Another option might see the translator create a sort of linguistic mishmash by welding together features of different existing slangs in English, in which case the slang would not necessarily be purely lexical but potentially permeate all parts of speech.

One could argue that the strategy of invention satisfies the playful function of slang present in the original text and circumvents the problem of appropriation through the use of language that implies a specific setting for the translated text, since the invented language exists only in the context of the translation. It may also be seen as a way to recreate a form of distance between the audience and the characters in the text who speak an opaque type of language. The invention of a new slang therefore avoids the thorny question of cultural appropriation, but it also further removes the text from its original context, placing the text in a sort of linguistic limbo and drawing attention to language in a way the original does not necessarily intend to do.

## **5.4 Borrowing**

The fourth option for translating slang that I would like to discuss in this typology is that of borrowing, or the procedure of direct transfer of selected terms from the source to translated text. This strategy might be more accurately considered as a technique, since it obviously cannot be used alone. Although isolated slang terms from the source text can be added to a translated text that otherwise relies on one of the other strategies outlined in this

typology, I have chosen to consider borrowing separately since it is a dense topic that merits attention on its own rather than when part of another strategy. It could be said that the concept of borrowing supposes that slang is primarily lexical since it is the words of the slang used in the source text that are given the most visibility and importance in the translation. When borrowing is used, a selection of slang words is highlighted while the other aspects of the non-standard variety of language are left on the sidelines. There is a certain logic here, however, since lexis is certainly the most appropriate part of slang to incorporate into a translation without overly disrupting the basis of the language of translation.

As we saw in Chapter 4, the transfer of lexis from the source to the translated text is often used for culture-specific terms which do not have a direct translation in the target language. In such cases, borrowing allows the translator to emphasise the specificity of the original term, but also imbue the translated text with the “flavour of the foreign”. Peter Newmark highlights this idea when he states that “in regional novels and essays [...], cultural words are often transferred to give local colour, to attract the reader, to give a sense of intimacy between the text and the reader – sometimes the sound or the evoked image appears attractive.” (1988, p. 82). The presence of foreign lexis in a translated text can therefore act as a reminder that this text has been sourced from outside of the borders of the context of reception: the choice to include specific slang terms in their original form acknowledges the original text’s intrinsic adherence to another set of linguistic and cultural codes.

Although this incessant reminder of the translated nature of the text can be seen as a frank recognition of its foreignness, it might also be equated with Berman’s exoticising tendency. This is especially true in cases where the foreign terms are simply carried across to provide an impression (or even illusion) of foreignness while couched in an otherwise stylistically familiar writing style that does not perform in the target language the same functions as the slang of the original text. The reflections that Rita Felski offers related to rendering difference imply that the task is not without risk, and we might apply her reasoning to some forms of borrowing. She states that “exoticising difference, tip-toeing around other cultures by treating them as the mysterious and unknowable Other, is a perilous and deeply patronising endeavour that

blinds us to moments when histories and cultures overlap” (2008, p. 40). Especially if the borrowing of the foreign slang term is performed in a manner that facilitates understanding through the provision of contextual, buffering information, or through a change in spelling to correspond to the norms of the language of translation, its function is to foster a facile feeling of foreignness rather than to communicate any linguistic rebellion or any of the other functions it serves in the original text. We might also argue that providing explanatory notes strips the text to a certain extent of its literary value and attributes it more overtly pedagogical aims.

It may be argued that when borrowing in translation is enacted by carrying across unchanged the terms without contextual assistance to simplify understanding for the receiving audience, the borrowed terms appear obscure to this audience and therefore act in a similar manner as in the source text. In both cases, there is a comprehension barrier established between the audience and the text through the use of a coded form of language. Although this argument is valid, it must be recognised that there is an inevitable shift in the nature of the foreignness communicated. The borrowed terms that are unfamiliar to the target audience are obscure because they are taken from a different language, not because they are terms used in a variety from within that language. In the case of a text set in the banlieue translated into English, the appearance of borrowed slang lexis in the translated text would strike the audience as “French” words on a macro level, rather than as the French words of marginalised groups. The identity of the Other is therefore altered in translation; the translator effectively draws attention to the foreign nature of the work for the target audience, but not to the foreignness of the Other within the work.

Borrowing is not a solution without its fans, however and Frank Wynne, a prolific Irish translator of books from French and Spanish, is among those who have a penchant for the strategy. In an exchange with *World Literature Today*, he discusses his approach to the translation of the slang in Matías Néspolo’s novel *7 Ways to Kill a Cat*, set in shantytowns south of Buenos Aires, describing it as follows:

My solution was to use something translators generally avoid—the calque. By preserving Hispanic words, but making their meaning clear contextually, it was possible to keep the clipped rhythm and cadence of the dialogue,

something of the flavour of the novel and the sense of “otherness,” which seemed to me crucial.

(in Johnston 2012, online)

As well as his use of borrowing, Wynne states that he does not translate proper nouns or nicknames formed through wordplay. Although the English-language reader is unlikely to understand this meaning, he reasons that they will be exposed to foreignness, which for him is more important (ibid). It is worth noting that Wynne does not use borrowing systematically in all of his translations: his 2017 translation of Virginie Despentes’ *Vernon Subutex 1*, a novel shot through with slang, for instance, does not contain such inclusions of French lexis.

From Wynne’s application of different strategies in different texts, we can deduce that a translator’s decision to borrow slang terms from the original text is not necessarily indicative of a general strategy that can be employed across the board. Rather, it is more likely that the decision to include foreign lexis is made after determining its applicability in terms of the specific text to be translated and of the skopos of the translated text, and perhaps also after negotiating with the commissioner of the translation. Indeed, the same can be said of any strategy. A further question one might ask Wynne is related to how he selects the terms to borrow, and those to translate, as well as what he feels constitutes an appropriate dosage of these borrowed terms in the translated text. Eric Lindor Fall, who translated Irvine Welsh’s *Trainspotting*, also made use of lexical borrowing in his translation for words related to drugs (Vreck in Antoine 2004, p. 43). It would seem that in selecting these terms, he intentionally or unintentionally highlights that the linguistic link between the characters is created through their shared relationship with drugs.

A final argument that I would like to raise in favour of borrowing certain slang terms is related to the formation of all types of slang. As we saw in Chapter 2, slang often includes foreign words, which means that borrowing is already a feature of the slang used in the source text. It could therefore be said that by using borrowed foreign terms in the translation, the translator is essentially emulating the process of creation of slang. Incidentally, if these foreign words used in the translation are borrowed words in the slang of the original text, the translator is also essentially drawing attention to the foreign

influences present in this slang, which provides the audience with an idea of its multifaceted and multilingual makeup. It should be noted, however, that there is again a shift in the type of foreignness that is conveyed to the audience of the translated text. If the borrowed words chosen are from the languages of immigration in the source culture, the text's initial audience will be better equipped to identify the nature of its foreignness; if not the meaning of the word itself, arguably at least its origin. It may be unclear to the audience of the translated text that the borrowed term is a foreign word of the original slang, and they may simply mistake it for an "everyday" French word, which also engenders a shift in the identification of the Other.

## 5.5 Non-Specific Colloquial Language

The final strategy for translating slang that I would like to explore involves focusing on the relaxed and oral style of the original text by rendering it through register in the translated text rather than through slang. The translator avoids as far as possible using any slang that might be suggestive of a specific place while striving to implement a tone that is casual and colloquial, communicating the oral nature of the writing style without suggesting an anchoring of the text in a particular setting. The prolific translator Anthea Bell has advocated this approach when discussing her translation of dialogue featuring slang or dialect.

In an article entitled "Translator's Diary, Delicate Matters", Bell briefly addresses the translation of dialect. She explains that she developed and honed her strategy when translating the language of a sailmaker speaking standard German in Willi Fährmann's novel *The Long Journey of Lukas B.* Although the character's speech was not characterised by a non-standard variety of German, Bell felt that the language lacked bite if translated using Standard English. She therefore proceeded to accentuate aspects of the character's raconteur persona by creating "an intellectual idiom of vague provenance", not wanting to "pin him down with an actual dialect, English or American" because the translation was "for both sides of the Atlantic" (1986, p. 18). To do so, she used "elisions, inversions, and colloquial tricks of speech" as well as the historic present for his narratives (ibid). If the sailor had used a dialect of

German in the original text, Bell states that she would have used the same method rather than a recognisable dialect from a specific area of the Anglosphere since the strangeness of such language appearing in a text taking place in a foreign setting might destroy “the whole fragile foundation of translation” by drawing attention to the artificiality of the cloak of the target language to dress a foreign text (ibid, pp. 19-20). This argument shares clear similarities with those presented by some scholars and translators against equivalence.

Bell clarifies that her remarks should only be applied to isolated snippets of non-standard dialogue spoken by a specific character within a text written in otherwise standard language. She further states that, when applied to an entire text, equivalence “can succeed brilliantly”, citing the Scots and Irish versions of a selection of the Grimms’ tales (ibid, p. 18). For Bell, then, it appears that the priority lies in establishing a linguistic logic that permeates the entire text. If readers are immediately convinced that the use of a replacement dialect in a translated text is natural and normal, then it should follow that they are sufficiently accustomed to its use throughout the text that it does not hinder the illusion of originality that commercial translation so often seeks to provoke. The stylistic choices made in the translation do not draw attention to the foreignness of the text, and the reader is indirectly persuaded that they are ingesting the words of the author, not the words of the author as interpreted and reimagined by the translator.

The American translator Emma Ramadan has stated in several interviews that she was drawn to the slang of Virginie Despentes’ *Jolies choses* in French and found that she could not use as much slang in her translation as is present in the original. Without specifying what she means by slang, Ramadan states that she sought to accentuate the orality of the dialogue of the original text to offset the reduced amount of slang she used in her translation: “[...] during the editing process I put extra effort into making sure that all the dialogue felt as natural and as realistic as possible for the characters I was crafting in English” (in Croft 2018, online). On a more concrete level, she further alludes to translating lexical slang through colloquial alternatives: “while it feels natural for Despentes to use the phrase ‘*les chiottes*’ for the bathroom in *Pretty Things*, which sets a certain atmosphere for the book, it

didn't feel right in English to say 'the shitter', and so I used the less vulgar phrase 'the can'" (ibid). Ramadan seems therefore to advocate an approach to translating non-standard language that adopts slightly softer, less specific language than that of the original text, using colloquial alternatives to slang. Her reasoning, however, has less to do with avoiding the risk of incongruity or of suggesting displacement through the use of equivalent slang and appears to be guided more by an intuition indicating what "sounds right" in English. Arguably, this mindset is reflective of the way in which many translators, and writers more generally, proceed, largely unaware of the mechanics of the creative process in which they are intrinsically and inextricably involved.

Other translators and scholars are more specific about their preference for a method of imbuing the translated text with features of spoken, colloquial language. Daniel Hahn describes the objectives of this method when speaking of his translation of *Blue Flowers* by the Brazilian novelist Carola Saavedra: "the aim is to be natural, but not natural from anywhere in particular – language that's geographically inert, but still plausibly alive" (2013, online). It is apparent in Hahn's lines, however, that this perception of "geographically inert" language is actually determined by the audience's positioning:

A Californian has to hear Carola's characters speak as though they were speaking to them "normally", not as foreigners. How weird it would be for them if these fictional Brazilians all sounded like they were from Glasgow. To the Glaswegian reader, of course, a "neutral" Glasgow accent is fine, because the characters can only be believably Brazilian if there aren't specific linguistic markers to make you think they're in California – or Baltimore, or Sydney.

(ibid)

Hahn seems to suggest that if a translation is written for a specific audience within the Anglosphere and not intended to be distributed elsewhere, the use of a replacement slang may be appropriate and well-received. According to his logic, the speech would not sound marked to the target audience if this target audience were made up of people for whom it is natural to speak in this way. Since few translations are destined for such a restricted audience (we might think back to theatre translation as a counterexample here, and specifically the case of the foreign plays translated for the Montreal stage mentioned by Annie Brisset), Hahn is suggesting that any overly-marked language be avoided, in favour of this type of casual, colloquial style he promotes.

As well as professional translators, a small number of scholars have expressed a preference for giving weight in translation to the qualities of relaxed speech in a text written using non-standard language. After explaining why she does not recommend standardisation or dialect-for-dialect approaches to translating non-standard language, and why she believes that footnotes are “but a weak substitute for the information that is encoded in the non-standard language of the source text”, translation studies scholar Susanne Ghassempur expresses a preference for “a supraregional colloquial language that is universally understood by the readers in the target language” (in Federici 2011, p. 54). Gillian Lathey also favours a strategy of this sort over equivalence: “A transposition into a local dialect of the target language is therefore best avoided, with the use of stylised non-standard dialogue as the only solution” (2011, p. 84). Unfortunately, without the assistance of supporting examples, the exact meaning of “stylised non-standard dialogue” remains unclear.

In many of the comments to be found in favour of the use of a broad colloquial, oral style to translate specific non-standard varieties, the scholars’ and translators’ appreciation of the strategy seems to stem from a desire to avoid the consequences of the use of equivalence. Through the use of this strategy, the potentially odd or ethnocentric effects of replacement slang are essentially circumvented, even if using a form of colloquial language arguably contributes to removing the playfulness and “coded” aspects of slang, and, to a certain extent, makes the text conform to the parameters of standard language. Indeed, before she declares that it is her preferred strategy, Ghassempur equates colloquialising with standardising. When reflecting on the translation of Roddy Doyle’s *The Commitments*, she states that “the language of the characters is standardised to a universal colloquial form of German and loses part of its original quality in the translation” (in Federici 2011, p. 53). Additionally, it would seem that some proponents of this approach deem it applicable to entire texts featuring non-standard varieties in both the narration and the dialogue, while others restrict its use to isolated sections of dialogue in which one, or several, characters use non-standard language. Despite these drawbacks and disagreements, this fifth option is unmistakably among the most popular for people eager to avoid the risk of appropriating or erasing the voice of an Other.

## 5.6 Translating Rap

Before I close this chapter, I would like to address briefly the applicability of the above typology to the translation of rap lyrics. As I stated in my overview of theory relevant to the translation of rap in the previous chapter, I have not proposed an additional typology for the translation of rap, but have chosen to focus on how slang and rap can work together in a fictional text to construct a distinct voice. A more specific typology concentrating solely on rap might consider the five strategies that I have outlined in this chapter alongside the theory related to translating rap and slang summarised in Chapter 4. In what follows, however, I will look at how my discussions of the implications of standardising and borrowing can be harnessed to the translation of rap lyrics when they appear in fictional texts. These two strategies are the most directly and immediately applicable to the ideas mentioned in Chapter 4, without incorporating further examples of rap lyrics from other texts.

If a rap song is translated by focusing on meaning while ignoring the stylistic features of rap, this strategy can be likened to standardisation. If the character's (rapper's) voice is normalised, the playful nature of the language use is erased. Standardising the form of rap lyrics by prioritising the meaning defies the intertwining of the two that is integral to the original text. In this way, readers (of a written text and of subtitles) are expected to make the link themselves, either by relying on the audio-visual elements of the film or by relying on their general awareness of the techniques of rap music to envision the performative situation in the case of written texts.

If a rap song is left untranslated and transposed directly into the translated text, this strategy can be seen as a form of borrowing. In such cases, importance is given to the typographical representation of the foreign sound of the lyrics, and meaning might be disregarded or otherwise relegated to a literal translation provided in footnotes or an appendix. This strategy might be used as part of a translation anchored in an approach of a more documentary or pedagogical nature, providing readers with original lyrics that they may or may not have the tools to decipher, and as a way of acknowledging the foreignness of the text. It is clear that "borrowing" foreign rap lyrics in this manner draws attention to the artificiality of the translation and contributes to

breaking the illusion of reality. The examples that I analyse from my translation of *Moi non* in the final chapters of the thesis will provide reflections on the importance of communicating an idea of playful, non-standard language use in the specific case of translated rap lyrics appearing in texts when the writing style is marked by slang.

## **Concluding Remarks**

As I arrive at the end of these theory-driven discussions and before moving onto the case studies, I would like to suggest, without resorting to prescriptivism, that a translator needs to be aware of the function of the use of slang and of rap in the source text before embarking on its translation. This is because the role the language is intended to play in a text necessarily affects and determines the linguistic form that it is assigned in both the source and translated texts. Being aware of this should allow the translator to make informed decisions about how to emulate as far as possible these functions in the translated text. This effort is carried out by choosing what they deem to be the most appropriate options available within the target language and according to the role the translated text is intended to play within the receiving culture. It is vital to bear in mind, however, that the translator's freedom is limited, determined, as we have seen, partly by the other players involved in the process as well as by systemic questions of a more implicit and often unyielding nature. When analysing the translations of the corpus in the next chapter, I will therefore endeavour to avoid attributing the responsibility for all aspects of the final product the translator in question, conscious that although their background and style necessarily shape the words offered to the foreign audience, they are part of a wider network of individuals and customs that can curb their agency.

Although I distinguish five separate strategies for the translation of slang, the reflections I have offered on each reveal that there is overlap between these different approaches, indicating that the boundaries between each are blurred. One might argue for instance that when a translation using equivalence exploits easily-recognisable features of a well-known slang to enable relatively effortless understanding, this should actually be classified

more appropriately as a form of colloquial translation. Such a view would reiterate the disagreements among certain scholars outlined in Part One of the thesis regarding the difference between slang and register. A broad-equivalence approach like this could also be categorised as a form of standardisation, as could the use of a casual colloquial style more generally. This line of reasoning would ring particularly true if the translated text were written in a fluid, straightforward style, since it can be argued that it corresponds to the norms of standard language composed in an informal register.

Furthermore, my discussions have brought to light the fact that it is rare for a translator to use only one strategy when translating a text featuring slang. If equivalence is used, for example, it may be used sporadically within an otherwise standardised text. The same can be said of borrowing or invention, where borrowed or invented lexis may be inserted into a standardised text or a text translated using an equivalent slang or in a colloquial style. These discussions have also established that, with the exception of standardisation, each of the strategies may be used within texts translated using other strategies as a form of compensation. The insertion of borrowed lexis, for instance, might be seen as a means of offsetting the loss of foreignness in a text using a replacement slang from the target language, while the occasional inclusion of lexis of expressions from a replacement slang in an otherwise standardised text might serve as subtle suggestions of opposition to the linguistic norms of standard language. In all cases, it would seem that the translator faces the tricky task of striking a balance within the translated text, by adopting one systematic strategy throughout the translation or by determining an appropriate dosage of each. When textual coherence is established in the translated text, it is more likely to function as a text in its own right and (re)present the original text in a way that allows audiences to appreciate its complexity.

Despite the differences between (and within) standardisation and equivalence, these two approaches can both be seen as a form of domestication since they exploit features of the target language and erase the specificity to a certain extent of the language used in the original text, albeit to different degrees. For Venuti, following Friedrich Schleiermacher, domesticating can be

equated with an “ethnocentric reduction of the of the text to target-language cultural values” (1995, p. 20). In this way, both standardisation and equivalence (when making use of easily-recognisable features of slang familiar to the audience) question the audience’s capacity to interact with foreignness, assuming that they will be more comfortable when presented with a text the corresponds to the stylistic norms of the target culture, or at least will be able to understand better the text and engage with it more thoroughly. Even if the type of equivalence sought involves the use of a particularly opaque slang in the translated text, which risks alienating the audience in a similar way that foreignising techniques might, one might still see this strategy as a form of domestication since it is using marked language from the target language and dimming the presence of foreignness. The issue of how to classify each strategy, as more reflective of domestication or of foreignisation, is clearly a question without a definite answer since it is both immensely intricate and fundamentally influenced by each audience member’s personal perspective.

Through these discussions, it has become apparent that the translator runs the risk of ridiculing the marginalised group depicted in the text. Although this is already a risk in the source text, it is exacerbated in translation because the distance between the audience and the Other is increased. Further, when equivalence is used, it is the voice of another Other that is harnessed, which means that the translator is caught between two minority groups. As well as these ethical concerns, the translator is also faced with questions of a more practical nature when establishing a sort of literary and linguistic coherence within the text, attempting to safeguard the text from language that could be seen to lack credibility or be stylistically weak.

By way of conclusion, to this conclusion, I would like to reiterate the idea that audiences’ reactions to a text are conditioned and influenced by their background. Within one language and culture, the ties binding audience members are very likely to be stronger than those which might connect people across linguistic and cultural borders. As a result, any translated text will necessarily perform differently for a foreign audience than for the original audience. Acknowledging and accepting this fact allows for a more reasonable analysis of translated texts: we cannot expect any two people, or any two groups, to share the same interpretation of any one text, and this is especially

true when the language of this text is changed and when it is asked to travel abroad. In the words of Rita Felski: “[...] as cultural studies and reception studies have amply shown, aesthetic objects may acquire very different meanings in altered contexts; the transactions between texts and readers are varied, contingent, and often unpredictable” (2008, p. 9).

Overall, it is difficult to blame a translator for choosing to adopt an approach that will facilitate the exercise of reading for audiences by softening the existing barrier of the foreign content. When approaching the task of translation in this way, the translator seems to endeavour to render the reading of the slang of the original text in its translated version a pleasant experience for all involved, which may ultimately pave the way for more widespread engagement with foreign literature. This sense of engagement might be compared with the description that Felski provides of the notion of enchantment, “[...] characterised by a state of intense involvement, a sense of being so entirely caught up in an aesthetic object that nothing else seems to matter” (2008, p. 54). Evidently, the potential for enchantment is enhanced when the style of the aesthetic option in question is fluid and fluent. It remains to be determined, however, if the practice of bringing foreign narratives into English in this manner might on the contrary constitute a slippery slope leading to a well of voices void of any intricacy.



## Chapter 6: The Banlieue

This chapter will provide background information on the banlieue, focusing specifically on the banlieue around Paris, and then develop an overview of the trials and tribulations of the marginalised youth of France living in the banlieue. These discussions will be followed by a more detailed description of the ways these young people manipulate and mould aspects of the French language to make it their own. Finally, I will explore how this language has been featured in a number of fictional texts since the 1980s.

### 6.1 Paris and its Banlieue

When writing about the etymology of the word banlieue, Hervé Vieillard-Baron explains the meaning of its prefix and suffix: the Germanic “*ban*” refers not only to overlords’ rule of estates through public proclamation, but also to censorship and exclusion, and the Latin “*lieue*” indicates both a unit of distance (4 440 metres) and the time it takes to walk this distance (approximately one hour) (1996, p. 12)<sup>59</sup>. Elsewhere, he states that, from a historical perspective, the word is loaded with ambiguity since it covers three meanings that follow on from each other chronologically: firstly, a legal meaning referring to the rights and responsibilities of its inhabitants in medieval times; secondly, a geographical meaning indicating the urbanised belt around a city dependent on the centre; and, finally, a symbolic meaning related to the sense of disrepute that weighs on people considered to be “excluded” (2011, pp. 28-29)<sup>60</sup>.

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<sup>59</sup>“Le mot est formé de la racine germanique *ban* - qui désigne non seulement l'autorité du suzerain sur ses domaines par proclamation publique mais aussi la censure et l'exclusion - et du latin *leuca* (la lieue) usité dès l'époque gallo-romaine. La lieue servait alors à désigner aussi bien l'unité de distance que le temps mis à parcourir à pied l'espace d'une lieue, soit une heure environ.”

<sup>60</sup> “D'un point de vue historique, le mot « banlieue » est chargé d'ambiguïtés puisqu'il recouvre trois significations qui se suivent chronologiquement : une signification juridique se rapportant aux « banalités », c'est-à-dire aux droits et devoirs de ses habitants à l'époque médiévale, une signification géographique, celle de ceinture urbanisée dépendante du centre,

Before devoting more attention to the issues faced by young people living in the banlieue, I would like to provide some background information about the fragile relationship between Parisians and the rest of France. Paris is the only city in France which is also a department, and it is one of the eight departments in the region known as Ile-de-France. Within these eight departments lie 1276 towns which are home to 12.1 million people, approximately 19% of the population of metropolitan France (Tribunal Administratif de Paris 2018, p. 91). Simon Ronai posits that the geographical and territorial break drawn by the boulevards des Maréchaux and by the 37.5km of the boulevard “*périphérique*” is compounded by the symbolic break between Paris, associated with luxury goods, arts, culture, and refinement, and its more anonymous neighbours (Ronai 2004, p. 29)<sup>61</sup>.

This symbolic division is explained by a series of events over the past 150 or so years which have contributed to the separation (one might say segregation) of Paris from its surrounding banlieue. Ronai explains that the first even dates back to 1860 with the extension of Paris to the walls outside the city through the annexation of the surrounding communes. Following this, Ronai cites the dismantling of the Thiers Wall (having been constructed between 1841 and 1844) in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, between the two World Wars, replaced by low-cost housing buildings, the subsequent subdivision of the Seine department, previously the Département de Paris, into four departments in 1964 (Paris, the Hauts-de-Seine, Seine-Saint-Denis, and the Val-de-Marne, with the three departments adjacent to Paris now known as the *petite couronne*), and culminating in the construction of the Boulevard *périphérique* between 1956 and 1973 (ibid, p. 29). He goes on to detail how a series of policies in both the banlieue and Paris has contributed to form a tension felt on both sides: each has demonised the other (ibid, pp. 31-32). Much of the tension between Paris and the banlieue, he states, is a result of the place Paris has occupied at the centre of the country’s attention and power throughout history, reinforced now through the entity of Paris as the capital city and the only city

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*une signification symbolique relative au discrédit qui pèse sur ceux qu’on qualifie d’« exclus » par réduction hâtive.”*

<sup>61</sup> “A la rupture géographique et territoriale exceptionnellement marquée dans le paysage urbain par la ligne des boulevards des Maréchaux et par les 37,5 km du boulevard ‘périphérique’, s’ajoute une très forte rupture d’image et de puissance entre Paris, qui s’identifie au luxe, aux arts, à la culture, au raffinement, et ses voisins plus anonymes.”

to be both a city and a department (ibid). This reality sets it apart from other cities, and adds to the impression of superiority that may be perceived by people living in cities, towns, or suburbs outside of Paris.

Vieillard-Baron describes the policies and decisions made in the wake of the Industrial Revolution that saw the banlieue unwittingly become home to the populations from which big cities wanted to be relieved, and the people that the countryside could no longer feed (2011, p. 30). During this period, the banlieue was the preferred location for cumbersome or polluting facilities, including workshops, sorting stations, purification plants, gas factories, and waste facilities, and, at the same time, a place where new services and facilities were built: sports grounds, psychiatric hospitals, hospices, prisons, and cemeteries, to name but a few (ibid). The fact that Paris in particular has systematically relegated to the banlieue anything it does not want has resulted in what Ranoi explains is the (justified) widespread image of a “rich city offloading its problems onto the backs of its neighbours” (Ranoi 2004, p. 40)<sup>62</sup>.

Despite the tension between the two areas does not inhibit the constant circulation of residents from one side of the *périphérique* to the other for work, in both directions. In fact, three jobs out of five within the city limits of Paris are occupied by residents of the banlieue, and one in three Parisians work in the banlieue (ibid, p. 32). While Parisians and *banlieuesards* make the daily commute across the *périphérique*, each population spends very little time exploring the neighbourhoods surrounding their place of work, bar the walk there to and from their form of transport. The commonly-heard expression “*metro, boulot, dodo*”<sup>63</sup> would support this idea of a door-to-door commute with no concerted effort to dispel the preconceived ideas that residents on each side of the city’s borders have with regard to each other.

Despite Paris’ history of foisting its problems upon its neighbours, Ranoi explains that the negative perception of the city fostered by residents of the banlieue is not entirely justified. He explains that people outside of Paris

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<sup>62</sup>“*Paris a généralement rejeté en périphérie ce dont il ne voulait pas et cet héritage souvent très pénalisant n’est pas bien accepté par les communes qui ont subi cette situation. Elle justifie l’image la plus répandue de ville riche se débarrassant de ses problèmes sur le dos de ses voisins.*”

<sup>63</sup> Literally “metro, work, sleep”, this expression refers to the “daily grind”: the routine of taking public transport, working all day, then going straight home to bed.

are not completely aware of the reality of the complicated legal policies making it difficult for Paris to embark on development projects, due to the vast number of protected heritage sites and the general lack of space available to make significant changes (2004, p. 40). Additionally, they seem unaware of the presence of substantial pockets of poverty peppered within the city, automatically associating Paris with (excess) wealth (ibid, p. 40). These feelings of hostility are complemented on the part of Parisians who, as we have seen, tend to see the banlieue as a place characterised by exclusion, unemployment, a lack of safety, illicit work, terrorism, and ghettos (Vieillard-Baron 1996, p. 4)<sup>64</sup>. Ranoi points out that Parisians and people living in Ile-de-France, especially in the inner banlieue, have a lot to say to each other, but that there is “no real common language, no place for open discussion, no legitimate local institutions, no democratic space that corresponds to the scale and the complexity of the problems faced” (Ranoi 2004, p. 41)<sup>65</sup>.

### **Banlieue: Dramatised-Lieu or Non-Lieu?**

The reputation of the banlieue is tied up for many in a sort of amplification of a misunderstood reality. Vieillard-Baron states that the banlieue, or the most precarious parts of it at least, should not be classed as a ghetto but that there are risks of it becoming closed-off and even of imploding (2011, p. 37). This risk, he argues, is not brought about by official policies of stigmatisation, but of an accumulation of hidden practices and parameters, including the limited housing options available for low-income households, the departure of middle-class households, mass unemployment, discrimination during job-hiring processes, insecurity, underachieving (or failing) students in schools, various forms of trafficking, and the persistence of social stigma linked with colonial history (ibid). As we will see, these seem to be the aspects of the banlieue on which the media most often chooses to focus.

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<sup>64</sup> “Que l’on évoque l’exclusion, le chômage, l’insécurité, le travail au noir, le terrorisme, les ghettos, c’est vers [la banlieue] que chacun se tourne.”

<sup>65</sup> “Il n’existe pas de vrai langage commun, pas de lieu de discussion ouvert, pas d’institution locale légitime, pas d’espace démocratique correspondant à la complexité et à l’échelle à laquelle se posent les problèmes.”

David Lepoutre explains that the low-cost housing estates of the banlieue have been the object of searing criticism since the 1970s, initially emanating from the mouths of sociologists, then politicians, and finally from urban planners and architects (2001, p. 33). He states that, in the eye of the general public, these estates are considered to be sleepy hollows; a sort of “nothing space” that houses “non-people” (ibid)<sup>66</sup>. Though his statement may not hold true for people of the estates who choose to emphasise the existence of violence and drugs, Lepoutre’s thoughts point to the relative invisibility of the banlieue in broader French society. When these areas are afforded any kind of attention, they seem to be discussed primarily in light of crime or the threat of terrorism. Alec Hargreaves supports this hypothesis when he posits that the use of the word banlieue as a tag in French media to indicate the subject of the article to follow is sufficient to suggest that the article will focus on criminality and foreignness (1996, pp. 608-609). This is because the word banlieue is used by the media as an equivalent to “problem-area”, used only for negative events, while “normal”, non-criminal events are tagged differently, meaning that the banlieue is associated almost exclusively with crime and danger (ibid, p. 610). Hargreaves states that this trend is found also in British media; on both sides of the Channel, there is a “casual connection” established in areas of social disadvantage between high crime rates and the large concentration of families of immigrant origin (ibid, p. 609).

Beyond the confusion surrounding the way the banlieue is perceived and portrayed, Vieillard-Baron argues that it cannot be reduced to one unique image, since it is characterised by extremely varied landscapes including industrial zones, apartment buildings of different sizes, secluded cottages, housing estates and residential projects built in diverse styles, and newer neighbourhoods with innovative architecture (2011, p. 31). For him, it is impossible to define the banlieue unequivocally: there is not one sole and unified banlieue, but many banlieues, wealthy and poor, and a whole range of banlieues with unequal wealth distribution in the middle (ibid, p. 33). Vieillard-Baron’s opinion is shared by Roger Celéstin, Eliane DalMolin, and

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<sup>66</sup> “*Bien souvent considérés par l’opinion publique, même encore aujourd’hui, comme des cités-dortoirs, c’est-à-dire comme des sortes de non-lieux où résideraient des non-personnes, ils sont devenus la cible de tous les discours stigmatisants, y compris les discours d’éradication les plus violents.*”

Alec Hargreaves, who state in their introduction to a special edition of the journal *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* dedicated to the banlieue:

Anyone who has bought a train ticket and looked at the route maps in the Gare St Lazare or the Gare du Nord in Paris knows that the *lignes de banlieue* (suburban lines) serve a great range of localities from the leafy suburbs of Versailles and Marly-le-Roi to chronically poor concrete agglomerations such as those of La Courneuve, St Denis, and Gennevilliers.

(2004, p. 107)

It also seems important to point out that within even within one banlieue of the wider banlieues, residents often assert their belonging to a specific district (*quartier*) or a high-rise residential estate (*cité*) inside this banlieue.

Françoise Hickel argues that the reality of the banlieue lies between the two myths surrounding it: that of the “banlieue-ghetto”, a place of relegation, and that of an urban village, founded on social diversity and conviviality (2007, p. 2)<sup>67</sup>. She seems to encourage the establishment of a middle ground between these two visions that respectively demonise and idealise the social fabric that constructs the geographical entity. Furthermore, Hickel points out that from a sociological perspective, the banlieue is a place where multiple social identities collide, a fact that should have bearing on a deeper level than that of an awareness of the existence of other cultures, translating into a form of intercultural education which rejects racism and ethnic segregation (ibid)<sup>68</sup>.

Hargreaves speaks specifically of the way in which young people respond to their categorical dismissal by discussing the period of unrest that had preceded the writing of Begag’s book. He mentions the way in which the then president Nicolas Sarkozy spoke of the banlieue as a place in need of cleaning with a high-pressure washer (“*au karcher*”) and that was home to “scum” (“*racaille*”) and states that these remarks were cited by young people

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<sup>67</sup> “*La banlieue est une réalité géographique multiple. Son intelligibilité est à situer à mi-chemin entre deux mythes : celui de la banlieue-ghetto, lieu de relégation et des alchimies dangereuses, et celui du village urbain fondé sur la mixité sociale et la convivialité. Il s’agit de dépasser “la dramaturgie médiatique et politique” pour rendre compte de la complexité des dynamiques urbaines.*”

<sup>68</sup> “*Sociologiquement, les banlieues sont des lieux de confrontations d’identités sociales multiples. Il s’agit alors de penser le concept d’“interculturalité”, conçu non comme le simple fait de connaître les identités différentes, mais de les tricoter ensemble dans une éducation interculturelle, visant au non-racisme et à la réduction de la saillance ethnique dans les milieux scolaires.*”

as “a significant factor in the rapid escalation of the local protests in Clichy-sous-Bois into nationwide disorders” (in Begag 2007, p. xvi). These “disruptive outbursts of anger” are indicative of a desire on the part of marginalised and stigmatised groups in the banlieue to “turn the tables on their detractors by inventing their own counter discourses” (ibid, p. xvii). On a linguistic level, this process can involve reappropriating a stigmatising label (in the case of the word *racaille* used by Sarkozy, it was proudly transformed into the *verlan* term *caillera*), and, non-verbally, can be seen in acts of street violence, “designed to demonstrate the limits of dominant power structures” (ibid, p. xvii). Hargreaves argues that these forms of rebellion are “motivated by anger at their exclusion from a society in which they wish to share, rather than by the attraction of an alternative social or cultural system” (ibid, pp. xvii-xviii).

The overwhelmingly negative representation of the banlieue in the media and its broader perception in the eyes of the general public would logically lead members of these communities to want to share their own stories and speak for themselves. This lack of real engagement with the voice of people living in the banlieue and lack of interest in less sensationalist stories might encourage them to dispel stereotypes or negative value judgements, which can be related to the questions regarding the (mis)representation of minority voices raised previously in the thesis. We might therefore ask if a banlieue “native” is better equipped to be able to tell their own story, or that of their peers, than a “non-native”, an “outsider”. Such questions become particularly interesting when combined with considerations of individual writers’ talent and ability to produce an aesthetic work that will be pleasing to the audience targeted.

The texts studied in Chapter 7 demonstrate that fictional works including slang generally tend to exploit the most accessible, but also the most impressive, features of the specific way of speaking. These stylistic choices are no doubt made to ensure the text’s potential to please. Additionally, it is useful to reflect on the platform provided for writers from different backgrounds in terms of the access they might have to the tools and resources necessary to see their work published. Finally, to relate the discussion more specifically to translation, we might ask if a translator should be familiar with the issues facing the banlieue, and if this would affect their way of translating.

Although there are valid arguments to justify the choice of different strategies, being at least partially aware of the context in which the original text was produced provides the translator with the cultural sensibility necessary to make informed and justifiable choices.

## **Banlieue Versus Suburb**

Several scholars have highlighted the difficulty of translating the word *banlieue* into foreign languages. Vieillard-Baron is of the opinion that one requires more than a dictionary to express the complex ideas behind the word that are specific to France (1997, p. 24)<sup>69</sup>. He explains that in France the word *banlieue* evokes peripheral towns that wish to protect their exclusive rights but remain dependent at the same time, and that it refers to a “complex mosaic” with significance that has varied and shifted through history (ibid)<sup>70</sup>. In the introduction to his translation of Begag’s *Ethnicity and Equality: France in the balance* (manuscript unpublished in French), Hargreaves explains that he chose to retain the not to translate the word *banlieue* by suburb because “in everyday usage [the word *banlieue*] has become synonymous with particular types of outlying urban areas, namely those characterised by high levels of social disadvantage and minority ethnic settlement” (2007, p. xxi).

Hargreaves draws parallels with similar contexts in the Anglosphere, stating that areas like the *banlieue* are usually close to the “downtown” area in the US, whereas in France they are “in the outer reaches of cities” (ibid). It seems clear that for Hargreaves, the word suburb was not an adequate translation, and throughout his translation he systematically proposes “hood” for “*quartier*” or “*cité*”. Hood is classified by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as a slang word, (“chiefly U.S., esp. in African-American usage, frequently with *the*”) and is defined as “a neighbourhood or community, usually one's

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<sup>69</sup> “La traduction du mot “*banlieue*” dans les langues étrangères ne peut être effectuée sans interrogation critique. Elle va bien au-delà d’un simple remplacement du mot à l’aide du dictionnaire : elle requiert une fidélité au sens et à la culture nationale.”

<sup>70</sup> “En France, la *banlieue* évoque des communes périphériques tout à la fois jalouses de leurs prérogatives et en situation de dépendance. Elle fait référence à une mosaïque complexe, mélange d’architectures, d’activités, de friches et de reliquats de formes rurales. Elle renvoie aux noyaux villageois médiévaux, aux villégiatures aristocratiques, aux lotissements populaires ou ‘résidentiels’, à la massivité des grands ensembles et aux manifestations plus lointaines de la périurbanisation.”

own; *esp.* an inner-city area inhabited predominantly by non-whites”. According to the *Online Slang Dictionary*, the word hood is a “shortened form of ‘neighbourhood’” and it “often implies a ghetto or urban community”. Interestingly, in an article published in 1996, prior to his translation of Begag’s book, Hargreaves chooses to retain the French word *banlieue* within his article rather than translating it, explaining that:

Because the English word 'suburb(s)' carries a radically different set of connotations, I have retained the French term 'banlieue(s)' instead of translating it. In terms of its ideological resonance, the nearest English expression is the 'inner city', but as the equivalent parts of French cities are situated in more outlying areas, this would be an inappropriate translation.

(1997, p. 617)

Stella Linn expands on the contrasting connotations of the words *banlieue* and suburb when she states that “unlike the British or American term ‘suburb’, the French term *cités*, or *banlieues*, refer to the deprived districts on the periphery of major cities, where large groups of immigrant workers were housed in the booming post-war period for the most part in high-rise social housing projects” (2016, p. 3)<sup>71</sup>. Her opinion is further supported by Vieillard-Baron who asserts that the two terms cannot be considered to be equivalent because of the opposing geographical references (1997, p. 28)<sup>72</sup>. Simply put, it would seem that the term *banlieue* in France is usually associated with disadvantaged and socially problematic areas, whereas in English the term suburb often evokes an image of enclaves for wealthy white people. This image of the suburbs is depicted in countless American television series and films, such as *Desperate Housewives* or *Edward Scissorhands*, and it would not be unreasonable to suggest that this image represents precisely the type of area from which inhabitants of many parts of the French *banlieue* might be excluded.

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<sup>71</sup> Interestingly, although most reviews of *banlieue* fiction translate the word *banlieue* as “suburbs”, some use the truncated “burbs”, indirectly accentuating the linguistic play that goes on in the area, or otherwise talk of “leafless suburbs”, drawing attention to more general feelings of misery and disadvantage.

<sup>72</sup> “Aux Etats-Unis, le terme suburb n’est pas équivalent à celui de “banlieue”. L’histoire urbaine, les migrations des ménages et leurs représentations de la ville sont si différentes qu’on ne saurait confondre les deux mots.”

## 6.2 *Jeunes de banlieue*

I would now like to shift the focus more specifically to the young people living in the banlieue. Who, exactly, are these “*jeunes de banlieue*”? According to Claire Marin, a philosophy teacher working in the banlieue of Paris, “they are black, they are white, Arab, Asian; they are mixed, at the crossroads of vacillating racial categories” (2018, p. 15)<sup>73</sup>. In addition, Marin asserts that they “illustrate the infinite variety of genetic combinations, the thousand faces of today’s France” (ibid). As I argued in the first part of the thesis, when discussing slang users more generally, it is difficult to define these young people as forming a singular entity because they form a heterogeneous group. What links many of them, however, is certainly a sense of marginalisation provoked by domination, repression, and social exclusion. Marin echoes Louis-Jean Calvet’s discussion of the mitigated impressions of identity of members of gangs, evoked in the first part of the thesis, when she observes that a large number of young people in the banlieue whose parents are immigrants, or from a background of immigration, do not speak their parents’ language (or else speak it badly) and feel excluded from family conversations in what is to them a foreign language. They find themselves in a difficult, unstable position, in limbo between the language and culture of their parents and those of France, feeling a real sense of dispossession and exclusion. This can manifest itself linguistically, as the *jeunes de banlieue* draw on the characteristics of the minority of their parents’ language and culture to amplify their manipulation of the language imposed on them; the dominant, standard variety of French that all children in the country are taught at school.

In the 15-page introduction to his translation of Begag’s *Ethnicity and Equality: France in the balance*, Hargreaves offers an extensive overview of the trends in immigration in France in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to frame the discussions that follow. He outlines that the young banlieue residents whose faces are most prominent in media coverage of the banlieue, thrown into the spotlight for their involvement in riots or other acts of delinquency, are “mainly teenagers and almost exclusively male” and that they

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<sup>73</sup> “*Ils sont noirs, ils sont blancs, arabes, asiatiques, ils sont mélangés, au croisement des catégories raciales et bancales.*”

form part of a “third generation among minority ethnic populations rooted in immigration from former French colonies, especially those in former French North Africa” (in Begag 2007, p. ix). Hargreaves explains that this third generation has been born in France since the mid-1980s: the first generation (mostly workers and their spouses) came to France in the 60s, and the second generation are the children of the first generation, born in France, became adults in the 1980s. He also points out that not all of the members of this third generation are of Maghrebi origin nor are they necessarily the grandchildren of migrants (some came to France afterwards, as recently as 15-20 years ago, and some are the youngest children of migrant parents with large families).

To conclude his description of their identity, Hargreaves proposes a rather discouraging picture of how these young people perceive their place in society, and their prospects: “[...] what distinguishes this third generation is that, unlike the first two, it has never known anything other than the ethnically stigmatised environment into which it was born, and many of its members are convinced that there is no hope of their ever escaping from the banlieues” (ibid, p. ix). The book was published in 2007 and it seems reasonable to posit that in 2018 we now find ourselves at an intersection between the third and fourth generations. The discussions remain of particular relevance to the works in the corpus, however, since they date from around this time, the early-mid 2000s (with the exception of *La Haine*, released in 1995).

Begag lists thirty names by which young people in the banlieue are known, “based on territorial, ethnic, religious, and temporal criteria”, and Hargreaves leaves the terms in the original French while proposing a translation for each, with evident overlap in the words he chooses for different French terms (e.g. “hoods” used to translate both *cites* and *quartiers*) (ibid, pp. 19-21). Begag also proposes his own terms, distinguishing three different “types” of young people within the banlieue:

We need to see that the population of young ethnics is not a uniform block, as the discourses of rejection would have us believe. We can, in fact, perceive among them a dynamic typology composed of three main subgroups: *rouilleurs* [lit. “rusters”, people who rot where they are]; *dérouilleurs* [lit. “de-rusters” or movers]; and *intermédiaires* [lit. “intermediaries”, those in an in-between position].

(ibid, pp. 42-3,  
additions in square brackets proposed by translator)

The first group he mentions, the *rouilleurs*, are arguably the most visible in French society. Begag states that they generate “a lot of attention by feeding dominant media representations of the banlieues”, and he offers an analogy drawing a parallel between these young people and “the disaffected young blacks observed by James Baldwin in American ghettos in the 1960s” (ibid, p. 43). Incidentally, this sort of comparison, highlighting similarities to groups in the US, is not uncommon throughout his book, which might suggest that Begag would support the use of a replacement slang in the translation of a fictional text set in the banlieue<sup>74</sup>. Opposing this first group are the *dérouilleurs*, young people who have succeeded in leaving a life of crime and violence, who are “part of the French middle class” and “inside of French society” (ibid, p. 47). Begag states that this group is “almost invisible” because they are “of no interest to the media because their behaviour is quite ordinary” (ibid). In between these two groups are the *intérmédiaires* who are “in search of stability, a firm point of anchorage, and a clear pathway to follow” (ibid, p. 48). Begag believes that the fate of France lies in the provision of a clear pathway to this group in limbo who could create more cohesion in French society (ibid).

## **Banlieue Youth Language**

Jean-Pierre Goudaillier regards the type of language spoken in France by people living in the housing projects of disadvantaged areas as a variety of the French language, labelling it “*argot des cités*” or “*argot de banlieue*” but expressing a preference for “*français contemporain des cités*” (FCC) (2002, p. 9). He asserts that FCC was born in housing estates in the early 1980s, developed quickly and considerably in the 1990s, and has evolved to shed its rural and then working-class character to become the mode of expression of social groups who find themselves in a process of urbanisation (ibid, p. 9). Though one might reasonably adopt Goudaillier’s name for the French spoken by marginalised youth in the banlieue, it is important to acknowledge that not

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<sup>74</sup> In particular, Begag draws parallels between the history of France and that of the US in terms of the treatment of people of colour when talking about his father who left Algeria (Sétif) for Lyon, in search of work: “His trajectory was not dissimilar to the Great Migration of African Americans in the early part of the 20th century, which took them from the rural South to Northern industrial cities such as Chicago and Detroit” (xxvi).

all of the young people using this language necessarily live in the banlieue, nor are they confined to the high-rise *cités*.

As outlined at the beginning of this chapter, pockets of poverty and disadvantage are present inside of Paris, largely invisible (or at least ignored) by Parisians, but also by people in the banlieue who tend to assume that all Parisians belong at least to the country's middle classes. As a case in point, we can think of one of the texts I look at in the corpus of this thesis, *Entre les murs*, which takes place in Paris but whose characters use a type of non-standard French that is akin to the French spoken by marginalised youth in the banlieue. Both in and out of Paris, in the city and in the banlieue, the *cités* house a large percentage of these marginalised youth (but not all of them). When I use Goudaillier's term *français contemporain des cités* or the more general term banlieue French, the geographical locations within these titles should not be taken literally. Rather, the banlieue, and *cités*, should be interpreted in a more symbolic sense, representative of the relegated situation in which the speakers of this variety of French find themselves.

Many scholars refer to the use of slang by young people in the banlieue as a means of asserting dissidence and affirming a distinct identity. Albert Valdman refers to the "tenacious tradition" that equates Standard French or "proper usage" ("*bon usage*") of the language with the sophisticated speech of the Parisian bourgeois (2000, p. 1179)<sup>75</sup>. From a functional perspective, the slang spoken by these young people seeks to bend and break the rules of this "proper usage", to shape and mould the words and expressions in ways that members of *la bonne société* would not. Their limited agency finds more ample room to move in language, a view reiterated by Linn who states that it "allows underprivileged youths from multi-ethnic suburbs to rebel against authority by deliberately violating standard language norms" (2016, p. 1). Doran confirms Linn's (and others') views on the way in which banlieue slang can be used to construct an alternative identity, stating mainstream discourse in France offers only two options to its residents: they belong either to the category of "immigrant" or that of "French" (2007, p. 499). She argues that banlieue youth language is "a tool for forging, negotiating, and expressing

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<sup>75</sup> "[...] *une tradition tenace définit le bon usage ou français standard comme le parler cultivé de la bonne bourgeoisie parisienne*"

identities which stand outside the binary categories of mainstream discourse” (ibid, pp. 499-500). The urban youth language used by the young characters in the texts of the corpus gives them a voice, literally and figuratively, allowing them to assert their identity and express their belonging.

According to Marie-Madeleine Bertucci, it was in the 1990s that the terms used to describe the variety of language used by young people became more specific, with the words *banlieue* or *cit * being incorporated so that a generational dimension was associated with a specific space or territory (2011, p. 14). She cites the publication of numerous works listing words used in the *banlieue* from 1996 onwards as evidence of the increased interest in and recognition of this specific slang (ibid). One such dictionary is Goudaillier’s *Comment tu tchatches ! Dictionnaire du franais contemporain des cit s*, published in 1997, and Bertucci also mentions *Panique ta langue* by Florence Hernandez (1996), *La T ci   Panam : Parler le langage des banlieues* by Pascal Aguilou and Nasser Saiki (1996), *Tchatche de banlieue* by Philippe Pierre-Adolphe, Max Mamoud, and Georges-Olicier Tzanos (1998). Although some of the words listed in these works might now be quite dated, the information that they provide on the mechanics of *banlieue* slang remains relevant and therefore renders them an invaluable resource. The entries also play a vital role in conserving the history of the usage of specific terms and tracking the evolution.

Other printed works similar to those listed by Bertucci have been published after the beginning of the 2000s, since the height of the digital revolution, but it should be pointed out that an increasing number of resources decoding aspects of *banlieue* slang are now available online. These resources are characterised by varying levels of formality and structure and might include online dictionaries such as *Bob : l’autre tr sor de la langue*, *Le Dictionnaire de la zone*, or *Le Dico 2 Rue*, forums, and YouTube tutorials. The added value of online tools is the possibility to edit and update the content regularly, following the rapid evolution of the slang used in the *banlieue*, as well as the potential for information from the source, since young people are often able to add to or comment on the various proposals for different words and expressions. These sources also offer useful matter for researchers who can augment their work with the input of native speakers, as well as for the

reader (and translator) of fictional texts containing banlieue slang. Furthermore, the fact that written dictionaries are concerned almost exclusively with lexis means that it is difficult to grasp the meaning of entire utterances when non-standard syntax, grammar, and phonology may be used. Audiovisual tools and other resources dealing with banlieue slang at the sentence- rather than word-level may be seen therefore as contributing to filling this void.

## **Formation of Banlieue Slang**

Focus on the lexical aspects of banlieue slang is directed in particular to the use of *verlan*, itself a coded way of verbalising words lifted largely from Standard French. According to Christian Bachmann and Luc Basier, cryptic ways of speaking based on complete lexical distortion are part of a long linguistic tradition, exploited especially by bandits and beggars (1984, p. 173). In its most basic form, the process of “*verlanisation*” involves inverting syllable order to modify and obscure the initial word; the word “*français*” for example in *verlan* becomes “*céfran*”. This process becomes more complicated, however, when the original word contains more than two syllables, and the complex explanations that linguists have endeavoured to extrapolate from the practice of banlieue youth require close attention for anyone seeking to fathom these rules<sup>76</sup>. The availability of such guides written by linguists does little, however, to guarantee the credibility of a person wishing to apply these rules in an attempt to engage in conversation with young people using *verlan*. It may on the other hand help them to recognise and decipher the “*verlanised*” words young people in the banlieue slot into their speech, and certainly assist any reader (and translator) in understanding the presence of *verlan* in fictional texts. This question of decipherability clearly contributes to a tension between linguistic understanding and performance: the two are not necessarily synonymous.

Young speakers of banlieue slang have devised numerous means of ensuring that this opposition is not disrupted. In particular, the fact that a large

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<sup>76</sup> See Christian Bachmann and Luc Basier (1984) and Vivienne Méla (1988) in particular for a list of *verlan* terms and rules.

number of *verlan* words have entered the broader French repertoire (or are otherwise understood by non-banlieue speakers due to the relative transparency of many words created using the initial process) has brought about the trend of *reverlanisation*, as well as other means of adding further layers of coding to banlieue slang. We can also note a desire to protect the context of usage of banlieue slang within certain circles. When Bertucci conducted a survey asking a group of young people if they would use *verlan* with teachers or other adults, the vast majority responded that they would not (2011, pp. 23-24). Their answer reaffirms the notion of solidarity and group identity inherent in the use of slang, since it is spoken almost exclusively within groups of individuals fluent in the variety of language. It also demonstrates the self-awareness of these young people speaking slang and their innate awareness of the mechanisms of sociolinguistic variation broached in the first part of the thesis. These young slang speakers are conscious of the fact that their way of speaking is different from that of “outsiders”, and that it would be inappropriate and unreasonable to expect these outsiders to understand or engage in conversation when a type of opaque slang is used. As such, they seem to be generally capable of identifying when they need to adjust their way of speaking to suit the situation and to suit the person to whom they are speaking.

Many observations of how banlieue slang is formed can be closely linked with the characteristics of slang more generally as discussed in the first part of the thesis. Stella Linn affirms that the most significant characteristics of banlieue slang include *verlan*, truncation, the conscious or unconscious shifting of grammatical categories, and new forms of creative tropes (2016, pp. 5-6). She also discusses the phonological features of banlieue slang, in particular in terms of changes to syllabic stress tendencies (*ibid*). Goudaillier meanwhile informs us that the lexical formations found in banlieue slang are procured from several linguistic systems: firstly from old French and its regional varieties, secondly from old slang, and finally from the several languages of migrant communities (2002, p. 7)<sup>77</sup>. Speaking in particular of this third source, he notes the change in the construction of argot over the past 100 years and the increased number of foreign words borrowed from foreign

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<sup>77</sup> “*Les formes lexicales du FCC sont puisées d’une part dans le vieux français et ses variétés régionales, d’autre part dans le vieil argot, celui de Mimile, mais aussi dans les multiples langues des communautés liées à l’immigration.*”

languages (ibid)<sup>78</sup>. Doran adds to this the increasing presence of English words from sources that “hold appeal for youths”, notably American and Jamaican English words learned through rap and reggae (2007, p. 500). Goudaillier also reminds us that FCC includes specific lexical creations that are not *verlan*, contrary to popular belief (2002, p. 7).

Following Doran’s reasoning, the language used by young people in the banlieue is a sort of linguistic bricolage “that mirrors their sense of identity as mixed, evolving, and drawing from multiple cultural and linguistic sources” (2007, p. 500). One of these sources is found in the influence of foreign languages brought to the area through immigration. The fact that these languages are largely marginalised is of distinct importance since it adds to the layering of marginality present within banlieue slang (ibid, p. 501). Bertucci states that there is a form of linguistic hybridisation visible in the lexis that is directly borrowed from or playfully inspired by these foreign languages (2011, p. 22). To illustrate how this borrowing is performed, she provides the example of the Arabic noun “*kif*” which is transformed into the verb “*kiffer*” in French through the addition of an additional consonant (f) and the most common suffix for regular verbs (er) (ibid)<sup>79</sup>.

The lexical innovation of banlieue slang is also influenced by slang words retrieved from the vault of the past, previously used in specific contexts by members of specific social or professional groups as part of a coded system of language (Goudaillier 2002, p. 7). Doran states that this source of borrowing, along with words taken from Romani, is reflective of a “symbolic alignment with other marginalised and working-class social groups within *l’Hexagone*” (2007, p. 501). Doran further points to the manipulation of words from Standard French that are given new meanings, which constitutes an additional

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<sup>78</sup> “[...] *de nos jours les épices apportées à la langue française sont de plus en plus empruntées à des langues étrangères*”

<sup>79</sup> Although Bertucci does not mention this, it should be noted that the two borrowed words she mentions, *kif* and *bled*, are both used in other forms in French. *Kif* or *kiff*, for example, can be roughly translated as a kick or a thrill, or as a passion (e.g. “*c’est son kif*”, it’s her passion), and can also be used in the form *kif-kif* to mean “all the same” (e.g. “*c’est kif-kif*”, it’s all the same). *Bled*, meanwhile, is commonly used in its original form to refer to a person’s (foreign) hometown or to a small town, often in a pejorative manner (e.g. “*un bled paumé*” is a one-horse town, or a ghost town).

means of appropriating standard language in such a way that it becomes undecipherable to outsiders.

## Performing Banlieue Slang

Language plays a central role in urban street culture where speech is often performed and staged, presented to peers for judgement (Lepoutre 2001, pp. 410-411, Bertucci 2011, p. 18). Young people living in the banlieue gain credibility and popularity when they show evidence of verbal dexterity, and this is exemplified especially in ritualised competitions such as rap battles and games involving the exchange of insults. Competitors are rewarded for their ability to shape and manipulate language as well as for their improvisation skills since these games rely on quick wit and the flexibility to think on one's feet. Bertucci writes about competitive ribbing ("*vannes*"), stating that it is a practice that can be likened to the Dozens, a game common in African-American communities in which each participant offers light-hearted insults targeting specific aspects of the other participant's family (especially their mother) (ibid, pp. 17-18).

Beyond the poetic devices embedded in the narration of *Moi non*, there is more explicit evidence in the story itself of the extent to which a person's linguistic skills are valued when they are able to use these skills to outperform friends and enemies alike. Hoch describes what is involved in the games he and his friends play that involve taunting each other:

<i>C'est cruel parfois, faut être agile du verbe, avoir du répondant, sortir la bonne crasse au bon moment, moduler le ton et adopter celui qui convient. Faut y participer pour le croire. J'ai fréquenté des pros, des imbattables de la vanne. Ils pouvaient te démolir en une seule phrase. (p. 57)</i>	Things can get nasty – you have to be quick off the mark, always ready with a comeback, come up with the right insult at the right time, adjust the tone and pick the right one. You need to have played to see what I mean. I've met pros, unbeatable ribbers. They could crush you with a single sentence.
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The skills he developed in these friendly games with his friends prove particularly advantageous when he is confronted by a group of young men unpractised in the art. Hoch finds himself able to outsmart these men, which incidentally has the advantage of impressing the girl he is dating (Estelle), and

the battle metaphor that runs through his description pays testament to the extent to which these young people see language as a weapon:

*Un vrai massacre oral, dissimulé derrière sourires hypocrites, bon enfant, mais j'ai taillé dur et mes adversaires, même à trois, étaient loin de faire le poids. Eux, c'était plutôt genre Elle est bien ta chemise, ils font les mêmes pour hommes ? Alors que moi, c'était plutôt Pourquoi, tu te sens des élans de virilité ? Si tu vois ce que je veux dire. Je me souviens pas en détail, mais rien que d'entendre Estelle pouffer chaque fois que je lançais mes couteaux verbaux, c'était une belle récompense. Je les ai taillés en pièces. Et j'ai pas cessé de penser à Flex qui se serait pas prêté au jeu aussi longtemps mais aurait préféré péter des dents.*

*Dans ce monde-ci, ce monde de tapettes mises en plis qui se font la bise, dans ce monde, je n'étais pas le bienvenu. Mais mes armes étaient les leurs, et incontestablement, les miennes étaient mieux affûtées.*

It was a real verbal bloodbath, hidden behind hypocritical smiles, good-natured, but my blade was sharp and, even with three of them, my opponents' were far too blunt to make a mark. They were a bit like Nice shirt, do they have them in men's? And I was more like Why, you feeling particularly virile? If you see what I mean. I don't remember all the details, but even just hearing Estelle giggle each time I threw out one of my verbal knives was a nice reward. I cut them to pieces. And I couldn't stop thinking about Flex, how he wouldn't've played the game as long as I did. He would've started breaking teeth instead.

In that world, a world of cheek-kissing, blow-dried wimps, in that world, I wasn't welcome. But my weapons were their own, and mine were undoubtedly better sharpened.

(p. 58)

Hoch's wit is clearly a means of subverting the social superiority of his opponents. Interestingly, he implies that this show of linguistic talent is more effective to outshine rivals than shows of violence. Verbal blows, it would seem, are more powerful than physical blows.

Rap battles are also commonly held in marginalised urban areas, and the banlieue is no exception (Lepoutre 2001, p. 413). Lepoutre explains that these battles often incorporate ribbing competitions and that a person's performance is judged by the crowd who applaud, whistle, and shout more or less enthusiastically to express their approval (ibid, pp. 412-413). In the second half of *Moi non*, Flex is invited to an informal freestyle rap battle by a friend and is intimidated by the confidence of the young rappers. In the absence of an official audience, appreciation is shown by the other participants in the game,

and Flex finds himself embarrassed when unable to perform as well as the rappers to whom he has just been introduced:

Avril se roule un joint, l'allume et commence à marmonner des bribes de rimes, pas sensationnelles mais bien assez carrées pour une mise en jambes. C'est l'échauffement et tout le monde y passe par sessions de deux ou trois minutes. El Mano explique dans son couplet pourquoi il rappe, le truc basique, sa technique consiste à couper les mots pour faire rimer leur milieu. Avril est inspiré alors il reprend le fil et tisse les phrases comme elles viennent, épaules voûtées, yeux furieux, comme une bombe à retardement.

[...]

Le niveau commence à grimper et j'imagine qu'ensuite les mecs vont débiter des textes écrits. Avril me regarde, tire sur son joint et me fait signe d'y aller. Je peux pas reculer.

*Flex, c'est mon nom / je passe à l'action / crache mes postillons / sur microsillons / mon flot est meurtrier et j'suis... j'suis...*

Putain, j'suis comme un con ! Dixxa se fout grave de ma gueule. Je sais plus quoi dire, y a plus rien de génial dans ma tête et j'ai pas envie de phraser ma vie devant tous ces types.

[...]

J'ai l'impression de savoir ce que ressent un élève studieux quand il se tape une bulle. El Mano me demande *Tu pourrais pas me dépanner d'une clope ?* Quand je lui tends, il me rassure *T'sais, c'est rien. Ça arrive à tout le monde de merder, surtout à froid.* Et Dixxa rajoute *Ben ouais, mon grand, c'est le principe d'un clash c'est le plus faible qui tombe.*

(p. 146)

Avril rolls himself a joint, lights it and then starts mumbling bits of rhymes – they're not brilliant but definitely pretty solid considering he's just warming up. They're warming up and each one has a go for two or three minutes at a time. In El Mano's verse he explains why he raps – it's basic, his technique is to split words so that the middle bits rhyme. Avril's inspired so he takes over and weaves his words as they come to him, arched over, eyes furious, like a time bomb.

[...]

The level's rising and I'm guessing the guys'll start rolling out written texts soon. Avril looks at me, tugs on his joint and gestures me to go for it. I can't back down.

*Flex is my name / I play the game / Busting blame is my aim / Microgrooves are my frame / My words flow and it's killer / I'm... I'm...*

Fuck, I'm fucking lame! Dixxa is making fun of me. I don't know what else to say. I've got no other bright ideas and I don't feel like rapping my life story in front of these guys.

[...]

I think I know now what it feels like for a bookish kid to get an F. El Mano asks *Can I bump a smoke?* When I hand it to him, he reassures me *It's nothing, you know. Everyone fucks up sometimes. Especially when they're cold.* And Dixxa adds *Well, yeah, kid, that's the point of a battle: the weakest one falls.*

Goujon has captured in this scene the pride that young people in the banlieue associate with performance, and the clash between performers of different abilities and assurance. In his discussions of performed urban street culture, Lepoutre emphasises the role of ego in rap, as well as in DJing, break dancing, and graffiti, since the goal is always to do better than one's peers; self-glorification and boasting bestow the young performers with more confidence and self-assurance (ibid, p. 412). All of these modes of expression are constructed in opposition to the normalised artistic styles of the dominant social group and provide marginalised with a way of demonstrating and asserting their difference. Within marginalised groups, young people who perform well in such competitions are therefore recognised implicitly by their peers as being the best at constructing and enforcing their shared, albeit competitive, counterculture. Their voices might be seen as being the most valued vectors of dissent.

The flair that young people in the banlieue have for performance and for innovative language use has not gone unnoticed by adults who have harnessed the competitive spirit of these youth in an effort to sharpen their skills. Notably, the *Eloquentia* public-speaking competition created in 2012 at Université Saint Denis is accompanied by a programme that endeavours to help young people develop both listening and speaking skills to encourage constructive debate. The competition was the subject of a documentary entitled *A Voix haute : La Force de la parole*, released in cinemas in 2017 after its success when broadcast on the television channel France 2 in 2016. Another initiative is visible in dictation competitions organised in public spaces since 2013 by the association *Force des Mixités* and the writer Rachid Santaki ("*La Dictée Pour Tous*" and "*La Dictée des Cités*"). These events ostensibly seek to transform the arduous scholarly exercise into a game that aims to cultivate an appreciation of (standard) grammar and spelling among young people. Santaki has enlisted the help of rappers to promote the events, and the *Dictée Pour Tous* held in Lille in May 2018 was hosted by Faïza Guène. By all accounts, these initiatives that underscore the linguistic talents and ambitions of young people in the banlieue have been met with enthusiasm on both sides of the *périphérique*.

Although it is not of direct relevance to the analysis of all of the texts in the corpus, I would like to close this discussion of the performance of language with a consideration of the phonology of banlieue slang. Doran explains that the sound patterns used in banlieue youth French differ from those of Standard French in a number of manners, apparent notably in the less precise diction and a throaty rasp that might be attributed to the influence of Arabic phonology (2007, p. 501). Mikäel Jamin posits that the banlieue accent was initially characterised by its North African influence, it is now adopted by groups from other ethnic and social perspectives (2004, p. 169). He argues that when it is adopted by “out-group speakers” it symbolises “a certain degree of identification with the street culture that is common to all young banlieue speakers” (ibid). A final aspect of banlieue slang worth noting is the speed of speech, and the “atypical intonation patterns that blur word boundaries” (Doran 2007, p. 501). When banlieue slang is spoken, these and other features of the phonology of banlieue slang contribute to the assertion of belonging and the exclusion of outsiders, augmenting therefore the identity and rebellion functions inherent in the linguistic formation of the slang itself.

In written fictional texts characterised by the presence of slang and/or features of orality, an author might attempt to transcribe aspects of the specific sound patterns heard in the characters’ speech (accent, pronunciation, speed etc.) by modifying spelling or morphology and these features may be ignored or reproduced in translation, at the translator’s discretion. Since orality is an inevitable element of audiovisual texts, a translator might feel inclined to implement similar techniques to those which might be used in written fiction, presenting subtitles that evoke accent and pronunciation. This technique would fall into the category of equivalence if the subtitler chooses to transcribe an accent reflective of a certain place. If the subtitler implements other techniques, orality might be suggested through less phonetic means, which, as we have seen, may fall into one (or more) of the strategies identified in my typology. The remainder of the thesis will be dedicated to an exploration of concrete examples of texts from the banlieue which are characterised by a marked presence of banlieue slang. The overview that I provide of a selection of these texts and the examples I analyse will show more precisely how the sound patterns and other features of banlieue slang are offered to source and

target audiences in written form, as well as how subtitlers seek to convey the orality of film texts to target audiences.

### 6.3 Banlieue Fiction

The 50-day March for Equality and Against Racism (also known as the *Marche des Beurs*<sup>80</sup>) from Marseille to Paris in late 1983 is said by many scholars to have established an interest in “*literature beur*” (cf. Reeck 2012, p. 122, Vitali 2009, p. 173). Since 1983, this genre has been given other names, such as banlieue literature, post-*Beur* literature, or urban literature (Reeck 2012, p. 120). Laura Reeck cites the publication of Mehdi Charef’s *Le Thé au harem d’Archy Ahmed* in 1983, a novel that gives voice to the curious and troubled son of Algerian immigrants, as the genesis of a genre (ibid, p. 121). The French writer Jules Roy, born like Charef in Algeria, praises the novel and likens it to Chester Himes’ novels in which “Harlem boils over”, as well as to the works of French writers such as François Villon and Rutebeuf whose work was initially considered provocative but is now seen as central to the canon (ibid). Charef considers his work to be “immigrant literature”, a type of literature that is from nowhere in particular and has no starting point, but suggests that the exploration of roots, immigration, and integration visible in novels written by immigrants is perhaps reflective of their desire to understand better where they are from so that this knowledge can help them move forward, despite the heavy load they carry (ibid).

Ilaria Vitali, meanwhile, claims that Azouz Begag’s novel *La Gone du chaâba*, published by Seuil in 1986, heralded the beginnings of the genre, since it was previously unrecognised (2009, p. 173). Begag’s novel relates the story of a boy of North-African origin living in a banlieue of Lyon. The protagonist’s name is Azouz, and the story is said to be autobiographical, dealing with issues of an identity torn between French and Algerian culture. Vitali recognises that the style and stories present in banlieue literature have evolved since the beginnings of banlieue fiction, citing the depiction of the critical condition of the high-rise housing estates in works by authors such as Mabrouk Rachedi,

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<sup>80</sup> Beur is the *verlan* term for Arab

Mohamed Razane, and Rachid Djaïdani (ibid). In particular, she cites Djaïdani's novel *Boumkoeur*, published by Seuil in 1999, in which the metaphor of the bunker of the title is intended to represent the trap of the banlieue (ibid, p. 174). She further notes a change in the attention given to the question of identity in banlieue fiction, comparing *Le Thé au harem d'Arché Ahmed* and Y.B.'s 2003 *Allah Superstar*; it would seem that more recent authors are less interested in meditating on their characters' roots than on their "branches", or on how they are able to slot into the society in which they live (ibid). She also notes the presence of code-switching in the works she cites, where the characters mix the different languages, and varieties of each language, that they know (ibid, p. 175).

22 years after the March for Equality and Against Racism, the riots of 2005 sparked a renewed interest in stories from the banlieue. Serena Cello states that this fact is evidenced by the almost immediate appearance of banlieue books the year after the riots in the catalogues of renowned publishing houses such as Gallimard, Hachette, Lattès, and Stock (2017, p. 1). She mentions in particular *Dit violent* by Mohamed Razane, published by Gallimard; *Du rêve pour les oufs* by Faïza Guène, published by Hachette; *Dembo Story* by Dembo Goumane, also published by Hachette, but in their collection "Essais"; *Le poids d'une âme* by Mabrouck Rachedi, published by JC Lattès; and *Cités à comparaître* by Karim Amellal and *Supplément au roman national* by Jean-Eric Boulin, both published by Stock.

The paratextual elements of some of these texts are revealing: the blurb of *Dembo Story*, for example, states that Goumane's account is "a real modern crime novel, slangy and funny, which relates the extraordinary violence of ostracised youth"<sup>81</sup>. The focus on the autobiographical and sociological nature of the work, seen almost as a commentary on the state of the banlieue rather than as a novel, is reinforced by Hachette's choice to publish it within their *Essais* collection. Another example of this will to emphasise the social significance of banlieue fiction can be found on the page on Gallimard's website dedicated to *Dit violent*, where the description states that the book explores themes reflecting the day-to-day life of the banlieues visible in "recent

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<sup>81</sup> "Son témoignage est un vrai polar moderne, argotique et drôle, qui raconte la violence extraordinaire d'une jeunesse mise au ban."

events”<sup>82</sup>. Publishers were clearly eager to harness the curiosity of readers who, in the wake of the riots, sought out books that might provide insight into the tension that led to the outbursts of violence. The interest of readers was met with an abundance of proposals from writers in the banlieue. Cello cites Jean-Marc Roberts, the then director of Stock, who in 2006 admitted that almost one out of every five texts he received was written by a young person from the banlieue (2017, p. 1).

Cello also mentions the post-riots establishment of the collective “*Qui fait la France*” whose ten members are all writers from the banlieue (Samir Ouazene, Khalid El Bahji, Karim Amellal, Jean-Eric Boulin, Dembo Goumane, Faïza Guène, Habiba Mahany, Mabrouck Rachedi, Mohamed Razane, and Thomté Ryam). They state in their manifesto that they seek to transcend borders and occupy the confiscated space in which they believe they have a role to play. Additionally, they profess a desire to offer stories that “bear the flesh of France” and reflect the invisible yet majority section of French society while avoiding the clichés that distort and wound its members (2007, blurb).<sup>83</sup> This collective was seemingly short-lived: they published one collection of short stories in 2007 through Stock entitled *Chroniques d’une société annoncée*, met with mixed reception by critics<sup>84</sup>, and their website is no longer active. Many of the authors continue to write novels and short stories, however. In 2007,

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<sup>82</sup> “*Ces thèmes appartiennent à la vie quotidienne des banlieues, des événements récents l’ont montré.*”

<sup>83</sup> “*Parce que nous pensons que la France est un pays moderne dont le vivre ensemble s’élabore par le décloisonnement des mentalités, la reconnaissance des souffrances particulières, la mise en récit de sa diversité et de ses imaginaires. Parce que la littérature à laquelle nous croyons, comme contribution essentielle à la guerre du sens, est aux antipodes de la littérature actuelle, égotiste et mesquine, exutoire des humeurs bourgeoises. Parce que, catalogués écrivains de banlieue, étymologiquement le lieu du ban, nous voulons investir le champ culturel, transcender les frontières et ainsi récupérer l’espace confisqué qui nous revient de droit, pour l’aspiration légitime à l’universalisme. Parce que cette génération, la nôtre, a le feu pour réussir, le punch pour démolir les portes, la rage pour arriver au but, le charisme pour crever l’écran, l’intelligence pour rafler les diplômes, la force pour soulever les barricades, la hargne du sportif, la beauté du livre, le caractère de l’Afrique, l’odeur du Maghreb, l’amour du drapeau tricolore et de la poésie de France... Les dix nouvelles parlent toutes de la chair de la France [...] Reflétant cette France invisible bien que majoritaire, loin des clichés qui la griment et la blessent, ces nouvelles “ordinaires et extraordinaires” veulent en même temps lui donner un peu de sens et de poésie.*”

<sup>84</sup> Fabrice Pliskin from *Le Nouvel Obs* (19/09/07) does not find the majority of the short stories, with the exception of Faïza Guène’s, particularly interesting, neither in terms of style or content while a review in *Le Monde* (20/09/07) states that their efforts to reflect a certain reality do not necessarily add anything new to literature.

Salma Daki wrote about the collective in anticipation of the release of their collection of short stories:

At a time when France is burning, they send a message of hope to the bruised youth of the French banlieues. “They” are those the press tends to dub Asphalt Writers. “They” are “*Qui fait la France ?*”. Ten writers, ten activists, uniting as a collective so that the banlieue is also known as a haven of creativity.<sup>85</sup>

(Daki 2007, online)

The reference she makes to the “burning” in France is pertinent, since she states that it was only after the 2005 riots that publishers showed interest in their writing (ibid).

The short stories written by the members of *Qui fait la France ?* and many of the post-riots books previously listed strive to provide more or less explicit reflections on social division and inequality in France, as well as an account of the ordinary life of people living in the banlieue. Cello points out that their approach is not necessarily revolutionary, since similar subjects have been broached before by writers such as J.M.G. Le Clézio (especially in *Ariane* 1982) or François Bon (*Décor ciment* 1988). She recognises, however, that these previous reflections reflect a certain regret, whereas more recent writers tend to focus on the affective links they share with the banlieue, their home (ibid). A certain sense of security and of belonging seems to emanate from these works, the writers rejecting stereotypical representations of their peers and instead focusing on the way in which they are relegated by members of dominant groups in French society (ibid, p. 6). Arguably, they advocate an approach to sharing stories that is anchored in experience and authenticity.

### **Banlieue Literature: Fact or Fiction?**

A number of writers openly reject the label banlieue literature, finding it reductive, or arguing that the interest in stories they tell lies precisely in the stories themselves, rather than in the stylistic qualities of their work. Kaoutar Harchi, author of three novels and a number of shorter texts, is one such writer

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<sup>85</sup> “Au moment où la France est en feu, ils envoient un message d’espoir à la jeunesse meurtrie des banlieues françaises. “Ils”, c’est ceux que la presse a tendance à surnommer les écrivains du bitume. “Qui fait la France ?”, c’est eux. Dix auteurs engagés qui s’unissent en collectif, pour que banlieue rime aussi avec créativité.”

who laments the lack of engagement with the aesthetic merit of her work, ignored in favour of a focus on what her books can tell people about life in the banlieue (Puig 2016, p. 5). It seems important to stress here again that not all people living in or writing from or about the banlieue are cut from the same cloth: not all of them write about the issues of relegation rife in the banlieue, and not all of them write using banlieue slang. A writer such as Azouz Begag might wish to state explicitly that he writes banlieue fiction in line with his desire to act as a role model for the *rouilleurs* and *intermédiaires* he describes in his sociological work, while another writer, such as Fardia Belghoul, might reject any label and argue that she and other banlieue writers should be considered simply as writers, without the addition of any qualifying terms (Géraud 2014, online).

An alternative label applied to texts emanating from the banlieue is urban literature. This label implies that texts set in the banlieue fall into the broader category of urban culture, of which hip-hop is an important part. Rap, in particular, as we have seen, is a branch of the Hip-hop Movement that seeks also to shape and play with language in creative ways, giving voice to the marginalised, who may or may not wish to discuss expressly the difficulties of their perceived ostracism or invisibility. The influence of rap in banlieue fiction is apparent in the presence of music and/or lyrics in some texts (*Moi non* or *La Haine*, for example), in the features of rap music implemented in the author's rhythmical and poetic style of writing (*Boumkoeur*, *Moi non*), and in the promotion of certain works (Rachid Santaki for example publicises his books by using rap clips). The fact that rap music and hip-hop culture are so often associated with the banlieue seems to enhance in a way the realism of many works of banlieue fiction.

The inclination to view fiction written by banlieue writers as representative of the reality of life for all young people in the banlieue is reflected also in the desire to take all fiction as a form of autobiography. Zahwa Djennad expresses frustration regarding the tendency to suppose that because of her name, because she is from the banlieue, and because she writes about the banlieue, the fictional stories she tells are a reflection of her own life (in

Géraud 2014, online)<sup>86</sup>. Whether it is the use of the term *banlieue*, the name or origins of the writers, or the simple fact of the subject matter of these books, it seems difficult to deny that there is a market for stories from/about the *banlieue* that might help “outsiders” to understand better the mentality of the young people who are at the centre of negative media attention. Some writers and directors, conscious of this demand for *banlieue* texts that offer insight into the areas’ unrest, chose to exploit techniques that add to the impression of authenticity that their work projects. This seems especially true of two of the films in the corpus of this thesis, *Entre les murs* and *La Haine*, which both rely on the performances of actors from the *banlieue*, and often with little or no professional experience. Film in particular is a medium that lends itself to responses tied up in assumptions of the accurate representation of life for young people living in the *banlieue*, no doubt because of the visual décor that acts as a constant reminder of the story’s setting.

In my analysis of these and other texts, I aim to address questions related to the reception of these texts based on the background of the person or people producing them, or participating in their creation, to understand if their status as an “insider”, an “outsider”, or a person straddling both worlds, has an impact on the assumed authenticity of the stories told. These questions are of particular relevance to translation, as they can be linked with the practices that might be followed to convince readers that they are being offered an insider’s perspective on a foreign culture. As we have seen, in the case of *banlieue* fiction, translating texts involves providing the target audience with a version of a text that is already foreign to a certain extent for its initial audience. The dual nature of the text’s foreignness clearly poses a challenge for the translator, who must decide which aspects of the two Others they would like to convey or emphasise to the target audiences, and how to do so. I will bear these considerations in mind in the analyses proposed in Part Three of the thesis which will explore several works that have encountered mainstream success to a greater or lesser extent in France and in the Anglosphere.

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<sup>86</sup> “*Les choses qui me touchent et sur lesquelles j’écris ne sont pas forcément mes réalités. Mais parce que je porte ce nom, que je viens de là, que je parle de la banlieue, on suppose que c’est mon histoire.*”

***Part Three:***  
***Translating the***  
***Banlieue***



## Introduction to Part Three

After examining questions related to the transcription and translation of slang in the first two parts of the thesis, I will present in Part Three a case study that applies the relevance of these questions to four texts. In this way, I will be able to harness the discussions of a more theoretical nature that run through the first six chapters to concrete examples of translated texts featuring the slang of the banlieue, including the novel I translated myself. Many of the sociolinguistic and translational issues related to representation and voice will be considered from a practical angle through the texts that I analyse in their initial French version, and in their English translation, or translations where relevant. Throughout my discussions, I will refer to the texts as independent entities but also in terms of the ways in which each pair or texts, source and translated, might be seen side-by-side as a duo, with aspects of one feeding into or influencing the other.

In Chapter 7, I will offer an outline of the state of banlieue fiction available in English and study three texts in particular: Mathieu Kassovitz' 1995 film *La Haine*, Faïza Guène's 2004 novel *Kiffe kiffe demain*, and François Bégaudeau's 2006 novel *Entre les murs*, as well as the 2008 film adaptation directed by Laurent Cantet. These texts are among the most prominent to have appeared in English since the 1990s, or the decade after the beginning of the banlieue literature movement, and my analysis will enable a more specific consideration of the techniques used as part of the strategies governing each translation. The fact that these texts were aimed at a wide audience is arguably an indication that concerns of a commercial nature were at the heart of the decision-making process that governed their translation. This, in turn, permits

an interesting point of comparison for my translation which was undertaken in an academic, non-commercial context.

Chapter 8 proposes an overview of the style and story of *Moi non* before exploring how the conditions of translation influenced my choice of text and the strategy developed to translate it. I then proceed to apply my typology for the translation of slang to my own translation, explaining why I opted against adopting each of the five options discussed in Chapter 5. It is at this point of the thesis that a more blatant marriage of my own theory and practice will come to the fore, since I combine my work as a translator and as a scholar of translation studies to propose a study of the use of an alternative strategy to translate slang. I will close Chapter 8 with an explanation of the reasoning behind my creation of Global Youth Speak to translate *Moi non*.

Following this exploration of the choices made prior to translating the novel, I will turn my attention to an outline of the techniques that were employed to executing this alternative strategy. The first subchapter therefore details the features of Global Youth Speak, offering examples of varying lengths to illustrate the shape that these features take in context. The influence of the attributes of rap music is visible in many of these examples, and I will explain in the second subchapter how, exactly, these aspects of rap came to imbue the style of the translated text in English. Finally, I will offer a pragmatic overview of the translation process and explain how I kept track of the challenges faced in implementing Global Youth Speak in an effort to ensure the coherence and consistency of my choices.

## Chapter 7: The Banlieue in English

I will begin this chapter by addressing the question of the works that have been translated into English and those that have not. In the case of the works that have been translated, I will endeavour to establish if the time of publication of these French texts in English coincides with specific events or circumstances in France or in the Anglosphere that might have fuelled the appeal of these stories. For the three texts I have selected to study in more detail, *Kiffe kiffe demain*, *Entre les murs* and *La Haine*, I will delve deeper into an exploration of how the context of publication may have determined or affected the approach adopted in translation, as well as of the degree to which the use of slang in the original text in French might be seen as a form of intralingual translation of the variety of French used by young people in the banlieue. Studying the reception of these texts will also prove useful in my effort to determine how they can be read from a sociological perspective, often as a snapshot of the tension that undercuts the relationship between Paris and its banlieues. Furthermore, I will consider how the voice of the producers of these texts might be harnessed so that they are attributed the role of spokespeople for the reality that their work depicts, and how the reception of these texts differs in France and in the Anglosphere.

### 7.1 Banlieue Fiction in English

It seems pertinent to preface this chapter with an acknowledgment that many of the works of fiction relating aspects of life in the banlieue cited or discussed in Chapter 6 (a small selection of the works produced) have not been translated into English. In fact, very few of these works have made the journey from French into English, from France into the Anglosphere. The most seminal of these works have been translated, but it is interesting to note that the prominent authors Azouz Begag and Mehdi Charef, said to have inaugurated the banlieue genre, have only had their first, and most successful, novels

translated into English. As a result, the only one of Charef's books available in English is *Le Thé au harem d'Archimède*. It was translated into English by Ed Emery and published by Serpent's Tail under the title *Tea in the Harem* in 1989, six years after its initial publication in France. Interestingly, this voyage into English was not made until after the release the film adaptation of the same name, met with critical acclaim and screened in the *Un Certain Regard* category at Cannes in 1985.

Begag waited even longer than Charef for his first novel *Le Gone du Chaâba*, initially published in France by the Editions du Seuil in 1986, to be made available in English. In April 2007, Bison Books (an imprint of the University of Nebraska Press) published Alec Hargreaves' and Naim Wolf's translation under the title *Shantytown Kid*. The same press published Hargreave's translation of Begag's sociological work *Ethnicity and Equality: France in the Balance*, also in April 2007, but no other full-length works of (auto)fiction or sociology by Begag are available in English. We learn while reading *Ethnicity and Equality...* that the unpublished French version of the manuscript was written before the three weeks of rioting led by young people which ravaged banlieues and towns all over France in the autumn of 2005. The fact this book and *Le Gone du Chaâba* were published in English early in 2007 would suggest that people in the Anglosphere were also curious to hear stories from the banlieues where these riots occurred.

The circumstances surrounding the publication of Charef's and Begag's works in English are not dissimilar to the context of publication of the translations of *Kiffe kiffe demain* and *Entre les murs*, two of the texts that I will study in more detail in the following sections of this chapter. Faïza Guène's first novel *Kiffe kiffe demain* was published in France in 2004 (by Fayard, Hachette Littératures), one year before the 2005 riots, but only made available in the Anglosphere the year after the riots, in 2006. It was translated by Sarah Ardizzone (Adams)<sup>87</sup> and published first in the UK in 2006 by Chatto & Windus (an imprint of Penguin Random House) as *Just Like Tomorrow* and then by Harcourt in the US later in the same year, with a new title, *Kiffe Kiffe Tomorrow*. Although the significant success of the work in French may have

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<sup>87</sup> I will refer to the translator by the family name she currently uses (Ardizzone), but citations and references will be provided with her previous name (Adams).

been sufficient to instigate its translation without taking into account the riots, the timing is nevertheless worth noting. As I will argue, this is especially true when the date of publication is considered alongside the angle taken by the media and by critics of the book in the Anglosphere. It is of further interest that Guène, as I will explain when analysing *Kiffe kiffe demain*, is the only author of banlieue fiction whose work seems to hold enduring appeal for English-language publishers.

*Entre les murs* was written by François Bégaudeau and published in 2006 by Editions Verticales (Gallimard) in France. It was translated into English by Linda Asher in the wake of the accolades received by the film adaptation at Cannes in 2008. Seven Stories Press (an imprint of Penguin Random House) published the translation the following year in 2009 under the title *The Class*. The film, directed by Laurent Cantet and starring Bégaudeau alongside a cast of non-professional teenage actors, was awarded the Palme d'or at Cannes and subsequently nominated for the 2009 Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. We might wonder if the book would have been translated into English without the increased interest in the work afforded by the release and success of the film version. As is common with any release of a film adaptation, Bégaudeau's book garnered more attention in France and was rereleased with a new cover featuring the faces of the film's actors. This reflects the subsequent consecration of the written text instigated by the film both in France and the Anglosphere, but, as we will see, the conversations kindled by the film differed significantly in each linguistic context.

Before I move on to my analysis of the three texts I have chosen to study more closely, I would like to mention two other authors whose work has attracted varying amounts of attention in France and in the Anglosphere. Born in 1974, Rachid Djaïdani grew up in the banlieue and has been involved in television and cinema as a writer, director, and actor for almost twenty years. He has also written several books, including three novels telling the story of a young man living in the banlieue: *Boumkoeur* in 1999, *Mon nerf* in 2004, and *Viscéral* in 2007, all published by Seuil. His first novel, *Boumkoeur*, sparked the most interest in France, but a full-length translation does not seem to be available in English. Translated extracts were published in English by the

journal *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* in 2004, translated by Roger Célestin. A more recent essay written by Stephanie Brynes published by *Asymptote* in 2016 seems to suggest that she has translated at least part of the book.

Another work that encountered success in France is the novel *Lila dit ça*, written by an unknown author using the pseudonym Chimo (which is also the name of the book's young narrator) and published by Plon in 1996. Unlike *Boumkoeur*, it has been translated into English. The translation was written by David Watson and published by Scribner in 1999 under the title *Lila Says*. The buzz created by the anonymity of author and the considerable success of the book in France perhaps provided sufficient motivation to have it translated, as well as its treatment of issues beyond the banlieue in its exploration of precocious female sexuality. A film adaptation directed by Ziad Douieri was released in 2004 but neither the film nor the book seem to have encountered continued commercial success in the Anglosphere, and neither have been widely discussed by the media.

The timing of the translation of these texts seems to indicate that at least two factors determine the decision to make fiction that features the voice of marginalised French youth available in English. Firstly, the post-riot surge of interest in the banlieue seen in France is complemented to a much smaller degree in the Anglosphere through the translation of works that had previously encountered success in France. The books are therefore approached, in both linguistic contexts, from an angle that prioritises their pedagogical potential. Essentially, they are seen from the perspective of how they can help people living outside of the banlieue better understand the apparent exasperation of young people across France during the riots. The release of a film version of a book, especially of a film praised by critics and popular among general audiences which also increases interest in the book in France, further appears to trigger the translation of the text into English.

Finally, it should be noted that only the works which were given significant attention in France have been translated, and that each of these books is based on the real-life experience of its writer. Since, as we have seen, works offering the voice of banlieue youth in French represent already a certain degree of foreignness for French audiences, this is not especially surprising:

audiences seem to seek authenticity, eager to be reassured that the version of the voice they are being offered is a true and accurate representation of life in the banlieue. They seem especially interested in the banlieue's young residents, whose stories they are able to hear only through the media coverage of the turmoil affecting the areas in which they live. When this media attention is largely negative and often sensationalised, it seems logical that "outsiders" would be especially eager to have access to what may be presented as an honourable version of the truth. In this way, when a work of fiction takes an exoticised area of interest as its focal point, the impression of authenticity and authority that is engendered by the author's direct contact with the context in question seems to bolster the credibility of the work as a form of entertainment anchored in a certain reality.

Although few other written works set in the banlieue have been made available in English, we might turn our attention to banlieue cinema. Following the international critical and commercial success of *La Haine* in 1995, several films have received attention in the Anglosphere. These include Laurent Cantet's 2008 film adaptation of François Bégaudeau's novel *Entre les murs* (*The Class*) as well as Abdellatif Kechiche's *L'Esquive* (*Games of Love and Chance*) released five years earlier in 2003, also taking place in a banlieue school. More recently, Céline Sciamma's 2014 film *Bande de filles* (*Girlhood*) garnered international praise and was nominated for a number of awards at film festivals around the world. It focuses on a group of black teenage girls living in a *cité* in the banlieue. Lastly, *Divines*, directed by Houda Benyamina and also featuring a female teenage lead, was awarded the *Caméra d'or* at Cannes in 2016 and released worldwide on Netflix later that year.

I will devote the remainder of this chapter to a close study of a selection of three of the contemporary banlieue novels and films that have been translated into English. *Kiffe kiffe demain*, *Entre les murs*, and *La Haine* have encountered widespread mainstream success both in France and in the Anglosphere and as such have arguably become representative of the voice of French marginalised youth available in English. Although this thesis is concerned first and foremost with the translation of written texts, the analysis of translations of two different mediums allows me to address more explicitly the transfer from oral to written speech that is inherent in all of these works,

involving a fictional recreation of the language spoken by young people. Intra- and interlingual subtitles follow the same procedure of transfer, with the language undergoing additional changes imposed by format and space restrictions, and in accordance with the role played by subtitles as a written support for the audiovisual elements provided by the screen. Despite these differences between the two mediums, the subtitles written in English for *La Haine* and *Entre les murs* merit attention in this thesis because they contribute to the version of the voice of banlieue youth that is made available to Anglophone audiences. Furthermore, while there are differences in the specific techniques employed in subtitles and in novel translations, the overarching approach to rendering the voice of banlieue youth in French and in English remains largely comparable.

Beyond their vast commercial success in France and in the Anglosphere, the three texts selected have the advantage of presenting the voice of banlieue youth from different angles and perspectives: *Kiffe kiffe demain* tells the story of a young girl, written by a woman who grew up in the banlieue and who shares similar origins; *Entre les murs* is written by a school teacher from the point of view of an adult belonging to a different social class from that of his students, and features his transcription of their voice, while the film adaptation of the book directed by Laurent Cantet, also from a different background and social class, uses non-professional student actors; and, finally, *La Haine* was directed by Mathieu Kassovitz, who is not from the banlieue, with a mix of professional and non-professional actors primarily from the banlieue, with the notable exception of Vincent Cassel. These three texts thus present the voice of banlieue youth through different prisms and in different formats, produced by people who have or have not experienced first-hand the impressions of relegation felt keenly by young people living in the banlieue.

## **7.2 *Kiffe kiffe demain***

Written by Faiza Guène and published in France by Hachette in 2004, *Kiffe kiffe demain* is narrated in the first person by Doria, a teenage girl living in a *cité* in Livry-Gargan, a banlieue north of Paris. Doria lives alone with her mother following the departure of her father who left them to live with a

younger woman in Morocco, his country of origin. The novel is composed of forty very short chapters, each between two and five pages in length, and might be read as a series of brief diary entries. Marc Sourdout likens the structure of the book to a sequence of scenes in a television show, allowing the reader to pass quickly from one episode to the next (2009, p. 496). He further comments on Guène's writing style, stating that the rhythm of the novel is distinguished by very short sentences, often without verbs or otherwise using markers of orality (ibid, p. 498). The way in which the style is reflective of oral speech provides the impression that the novel is delivered directly to the reader by the young narrator in spoken form.

This written version of the variety of French used by young people in the banlieue remains accessible to readers unfamiliar with or unpractised in banlieue slang, however, since Guène takes care to harness the most widely recognised and understood traits of this language. Her approach has proved popular among readers: *Kiffe kiffe demain* sold 15 000 copies in France in the two months following its release and has since sold over 350 000 copies and been released in translation in more than 20 countries (ibid, p. 496). *Kiffe kiffe demain* was Guène's first novel, and she has published four other books through Hachette/Fayard since 2004: *Du rêve pour les oufs*, 2006, also translated by Sarah Ardizzone and published in the UK by Chatto & Windus in 2008 as *Dreams from the Endz*, with a second translation by Jenna Johnson published in the US by Houghton Miller Harcourt in 2009 as *Some Dream for Fools*; *Les Gens du Balto*, 2008, translated by Ardizzone and published in the UK by Chatto & Windus in 2011 as *Bar Balto*; *Un homme ça ne pleure pas* 2014, translated by Ardizzone and published in 2018 by Cassava Republic as *Men Don't Cry*; and *Millénium Blues*, 2018, which is yet to be translated.

With five books published in France by a leading publisher and four published in the Anglosphere, Guène is no doubt the most prominent banlieue writer. In France, her writing is the most widely available work from or set in the banlieue, and her voice is one of the very few that has crossed the border into the Anglosphere. It should be noted, however, that while Fayard have continued to publish all of Guène's novels, the translation of *Un homme ça ne pleure pas* does not seem to have appealed to Chatto & Windus. After publishing Ardizzone's translation of Guène's first three novels within two or

three years of their publication in French, the UK publisher seems to have lost interest in her work. Regardless of the change in publisher, the role of Ardizzone as Guène's primary translator has not changed.

It is also worth mentioning that the same American publisher that produced the edited version of Ardizzone's *Just Like Tomorrow* for an American market did not take on Guène's second novel, and that only her second novel, *Du rêve pour les oufs*, has been translated for an American market. One might deduce from these changes of publisher in the US and the UK and from the absence of a second translation in American English for all of Guène's works that questions of a commercial nature have governed decisions to make her writing available in the Anglosphere. The drop in sales of her subsequent works, both in France and abroad, when compared with the substantial success of *Kiffe kiffe demain*, seems to be a source of concern resulting in a cautious approach to investing in their translation into English.

### ***Kiffe kiffe demain* in (Two) English(es)**

*Kiffe kiffe demain* was initially translated into English for a British audience by Sarah Ardizzone, published as *Just Like Tomorrow* by Chatto & Windus in 2006 before being published several months later in the US by Harcourt in a heavily-edited version of Ardizzone's translation, under the title *Kiffe Kiffe Tomorrow*. The two versions of the translation differ drastically in the use of language, with each making use of the way of speaking common to teenagers in the UK or the US. In the translator's note that appears at the end of the UK edition, Ardizzone states that she "tried to find parallels and resonances in contemporary British urban slang, with all its multicultural references" (UK version 2006, p. 184). *The Guardian*'s first review of the book, prior to its release in the UK, provides a quote from an interview with Ardizzone in which she explains her approach:

Adams' solution was to look to the street slang of her own neighbourhood, Brixton, in London, but she is careful to point out that rather than swapping one immigrant culture for another, she has looked for a believable "urban street language in a developed western country. You want something that sounds authentic and not translated".

(2005, online)

From these comments, it is clear that Ardizzone prioritised fluency in her translation, and that she sought to supply a style of writing in English influenced by the language used by young native speakers of English in urban areas. Though the article reveals that she found inspiration specifically in the voice of young people living in Brixton, Ardizzone does not equate this process of linguistic substitution with cultural replacement, and seems to consider that a text translated using an “authentic” slang in English can maintain its mooring in a French setting.

To illustrate how Guène moulded the voice of banlieue youth for a broad audience, how Ardizzone tackled the translation of slang, and how this translation was altered for an American audience, we can turn to the very first paragraph of the book. Below is the original French followed first by the initial translation for a UK readership and then by the US version:

FR *C'est lundi et comme tous les lundis, je suis allée chez Mme Burlaud. Mme Burlaud, elle est vieille, elle est moche et elle sent le Para-poux. Elle est inoffensive mais quelquefois, elle m'inquiète vraiment. Aujourd'hui, elle m'a sorti de son tiroir du bas une collection d'images bizarres, des grosses taches qui ressemblaient à du vomit séché. Elle m'a demandé à quoi ça me faisait penser. Je lui ai dit et elle m'a fixée de ses yeux globuleux en remuant la tête comme les petits chiens mécaniques à l'arrière des voitures.*

UK It's Monday and, like every Monday, I've been round at Mrs Burlaud's. Mrs Burlaud is old, ugly and she smells of Quit Nits shampoo. I'd say she's harmless, but sometimes I worry. Today she took a whole load of weird pictures out of her bottom drawer. We're talking huge stains that looked like dried sick. She asked me what they made me think of. When I told her, she stared at me with her sticky-out eyes, shaking her head like one of those toy dogs in the backs of cars.

US It's Monday and, like every Monday, I went over to Madame Burlaud's. Mme Burlaud's old, she's ugly, and she stinks like RID antilice shampoo. She's harmless, but sometimes she worries me. Today she took a whole bunch of weird pictures out of her bottom drawer. There were these huge blobs that looked like dried vomit. She asked me what they made me think about. When I told her she stared at me with her eyes all bugged out, shaking her head like those little toy dogs in the backs of cars.

This paragraph presents some of the most common features of the informal spoken French that is typical of teenagers, notably colloquial lexis and relaxed syntax with detached structures. These features are exploited throughout the novel, complemented by the systematic absence of *ne* in negative verb structures the use of *on* instead of *nous*, which are general traits of informal spoken French, as well as the occasional presence of *verlan* or Arabic terms. It

is important to note that any slang she includes has found its way into the broader repertoire of the French language and that, in the rare cases where an uncommon word or expression is used, it is buffered through subtle in-text explanations that allow the reader to understand its meaning<sup>88</sup>. In terms of syntax and spelling, Guène provides a relatively polished and transparent style that avoids clouding the content and hindering understanding, all the while transmitting the impression of teenage speech. In this way, she seems to manage to make her novel appealing to a broad audience, infusing her text with enough traits of banlieue language to make it appear credible to readers of a similar age and in a similar situation to the teenage narrator to whom she gives life, while being careful not to use language that is so obscure that it might alienate other audiences.

The differences between the British and the American versions of the novel are apparent in all aspects of language, surpassing changes to lexis to imbue the syntax and the punctuation. Structures from the initial translation as seemingly simple as “I’ve been round at”, no doubt deemed “too British”, are transformed in the US version in what seems to be an effort to avoid jarring the American reader. The American version proposes alternatives that are judged to be more typical and representative of the voice of American teenagers; “I’ve been round at” is thus replaced by “I went over to”. In this first paragraph alone, we can see a striking number of changes made to the first translation: filler words at the beginning of sentences are erased or edited (the hedge “I’d say” and reformulation “We’re talking” disappear in the American version), lexical changes are made (“a whole load of” replaced by “a whole bunch of”, “sticky-out” replaced by “all bugged out”), modulation that shifts the point of view is enacted (“I worry” shifts to the passive voice through a change in subject and becomes “she worries me”), and prepositions are altered (“smells of” replaced by “stinks like”, with “smell” also replaced by the more informal “stink”, “think of” becomes “think about”).

Though the US edition of the translation does not specify who performed the editing of the translation, it was presumably a translator or an

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<sup>88</sup> E.g. “*Heureusement, ma mère n’a pas tout à fait dit oui. Elle a utilisé le joker « inchallah ». Ça veut dire ni oui ni non. C’est « si Dieu veut » la vraie traduction.*” (p. 46), translated in the UK version as “*Luckily, my mum didn’t exactly say yes. She played that wild card, AKA “insh’Allah’. It doesn’t mean yes or no. The proper translation is God Willing*” (p. 38).

editor fluent in French, since the edits do not stray from the meaning of the text in a way one might expect to see in a translation that was edited without consulting the original source text. These edits also tend to bring the US version of the translation closer to the syntax of the original French, as in the following example, taken from the second page of each version of the novel:

<p><i>Il n'a eu qu'un enfant et c'était une fille. Moi. Disons que je correspondais pas tout à fait au désir du client. Et le problème, c'est que ça se passe pas comme à Carrefour : y a pas de service après-vente.</i></p>	<p>But he only got one kid, a girl. Me. Let's say I didn't exactly meet customer requirements. Trouble is, it's not like at the supermarket: he couldn't get his money back. (UK)</p>	<p>But he only got one kid and it was a girl. Me. You could say I didn't exactly meet customer specifications. Trouble is, it's not like at the supermarket: there's no customer-satisfaction guarantee. (US)</p>
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Although the differences between the two translations appear insubstantial at first glance, there is a clear inclination to have the American version more closely reflect the syntactic progression of the original French. Thus, the first sentence in French containing only one clause that is separated into two clauses through a comma in the British version is returned to the initial structure in the American text. In addition, in the final clause of the final sentence, we see that the third-person structure of “*service après-vente*” is modulated in the British to spin the statement from the father’s point of view, but restored to the perspective of the original French in the American. Such choices to align the syntax more closely with the original French text in the American version than in initial British translation are consistent throughout the novel.

Since the way that the slang is rendered in the initial translation of the novel immediately strikes the reader as typical of the slang employed by teenagers in Britain, it seems logical that it would undergo heavy editing for the American version. Following this strategy, lexis of a less marked nature is also systematically modified in the American version, likely in order to avoid the risk of American readers questioning the Britishness of the language of a novel taking place in France. Words such as *vacances*, or *maman*, for instance, translated using the British terms “holidays” and “mum” in the UK version, are therefore Americanised to become “vacation” and “mom” in the US version. All of these techniques ensure that readers of both versions of the translation, on

both sides of the Atlantic, are offered an accessible type of language characteristic of the way of speaking of young people in each context.

## Framing the Foreign

The title that Guène gives to her novel is indicative not only of her narrator's ambivalence regarding her future but also of her sense of humour. It hinges on the dialectal Arabic term "*kif*" which has made its way into French in various forms, notably as a noun, *kif*, a verb, *kiffer*, and in the expression *c'est kif-kif*, combining the verb and the expression in a sort of wordplay to express Doria's change in mentality over the course of the novel. She explains her crafty reimagining of the expression in the final pages of the book:

[...] C'est ce que je disais tout le temps quand j'allais pas bien et que Maman et moi on se retrouvait toutes seules : kif-kif demain.

Maintenant, kif-kif demain je l'écrirai différemment. Ça serait kiffe kiffe demain, du verbe kiffer.

(pp. 187-188)

In English, the two versions of the title and this passage from the book differ in their acknowledgement and explanation of the wordplay created through foreign lexis:

[...] It's what I used to say when I was down and Mum and me were all on our own: '*kif-kif* tomorrow'. Nothing changes, today's just like tomorrow.

But now I'd say it differently. I'd say I just *like* tomorrow.

(UK version, pp. 177-178)

[...] It's what I used to say all the time when I was down, and Mom and me were suddenly all on our own: '*kif-kif* tomorrow,' same shit, different day.

But now I'd write it differently. Spell it "kiffe kiffe tomorrow," borrow from that verb *kiffer*, for when you really like someone or something.

(US version, p. 178)

Each keeps the initial "*kif-kif*" and explains it in English, with the US version adopting the more popular phrase "same shit, different day", often shortened in the acronym SSDD. This, however, is where the similarities end. While the UK version establishes wordplay through the explanation in English, by playing on the double-meaning of the word "like" used as a preposition and as a verb, the US discards the explanation and keeps the *kiffe kiffe*, before replacing the French *demain* by its corresponding English word tomorrow.

This simple process of substituting a French word for an English one and maintaining the Arabic term is symbolic of the approach to the representation of the context of the banlieue that characterises other aspects of the US paratext.

Following this trend, the UK version is more explicit than the US version regarding the process of translation that preceded the book's publication in English, as well as about the setting of the story in the banlieue. On the cover of the initial UK version, a quote from a review published in *Elle* appears in the bottom-right corner: "Doria is an adolescent Bridget Jones. Her fantastic voice speaks for all those stuck in Paris' high-rise estates". Three other quotes appear on the back cover, taken from *Cosmopolitan*, *Newsweek*, and *The Guardian*, and two of these also make explicit reference to the "high-rise estates" of the "Parisian suburbs". These references to the setting in reviews are complemented by the cover illustration, which features a drawing of the Eiffel Tower. By way of recognition of the translator, the UK version includes the italicised mention "*Translated from French by Sarah Adams*" on the title page, with further visibility of the translator granted on the reverse side of the author's dedication page (Guène dedicates the novel to her mother and father) through the inclusion of the note "The translator would like to thank Cleo Sozandry and all the slangstas at *Live Magazine*". Ardizzone is also allotted space for a translator's note entitled "A Note on the Slang" at the end of the UK version. In her note, she explains the formation and significance of *verlan* and the difficulty of translating this "backslang" into English.

Much less attention to the translated nature of the book is provided by the edited US version of the UK translation. Compared with the UK cover, the illustration on the US version provides a more generic image of high-rise apartment buildings, rather than including any visual reminders of the French context. The translator's name appears only on the copyright page in the small-print note "This is an edited version of Sarah Adam's translation, published by Chatto & Windus in the United Kingdom" with no other mention of the original French context in the peritext, except for in some of the 11 press excerpts printed before the title pages under the title "Praise for *Kiffe Kiffe Tomorrow*". These press clippings are followed by the standard cover pages (without the translator's name), copyright notice, and dedication page (without the

translator's acknowledgement), and the addition of a page dedicated to dictionary-like definitions of a number of terms. These terms, mostly French or dialectal Arabic words of particular importance in the novel, highlight the significance of the narrator's Moroccan background: *bled*, *Maghreb*, *mektou*, *inchallah*, *hchouma*, *kif-kif* and the verb *kiffer*.

While the paratextual elements of the initial UK translation also provide explicit references to the influence of the narrator's North-African heritage on the text, the prominence and positioning of this recognition are substantially different. In the UK version, a more extensive list of terms with more detailed explanations appears at the end of the novel in the form of a glossary containing 14 words. Overall, the emphasis on Arabic words and the resistance to disclose the translated nature of the text in the US version can be read as a visible acknowledgement of the North-African identity of the narrator in a way that obscures the more complex status of that identity which is framed within French culture. The nature of the Other therefore shifts in the US version of the translation, which positions feelings of exclusion or confusion experienced by foreigners in Western society as a condition that crosses borders, rather than focusing on the form it takes within the French context of the banlieues.

This choice made by the American editors is perhaps indicative of their concern that translated books, as we have seen, generally do not sell very well in English. Rather than embracing the specificity of the setting of the translated story, they have drawn attention to an aspect of the text that might resonate more strongly with American audiences. Although we might criticise their choices and judge their approach as simplistic and reductive, as a way of nannying the reader, we might also see it as a logical continuation of the strategy of replacement slang adopted in the two translated versions. Within both texts, the translation does not include any language that might unsettle readers. In this way, the US version could in fact be seen as more coherent than the initial UK translation, since the paratextual choices focusing on transnational similarities between the two contexts echoes the use of typical American teenage language within the translation itself. In both cases, it would seem that the paratexts are misleading, since the US version negates the specificity of the French context, while the UK version's attention to the

translator does not disclose the domesticating nature of the approach to translation taken within the novel through the use of a replacement slang.

### **Reception of *Kiffe kiffe demain*, at home and abroad**

The quote featured on the front cover of *Just Like Tomorrow*, taken from the review published by *Elle*, implies that Doria's story is assumed to represent that of all young people in the banlieue, and this impression is also present elsewhere in other reviews of the book published both in English and in French. Guène was interviewed on numerous occasions about the issues she raises in her book and she became the real-life voice asked to chronicle the fictional world of her novel which has its roots in her observations and experiences growing up in the banlieue. Her word, in and out of the novel, was taken to be a true account of the real-life struggles faced by the banlieue's young residents, ostensibly because she herself is an insider. This snippet from an article in the *Independent* is indicative of the general attitude adopted by the media reviewing Guène's novel: "Describing a world more often written up by journalists after the latest riots rather than by authors who have lived there all their lives, this is literature that needs to be read" (Tucker 2006, online).

Lynsey Hanley's review in the *New Statesman* also adopts this viewpoint regarding the general representativeness of *Kiffe kiffe demain* and further raises the valid point that Guène was attributed a similar role by the media in France:

Except for the fact that her parents are from Algeria and her father stuck around, Guène is describing her own life as much as her fictional character's. [...] Because Guène grew up on just the kind of peripheral estate that has gone up in riotous flames in the past six months, the 20-year-old author has been required to give chapter and verse to French newspapers on the possible causes of such unrest and what can be done to help.

(Hanley 2006, online)

It should be noted, however, that although her voice in France as an ambassador for banlieue youth is one of the most solicited, audiences in France have access to a significantly larger number of voices speaking about the banlieue than those offered in the Anglosphere. This means that French audiences necessarily are offered a wider range of perspectives than non-French speakers, who must rely on the information and stories made available

in English through translation, without being able to choose these sources themselves. The degree of distance between the readership and the reality described is greater in the English versions than in the original French, meaning that there is more coverage of the issues available in French than in English. In France, the question of access to other perspectives is better framed in terms of the reader's desire to seek them out. This is arguably not a priority for many readers who seem satisfied with the version of the voice of banlieue youth Guène is offering, directly through her novel or indirectly via the media.

### **Accessibility of the Other**

As we have seen, the two translations of *Kiffe kiffe demain* differ drastically, each taking quite a liberal approach to the communication of orality. We can but hazard at a guess as to why the initial translation was so reliant on aspects of the English language used by young British speakers, and why this voice was so heavily edited in the US version, but it seems safe to say that these decisions were made to provide a fluid, fluent target text that would not challenge readers. In this way, readers are led to believe that they are being granted access into the world of French teenagers relegated to the fringes of Paris and the fringes of society. Ardizzone's approach to translating Doria's voice is therefore not dissimilar to Guène's writing style which manages to strike a balance between realistic and accessible: Ardizzone states that "her dialogue is wholly authentic, but never a verbatim transcription" (Adams 2006, online). Indeed, if Guène had opted for a more veracious rendering of this voice, her readers may have been alienated, unable to understand the thoughts and dialogue presented to them. By using a sort of sanitised slang, Guène is able to tell Doria's story in an inclusive rather than exclusive manner.

One might argue that Guène's choice constitutes a betrayal of the very premise of the use of slang on the part of young people in the banlieue, since it is designed to establish distance between marginalised youth and speakers of the standard language. Her approach could further be likened to the practice of performing domesticating translations that provide a fluid version of the original text for the foreign reader. The difference here lies in the point of departure, since the fictional language of the original French text is based on

what we might see as the real-life text of banlieue youth speech, while the translation moves from this written form of banlieue youth language to provide a version of it in English that is stylistically similar to comparable works available in English. Consequently, the intralingual change of medium and of mode in the first instance, from the mouths of banlieue youth to the page of a work of fiction, manages to remain suggestive of the novel's setting, whereas the interlingual process of translation may insinuate an alternative context elsewhere in the Anglosphere, or otherwise result in a partial effacement of the original setting. The latter consequence may be seen as an inevitable product of translation, since it is impossible for a foreign language to carry the same suggestions of place as the original language of writing. In cases where a text provides frequent or flagrant indications of place through content, it may further be argued that the maintenance of these culture-specific references in the translation serves as a form of compensation for the absence (or replacement) of linguistic suggestions of place, in all its forms.

We might criticise writers who produce a simplified version of slang, and translators who decide to adopt a domesticating approach through equivalence or standardisation, for their lack of respect of the original voice. A counterargument might highlight the fact that in both situations, the writer or translator is providing for readers a version of the voice of the Other that is able to be understood. Although this version may be altered or simplified so as not to jar audiences, failing to communicate exactly what the voice of the young people depicted sounds like inside the banlieue and outside of fictional texts, Guène's and Ardizzone's methods have proved successful in exposing readers to a voice (and a story) they are unlikely to hear otherwise. Ultimately, it is up to the writer, translator, and other players in the publication process to bear these questions in mind when deciding how the voice of the marginalised characters depicted or symbolised should be presented to "foreign" audiences.

### **7.3 *Entre les murs***

The second text study I will study in this chapter is the novel *Entre les murs*, written by François Bégaudeau and published by Gallimard in 2006, as well as the more widely successful film adaptation of the same name, directed

by Laurent Cantet and released in 2008. *Entre les murs* follows a French teacher and his class of 13/14-year-old students (*quatrième*) across a school year. Set in a *ZEP* (a *zone d'éducation prioritaire*<sup>89</sup>) school in the 19<sup>th</sup> arrondissement, the novel is a semi-autobiographical account of Bégaudeau's experience teaching French to students from a mixed ethnic and low socio-economic background. The fact that the story takes place within Paris further serves to reinforce my use of the term *banlieue* in a symbolic manner in this thesis, intended to designate areas where young people feel ignored or ostracised and express themselves using features of *banlieue* slang. Although the vast majority of these places are located in the *banlieue*, Paris is also home to several such "priority" schools and disadvantaged areas. Much of the story of *Entre les murs* pivots on the tension between the teacher's insistence on the use of standard grammar and complex structures and the students' relentless use of slang and/or reluctance to see the worth in using more formal language.

With almost the entire novel taking place in the classroom, the staff room, or the school yard, most of the text is dialogue. Since Bégaudeau's alter ego, Mr Marin, narrates the novel, the speech of his students and colleagues is transcribed from his perspective. This means that the youth slang is presented as dialogue and therefore marked as distinct from the narration, and also that the students are never heard speaking completely freely, on their own, without adult supervision. Their speech is directed to Bégaudeau or to other students, but always in his presence and usually in the classroom. Despite the fact that Mr Marin sometimes reprimands his students for using overly casual language, they appear to be conscious that their language use must be altered at least slightly in a classroom situation so that it is less opaque than what it might be in the schoolyard. In this way, many of the features of spoken informal French used by students are often also used by teachers in dialogue, as in the following examples (my bold)<sup>90</sup>:

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<sup>89</sup> A *Zone d'Education Prioritaire* is an area that has been classified as disadvantaged and in need of additional government resources. They are now known as *REP, Régions d'Education Prioritaire*.

<sup>90</sup> All translations are taken from Linda Asher's 2009 translation of the novel, published by Seven Stories Press. The translations have been provided here for reference but I will focus solely on the original French in this section and analyse a selection of translation choices in subsequent sections.

<i>Je sais pas si j'ai le droit de <b>leur</b> passer des séries télé, <b>aux</b> élèves.</i> (p. 21)	I don't know if I'm allowed to screen a TV show for the kids? (p. 17)
<i>C'est un peu <b>bébête</b>, mais justement ça pourrait <b>leur</b> plaire <b>aux</b> gamins.</i> (p. 21)	It's a little silly, but that's just why the kids might like it. (p. 18)
<i>T'as l'air fatigué. / <b>Ouais, j'sais pas.</b></i> (p. 33)	You look tired. / Yeah, I dunno. (p. 29)
<i><b>C'est des dingues, j'te jure.</b> J'ai fait quatre fiches incident ce matin. <b>Moi</b> si ça continue ça va être fini.</i> (p. 34)	They're nutcases, I swear! I already filled out four incident slips this morning. If this keeps up it's gonna be the end for me. (p. 29)
<i>En plus, on est dans un collège où les gamins savent pas écrire, donc tu leur donnes un exercice ils te rendent trois <b>crottes de mouche.</b></i> (p. 128)	Besides which, we're in a school where the kids don't know how to write, so you assign them a writing exercise to do and they give you back a few dog droppings. (p. 116)

In these examples, we see a consistent absence of the negative *ne*, a presence of dislocated syntactic structures (“*leur passer des séries télé aux élèves*”) and of informal markers of orality (*ouais, moi*), the removal of vowels and addition of apostrophes to create connected speech (*t'as, j'sais, j'te*), as well as imprecise subject-verb agreement (“*c'est des dingues*”). Despite these features suggestive of casual speech that are present in both the students' and the teacher's dialogue, the teachers' sentences appear more composed and coherent than those of the students. The lack of punctuation in the students' dialogue, with frequent run-on clauses and sentences, reflects the difference that Bégaudeau seeks to establish in his novel between students who, he believes, do not take sufficient time to reflect on their words and actions, and their teachers who are deemed to be better equipped to weigh the consequences of their behaviour. This is a central theme in the work and the catalyst for much of the tension between Bégaudeau's character and his students.

The example below of an exchange between Marin and one of his students brings to light several of the differences between the features of dialogue used by the students and teachers, as well as some of the areas where there is distinct overlap (my bold):

Student: *M'sieur pourquoi vous nous charriez toujours **comme quoi** on sait rien ?*

Teacher: *Pas toujours, t'exagères un peu.*

Student: ***Ouais** mais les Galeries Lafayette vous nous avez **trop chauffés** parce que moi j'connais **trop bien** j'y vais toutes les semaines **et tout**. (p. 51)*

Student: M'sieur, why're you always riding us like we don't know anything?

Teacher: Not always, you're exaggerating.

Student: Yeah well with the Galeries Lafayette you got us real mad because, like, me I know it very well I go there every week. (pp. 44-45)

The dislocated structures, absence of *ne*, and morphological contractions that are recurrent in the teachers' dialogue reappear here, but the placement and nature of some oral discourse markers differs, and there is also more repetition and accumulation (e.g. *Ouais + mais, et tout, trop x 2*). This is accompanied by the use of topicalisation for emphasis (*les Galeries Lafayette* fronted at the beginning of the sentence), adverbial intensifiers more typical of youth speech (*trop*), as well as more chaotic and unpunctuated syntactic structures. Beyond the differences in punctuation and syntax between the students' speech and that of the teachers, we note a flagrant contrast in the type of lexis used, since some of the vocabulary used by teachers is unlikely to be used by youths (*bêbete, crotttes de mouche*), and vice-versa.

Slang is usually decoded for the reader through the teacher's admonishments, as a result of the classroom setting and of the nature of the student-teacher relationship: Mr Marin stresses the importance of "correct" French on the rare occasions that students use *verlan*. The following examples show how the students are asked to modify their language in such a way that the reader is conveniently offered an intralingual translation (my bold):

Student: *M'sieur ça s'fait pas, vous êtes **vénère** et vous vous en prenez à moi ça s'fait pas.*

Teacher: *D'abord on dit pas **vénère**, on dit quoi ?*

Student: *On dit quoi quoi ?*

Teacher: *Utilise un vrai mot français, ça changera.*

Student: *Vous avez la rage et vous vous en prenez à moi ça s'fait pas*

Student: M'sieur that's not right you're pissed off and you're taking it out on me that's not right.

Teacher: First off, you don't say "pissed off", you use a real French word, that will help.

[not translated]

[translated above]

Student: You're mad and you're taking it out on me that's not right

*m'sieur.*  
(p. 57)

Student: *C'est pas moi j'vous dis, je m'en bats les **yeuks** d'elle.*

Teacher: *Tu t'en bas les quoi ?*

Student: *J'm'en fous d'elle.*

(pp. 54-55)

*m'sieur.*  
(p. 50)

Student: Wasn't me I'm telling you! I don't give a fuck about her.

Teacher: You don't give what?

Student: I don't care about her.

(p. 48)

The language used by the students therefore remains accessible to readers unfamiliar with some *verlan* words. A final feature of Bégaudeau's approach to rendering the speech of students and teachers that I would like to consider is the way in which he attempts to mirror sound patterns. Many of the examples provided above include phonetic transcriptions of contracted speech, but we see in other examples that Bégaudeau clips and adjusts the words of his student characters more so than with the teachers' dialogue. He also occasionally changes spelling or adds letters to the beginning of words to reflect pronunciation and/or non-standard grammar. The first three of the examples below present some of these aspects appearing in students' speech, and can be compared with the final example of the more conservative contraction found in the teachers' dialogue (my bold):

*Ceux-là qui **z'**ont dit ça ils ont juré sur leur vie.* (p. 90)

Them people they say it, they swear on their life. (p. 81)

*J'sais pas moi, **par'emple** si on croit en Dieu et tout.* (p. 38)

Like, I don't know, frinstance if a person believes in God and all. (p. 33)

***P't'êt.** J'sais pas.* (p. 39)

Maybe... I dunno. (p. 34)

***T'**façon j'ai mes **p'tits** à prendre à l'école.* (p. 44)

Whatever, I've got my kids to pick up at school. (p. 38)

Interestingly, in the first example, the addition of the letter "z" indicates an erroneous liaison, reflective of a socially-marked grammatical mistake. The following two examples delete syllables not usually pronounced orally, as does the fourth example of a sentence uttered by a teacher. However, in this final example, the absence of "*de toute*" is very much reflective of the pace of delivery, especially since it appears at the beginning of a sentence. This sort of contraction is more common in all varieties of informal spoken French and

could conceivably be used by almost any French speaker, whereas the three other examples are less common outside of youth speech.

The prominence of sound patterns becomes more interesting in the film version where the possibility of listening to the prosody of the students' language distinguishes their speech more overtly from that of the teachers. I will provide an overview of the film adaptation below since its success was particularly influential in increasing interest in the book, and because it acted as a trigger for debate on the nature of language norms and education in France. A more detailed study might seek to examine how the representation of the language used by teachers and students is altered when their speech moves from the page to the screen. It would also be worthwhile exploring how translators endeavour to capture these differences in subtitles, and if the features of transcribed dialogue in the novel and in the translation of the novel can be compared with those used in the English subtitles.

### ***Entre les murs*: From Page to Screen**

The film adaptation of *Entre les murs* was directed by Laurent Cantet and released in 2008 with B egaudeau in the main role. Shot in documentary style, the general aesthetic resembles a sort of "docufiction". It was the recipient of the Palme d'or at the 2008 Festival de Cannes and the subject of overwhelmingly positive reviews both in France and abroad, including a nomination for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film in 2009. Playing alongside B egaudeau are a number of non-professional actors, mostly students and teachers from the school in which the film is set. These teachers and students participated with Cantet and B egaudeau in weekly workshops across the 2006-2007 school year and the film's dialogue was improvised and developed during these sessions. The film was later shot in the summer of 2007.

Both in France and the Anglosphere, critics praised the film for its realism as well as its ability to maintain the viewer's attention throughout the many long teaching scenes. In France, however, the film solicited fervent responses calling attention to the its depiction of the school system. In this way, *Entre les murs* participated in the debate on education and on issues

relating to national identity, complemented by ample questioning of the teacher's approach to dealing with rowdy classroom situations, as well as a discussion about language. The various filmmaking techniques employed in the realisation of *Entre les murs* that contribute to its ambiguous status, somewhere between fiction and documentary, fuelled tension between, on the one hand, those critical of the teaching practices and of the vision of marginalised youth disseminated by the film, and, on the other hand, people eager to point out that, as a work of art, and of fiction, the film should not be interpreted as an accurate depiction of what goes on “*entre les murs*”, or behind closed doors, in all *ZEP* schools.

In a debate with two teachers organised by *Libération*, Cantet commented on the way that teachers had interpreted the film when he argued that others, especially parents of school children, were more willing to see the film as a work of fiction since they felt less involved in the context of the scenes depicted, which teachers seemed to see as a sort of “mirror” (Lefort and Soulé 2008, online)<sup>91</sup>. Valérie Sultan, a teacher of French at Collège Rosa-Parks in the banlieue (Gentilly) disagrees with Cantet's insistence that the film raises questions about how language works:

Do language norms exist? Who determines them: dictionaries, grammarians, the streets, *académiciens*? What is the norm? Language issues are central in power struggles. But what kinds? Why did the teacher not raise these questions? Because when this is done, by showing that power struggles can be social and cultural, once this has all settled down for students, learning the *passé simple* becomes much easier<sup>92</sup>.

(ibid)

The conservative philosopher and intellectual Alain Finkielkraut is among those critical of Bégaudeau's practice and of the message the film seems to send about language use. He penned a scathing review for *Le Monde*, stating that civilisation requires language to be scrupulous, precise, nuanced, and

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<sup>91</sup> “[...] *les parents d'élèves sont beaucoup moins choqués par le film que les professeurs. Leur grille de lecture est évidemment plus simple à établir, parce qu'ils sont moins dans cet espèce de miroir que le film semble vous tendre.*”

<sup>92</sup> “*La norme langagière existe-t-elle ? Qui la fixe : les dictionnaires, les grammairiens, la rue, les académiciens ? Qu'est-ce que la norme ? Les questions langagières sont au centre d'un rapport de force. Mais lequel ? Pourquoi l'enseignant n'a-t-il pas mis ces questions sur la table ? Car quand on le fait, en montrant que les rapports de force peuvent être sociaux, culturels, une fois que tout cela est apaisé chez les élèves, l'apprentissage du passé simple devient beaucoup plus facile.*”

courteous, and deploring the absence of classic literature studied in the classroom<sup>93</sup>. Such debate was largely absent from reviews of or articles on the film published in the Anglosphere, where the comments were of a more general nature and less specific to the practices of school teachers in the context of difficult classroom situations in France. The way that the film's representation of school was publicly discussed in France gave French speakers the opportunity to distance themselves from the realist qualities of the film and appreciate that what they had been shown was not necessarily a reflection of an actual *ZEP* school. Before considering some of the trends present in the English subtitles of the film, I will provide an overview of the approach taken in the translation of the novel.

### ***Entre les murs* Becomes *The Class***

*Entre les murs* was translated by Linda Asher and published by Seven Stories Press in the US in 2009 in the wake of the success of the film adaptation. It is prefaced by a translator's note, which begins:

The school pictured here lies in a lively arrondissement notably mixed in language as well as in race and class. As dialect renditions can be oppressive to read over the length of a book, I have merely sketched the speech styles of the speakers and then left them to communicate in ordinary language. An occasional omission in the English occurs where the original lines turn largely on a problem in French sound.

(in Bégaudeau 2009, p. 5)

The remainder of the note provides an overview of the French school system so that the reader is aware of how students, teachers, and other school staff fit into the bigger picture. Asher offers a number of school terms in French with general translations or explanations using American equivalents (e.g. "homeroom", "in American schools, this role, and that of the 'bursar', might fall to assistant principals or guidance counsellors", "ninth grade" etc.).

Asher's preface establishes the pedagogical aims of the translation, which seems to seek to provide readers with an insight into the French

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<sup>93</sup> "Car la civilisation ne demande pas à la langue d'être efficace, d'être directe, de permettre à chacun de dire sans détour ce qu'il a sur le cœur ou dans les tripes [...]. La civilisation réclame le scrupule, la précision, la nuance et la courtoisie. C'est très exactement la raison pour laquelle l'apprentissage de la langue en passait, jusqu'à une date récente, par les grands textes."

schooling system. Readers are made immediately aware of the process that has preceded the text presented to them, and this reminder is reiterated all throughout the text. Since much of the discussion between Mr Marin and his students revolves around the teaching of French grammar, there are constant reminders of the setting in a French classroom. The specific terms and points of grammar discussed are often retained in French in italics or otherwise translated literally. When the option of literal translation is chosen, it is often performed in quite a forced manner, especially where the basic structures in the two languages are not easily comparable (e.g. discussion of the use of the indicative or the subjunctive after “after”, or of the future anterior, which are not issues in English, on pp. 21-23). These conversations, featuring italicised French terms or awkward translations or “equivalents” in English, are a constant reminder of the foreign setting, bolstered by the consistent carrying across of most culture-specific vocabulary in French. In some instances, French titles are even added to the English text to reinforce further the French context, as in the example “M’sieur, how do you write ‘*qu’est-ce que c’est?*’” (p. 81) which translates “*Comment ça s’écrit qu’est-ce que c’est ?*” (p. 90), where there is no title in the original question.

An attempt to encode sound patterns in speech is also prominent in the translation into English, through the use of commonly used contractions (dunno, gonna, gotta, kinda, wanna), the absence of the final “g” for words ending in “ing”, and other less common contractions (e.g. “s’not me”, “omigod”, “y’know”). Representations of sound patterns such as these are included systematically throughout the entire translation, recreating in a manner typical of English speech the truncation that Bégaudeau consistently uses throughout the French text. These choices are generally indicative of the speed of speech and of informality, rather than of accent, a strategy which avoids suggesting a specific setting in the Anglosphere. Elsewhere in the translation, however, more unusual spelling choices are made (my bold):

*J’sais pas moi, par’empe si on croit en Dieu et tout.* (p. 38)

Like, I don’t know, **frinstance** if a person believes in God and all. (p. 33)

*Pourquoi tu m’pousses ? / Pourquoi tu m’as poussé ?* (pp. 113-114)

**Whatchu** pushin me for? / **Why’dju** push me? (pp. 102-103)

*Pourquoi vous m’parlez ?* (p. 150)

Why you **talkina** me? (p. 136)

*J'peux m'lever m'sieur ?* (p. 188)

**Kin** I get up, m'sieur? (p. 171)

*Pfffh n'importe quoi celle-là.* (p. 264)

Pfffh **oweys** talkin bullshit that one.  
(p. 241)

*J't'ai pas tipée j'm'en bats les yeuks de toi.*  
*Tsss.* (p. 178)

I **din** hiss you I don't give a fuck about  
you. Pffft. (p. 162)

These sporadic inclusions of unconventional spelling are reserved to the students' dialogue, ostensibly in an effort to further distinguish between the speech habits of the teachers and those of the students. Their presence is further complemented by the general lack of punctuation in students' speech, a technique carried across from the French text. Since the phonetic transcriptions are not immediately recognisable as representative of the accent or pronunciation of one specific place, they also contribute to avoiding suggesting an alternative setting in the Anglosphere. However, the irregularity and inconsistency of their presence means that they also risk striking the reader as atypical in a way that is distracting. This may result in the readers' attention being drawn away from the tension between the teacher's and the students' use of language that is central to the story, diverted instead to the artificial nature of the use of language in this translation.

Additional instances of incongruity in language choices can be found in the occasional decisions to remove auxiliary verbs or to remove the last letters of the preterit, or in the deliberate confusion of pronoun use, as seen in the examples below.

*C'est n'importe quoi j'l'ai pas touchée*  
*j'm'en bas les couilles d'elle.* (p. 264)

Talkin bullshit I never **touch** her I don  
give a shit about her. (p. 241)

*Ceux-là qui z'ont dit ça ils ont juré sur*  
*leur vie.* (p. 90)

**Them** people that say it, they swear on  
their life. (p. 81)

Student: *N'importe quoi, l'autre. Eh*  
*m'sieur est-ce que vous à la naissance*  
*vous vouliez être prof ?*

Student: **She** just **runnin** her  
mouth. So m'sieur, already when you  
were born did you wanna be a teacher?

Teacher: *Non. A deux ou trois ans*  
*seulement.*

Teacher: No. Not until I was two or  
three.

Student: *Mais ouais, voilà, c'est*  
*n'importe quoi ce qu'elle dit l'autre.*  
(p. 39)

Student: Well yeah, **at's** what I  
mean, she just says whatever.  
(p. 34)

*Vous vous êtes pas juge et vous vous*  
*vengez c'est tout.* (p. 185)

**You** not a judge and **you** getting even  
that's all. (p. 168)

Several of the examples provided above, and elsewhere in this subchapter, also demonstrate a somewhat clunky calque of the original French syntax, which produces stilted sentences in English. This decision to mirror the French syntax may be an attempt to recreate the unusual sentence structures used in many of the students' utterances in the source text. These structures frequently appear in urban youth slang in French, adding to the realism of the dialogue in the French text. However, when they are replicated in the translation without imitating the structure of informal oral speech or of any variety of urban youth slang in English, they actually detract from the realism of the translated text and instead draw attention to the artificiality of the fictional reproduction of French youth slang in English.

Regarding lexical choices, in the examples provided in the previous section where the students are reprimanded for using *verlan* words, these words are translated through vulgarity, so that the teacher is scolding students for swearing in class rather than for using *verlan*. Otherwise, lexis is generally translated using more generic vocabulary, but borrowing is occasionally also used for isolated slang words, complementing the presence of French words and phrases related to in-class exercises, as in the example below:

<p><i>Wesh pourquoi tout à l'heure j'ai demandé un mot vous avez pas voulu écrire et maintenant vous écrivez ? [...] Moi c'est bon j'sais l'écrire. Tsss. (p. 81)</i></p>	<p><i>Wesh</i> how come before when I ask about a word you wouldn't write it and now you writing one? [...] No, me it's okay I know how to write it. Pffffh. (p. 73)</p>
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This carrying across of “*wesh*”, in italics to mark its foreignness, serves as yet another reminder of the fact that this text was originally written in French.

Asher's translation offers frequent suggestions of the foreign nature of text through borrowing, in-text references to French language, and awkward syntax calqued from French. Since she states in the preface to the translation that she has aimed to “sketch” the students' speech styles, we might see the unusual spelling and syntax used throughout the text in English as a technique that contributes to an innovative approach to translation combining several strategies. Conversely, her words may be seen as a means of attempting to justify the almost erratic nature of choices that seem to lack consistency. In any case, it is clear from both the paratext and the text itself that the translation is

intended to offer readers an idea of the French text and setting, not to replace it.

The translation of *Entre les murs* into English could be seen as a form of supporting documentation, for the French text, but also for the film that preceded and framed the publication of the book in English. In this way, the translation might be likened to subtitles, since, as we will see, these are added to a film in its original version as a means of enabling understanding of the dialogue spoken in a foreign language. The approach adopted in the translation of the novel can in any case be compared with what Christiane Nord calls a documentary translation. As I explained in Chapter 4, such a translation does not intend to act as an independent “communicative instrument” but as a means of providing information about the original (con)text (2005, p. 142). Overall, we might praise the decisions made in the translation of *Entre les murs* that highlight the text’s foreign setting while recognising that the novel in English is unable to flourish fully as a stand-alone text.

### **Subtitling *Entre les murs***

Before studying some of the trends in the subtitles of *Entre les murs*, I would like to offer a broad reflection on the nature of subtitles and the role they are intended to play for audiences viewing a foreign film. In Chapter 5, I stated that the existence of contextual information suggesting some of the functions of slang might act as a form of motivation for translators to devote their attention to rendering meaning (through a strategy of standardisation) rather than striving to strike a balance between style and meaning. This argument seems particularly applicable to the translation of film texts where subtitles can be seen as a form of support for the audiovisual elements provided for viewers on or through the screen and sound. Subtitles are not intended to *replace* the source text, as is the case with the translation of written texts, but to *complement* it, accompanying it in its international travels. They are therefore a partial translation that form part of a bilingual text that brings about a meeting of two mediums, of the written and the audiovisual.

As he discusses the constraints involved in the writing of subtitles, Lukasz Bogucki states that translators tend to be pragmatic and privilege an approach to rendering dialogue that focuses on its key communicative aspects:

[...] any redundant elements of film dialogue (information conveyed also by the picture, signs, or captions) may well be omitted from the translation. Curtailed by the technical limitations of subtitles and striving for maximum clarity and minimum complexity of message, translators must restrict themselves to what is pertinent.

(in Incalcaterra McLoughlin, Biscio, & Ní Mhainnín 2011, p. 11)

The technical limitations he mentions pertain primarily to time and space restrictions that limit the number of characters available per line. These limits seek to ensure that viewers are able to read the subtitles at the same time as the words are uttered by the characters on screen. Viewers also need to be able to understand the subtitles quickly, before they disappear and the next lines appear, since it is not possible to linger over long or complex sentences to decipher their meaning<sup>94</sup>. Carlo Eugeni develops this argument when he discusses the importance of coherence and cohesion in translation. He states that, when subtitling, the translator needs to ensure that what they write “is immediately understandable in the context of what comes before” (in Incalcaterra McLoughlin, Biscio, & Ní Mhainnín 2011, p. 270).

The constraints involved in writing subtitles relate therefore both to length and to complexity: the subtitler’s priority lies in producing short, simple lines. Previous chapters of this thesis, especially Chapter 2, have addressed the changes that slang undergoes when transferred from a spoken to written format, and the importance of clarity in subtitles adds another layer to these changes to slang brought about by the medium used. As such, we would expect markers of orality in particular to be absent from the written lines displayed onscreen, and, in the case of slang, it seems likely that the subtitler would be inclined to remove any cryptic or coded aspects of language that may hinder immediate understanding. To return to the discussion of standardisation when it is applied to film translation, the translator may reason that extralinguistic aspects of the film such as body language, voice, clothing, and physical

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<sup>94</sup> Although it may be argued that in the case of subtitles written for a DVD, viewers are able to rewind and reread passages they have trouble understanding, such an action clearly disrupts the flow of the film which means that subtitlers would no doubt want to avoid any risk of obscurity.

surroundings act as a means of communicating the tone of the slang used by the characters while hinting at ideas of dissidence and identity.

This line of reasoning seems to have been applied to the subtitling of *Entre les murs*, which favours unadorned, stripped-back language that reflects an approach to rendering the students' speech that combines several strategies, notably standardisation, broad equivalence, and borrowing. In the examples below, I will analyse the effects of the various techniques adopted as part of this approach. The first example is taken from a scene where a student named Arthur stands before his classmates and teacher at the front of the classroom to defend his decision to conform to gothic dress codes:

<i>Je voulais défendre mon look.</i>	I want to defend my look.
<i>Parce qu'il y a beaucoup de gens qui disent que mon look est pourri.</i>	A lot of people say <b>it sucks</b> .
<i>Moi je dis rien sur vos habits.</i>	I don't <b>dis</b> your clothes.
<i>Donc vous avez rien à dire sur les miens.</i>	So you don't <b>dis</b> mine.

When reading the original French, we see that the voice of the young character is conveyed primarily through syntactical choices, especially in word order and in the use of sentences that begin with conjunctions. As we would expect, the written English version of his speech is more concise than the original French to correspond with the subtitling constraints outlined above. The sentences are shortened with conjunctions (*parce que*) and discourse markers (*moi*) removed, pronouns used to replace nouns where possible (*mon look* = it), and a general preference for brevity. These space-related issues may have influenced the translator's decision to use the contracted form of the verb disrespect, "dis". The *OED* classifies the word as slang and states that it is of US origin, especially in African-American usage, but the examples provided from sources on both sides of the Atlantic suggest that its usage is now more widespread. This would indicate that the translator has opted for a relatively universal form of youth slang here. The same can be said of the use of "it sucks" to translate "*mon look est pourri*", since this expression is commonly pronounced by young speakers of English around the globe.

In the second example I have chosen to study, the female student Esmerelda is telling her classmate Souleymane about the way that their

teacher, Mr Marin, talked about him at a staff meeting she had attended the previous evening.

*Eh Souleymane hier il t'a trop insulté !* He really laid into you!

Again in this example, syntax and grammar are more significant than lexis in the construction of the character's voice in French, and the English subtitle favours brevity by removing contextual information already communicated in the scene (the fact that the event being related occurred yesterday) or visible through body language (the fact that she is addressing Souleymane), as well as discourse markers (*eh*). In this instance, the subtitle uses non-specific colloquial lexis (to lay into) rather than youth slang, no doubt relying on the force of Esmerelda's tone to convey her emphatic insistence on what she believes to be the injustice of a situation in which a teacher speaks poorly of his student. Her body language may also be seen as a means of communicating the identity function of slang which establishes an opposition between marginalised youth and authority figures.

The third example below is taken from another scene that depicts a clash between Mr Marin and a female student, Koumba, who is refusing to read aloud from a novel in front of her classmates. She accuses Mr Marin of singling her out unfairly:

*C'est de la vengeance ce que vous faites* You just want revenge. You're **riffed**  
*là, vous avez envie de vous venger, vous* with me.  
*avez le **seum** contre moi.*

Koumba's expression here is characterised by a sense of stream of consciousness and a lack of precise structure, a device also employed in the novel to differentiate the students' speech from that of the teachers. Her long sentence contains three clauses separated by commas but no conjunctions or other link words, and her use of the adverb "*là*" and the slang expression "*avoir le seum*", derived from the Arabic term *sèmm* (venom), place her speech firmly within the realm of banlieue youth speech. The accumulation in the character's outburst of anger reflects her pent-up frustration since each subsequent clause is an amplified version of the same general idea expressed in the first: the target of the teacher's supposed attempt to enact revenge is eventually revealed to be Koumba. The run-on effect of her outburst is not conveyed in English,

where the two short sentences conversely communicate a sense of curt abruptness. The English viewer is thus provided with a sense of her anger, but not necessarily of her excess emotion, no doubt deemed sufficiently suggested by the audiovisual aspect of the scene.

In terms of lexis, the choice to use the adjective “riffed” in the second sentence is perhaps inspired by its musical associations, but, by all accounts, it does not seem to be widely used in English. None of the slang or general dictionaries that I consulted contained an entry referring to a possible meaning related to anger. The only related reference I was able to locate is found in the 12<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Collins English Dictionary* which indicates that, when used as a verb, “riff” can mean “to speak amusingly or make amusing comments or remarks”. Its inclusion as an adjective in these subtitles is therefore somewhat of a mystery. It is unclear if the word is or was used by a specific subgroup somewhere in the US and used in the subtitles as a form of equivalence, or if it was adapted and adopted in the translation as part of a strategy of invention. In any case, the context of its use in the film seems to make its general meaning adequately clear, and the fact that it is used once on screen and disappears quickly means that it is unlikely to jar viewers.

The next example is a continuation of the exchange between Koumba and her teacher from the previous example (the first and third lines of speech are spoken by Koumba, and the second and fourth by Mr Marin):

*Depuis que vous êtes là, là, vous êtes* You're **all angrulo** with me! What is  
**vénère là, vous vous excitez sur moi,** this?  
*là, c'est quoi ça ?*

*Mais pas du tout, absolument pas. Et* That's not true. Try saying it in French.  
*puis commence par parler français. Je* What am I?  
*suis quoi ? J'suis...?*

**Vénère.**

**Angrulo.**

*Oui, dis-le-moi en français courant si tu* Say it in everyday French.  
*veux bien.*

The English subtitles again favour brevity and simplicity, and largely erase the run-on nature of the students' first sentence. Notably, the repetition of “là” three times in the French, serving in part to relate the flustered nature of her frustration, is not replicated in the subtitles. The verlan “*vénère*” is translated

as “angrulo”, an adjective which does not appear in any general dictionary but which, according to some slang dictionaries, seems to be an American slang word for anger. In the same scene in the novel, analysed in the previous section of this subchapter, “*vénière*” is translated as the more common “pissed off”. While the book translation found inspiration in the use of vulgarity to translate the *verlan* word, the subtitles rely on the use of a specific slang, coupled with the addition of the adverb “all” for emphasis.

The fifth and final example I have chosen to study contains an interesting example of wordplay. A student is referring to his classmate of Moroccan descent with whom he has just had an argument:

*Je le calcule pas ce Marocchien.*                      Morocco **jerk's** not even **on my radar**.

The change to the ending of “*Morocain*”, with “*cain*” replaced by “*chien*” (dog), acts as a form of humour and a reflection of the playful nature of the students’ slang. The wordplay is not reproduced in English, but the absence of a definite article at the beginning of the sentence and use of contraction (“jerk’s”) convey an idea of the informality of the remark. The choice of a general insult (“jerk”) and geographically unmarked informal phrase (“on my radar”) might again be seen as an effort to use, in this specific sentence, a form of global youth slang.

To close this discussion, I would like to reiterate the importance of the context of speech in *Entre les murs*. In both the book and the film adaptation, the situations in which the students speak allow the features of banlieue slang to remain comprehensible and accessible. In this way, we might see the dialogue as an accentuated version of urban youth language which bears a broad resemblance to the specific variety used by marginalised youth when speaking among themselves. *Entre les murs* can be compared with Abdellatif Kechiche’s 2003 film *l’Esquive* in terms of the classroom situations and the meditation that it provides on language type and use. *L’Esquive* follows a group of teenagers preparing to perform Marivaux’s play *Le Jeu de l’amour et du hasard*, used as a point of comparison for the students’ language. Kechiche’s film shows the students speaking among themselves and therefore displays a more coarse version of the language of youth in the banlieue, in a similar way to *La Haine*, the next and final text I will study in this chapter.

## 7.4 *La Haine*

In the decade prior to the release of *Kiffe kiffe demain* and *Entre les murs*, Mathieu Kassovitz' 1995 film *La Haine* (*Hate*) painted a bleak picture of the banlieue. It follows, in black and white, the life of a multiethnic trio of young men, Hubert, Vinz, and Saïd, over a nineteen-hour period the day after a riot. The 95 minutes of the film bring to the fore the ways in which many young people in the banlieue become caught up in drugs, violence and petty crime, and expose the deep rifts that characterise the relationship between youth and police in the banlieue. In one memorable scene, a hip-hop track mixed by DJ Cut Killer rings out over the housing state from the speaker wedged in a young man's high-rise window. The track features samples of songs by Notorious BIG, NTM, Assassin, KRS One, and Edith Piaf, and the force of the repetition of the line "*nique la police*" ("fuck the police") reinforces the anger felt by these young people towards the police, insinuated in the film's title.

Each of the three main characters is played by an actor who shares the same name, and their diversity is suggestive of the multi-faceted range of people living in the banlieue: Hubert is of Beninese origin and Christian, Saïd is of North-African origin and Muslim, and Vinz is white and Jewish. Aside from the scenes that take place at night time in Paris, *La Haine* was filmed in a housing estate in Chanteloup-les-Vignes, 25km north-west of Paris. Many of the town's residents featured in the film as extras or were hired to form part of the film's crew. The fast-paced and relatively unfiltered dialogue of the film provides a less polished version of banlieue slang than the other two texts, containing more unmediated speech between peers, which made understanding everything said by the film's young characters a challenging exercise for some viewers. In a similar way to the techniques used in *Entre les murs*, these choices relating to the casting, filming, and acting of the film contribute to attributing a certain impression of authenticity to a fictional story.

## Reception of *La Haine* at Home and Abroad

By all accounts, *La Haine* was an immense success both in the critical and public spheres. Following its première at Cannes in 1995, where Kassovitz was awarded the prize for Best Director, it recorded over two million entries in French cinemas and featured in the top 20 films at the country's box office in 1995 (Vincendeau 2005, p. xiv). It also garnered three Césars (and eleven nominations), including for best film, in 1996. Both in France and in the Anglosphere, *La Haine* was hailed by the press as an accurate and striking portrait of the *banlieue*, and met with quasi-unanimous critical acclaim. Ginette Vincendeau identifies slight differences in the type of reception with which the film was met in the two spheres, stating that the attention was directed towards aesthetics in French reviews and towards sociocultural issues in reviews written in English (ibid, p. 92). The relatively limited negative reactions in France focussed on minor stylistic details, or else on the credibility of Kassovitz' position as a middle-class white filmmaker investigating the banlieue (ibid, p. xiv). Among residents of the banlieue, reception was mixed, with some young people proud to see their neighbourhood and life portrayed on screen and others pointing out that the violence depicted is an attenuated version of the reality of these high-rise estates<sup>95</sup>.

During the question and answer session with Kassovitz following the screening of the film, a young man from Saint Denis commented on the media hype that praised the film's realism: "Where do these journalists live to be able to say that *La Haine* is reality?"<sup>96</sup> (*Libération*, online). His objections can be related to the important question of the difficulty that audiences face in assessing the accuracy of what is unknown to them. Despite the fact that *La Haine* is presented as a work of fiction, the techniques used in its filming contribute to conjuring up an illusion of reality, and the conversation surrounding its release suggests that the film holds up a mirror to the civil

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<sup>95</sup> One viewer in particular, quoted in an article written for *Libération*, stated that the film was "ten years too late" since young children are not shocked by guns, with some selling drugs: "*La Haine a dix ans de retard. Les mêmes, dans les cités, ils ne sont plus éblouis par les flingues. Tu sais, y a des petits de 9-10 ans qui vendent de la drogue, alors...*" (in Celmar & Dufrense 1995).

<sup>96</sup> "*J'ai vu beaucoup de caricature dans ton film. On dirait Seconde B sur grand écran. Mais c'est surtout le battage autour du film qui m'énerve : ils habitent où, les journalistes, pour savoir si c'est réaliste la Haine ?*"

unrest rife in the margins of French society. In this way, it is difficult to dissociate the fiction from the reality by which it is inspired. These challenges involved in ascertaining the authenticity of the film are arguably intensified for viewers abroad who have even less exposure to the areas and issues shown on screen. Additionally, the frequent associations made by the media between the banlieue and violence outlined in Chapter 6 mean that the simple act of presenting them to audiences in a naturalistic manner necessarily invites assumptions of reality. Since this media coverage that stigmatises the banlieue often renders it an object of interest and a source of curiosity for outsiders, the opportunity to gain an insight into what goes on there, presented from the perspective of its residents acting out the film's story, may appeal to people otherwise unable to speak directly with the real-life counterparts of the characters on screen or witness first-hand the events depicted.

Furthermore, the fact that audiences are afforded this exploration of the banlieue offered by *La Haine* from the comfortable and protected position of an armchair may invite further scepticism on the part of people living in the type of environment shown on screen. Indeed, viewing the film in this manner could be seen as a form of voyeurism, ironically akin to the remark Hubert makes in the film when journalists visit his *cit * in the aftermath of the riots. He shouts out to them in frustration, asking them why they won't get out of their car, and telling them that the banlieue is not a safari park<sup>97</sup>. Visibly, such a foray into the foreign that almost wraps the audience of virtual explorers in cotton wool can provoke indignant reactions from residents of the banlieue who might feel that interest is only taken in their lives when there is an event deemed worthy of (largely negative) media coverage, or when a work of art offers non-residents an aestheticised overview of the reality these banlieue residents face on a daily basis.

It is difficult not to see the validity of such reactions, especially when the techniques employed in texts like *La Haine* (and *Entre les murs*) contribute to carrying some viewers towards a false sense of authority that entitles them to comment on issues of a complexity they may be ill-equipped to grasp. The

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<sup>97</sup> "Pourquoi vous descendez pas de la voiture ? On est pas   Thoiry ici !" "Why don't you get out of the car ? This isn't Thoiry!" (Le Zoo Safari de Thoiry is a wildlife park in the Yvelines department, around 40km west of Paris)

frustration may be further compounded when the interest sparked is fleeting and does not result in any prolonged attention to or recognition of the variability of what life is like on a day-to-day basis in the banlieue, in all its joy and hardship, or when any solutions offered to the issues raised are either uninformed or un-implemented. Not all people living in the banlieue reacted in this way, however, and some saw the film as realistic and/or as a way of validating the banlieue since it is considered to be worthy of playing host to the setting of an acclaimed work of art. This division in the opinions held about the film's value and accuracy acts as yet another reminder that reactions to art are largely unpredictable and supremely personal.

### **Subtitling *La Haine***

There are two versions of the subtitles for *La Haine* available in English: those written for the film's initial release in cinemas, by Alexander Whitelaw and Stephen O'Shea, and those written for the tenth anniversary DVD release in 2005. The two versions of the subtitles adopt a contrasting approach to rendering the slang and the culture-specific references of the dialogue, each following a combination of strategies to grant foreign viewers access to the film. When studying the different examples I have chosen to analyse below, it will be useful to keep in mind the various trends in subtitling outlined in my discussion of the subtitles of *Entre les murs*. Although I have chosen to focus primarily on the application of techniques that form part of strategies to translate slang which are not directly influenced by the constraints involved in audiovisual translation, it should be recognised that the reliance on brevity and simplicity in particular in some subtitles can be explained by these technical limitations.

In the first version of the subtitles, the potentially obscure cultural references are replaced with references familiar to an Anglophone, and specifically American, audience. The code names Astérix and Obélix, for example, become Snoopy and Charlie Brown; *les Schtroumpfs*, known in the Anglosphere as The Smurfs, become Donald Duck; the brand of beer "*Kro*" (short for Kronenbourg) is translated as "Bud" (Budweiser, an American brand); the store name Darty is translated Walmart; the *merguez* sausages

being sold on the roof of one building are called (hot)dogs; the currency francs is translated as “bucks”; and *la capitale*, used to refer to Paris, is translated as “uptown”. This replacement of French references by American “equivalents” is further extended in the subtitles to the name of a victim of police violence. When the young man Malik Oussekine, killed by two police officers in Paris in 1986, is mentioned in the dialogue, he becomes Rodney King in the subtitles. The decision to use King’s name not only removes the specificity of the incident in a French setting, it also changes the result; although King was also assaulted by police officers in the context of riots, the abuse did not result in his death.

In the more recent version of the subtitles, all of these references were restored, carried across in French, or with a direct translation into English (e.g. The Smurfs, and Paris for *la capitale*). We might praise the writers of these translators for bringing the film’s subtitles closer to the original French references, but it must be acknowledged that the initial subtitles bring the text closer to familiar ground for American audiences, enabling rapid comprehension of the dense and fast-moving dialogue. Viewers of a foreign film are automatically placed in a position of disadvantage, unable to engage completely with the audiovisual aspects of the film since they face the necessity of reading the subtitles. To lessen the burden, it seems logical that the subtitlers would seek to provide a translation in English that allows viewers to spend less time concentrating on understanding what they are reading and more time focusing on the sounds and images of the film.

The same logic might be applied to an approach to translating the slang of films by relying on an approach of equivalence or standardisation instead of using language that requires attentive reading in order to be understood. Following this reasoning, both versions of the subtitles can be seen to conform to these strategies, in spite of their differences. The following examples illustrate the features of youth banlieue French used in the dialogue of the original film, as well as of the two versions of the subtitles in English:

	French	Version 1	Version 2
(1)	<i>Alors pourquoi tu t'es cassé le cul pour l'obtenir ? / Parce qu'il pensait que ça valait la</i>	So why'd you bust ass to get it? / 'Cause he wanted to, dickface! / You're the dick.	Why did you break your back for it? / Because he thought it

	<i>peine, trou de bite ! / C'est toi la bite.</i>		was worth it, dickhead. / Dickhead yourself.
(2)	<i>Passer 48 heures au poste à se manger des grosses tartes dans ta gueule et rentrer à la maison pour que mes parents m'égorgent, je te dis franchement, mais franchement, je vois pas le chiffre cousin.</i>	Tear gas, 2 nights in a cop shop, all the fists you can eat, getting hell at home, sorry cousin, but I ain't buyin'!	Tear gas, two days being beaten up at the police station then back to face the music at home. I don't see the point.
(3)	<i>Je vais pas me faire taper dessus pour une caillera que je connais pas</i>	I won't take hits for a homeboy gangsta I don't know.	Why get hit for a wanker you don't know?
(4)	<i>Fais pas chier, Saïd. Qu'est-ce que tu veux là ?</i>	Chill, Sayid. What's up?	What do you want?
(5)	<i>Est-ce que ça t'arracherait les poils du cul de dire bonjour ?</i>	What? Whadda ya mean "what"? Can't fuckin' say hello?	What? Can't you say hello?
(6)	<i>J'ai un truc à vous montrer avant.</i>	I gotta show you something...	I've something to show you first.
(7)	<i>Mais vas-y arrache-toi t'es encore là.</i>	You still there? Beat it!	Piss off.

These seven examples in French provide a clear, transcribed version of the film's spoken dialogue which is often further punctuated by the presence of markers of orality or muffled speech. When compared with the language used in *Kiffe kiffe demain* and *Entre les murs*, the dialogue of *La Haine* comes closer to the speech of the actual young people being depicted. Although many of the same common characteristics are visible, notably in the use of relaxed or dislocated syntactic structures, adverbs for emphasis, and contractions, their speech has undergone less filtering than that of Doria's written internal monologue or the exchanges among the students (and teachers) of *Entre les*

*murs*. This has resulted in an accentuated form of the features we can observe in written texts, as well as an increased presence of *verlan* and of vulgarity, meaning that the speech appears more natural and spontaneous, even in the transcribed version above.

In terms of the strategies adopted in the subtitles, it is immediately apparent that the more recent version offers viewers a more standardised translation of the slang of the banlieue French than the initial version. Following this strategy, the syntax of the second subtitles tends to remain closer to that of the original French, and the sentences are structured in a more complete and formal manner. Despite the fact that most of the sentences are longer in the second version, the words added contribute to creating more coherent sentences and the fillers and markers of orality heard on screen, such as the *vas-y*, *mais* and *là*, of Example 7 are almost always omitted. This is also the case for the first version of the subtitles, no doubt to comply with space constraints, but omission is more common in the second version, which also tends to prioritise brevity so that the viewer needs to spend less time reading. The first version of the subtitles also makes use of more contractions than the updated version (e.g. *whaddaya*, *motherfucka*, *gimme*, *gotta*, *lemme*, *dammit*, *Goddam*, *c'mon*, *shoulda*, *dunno*). Although these also save space, the translators of the second version may have considered these to be too suggestive of accent, with many of the forms commonly associated with American English slang.

The decision to produce more complete sentences reflective of written language in the second version of the subtitles adds to the overall raising of the register, also reflected in the decreased presence of slang and vulgarity. In general, the first version of the subtitles relies heavily on lexical features of African-American Vernacular English, with words such as “gangsta” and “homeboy” (as in Example 3) peppered throughout. The updated version of the subtitles generally replaces the American slang of the original with more colloquial words or expressions, as in Example 2 where “all the fists you can eat” and “getting hell at home” become “beaten up” and “face the music at home”, and in Example 1 where “bust your ass” becomes “break your back”, choices which also soften the vulgarity of the film’s dialogue. When lexical

words are included, however, they are chiefly British slang, visible in the two occurrences of the word “wanker” in these examples.

While the application of this strategy of equivalence might garner praise in situations where it allows readers to draw parallels between a situation unfamiliar to them and one which they already understand, meaning that they are able to engage more confidently with the text, it may also attract criticism when the words chosen contribute to suggesting a setting that is completely detached from the original. This risk of compromising credibility through the use of an equivalent slang is particularly true of cinema, since the on-screen images and the foreign-language dialogue act as a constant visual and acoustic reminder of the foreign setting, clashing with the familiar language in the subtitles. The stakes are also higher when the use of equivalent slang is coupled with the use of equivalence for culture-specific references, which is the case for the initial subtitles of *La Haine*.

### **Concluding Remarks on Translating the Banlieue**

It is reasonable to suggest that the style in French of each of the banlieue texts studied in the chapter has been instrumental in increasing their appeal to audiences. Each makes the voice and the story of banlieue youth largely accessible to uninitiated audiences, increasing penetrability through the use of slang forms that are not particularly opaque and/or mostly understandable through buffering context: implicitly or explicitly in written texts through in-text explanations and in film texts through audiovisual aspects. When translated into English, many of the linguistic features exploited seem to reflect the approach to rendering the banlieue slang in the French texts, albeit through slightly different means and to varying extents. The mixed methods adopted combine aspects of all of the strategies mentioned in my typology:

- we see varying levels of equivalence in all three texts, with a kind of national urban slang in the case of *Kiffe kiffe demain* and occasionally in *Entre les murs*, or more restricted slang for *La Haine*;
- there is standardisation in the British version of *La Haine* especially and in the simplification of some slang in the subtitles of *Entre les murs*, due partly to technical constraints;

- borrowing is used throughout the translation of the novel *Entre les murs* and in isolated instances in *Kiffe kiffe demain*;
- some of the linguistic creations visible in the translation and subtitles of *Entre les murs* may be equated with aspects of invention since they do not seem to have precedents in other texts using slang in English, original or translated;
- and, finally, elements of a non-specific colloquial style can logically be seen in each.

All three texts offer audiences in France and abroad what we might see as diverging degrees of a sanitised version of the slang used in the banlieue, as well as of the violence and unrest in the areas. As such, there is little in the way of content that seeks to shock, perturb, or unsettle readers or viewers, and they all provide a version of the voice of banlieue youth in an intelligible format thanks either to the use of relatively recognisable and accessible linguistic features or to the context that surrounds them. They therefore enable French speakers living outside of or unfamiliar with the banlieue to glean an insight into the life of its marginalised young residents. The translations into English mirror this general approach that seeks to share a somewhat simplified version of banlieue slang with foreign audiences, and the range of options adopted pays testament to the complexity of the question of how to go about this task. Visibly, there is not one ideal strategy, but a vast palette of possibilities that appeal applicable and appropriate in different ways to different translators for different texts in different contexts of translation. In the final two chapters of this thesis, I will explore and explain the various factors that contributed to the way in which I chose to translate *Moi non*.

## Chapter 8: Approaching the Translation of *Moi Non*

In this chapter, I will provide a more extensive overview of *Moi non* than that which is included in the introduction. As well as referring to the style and story of the novel, I will also look briefly at its reception in France and at Patrick Goujon's background. I will then explain the reasons for which I chose to translate this text as part of a PhD thesis, and how the context of translation affected the strategy I developed and adopted. Before I describe the strategy that I did adopt, I will clarify why I did not choose one of the five approaches from my typology.

### 8.1 *Moi Non*: Style and Story

Published by Gallimard in 2003, *Moi non* relates the story of two young men, Hoch and Flex, and of their entourage. The entire novel is narrated in the first-person, from the perspective of Hoch, Flex, or an external character who presents a short chapter in between each of the chapters narrated by Hoch or Flex. It is divided into two sections, each containing thirteen chapters. The first half, entitled "*Une Marguerite, un peu pliée*" ("A Daisy, Kind of Creased"), focuses on Hoch, and the second half, "*Complexe du sale gosse*" ("Brat Complex"), on Flex, who each narrate the odd-numbered chapters. The even-numbered chapters are mainly short monologues proposed by characters to whom Hoch and Flex refer directly or indirectly in their chapters, with the exception of one chapter (Chapter 10 in the first half) which is a poem written by Hoch. Each half is prefaced by rap songs: "*L'Enfant seul*" ("The Lone Child") by Oxmo Puccino for the first half, and "*Nuage sans fin*"/"*Aujourd'hui*" ("Endless Cloud"/"Today") by Fabe, and "N.Y. State of Mind" by Nas for the second half.

The story takes place somewhere in the banlieue, but the reader is not provided with any specific details about the exact location. In fact, *Moi non* contains no direct reference to time or place, nor to the characters' race or background. There are no street names, no mentions of ethnicity or religion, and no references to politics or current events. Paris is never mentioned by name, but referred to as "*la Ville d'à côté*" ("The City Next Door"). Similarly, the Eiffel Tower is simply called "*la grande tour qu'ils ont là-bas*" ("the big tower they have over there"). In this way, Goujon sets the novel in a would-be no man's land, which voluntarily or involuntarily draws attention to the invisibility of the banlieue of Paris in the French social landscape more broadly. The role of language is therefore fundamental to communicate subtly a sense of time and place, since, rather than through content, it is through language that the setting of the banlieue in the early 2000s is evoked. As I will explain in subsequent sections, this language is a fictional version of banlieue youth French which is also highly influenced by the features of rap music.

Despite being published by one of the most prominent publishers in France, *Moi non* did not receive considerable critical attention in France nor encounter great commercial success. It sold approximately 4000 copies, but is nonetheless Goujon's most successful work (he has written three other novels, all published by Gallimard, as well as a number of screen- and theatre plays). In light of this lack of success, it is interesting to compare Goujon's profile with that of many of the banlieue writers whose work is discussed in previous chapters. Born in 1978, Goujon grew up and has spent most of his life in the banlieue where he has also worked as an *éducateur*, or a sort of mentor for troubled youth, and as a facilitator of creative writing workshops. He is what one might call a *Français de souche*, meaning that he does not have recent non-French ancestors; unlike authors such as Faïza Guène or Azouz Begag, he is not a "*beur*" writer<sup>98</sup>. Arguably, however, his experience working with young people in a similar situation to that of his characters equipped him with the tools necessary to produce a credible version of their thoughts and speech in his novel.

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<sup>98</sup> I will return to this question in the conclusion, since other texts in my corpus are not produced by "*beur*" authors but feature the voice of banlieue youth in dialogue.

It might be said that the fact that Goujon directly assumes the voice of the marginalised youth who narrate his novel by having them speak in the first person contributed on some level to his decision to avoid explicit references to their background. In this way, he avoids the thorny question of potentially appropriating the voice of the Other. It may also be his intimate knowledge of the struggles of banlieue youth that drove him to transcribe stories that are not his own, but to which he is constantly exposed, in a language he does not necessarily practise himself. He could in fact be seen as a documenter, a writer wielding his own talent to weave together the words of young people who may lack the skills and contacts to produce a version of their own story that would be appealing to a publisher such as Gallimard, as well as to their readership. As a person who straddles two different spheres, that of his characters and that of his readers, Goujon was able to exploit his understanding of the codes of both in such a way that he could produce a story representative of one and able to be shared with the other<sup>99</sup>.

Goujon's background and the absence of "real-world" anchorage in his novel did not prevent the editing team at Gallimard from placing the term "*récit*" on the front of the novel. The choice of this classifying term has the effect of presenting the book as a true story, or at least an accentuated form of social realism. This choice seems indicative of the editors' perception of readers' desire to be offered an accurate representation of a world to which they may not ordinarily have access, and is also extended to the back cover of the book. The blurb contains an extract from the first chapter in inverted commas followed by a brief overview of the novel's main themes:

« *T'aurais vu la tête de ma mère quand j'lui ai annoncé ! Elle m'a même pas cru, elle a balayé mes phrases avec la main comme si elle essuyait la table avec le torchon, De toute façon c'est tous les jours. Je lui ai dit J'te jure, c'est pour de bon, m'man, je vais trouver un boulot et me fixer.*

"You should've seen my mother's face when I told her! She didn't even believe me, just brushed everything I said aside with her hand like she was wiping down the table with a cloth. *It's the same story every day anyway.* I said *I swear, mum, this is for good, I'm going to find a job and settle down.*

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<sup>99</sup> Interestingly, the tension between these two worlds is occasionally present in the language employed in the novel. Although written using the slang of banlieue youth, there is the occasional presence of quite formal language within passages otherwise written in slang, which may strike the reader as out of keeping with the remainder of the text.

Tu es sérieux ?

*Are you serious?*

*Elle me croit toujours pas, j'ai dû lui faire frôler l'overdose de bile au moins un million de fois.*

She still doesn't believe me – I must've come too close to pushing her over the edge at least a million times.

J'te l'dis, maman, j'arrête.

*I'm telling you, mum, all that's over.*

*Dès demain, je cherche du boulot. J'vais bosser dur et quand je serai cadre tu pourras m'accrocher dans le salon. »*

I'll start looking for a job tomorrow. I'll work so hard that one day I'll be a suit and you'll get to hang me in your cupboard."

*Hoch et Flex ont grandi ensemble dans la même Cité. L'un veut s'éloigner, l'autre non. Le récit de leurs parcours parallèles décrit avec une poésie paradoxale un univers brutal et fruste.*

Hoch and Flex grew up in the same estate. One of them wants to get away, the other doesn't. With paradoxical poetry, the account of the different paths each takes describes a rough and violent world.

The choice of this passage, in which Hoch tells his mother that he is going to change his habits, “find a job and settle down”, is consistent with the tension between two different paths that is highlighted by the comment following it. Although this short excerpt does not mention Paris or the banlieue by name, it uses the word “*cité*” which is commonly associated with the banlieue, implicitly drawing attention to the setting within a disadvantaged urban area of France. The use of the word “*récit*” again serves to imply that the account provided is reflective of a certain reality.

The tone of Hoch's chapters is tinged by the distance that settles in between him and his unemployed friends when he starts working in a mannequin factory named *Tanplain* (which I translated as *Diorestore*)<sup>100</sup>. The extract below, from the beginning of Chapter 3, reveals how he feels detached from his friends when he starts to “conform” (or to “get away”, “*s'éloigner*”, in the words of Gallimard's marketing department). It also describes the day-to-day life of the young people whose company he keeps, or used to keep, whose activities and mentality might be seen as representative of many young people in the banlieue:

*J'avais dit à Flex que je passerais au centre et je suis pas passé. La vérité*

I'd told Flex I'd go to the shopping centre and I didn't. The truth is I'm

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<sup>100</sup> See Appendix 4 for an explanation of my translation.

*c'est que je flippe de ce que les autres vont dire. Tu sais, on fout rien de nos journées quand on n'a pas de boulot. On est dans les parages, au centre commercial, à la gare, dans les halls, sur les bancs près des terrains, et la vie suit son cours à sa façon. On a l'impression tenace que rien se passe, qu'on gâche les heures et que les jours rabâchent les mêmes démonstrations. On se raconte nos petites histoires, enfin je t'ai déjà dit, les taffes soporifiques et les tafs en sous-marin, les coups de vices à la scred'. Bref, on le sait qu'on piétine, mais si tu t'absentes ne serait-ce qu'un jour, t'as l'impression de tout rater, et c'est vrai que t'as intérêt à revenir vite sinon tu calcules plus rien. Ouais, ça fait un peu comme les feuilletons à la télé. Les mêmes personnages qui jactent, les mêmes embrouilles sans réel intérêt, les mêmes décors bon marché d'un épisode sur l'autre mais l'impression bizarre de plus rien suivre quand t'en rates un.*  
(p. 21)

freaking out about what the others'll say. You see, when you don't have a job you do nothing all day. You hang around, at the centre, the train station, in lobbies, on benches near sports fields, and life follows its own course. Same shit, different day: you're well aware. You get the nasty feeling that you're headed nowhere. We trade stories, like I said, trading under the table – smoking and joking, puffing to relax – wheeling and dealing, covering our tracks. Anyway, you know you're treading water, but if you leave, even just for a day, you feel like you've missed everything, and you'd better get back there ASAP or otherwise you're completely out of the loop. It's kind of like watching soap operas on TV: the same characters, the same pointless dramas, the same cheap set episode after episode, but the strange sense you're not up-to-date when you miss one.

These feelings of estrangement are intensified when Hoch starts dating a colleague who visibly belongs to a different social class. The distance between the young people in Goujon's novel and "outsiders" is a prominent point of reference throughout the story and addressed specifically when Hoch meets his new girlfriend's parents in Chapter 11 (Part 1), when he goes out to a nightclub with her and her male friends in Chapter 9 (Part 1), and in the chapter of Part 2 entitled "*Ceux qui ne nous aiment pas*" (Chapter 4, translated as "The People Who Don't Like Us"). This brief chapter in particular assumes the voice of a person who disapproves of many young people living in the banlieue, reckoning that all of them are "a danger to society". The passage is written in colloquial French and in inverted commas which presents the opinion in such a way that the reader might interpret it as representative of the kind of impassioned speech commonly made by people frustrated by the attitude and behaviour of marginalised banlieue youth:

« Ah, ça se dégrade, je vous jure. Et personne qui dit rien, mais moi je sais moi, je les vois bien les parasites. C'est de la vermine tout ça. Ça, pour rien foutre de la journée, c'est champion, ça emmerde le monde, ça pète tout, ça ils sont contents, c'est tout ce qu'ils savent faire, ils ont ça dans le sang de toute manière, on peut rien en tirer. Des bons à rien, un danger, on devrait les foutre dans un bateau et torpiller tout ça. Ouais ouais, je m'comprends. Je vous coulerais tout ça moi. Je vous les zigouillerais, ces rebuts de la société, ils seront plus là à zoner. On peut dire que j'exagère mais je dis juste tout haut ce que beaucoup pensent tout bas. Y a un moment, c'est vrai quoi, on peut plus rien faire non plus. Et puis merde, c'est avec notre fric qu'on les entretient. Qu'on les renvoie à leur place et leurs parents avec. »

(p. 107)

“Ah, things are deteriorating, I swear. And nobody’s saying anything, but I know – I do, I can see it, all the freeloaders. They’re parasites, vermin. They’re real champions at doing fuck all all day, pissing people off, breaking everything – they’re happy that way, it’s all they know how to do – it’s in their blood in any case, you can’t get anything else from them. They’re good-for-nothings, a danger to society. We should chuck them in a boat and torpedo the lot. Yeah, yeah, I know what I’m saying. I’d drown the lot of them, I would. Do them all in, all of them – dregs of society – then they wouldn’t be hanging around doing nothing anymore. You might say I’m exaggerating but I’m just saying out loud what heaps of people are thinking to themselves. There comes a time when – well it’s true, really – when we can’t keep doing nothing either. And, well, shit, it’s our money paying their bills. They should be sent back to where they belong – and their parents along with them.”

Many of the aspects of hip-hop and urban youth culture cited by the scholars in previous chapters are prominent in *Moi non*, notably rap and graffiti, unemployment and illicit work, consumerism and clothing, and recreational drug use. These subjects and elements are described by Hoch and Flex in a relaxed style and the two characters address readers directly, as if speaking to them aloud. A fictionalised version of the slang spoken by banlieue youth is used throughout the entire novel and the slightly accentuated, even more casual form of slang in the dialogue is distinguished from the narration through the use of italics. The style is heavily influenced by the techniques used in rap music, apparent in the remarkably playful manipulation of language throughout the novel. Goujon brings to life the words on the page by playing with both sound and meaning so that the narration is coloured by lyrical reflections that underscore the most striking attributes of banlieue slang and rap.

In the two short passages already provided in French from Hoch's section of the novel, we note many of the features of youth slang highlighted in previous chapters: dislocated structures, absence of "ne" in negative structures, *verlan* or informal and often vulgar lexis typical of banlieue slang, contractions, hyperbole, discourse markers, and intensifiers, among others. These two passages also feature examples of the type of wordplay common in the novel ("quand je serai cadre tu pourras m'accrocher dans le salon", "les taffes soporifiques et les tafs en sous-marin") and are marked by a distinct rhythm which might be likened to the flow of rap songs. This highly marked form of French, coupled with the general references characters make to aspects of urban youth culture, contribute to placing the text implicitly within the banlieue. As a result, Goujon's effort to mask the setting of his novel is ultimately compromised and effectively adopts a more symbolic status. The remainder of this and the following chapter will explore how I endeavoured to share these aspects of Goujon's novel with an English-speaking readership.

## **8.2 Translating *Moi non* for a PhD Thesis**

Before I explain more specifically how I undertook the translation of *Moi non*, I would like to devote this subchapter to a discussion of how the context of translation affected my choice of text and my approach to the task of translating it. Gillian Lathey, cited earlier in the thesis, points out that editorial pressure is inevitable when it comes to the translation of texts containing slang. She believes that this is especially true for translators working on texts written for children who are more likely to be asked to censor and standardise spoken language (2016, p. 75). Although her assertions are directly related to literature intended for children, where editorial involvement might indeed be more consequential, we can extend her thoughts to encompass the broader issue of the limits to a translator's agency when translating texts in professional contexts. It goes (almost) without saying that the translator is but one of many players in the translation process, and s/he, an employee, is faced with the necessity of respecting a brief established and enforced by an employer, whose priorities might lie more firmly in commercial

concerns than in the translator's views on the appropriateness of various choices.

Translating within an academic context, where one is funded not only to undertake a translation but also to write about it, ensures a number of advantages. Real-world considerations of marketability and commercial appeal take a backseat to less conventional approaches when the aim of a study is to provide matter for discussion in the commentary of the translation. In my case, the situation allowed me to choose a text which posed substantial difficulties without being concerned by pressing deadlines. This also meant that, while translating, I was able to dedicate as much time as I deemed necessary to find a satisfactory solution for particularly challenging passages. I was aware that the time I spent mulling over various options would in this case not necessarily be time wasted, better spent on more lucrative activities. On the contrary, I knew that my deliberations would undoubtedly enrich the translation and bolster the discussions I developed in the critical component of my thesis.

Arguably, the necessity of writing a critical commentary might also lead the academic translator to make use of methods which would result in the production of a text that is unmarketable, or, in the words of Clifford Landers, "purely a *succès d'estime*" (2001, p. 52). Although I might have seized this opportunity to test a combination of any number of the five strategies outlined in Chapters 4 and 5, I intended to produce a translated text that corresponded to the original text in a way that allowed it to function in a relatively similar manner. My choices differ from many of those made by the translators and subtitlers of the texts studied in Chapter 7, but they remain consistent with the overall objective of producing an independent text that does not depart in any consequential manner from the style and meaning of the original text, as I will endeavour to demonstrate through the examples presented in Chapter 9. In fact, I hope that this thesis will bring to light what I see as the drawbacks of using the strategies detailed in Chapter 5 to translate the voice of marginalised youth, and that my translation of *Moi non* is evidence that another solution is available and appropriate.

The benefits of having ample time at my disposal to complete the novel translation for this thesis can be seen in my conscious choice of a difficult text

to translate, and also in my decision to select a text based on my own perceptions of quality, rather than on the success encountered by the work in the source culture or its potential to please in the target culture. Although, ideally, I would like to have my translation of *Moi non* published in the Anglosphere, this was not my primary concern. As such, the choice of a novel by a relatively little-known author, that had only sold 4000 copies, albeit by a reputed publisher, was a decision I felt justified in taking. I was drawn to *Moi non*'s playful style and the discreet but distinct story that it tells. However, I was aware that it is not a novel which conforms to the typical image of the banlieue propagated in other more successful works, read or received by significant numbers of people both in France and further afield.

*Moi non* is a toast to the power of language, and does not feature an extravagant or politically-oriented plotline. Without bells and whistles, it tells the story of the ins and outs of the life of a group of marginalised characters, exposing their reflections quietly. It avoids holding up a banner of sorts that might read: "This is what life is like on the outskirts of Paris and these characters represent all young people living here". Works such *Kiffe kiffe demain*, *Entre les murs*, and *La Haine*, on the other hand, encountered considerable success in the English-speaking world. All three works communicate a distinct sense of place and provide clear images of the marginalisation of French youth, through the story they present and through the images they convey, on paper and on screen. They offer a feeling of authenticity, leading the reader or viewer to believe that these works provide them with the key to the locked doors of a society foreign to them, allowing them access to the goings on of a mysterious and exotic landscape.

Outside of contexts such as these, as the scholars cited in Chapter 4 (Holz-Mänttari in particular) remind us, the translator is but one of many players in the translation game. They are not awarded the same flexibility or freedom as a translator operating in an academic context, able to choose (almost) any text they like and adopt whatever strategy they see fit. Their work is subject to the demands of a number of other individuals who generally wish to ensure that the work in translation is a critical and commercial success. Among these players are the editors, whose mysterious interventions unfold behind closed doors, the specifics of which are generally not divulged to the

recipients of the final product. Without the possibility of asking the translators of the texts analysed in Chapter 7 directly, I cannot be sure what exactly guided their choices. Nor do I know how their work was influenced by the players involved in the process. This is true also of their broader audience in the Anglosphere. As a consequence, we are left to make the kind of inferences that I have included by taking into consideration the context of translation and the reception of these works.

### **The Translator's Responsibility**

Readers of a text in translation rely on the translator to bring them the words of the original text and to present them in a linguistic format that they are capable of understanding. Since these audience members do not have linguistic access to the original, they are poorly positioned to determine if the version of the text that is offered to them is an accurate reconstruction of the situation depicted. We might also apply this reasoning, although to a lesser degree, to the relationship established between the readers and characters of an original text featuring the slang of a marginalised group, since most readers lack exposure to the intricacies of this specific slang. However, as we have seen, fictional texts destined for a wide readership tend to contain a toned-down version of the slang in question, allowing readers to understand the story being told and to engage with the language being used to tell it. Furthermore, despite their lack of mastery of the slang in question, the geographical, linguistic, and cultural distance between the readers and characters of the original text, in the vast majority of cases, significantly smaller than that which exists between the readers and characters of the translated text.

In both situations, a range of questions of an ethical nature come into play concerning who has the right to speak on behalf of marginalised individuals by assuming their voice. It could be said that the decision to depict minority groups in fictional texts comes with a certain amount of responsibility. At the very least, we might expect the writer, and the publisher, to be frank about the position from which the work is written and to accept the inevitability of backlash if the fictional voice that the writer crafts for his or her marginalised characters is deemed to be inaccurate, or even offensive, by some,

many, or all of the people it is said to represent. When a text featuring the voice of minority groups is translated into another language, the individuals represented generally do not have access to the linguistic and cultural tools necessary to evaluate the repercussions of the choices made to translate the fictional version of their voice for another audience. As a result, the translator has a certain responsibility to ensure that all efforts are made to ensure that the rendering of the foreign voices is conducted as ethically as possible, despite the inherent subjectivity involved in determining the appropriateness and legitimacy of a translated voice.

These questions were paramount in the construction of my approach to the translation of *Moi non*. Although, as I mentioned, translating this novel within the framework of a PhD thesis afforded me the freedom and flexibility to adopt any number of approaches, my reflections and research drove me to conclude that Global Youth Speak was the most suitable strategy I could use to translate the voice of Hoch, Flex, and their friends. Additionally, I see this thesis as a means of drawing attention to the fundamental challenges of arriving at a decision to implement a specific strategy, and of adhering to that strategy in such a way that the choices made within the text are consistent with the overarching approach. As such, I assume my responsibility as a translator of a text that gives a voice to marginalised youth in a context that is foreign to most of my readers. I am also aware that such a translation may in fact be the only exposure English-speaking readers have had or will have to the voice in question. In this way, the voice that I give to these characters in English may become my readers' sole point of reference when thinking about youth in French banlieues, and, perhaps even more importantly, when discussing the situation with other speakers of English unfamiliar with the French context. In such circumstances, we might see the readers of the translated text as the mouthpieces for authors whose voice or work have already been interpreted as symbolic of a specific reality.

I take full responsibility when it comes to translating the voice of a foreign minority, while also declaring my impartiality when it comes to commenting on my own translation. This thesis requires me to put my practice into perspective and to reflect on the choices I have made, which is by no means a straightforward task. The necessity of doing so, however, has also driven me

to ensure that my comments are, as far as possible, in line with the translation they describe. Furthermore, analysing the translation of parallel texts in depth provided me with the opportunity to consider more comprehensively the implications of a number of strategies. Performing such a task consolidated my choice to employ Global Youth Speak, and the remainder of this chapter will explain how, and why.

### **8.3 My Typology and My Translation**

The typology that I proposed in Chapter 5 is the product of my reading of translated texts, of translation theory, and of interviews with or comments made by translators of texts written in non-standard language. In this subchapter, I will apply this typology to my own translation of *Moi non*, relying on the arguments that I presented of the advantages and drawbacks of each of the five strategies to explain why they were not implemented in my translation. These reflections will ultimately lead to an overview of the alternative strategy that I did adopt, which I will detail with examples in Chapter 9. It is important to reiterate here the difficulty of separating each of these strategies into individual, indivisible categories since certain characteristics and effects of some strategies intersect with and feed into others. Proceeding in this manner, however, provides an appropriate means of ensuring a comprehensive discussion.

#### **Standardisation**

The first strategy that I chose to include in my typology involves taking the non-standard variety of the foreign language of the source text and replacing it with the standard variety of the language of translation. I stated that a standardising strategy might be appropriate for a text in which various functions of slang such as rebellion and playfulness were not considered to be as important as the overall clarity of the text, or when content or other aspects of the text were able to indicate these aspects of the characters' identity in a way that might compensate for any loss incurred through standardisation. When reading *Moi non*, it is immediately obvious that the characters' spirited

and dissident use of language is a vital attribute of the novel. Additionally, the absence of any direct reference to setting means that no buffering content can communicate these functions of the characters' slang if standardisation were to be used in the translation. Slang is not used to support the content of this text; the language is intricately tied up in the themes broached.

I also stated that standardising the slang of the source text in translation might allow readers to understand the text better and therefore make a translation more accessible. I did not want my translation of *Moi non* to appear to be nannyng readers by providing them with a familiar version of Standard English, and I believed that this use of this strategy might actually risk insulting their intelligence. If I standardised the slang, it could be argued that the translation implies that readers are incapable of the mental dexterity required to understand any form of non-standard language. I would also be misleading my readers by depriving them of the intricate aspects of the language used by the characters in *Moi non*, and negating the importance of the distance from speakers of Standard French that their slang implies. Furthermore, I believe that there are other means of rendering a translated text accessible, and fluid, without resorting to standardisation (or equivalence), as I will endeavour to demonstrate through the examples that I provide from my translation of *Moi non* in Chapter 9.

As well as being more accessible, I suggested that the use of standardisation to increase clarity might make a translated text more appealing to readers cautious of being confronted with a foreign story in unfamiliar language. As a response to this suggestion, I would argue that the creative manipulation of language which is inherent in the slang used in *Moi non* provides the potential to make the language of translation appealing, and to a greater extent than if standardisation were employed. In fact, I believe that there is a danger of the opposite being true; that is to say, if I standardised the translation by stripping the slang of its creative aspects, I might risk producing a lacklustre text, flat and void of character. In seizing and exploiting the creative potential of the English language, I sought to make use of its playful possibilities in the style I adopted for Hoch, Flex, and their friends. My aim was to produce an aesthetically attractive and engaging text that reveals a certain meditation on the capacities of language beyond the realm of the

standard. Although this might be achieved through another of the strategies that I explored in the typology, since each involves more linguistic liveliness than standardisation, I did not believe that they were suitable for the translation of *Moi non*, as I will explain in the remainder of this chapter.

## **Equivalence**

The second strategy that I outlined in my typology relies on replacing the slang of the source text with an existing slang in the language of translation. As we saw in Chapter 7, different versions of this strategy were used to translate the banlieue slang of the three texts I analysed. These texts reveal the difficulty of choosing the exact level of equivalence to apply to the replacement slang used and prompt questions related to how this choice is influenced by the nature of the slang used in the source text and by the distance that the slang establishes between the text and its readers. If we compare the strategy adopted in the versions of *Kiffe kiffe demain* and *La Haine* produced for an American market, we can see that the translation of *Kiffe kiffe demain* harnessed the typical features of the generic voice of an American teenager, whereas *La Haine* used a more specific variety of American slang, taking inspiration from African-American vernacular. In both cases, creating and shaping a voice in English based on an existing slang requires an intimate knowledge of and close attention to the features of this slang. I do not master any variety of slang spoken by a group of people who could be considered comparable to the characters in *Moi non*, and did not have the audacity necessary to feel entitled to take on such a voice in translation.

A lack of familiarity with the slang chosen to replace the slang of the original text is not necessarily a factor which would deter all translators. Indeed, translators who have adopted this strategy had no doubt come to the conclusion that the intention is to create a coherent translation which appears credible to readers but which is not necessarily completely accurate. They were able to use the features of the chosen slang, which they may have acquired through research or through consultation with “native speakers”, to produce a translated text that enables readers to engage with a familiar voice. I was unable to identify a familiar voice that seemed appropriate, and one that I

would feel comfortable taking on. Furthermore, I was aware of the risk of restricting my readership through the choice of a specific slang. The fact that the initial translations of *Kiffe kiffe demain* and *La Haine* that feature equivalence were retranslated for a different audience suggests that editors and/or audiences are likely to find a slang from another national context unnatural or overly indicative of that context.

Another case made for replacement slang is attributed to the possibility of drawing parallels between the situation of the source text and a similar situation in the receiving culture. I provided the example of the Bronx, stating that the feelings of marginalisation and political abandon felt by young people living there were visible in similar ways to what is seen in the banlieue, notably in violence and hip-hop. These connections might justify the decision to use a slang inspired by the language of the Bronx, although a subsequent step might ask from exactly which period this slang should be taken. Attempting to emulate the linguistic habits of marginalised youth in the Bronx of the 1970s, the era of the birth of hip-hop, could prove problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, it might appear anachronistic to use a dated slang, or otherwise have the effect of taking the setting of the text back several decades. Secondly, it would require the translator to be familiar with the slang used at this time, which would likely involve extensive research, unless the translator happened to have lived in the Bronx in the 1970s. Even in such a case, the sizeable lapse, of at least 40 years, between the time the translator was exposed to this slang used in the Bronx and the time of translation, would result in the risk of inaccuracy since it is difficult to remember and recreate a way of speaking which has evolved in time.

Since slang is in a constant state of change, this reasoning could also be applied if the translator chose to use the slang from the Bronx (or from anywhere else, for that matter) from the early 2000s, the time when the book was published and ostensibly set. Regardless of the era, if I had sought to emulate the way that marginalised youth speak in the Bronx from today or how they spoke in the early 2000s or in the 1970s, I would have faced similar challenges in attempting to produce an accurate and credible version of the slang. Additionally, using a slang from the Bronx to translate a novel written and set in the early 2000s would require studying how the context of the Bronx

has evolved since the 1970s. Although at the time of the birth of hip-hop, the situation, attitude, and behaviour of marginalised youth is similar to that of the characters in *Moi non*, I would need to be sure that this was still the case. Otherwise, I would need to be confident that my target audience would associate the Bronx slang used with the general situation of youth in the area in the 1970s without necessarily thinking that the story was taking place in the 1970s and without thinking of the current situation in the Bronx, if indeed they are familiar with this. Essentially, this would involve expecting that the reader remove considerations of time from their reading and concentrate uniquely on the question of the general situation of marginalisation.

One of the arguments against the use of an equivalent slang that I referenced in Chapter 5 lies in the risk of incongruity when there is a clash between the local slang and foreign setting. Isabelle Génin, quoted in Chapter 4, raised the point that Anglophone readers would find it strange, for example, that characters walking around the street of London would speak with a strong accent from Lille or Marseille (in Antoine 2004, p. 71). Given the lack of reference to place in *Moi non*, this risk is less consequential since the story itself might take place in any number of urban areas across the world. However, this also means that the risk of incongruity is replaced by the risk of displacement. If an equivalent slang is used, the original setting may be erased completely, replaced by an alternative setting that is suggested by the specific slang used in translation, since there is nothing in the way of content to maintain the text's anchorage in the banlieue once the banlieue slang is removed. I will address this question in greater detail when considering how I endeavoured to broach the lack of reference to setting.

All of these challenges were, to me, the person responsible for producing a translation of *Moi non* in English, too consequential to overcome, and the risks of incongruity and inaccuracy too great to ignore. This reflection process resulted in my assessment that using slang from the Bronx to translate the voices of the characters in *Moi non* was not an appropriate option. One last factor that played a part in the decision-making process arises from the fact that the evolution of the situation in the Bronx since the 1970s is complemented by developments and changes to the Hip-hop Movement itself has developed and changed since the 1970s. As the scholars cited in Chapter 3

explain, hip-hop has transcended the borders of the Bronx and transformed into a global movement. Rather than taking inspiration from the source of hip-hop, I sought to seize its implicit presence in *Moi non*, as well as the features of rap music that permeate the novel's style, in an effort to recognise the cultural and linguistic force of a movement that has been adopted and adapted by banlieue youth. Chapter 9 will illustrate how I went about implementing this method. As a final note to my discussions of standardisation and equivalence, it is worth recognising that central to many of the arguments made in favour of these two strategies is that of accessibility. Translators therefore may be asked to adopt one of these two strategies by an editor interested in publishing a translated text that appeals to the widest possible audience. This was not the case for my translation, since I was able to play the role of both editor/commissioner and translator, and since, as I have explained, I believe that it is possible to produce an appealing translated text without resorting to these strategies.

## **Invention**

In translating *Moi non* for the purposes of a PhD thesis, I was afforded much more freedom than that of a translator of slang working in a commercial context. This flexibility and lack of commercial concern might have encouraged me to adopt a less conventional and more creative approach to the translation by opting for a new, invented slang. Had I invented a form of slang in English for the translation of *Moi non*, I could have emulated the playful features of banlieue French slang by studying more closely the specific linguistic units of the characters' speech and creatively reproducing them in English. The features of *verlan* and French rap music in particular might have served as a basis for such an exercise which, if performed carefully, could have contributed to imitating the functions of the slang that Goujon uses in his novel and to replicating his effort to avoid overtly situating the text in the banlieue. Indeed, invented slang would remove the risk of shifting the setting of the story to somewhere in the Anglosphere and perhaps place the text in a linguistic no-space, a *non-lieu*, which is precisely what Goujon attempted to do, albeit through content, in writing *Moi non*.

Although the language used in *Moi non* is creative, it is not invented, but based on the slang used in the banlieue. When considering the strategy of invention, I came to the conclusion that the result of the level of creativity that the strategy required would draw an excessive amount of attention to the style of the text. Presenting readers with a system of speech with which they are not familiar certainly plays a part in avoiding the localisation of the text, but it might also highlight the artificiality of the language used. Furthermore, it would involve pushing the boundaries of the English language in a way that could be seen as using the translation as a sort of pretext for linguistic experimentation in English. If I were more interested in dwelling on the status of translated texts and asserting their independence, I might have given more serious consideration to this option. The fact that I was more preoccupied with the task of producing a version of *Moi non* in English which would display clear correspondence with the source text, however, meant that it was not a strategy that I envisioned as being satisfactory in this regard.

There is a risk that the use of an invented slang would draw attention to the artificiality of language. Such a risk may be circumvented if the translator is able to infuse the text with a linguistic logic that sees the reader engage fully with the novel, but I was not sufficiently confident to assert the appropriateness of invention for the translation of *Moi non*. I felt that this strategy would suggest that the exercise of bringing the characters' voices into English was more connected to the concept of linguistic creation in general than to the innovation on the part of marginalised youth. This argument may appear contradictory, since I stated earlier that I dedicated a considerable amount of time to the translation of rap, a luxury out of reach for most translators working in commercial contexts. However, I also stated that few of the texts under study contain an explicit presence of rap in the form of lyrics or narration heavily influenced by rap-like wordplay. Harnessing the techniques used in rap lyrics and in slang does not have to be a particularly time-consuming process for translators willing to develop techniques to adopt creative solutions as part of the strategy of Global Youth Speak, which makes this strategy a viable option for commercial translation.

I was also conscious of the fact that presenting a translated text containing invented slang as a translation of a foreign source text could be seen

as misleading. This fear is perhaps tied up with the status of translators more generally, often seen to be mediators or the key holders to the foreign text responsible for bringing it into the target language in such a way that the reader is convinced that they are granted access to the words of the original writer exactly as s/he would have written them if s/he were a native speaker. It might also depend on the way in which the translated text is presented to readers, as a "faithful rendition" of the original, or as a basis for a linguistic experiment in the target language.

A final factor that dissuaded me against using invention can be attributed to the time that such an undertaking would represent, not only in creating the slang but also in ensuring that its use was logical and systematic throughout the thesis. The time that this would necessitate is more than that required by the strategy I did adopt, which means that it is unlikely to be used by translators of similar texts. Since I hope that my translation and this thesis as a whole can demonstrate to translators and commissioners and editors of translations alike that an alternative strategy is possible and achievable, I reasoned that invention was not a viable solution for the translation of *Moi non*. Another research project might be more concerned with exploring the formation and features of slang in French and how these can be harnessed in English to renew or refresh existing forms of slang, in which case the strategy of invention would be an ideal choice.

## **Borrowing**

Since *Moi non* contains no direct reference to place in the content, borrowing slang words or expression and transferring them across to the translation as part of one of the other four strategies within this typology might represent a means of restoring a suggestion of setting to the translated text. If French lexis is added into the text in English, the readers would be reminded of the translated nature of the text with which they are presented and a sense of place would be reinstated into the text. After all, in a way, this is what the French text aims to do: to suggest setting through slang, rather than through content. When used alone, as far as is possible, each of the four strategies in the typology could create an alternative setting, different from that of the

source text: standardisation and non-standard colloquial language might imply a broader (and non-marginalised) space in the Anglosphere or else erase setting all together; equivalence might evoke a non-French setting somewhere specific in the Anglosphere; and invention could construct an imaginary world for the text. Adding French words into the text if one of these four strategies were used could therefore counteract the possibility of displacing the text by bringing it firmly back to France.

At the same time, borrowing, as I stated in Chapter 5, can only be used for isolated words and expressions and thus supposes that lexis is the most significant aspect of slang. Through the theories that I exposed in Part One of the thesis, I argued that this should not be the case. Although lexis is an essential part of slang, and perhaps its most easily recognisable characteristic, the ways in which the words and expressions are formed, and the ways in which they fit into the speech of marginalised youth, surpass the micro-level of their usage and contribute to creating a distinct form of language. While dependent on the fundamental features of the standard language, slang constitutes a way of speaking which cannot simply be thought of as a series of words slotted into standard speech, regardless of the register. Furthermore, selecting certain words to borrow would involve the arduous task of establishing a hierarchy of importance within the slang words used in *Moi non* when no such hierarchy is present in the source text.

As well as drawing disproportionate attention to the French lexis of *Moi non*, adding borrowed words to the translated text could give unsuitable weight to the Frenchness of the text, when in fact the linguistic and social tension inherent in the use of slang on the part of banlieue youth lies in the difference and distance between banlieue French slang and Standard French. If I chose to borrow lexis from the banlieue slang used, I could not be sure that my readers would recognise these French words as non-standard, slang words rather than simply recognising them as French words more generally. My readers' not understanding this difference would therefore involve a transfer of the Other in the translated text from that which is present in the source text. It would highlight the foreign nature of the text as taking place in France, rather than in a specific part of France, which could subsequently result a sort of thematic simplification.

If borrowing were used strategically in parts of *Moi non* where it was clear that the characters were speaking out specifically against speakers of Standard French, this danger might be mitigated and the strategy might be effectively applied to accentuate the specific features of banlieue slang, and its function. I was unable to identify suitable sections of the text where the strategy might be employed in this way, nor was I able to justify the inclusion of some words rather than others or to identify the right dosage of borrowing to ensure that its use was successful in instilling place in the translation without appearing odd or opaque. This does not mean that another translator working on the translation of same text, or of a different but comparable text, could not.

### **Non-specific Colloquial Style**

The last strategy that I included in my typology is the use of a non-specific colloquial style to translate slang. The references I provided in Chapter 5 to discussions of this option revealed that it is quite a popular choice among translators of texts containing non-standard language, especially in dialogue, but that it is not explored at length by translation studies scholars. As a result, the statements offered by translators indicate that their preference is mostly guided by a sense of what they suppose will sound natural to their readers. We can infer from their comments that the non-specific colloquial style involves translating non-standard varieties through register and/or through orality, establishing a style of writing in translation which is informal and which exploits features of casual spoken language. If this strategy is implemented using geographically unmarked features of informal speech, the translator avoids the potential for displacement that the use of equivalence can entail.

The most distinctive drawback of this approach pertains to the loss or the softening of several of the functions of slang. In particular, the fact that colloquial speech is available to all speakers of a language and not confined to the contours of a specific group means that if I relied exclusively on informal, speech-like language to translate the slang of *Moi non*, this style would necessarily detract from the insider-outsider dynamic that the characters' linguistic choices establish in the source text. The reader-text relationship

would also shift because the characters' speech in the translated text is inevitably more understandable than that of the source text. In spite of the shortcomings of this strategy, I believe that its implementation involves fewer risks and is less problematic than that of the four other strategies I outlined. The alternative strategy that I developed for the translation of *Moi non* therefore uses the idea of a non-specific colloquial style as its basis, as I will explain in the final section of this chapter.

## 8.4 Global Youth Speak

Now that I have provided an overview of the style and story of *Moi non* and of the reasons for which I decided against adopting one of the five strategies in my typology to translate the novel, I would like to offer a more detailed description of the strategy that I did adopt, and explain why I deemed it to be the most appropriate strategy for this text. The strategy that I used to translate *Moi non*, tentatively termed Global Youth Speak, involves taking the situational and mode-related aspects of oral, colloquial speech and adding broad dimensions of age and time. In essence, I sought to harness features of language commonly used by young people from all over the Anglosphere since the beginning of the 2000s, since *Moi non* was published in 2003. As I did this, I avoided including lexis that is quite marked geographically or socially, that is to say words and expressions usually associated with a specific group of people in the Anglosphere, as well as short-lived buzz words. The inventive and nimble style of the narration of *Moi non*, clearly influenced by the features of rap music, increased the potential for me to harness the innovative possibilities of the informal language I was using to ensure that the final product in English retained aspects of the creativeness of the source text.

After reading and analysing *Moi non* in French, I decided that the language I used in translation should express a sense of group solidarity, of inclusion and exclusion, and that it should demonstrate playfulness and push the boundaries of Standard English. The discussions that have led up to this point of the thesis have made it clear that no translation is able to recreate entirely the same group identity function as the original text. *Moi non* relies on banlieue slang to communicate the connections between a group of

marginalised youth who feel disconnected from speakers of Standard French, and this same banlieue slang simply does not exist in English. To me, the only viable solution to this problem in translation lay in broadening the function of the slang used in the source text. As such, I chose to make use of informal but playful language that sounded credible as the voice of disenfranchised youth; not necessarily from the banlieue, but also not from anywhere in particular. In a way, this strategy was able to achieve in English what Goujon may have been striving to achieve in English, by subtracting considerations of location from the equation in such a way that the banlieue is equated with a *non-lieu*: an invisible, nothing space.

It should be noted that Global Youth Speak does not represent an esperanto-esque attempt to coin a new, global language. Rather, it is an attempt to exploit aspects of the English language common to (almost) all young speakers. My preliminary hypothesis arose from my observation that many features of English are shared by native speakers across the globe, and that these features are becoming more and more ubiquitous. This is largely thanks to the rise of social media and international travel, both obviously allowing communication across cultures. Many of the quotes and ideas offered in Part One of the thesis point to the role of the increasingly widespread availability of audio-visual and written media from all over the world in the spread of slang, as well as that of hip-hop culture and of rap music in particular. These intercultural forms of communication add to the distribution and adoption of aspects of different slangs among and by youth in geographically dispersed areas of the globe. I was convinced that the translation of *Moi non* could depend on this growing pool of shared linguistic features to establish a style that would appear credible as the English voice of marginalised French youth.

Perhaps the most noteworthy disadvantage of the use of Global Youth Speak is linked to the change in reader-text relationship that the change of language brings about. In Chapter 2, I highlighted the fact that writers often choose to include notable, sometimes stereotypical features of slang in their text to ensure that their readers recognise the language used. The version of banlieue French that *Moi non* contains is not especially exaggerated or stereotypical, but I would argue that this variety of French is quite easily and

immediately identifiable as the language of banlieue youth. This means that Francophone readers of the source text would associate the voice of Hoch, Flex, and their friends with banlieue youth, and, as such, recognise their own distance from the characters and the young people they represent. This association is unfortunately not possible in translation since I am unable to construct in English the same reader-text relationship that the source text establishes between the reader on one side and the fictional characters and real-world youth on the other.

I also explained in Chapter 2 that writers of fictional texts featuring slang generally use a softened form of the non-standard variety of language used by the people represented by the characters in these texts, so as to avoid excluding a significant section of their readership. *Moi non* is no exception; the slang used is not particularly problematic in terms of how it affects readers' potential to engage with the plot, and in cases when the language is quite difficult, its opacity is at least reduced by the surrounding context. The fact that the language I used to translate the novel is also quite comprehensible might suggest that the style of the translated text is comparable to that of the source text in this regard. Although the style I used to translate the novel is relaxed and spirited, it is entirely transparent. Some of the rap lyrics and the rap-like narration require attention to decipher and digest, but the language of the text is in general able to be understood by native speakers of English regardless of their age and background.

When a translator realises that the language of the original text is highly suggestive of space and identity, and recognises that it is impossible to reconstruct these suggestions in the translated text in the same way as in the original text, s/he may become quickly discouraged. Although it is tempting to succumb to the despair that these facts might kindle, in accepting the inevitability of the loss of or changes to a number of functions of slang in translation, I was able to make a more realistic and reasonable assessment of the ramifications of adopting a given strategy. Rather than surrendering to excess emphasis on the negative aspects involved in shedding the source text of the specific slang it uses to achieve a number of functions, I believe that it is important to focus on the potential for the language of translation to reshape these functions in such a way that "loss" is minimised and "gain" is maximised.

I do not believe that any one strategy is ideal to translate any one text, but I will provide explanations and examples in Chapter 9 to contribute to my argument that Global Youth Speak was the most appropriate strategy for *my* translation of *Moi non*.



## Chapter 9: Translating *Moi Non*

The two previous chapters of Part 3 have highlighted and analysed the result of several different strategies one might use to translate the voice of banlieue youth into English. In this final chapter, I will build on the discussions that explained why I did not find these strategies suitable for the translation of *Moi non* and offer a more specific explanation of the features of Global Youth Speak. In this vein, I have endeavoured to dissect my translation and identify the techniques that contributed to creating the global voice in English I sought for the young characters the novel and will begin by outlining these techniques with brief examples<sup>101</sup>. Although the features that I describe are present throughout the entire translation, I will provide examples primarily from Chapter 1 of the novel so that they can be easily observed working together in context through reading this first chapter. The brief examples that I present during the overview of the techniques used to implement Global Youth Speak will be followed by a more detailed commentary of a selection of passages, and an exploration of the influence of rap music on the style of the text and of my translation. To close this chapter, I will shed light on the translation process by explaining how I established and implemented these techniques as I tried to ensure the coherence of their application throughout the translation.

### 9.1 Features of Global Youth Speak

It is clearly impossible to replicate the same level of informality in the same ways and in the same places in an English translation of a French text, due to the insurmountable differences between the foundational structures of each language. Bearing this in mind, I aimed to establish techniques that would

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<sup>101</sup> All page-number references provided for both the source text and the translated text refer to the pages in Volume 2 of the thesis, and not to the version of *Moi non* in French published by Gallimard. The numbers provided for each example are the same in both the source and translated text, since the corresponding content is presented on the same page in both versions.

create a voice in English for the characters of *Moi non* which was inherently casual in tone, without necessarily becoming bogged down in concerns of exact correspondence of the level of orality at the unit or sentence level when this might result in forced or clumsy structures. This does not mean, however, that I departed considerably from the style or meaning of each word in each sentence. On the contrary, I sought as much harmony between the two texts as possible for each unit, but I kept in mind the ultimate goal of bringing the English text to life in such a way that the casual and non-standard style of the source text could thrive in translation.

### **Grammar and Syntax**

The style that I developed for the translated text in English is articulated primarily through non-lexical means; I made use of the features of relaxed informal speech that permeate the language of young speakers of English from all parts of the Anglosphere. I believe that it is important to convey a sense of the characters' resistance to the rigidity of standard speech and therefore chose to employ supple sentence structures that contain markers of orality. As such, these sentences are peppered with informal and sometimes vulgar lexical constructions, phatic fillers, casual demonstrative adjectives or adverbial phrases, and general extenders that add emphasis or contribute to intensifying orality (e.g. "and shit", "a whole lot of..."). These linguistic additions are complemented by omissions, since I also systematically dropped (subject) pronouns and auxiliary verbs where appropriate.

An additional feature of Global Youth Speak is found in the use of contractions to create connected speech. I decided that the spelling of such contractions should not be representative of pronunciation but of the delivery and speed of speech. Unlike the translators of *Entre les murs* and *La Haine*, I therefore avoided merging structures such as "got to", "want to", and "going to", preferring not to use "gotta", "wanna", and "gonna". Although one might argue that the use of these forms is ubiquitous throughout the Anglosphere, I decided not to use them because I was cautious of changing the spelling of words in ways that might suggest accent. Instead, I favoured the use of contractions indicative of pace, such as "I've" for "I have", "I'm" for "I am",

“could’ve” and “couldn’t’ve” for “could have” or “could not have”, and “there’re” for “there are”. Goujon himself did not tend to change spelling in the French text, but the novel often includes, albeit inconsistently, contractions. My use of contractions also borders on inconsistent in some places: in some places, for instance, I have written “there’re” but spelled the two words out in others. I do not believe that rigorous respect of rules throughout the translation is necessary in this regard, especially because such rigidity is not reflective of the irregularity and inconsistency of many minor grammatical choices made when people speak in informal situations.

I also intentionally strayed from grammatical norms in some instances to accentuate the non-standard nature of the characters’ language use. I was careful, however, to make use uniquely of the types of deviations common in relaxed speech and to avoid grammatical mistakes that might suggest that a lack of education is synonymous with the use of slang. These non-standard grammatical features include the use of inexact subject-verb agreement (e.g. “There’s these two guys at the entrance”) and the use of adjectives instead of adverbs (e.g. see below, “lucky” instead of “luckily”). My use of punctuation to arrange emphasis and as the decisions I made to split some long sentences, further contributed to constructing the flow that I endeavoured to establish throughout the text. These and other techniques related to rhythm will be explained and analysed in greater detail in the extracts that I comment before closing this subchapter. Before I move onto a discussion of lexis, I would like to present a small number of brief examples that illustrate the characteristics of Global Youth Speak outlined above when they are used in full sentences:

*L'air con que j'avais dû avoir dis donc...* I must’ve sounded like such an idiot.  
*Le mec qui sort des vapes sans doute.* Probably like a guy who’d just smoked **a whole lot of** weed. Pretty accurate,  
*Normal remarque vu que j'en sortais.* **really**, given that I had just smoked **a whole lot of** weed...  
 (p. 13)

*Mais c'est pas grave, je m'en banquerais une autre si le boulot fonctionne.* (p. 11) But it’s OK, I’ll buy another one if **this whole job thing** works out.

*Je suis pas prétentieux mais c'était couru d'avance qu'il allait kiffer.* (p. 15) I’m not vain **or anything** but it was **kind of a given** that he was going to love it.

<p>Bon ben, prends-la, <i>il a dit</i>, si tu veux ressembler à un bébé ça t'regarde. (p. 13)</p>	<p>So take it then, he said. If you want to look <b>all posh and shit</b>, that's your business.</p>
<p><i>L'interrogatoire se penchait sur les bases de ma personne [...] et concluait avec quelques tests bidon absolument illogiques [...].</i> (p. 12)</p>	<p>The form had <b>all these</b> questions asking for my personal details [...] and at the end there were <b>these</b> stupid, completely illogical tests [...].</p>
<p><i>Heureusement, j'ai une cravate pour l'occasion.</i> (p. 11)</p>	<p><b>Lucky</b> I've got a tie for the occasion.</p>

## Lexis

The examples above demonstrate how the techniques that I developed to establish and maintain a casual style throughout the translation transcend the lexical level. The discussions in Part One, especially in Chapter 2, revealed that scholars see lexis as an integral part of slang, and that some even consider that slang is a lexical resource that speakers can add to colloquial speech. Without seeking to confirm or to challenge these views, it is important to recognise the extent to which I relied on colloquial constructions, and as well as on colloquial lexis, to construct the skeleton of Global Youth Speak. This tactic boils down to the quite simple explanation that colloquial speech is generally inclusive and therefore not limited to one place within the broader linguistic community. As such, I tried to avoid as far as possible using any words or expressions in my translation that were restricted to usage in one area of the Anglosphere or that have already dated or might date quickly. I attempted to dip into the well of global youth lexis in my translation, using words that may have originated in one place, but that are now used by young people all over the world. In this way, I have employed language that is shared by young people around the world, instead of sporadically selecting words from different slangs spoken in different sections of the Anglosphere.

Throughout the translation process, I systematically sought out instances where the type of lexis described above could be inserted into the relaxed sentences that I had created. This tactic forms part of my resistance to seek systematically a stringent correspondence in tone between the French and English for each word or in each sentence, since I was concerned that

attributing too much attention to every single word could result in a forced and artificial style. Instead, I focussed on ensuring that my translation conveyed the non-standard voice of the French characters in each longer passage of the novel, and, more importantly, throughout the novel as a whole. The two examples below illustrate in bold the types of lexis and context of usage that I am describing. In the first of these examples, Hoch describes how his uncle played an instrumental role in helping him to find a job:

<p><i>Thierry m'a négocié un entretien avec la nana qui recrute. Son prénom c'est Véronique. J'ai un peu les jetons, j'aime pas les trucs formels.</i></p>	<p>Thierry <b>scored</b> me an interview with the <b>chick</b> in charge of recruitment. Her name's Véronique. I'm <b>freaking out</b> a bit – I don't like formal things.</p>
<p>(p. 11)</p>	

I would like to focus here on the verb “to score” which I have used to translate the French “*négocier*”. Although the verb “*négocier*” is not a colloquial or slang term, the way in which it is used here as a reflexive verb, preceded by “*me*”, gives the French sentence an informal and relaxed style. The 16<sup>th</sup> item in the entry for “score” in the *OED* states that, in the way I have used it here to signify “to gain, win (a success etc.)”, the verb takes on a figurative meaning and is “chiefly colloquial”. Items 16c and 16d make reference to the tendency to use the verb in this manner in criminal slang or to refer to obtaining or taking narcotic drugs. When used in the translation of *Moi non*, these subtle associations represent a recurring theme in the novel, adding to the semantic field related directly or indirectly to illicit work and habit. This example demonstrates how executing the strategy of Global Youth Speak in translation involves selecting the aspects of colloquial language and lexis that seem to correspond most to the voice of marginalised youth. The second example below is taken from the dialogue, with Hoch relating words spoken by Flex.

<p>Fait chier, dit Flex, marre de ces cons.</p>	<p><b>Piece of shit</b>, says Flex, <i>I'm sick of these cocksuckers.</i></p>
<p>(p. 13)</p>	

This example demonstrates how vulgarity is used throughout the translation. Although I have used vulgarity in this example in the same place as it appears in the original French, I also chose to add crude lexis to the translation where these were not present in the original. This is especially visible in general extenders such as “and shit”, and in the frequent use of the word “fucking” in amplifying constructions. Such inclusion of vulgar language might be seen as

a convenient means of ensuring that the characters' reluctance to use polite speech is conveyed systematically throughout the translation. I was careful to not exaggerate its usage, however, so as to ensure that the text in English did not come across as overly crass where this would be inappropriate in the broader context into which the characters' speech is inserted.

## **Spelling and Standard Lexis**

One of the major obstacles that I encountered when translating *Moi non* was the choice of a particular spelling system to adopt: UK or US. After much deliberation, I eventually settled on UK spelling since is widely used in Europe and generally taught in English classes in France. Its use might therefore suggest a European setting, which is accurate as far as the source text is concerned. I do believe that it is important, however, to recognise that a reader more familiar with American English might make immediate associations with the UK rather than with Europe. Ultimately, a choice was necessary, since no global form of spelling in English exists, and I reasoned that UK spelling was the most logical choice for this text, and for this project. If the translation were to be published in the US, editors may choose to alter the use of UK spelling, which should be a fairly straightforward process.

Avoiding a specific national English was less problematic when it came to lexis since I had more flexibility. I applied the same strategy of avoiding geographically marked slang and seeking out global alternatives to non-slang lexis. As such, I limited the use of UK- or US-specific vocabulary as far as possible, developing techniques to find alternatives. I used a more general term or formulation where this was possible (e.g. instead of translating "*coffre*" by "boot" or "trunk", I preferred the more general image of "behind us") or otherwise changed the image slightly while maintaining the same idea (e.g. I translated "*chips*" by "peanuts" rather than "chips" or "crisps"). These alternative solutions were not always possible, however, since striving to make all words neutral might have resulted in artificial formulations that draw attention to themselves for the simple reason that they are clunky. I therefore chose to use UK vocabulary when I felt that this was required (e.g. instead of translating the word "*ascenseur*" by a structure such as "a box that moves up

and down”, I used the UK “lift” and not the US “elevator”)<sup>102</sup>. Such instances are relatively limited in the entire translation, and, like the UK spelling, could no doubt be easily replaced by US equivalents if deemed necessary.

The techniques that I apply to sidestep the problem of setting differ from those employed in the original, since it is through the content and not the writing style that context is concealed. With the stylistic tools at my disposal, I strove through my use of language to place the translation in a non-specific setting within a developed urban area, while conceding that a choice concerning the unavoidable issue of spelling, and occasionally of vocabulary, must be made. Despite his concerted efforts, Goujon found himself unable to create a text where setting was entirely invisible, since the slang suggests that the story takes place in the banlieue of Paris, and the content, while void of specific references to concrete cultural markers, evokes an urban backdrop. These shortcomings are partly reproduced, therefore, through the manner in which the translation restricts the setting in its own way. There is no ideal solution to this complex problem, which remains to a certain extent unresolvable, and, in the end, it was a case of deciding which options would correspond the most appropriately to the implications of the choices made in the writing of the original text.

## **Global Youth Speak in Context**

The isolated examples provided above have helped to illustrate the techniques that I used to translate *Moi non* through the strategy of Global Youth Speak. I would now like to study a selection of longer passages so that these techniques can be considered in context. These examples are again taken from the first chapter of the novel, the first two passages from the narration and the third from dialogue, and I have highlighted in bold the features on which I will comment. In this first example, Hoch begins to explain his relationship with his friends and with his mother:

*Je pourrais te monter des explications,* I could come up with explanations, why  
*pourquoi chaque jour on est poussé aux* every day we're **pushed into the same**  
*conneries, mais j'ai pas envie de jouer à* **old shit**, but I don't feel like playing

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<sup>102</sup> I have provided a more extensive list of examples of vocabulary choices in Appendix 3.

*l'avocat. Et puis tout ça c'est du vent, la seule vérité, c'est que je suis plus capable d'assumer les conséquences. Voir Paul s'acharner sur le corps de la meuf innocente, j'ai tout de suite senti que c'était terminé pour moi. Je comprends pas pourquoi il a disjoncté, et je veux pas savoir. J'ai ma mère qui fait les cent pas tous les soirs à m'attendre et tous les soirs je m'en fous, mais tu vois, c'est con de dire ça, j'y tiens à ma mère. Ça se traduit pas par des trucs lumineux, des attentions toutes connes plutôt, comme par exemple qu'elle reste parfois seize heures d'affilée à son taf, que c'est interdit par la loi, mais que son patron lui met le bruit de la monnaie dans les oreilles, et qu'elle enchaîne des journées doubles donc, pour m'acheter des pompes qui sont pas ridicules. Ça se joue aussi quand je rentre à cinq heures du mat' et que mon assiette dort encore sur la table, la bouffe au micro-ondes, qu'elle a rien débarrassé alors que j'ai même pas téléphoné pour prévenir que je rentrerais pas bouffer. Elle gueule ma mère, elle gueule parce qu'on n'a pas de fric, parce qu'elle est seule à assumer le loyer, et c'est même pas la faute de mon père, avec son salaire de misère, la pension paie même pas le téléphone.*

(p. 8)

lawyers. And, plus, all that's just hot air. The only thing that's really certain is that I can't deal with the consequences anymore. Seeing Paul **beat the crap out of that innocent chick**, straight away I realised it was all over for me. **I don't get why he lost it like that**, and I don't want to know. My mother paces back and forth in the hallway waiting for me every night and every night **I don't give a shit**. But, you know, it seems a bit stupid to say that because I really do care about her. **It's not like** it's life-changing **stuff or anything**, but you can tell by the silly little things she does – like how sometimes she slaves away at work for sixteen hours straight when it's actually illegal but her boss waves **cash** in her face and she works double shifts so the shoes she buys me don't make me look too ridiculous. You can also tell by the fact that when I get home at five in the morning, my **plate's** still sitting on the table and there's food in the microwave, even though I haven't called to say I won't be home for dinner. My mother complains a lot. She complains because **we've got no money**, because she's the only one paying the rent. And it's not even my father's fault – his wage is so measly the child support doesn't even pay the phone bill.

In accordance with the main features of Global Youth Speak, I have relied on primarily on syntax and grammar to create a casual style throughout this passage. The syntax is generally relaxed, including dangling modifiers (“Seeing Paul beat the crap out of...”), sentences beginning with conjunctions (“And”, “But”), informal negative structures (“we've got no”), and general extenders (“or anything”). I systematically shortened words where I could use contractions (e.g. “I don't”, “we're”, “my plate's still sitting on the table”), and included colloquial lexis (e.g. “chick” and “cash”) and phrases (e.g. “beat the crap out of”, “I don't get why...”, “... he lost it”) commonly used by young people. The word “shit” is also used twice, contributing to the mild level of crudity in the text and the general opposition to conformist, polite speech. In

the second example below, Hoch explains his anxiety when filling out a form before beginning his new job:

*Je me suis accoudé au comptoir et j'ai chopé fébrilement un stylo attaché à une chaîne à billes. L'interrogatoire se penchait sur les bases de ma personne, les capacités que j'avais, que j'avais pas en l'occurrence, et concluait avec quelques tests bidon absolument illogiques : des carrés avec des chiffres, des suites à mettre dans l'ordre, des ronds et des cases que j'ai cochés au hasard. On me demandait par exemple si j'étais une femme ou un homme, quelles étaient mes compétences informatiques, mon cursus scolaire. Faut que je te dise, c'est débile, mais même pour les cases masculin/ féminin, j'étais en panique, de l'eau dans le dos, une colonie de fourmis dans les pieds, de l'hésitation dans les doigts. Je me répétais Faut que je sois attentif, ils vont forcément essayer de me piéger. (p. 12)*

I leaned on the counter and nervously snatched a pen attached to a chain. The form had **all these** questions asking for my personal details, my skills, or lack thereof as it seemed, and at the end there were **these** stupid, completely illogical tests – little boxes with numbers in them, numerical sequences to put in order, circles and squares that I ticked at random. It asked me for example if I was a man or a woman, what my computer skills were, about my education. It's pretty pathetic, I've got to admit, but even for the male/female boxes, I was panicky. My back was **all** sweaty and my fingers **all** shaky and my feet felt really tingly. I kept thinking *Concentrate, they're definitely trying to trick you.*

Many of the techniques highlighted in the first example have been applied to this second passage, and this extract also contains additional features that I exploited as part of the overall strategy of *Global Youth Speak*. In particular, I made use of casual demonstrative adjectives (“all these” and “these”) and intensifying adverbs (“all”), and created a distinct rhythm through my choices of punctuation and conjunctions. Throughout the novel, I often departed from the exact punctuation used in the French text where the impression of spontaneous speech is often communicated through an accumulation of clauses separated by commas. If I had used commas in the same way in English, this could have resulted in clumsy run-on sentences, so I tended to split the longest sentences in French with full stops in English. This technique can be seen in the example above where the two clauses “[...] *j'étais en panique, de l'eau dans le dos* [...]” are separated into separate sentences “[...] I was panicky. My back was all sweaty [...]”. Incidentally, this technique often helped to create a staccato rhythm similar to the punchy delivery and “flow” of rap songs. In the longer sentences that I did maintain in English, I avoided using

semi-colons or colons which are generally reserved for more formal writing, favouring the use of dashes. This can be seen in the example above where the colon between “*illogiques*” and “*des carrés*” is replaced by a dash between “tests” and “little boxes”. The decisions such as these that I made to adjust the punctuation of the source text in my translation enabled me to establish a rhythm that I perceived to be more typical of the relaxed speech of young people in English. The final extended passage that I will comment in this subchapter is taken from the dialogue in Chapter 1, on page 9, where Hoch describes and transcribes a story told by Flex:

*Flex se lassait pas de parler, une vraie pipelette. Il nous racontait ses histoires de mytho et comme il se croit au cinéma (c'est dans sa tête y a un projecteur), il fait les gestes pour illustrer. Il raconte super vite à tel point que des fois t'entraves pas la moitié de l'anecdote, mais ce qui compte c'est moins le sens des mots que le rythme avec lequel il les fait bouger. Alors tu vois j'arrive, c't'ait jeudi ou vendredi, Ouais vendredi, non jeudi, C't'ait jeudi qu'on a bouffé près du vidéoclub ? Ouais c't'ait jeudi, on s'en fout, tu vois comme j'savais pas où vous étiez, j'me suis dit « J'vais passer par la gare quoi ». Et y a deux lascars, j'les ai d'jà vus quelque part tu vois, y m'demandent une cigarette, J'dis non « J'en ai pas », Et y m'demandent « Tu connais pas un mec qui s'appelle Dan », et y a pas de Dan ici, tu vois quoi, Les mecs y veulent me tester, y veulent doser avec moi pour voir si y a pas moyen de me mettre un coup de pression, j'dis « J'connais pas d'Dan, y a pas de Dan ici », et y m'dit « Qu'est-ce t'en sais, tu connais qui ici toi », j'dis « Tout le monde », Y'm'dit « T'as pas cinq francs », j'dis « Non, mon porte-monnaie il est vide j'suis en galère », Y'm'dit « Montre », j'fais « Quoi montre », y'm'dit « Vas-y montre, t'as pas confiance », j'dis « Non j'ai pas confiance ». J'commence à*

Flex never got sick of talking – a real chatterbox. He'd tell us his **bullshit** stories, and since he thinks he's at the movies, he moves his body around to make the pictures (he's got a projector in his head). He speaks so quickly that sometimes you don't **catch** half the story, but what counts is not so much the actual meaning of the words, but their rhythm, the way he makes them move. *So you see I **turn up**, it was Thursday or Friday. Yeah, Friday. No, Thursday. Was it Thursday we ate near the video place? Yeah, it was Thursday. But, anyway, doesn't matter. I didn't know where you guys were, right, so I thought to myself "I'll just go see at the station." And there're these two **jokers**, I've already seen them somewhere, **right**, and they ask me for a cigarette. I say, "Don't have any." And they ask me "Know a guy called Dan?" And there's no Dan around here, see what I'm getting at – these guys, they're trying to test me, trying to **suss me out**, see if they can put a bit of pressure on. I say, "Don't know any Dan. No Dans around here." and one of them says, "What do you know? Who do you know around here?" and I say, "Everyone," **and** he says, "Got any cash? Five francs?" **and** I say, "Nah, my wallet's empty, I'm all out." He says,*

m'vénère tu vois, ça va pas le faire, y commence à gazer, et... *“Show us,” and I say, “Show you what?” and he says, “Go on, show us, you don’t have the balls,” and I say, “No, I don’t have the balls.” It’s starting to piss me off, this is turning to shit,*  
 (p. 9) *he’s heating up, and...*

As in the first two examples, this extract contains contractions and the omission of subject pronouns, and non-specific colloquial and mildly crude lexis (e.g. “bullshit stories”, “jokers”, “piss off”, “turn to shit”). Unlike in the previous examples, many of the longer sentences with commas are maintained to communicate the sense of a stream of consciousness that corresponds to the fluidity of Flex’s speech, delivered with little forethought. There is a smaller number of these run-on sentences in English than in French, however, since I split several sentences to avoid an excessive accumulation of clauses. In addition, I added several “ands” and a “right” to punctuate the flow of his speech and convey the rhythm and enthusiasm that Hoch describes at the beginning of the passage.

## 9.2 Translating (with) Rap

The features of Global Youth Speak outlined in the first part of this chapter fall largely within the realm of casual speech. Although I intentionally and systematically made lexical, syntactical, and grammatical choices typical of the relaxed language more specific to the speech of young people, the basis of my strategy relies heavily on the characteristics of colloquial language. I will conclude this section with a more specific examination of the ways in which Global Youth Speak differs from the fifth strategy that I included in my typology, a non-specific colloquial style of translation, but I would first like to address the influence of rap music on my strategy. The playful deviations from standard language that I sought out in the informal language of my translation are complemented by an effort to harness the features of rap music throughout the text, specifically in terms of rhythm and sound-based wordplay. I made frequent use of half-rhymes, and of assonance, consonance, and alliteration in particular, as seen in the repeated sounds highlighted in the examples below:

*Dans mon attirail, j'ai aussi un masque pour la poussière mais comment travailler avec un bordel pareil sur le nez, qui filtre la crasse mais vous rationne du même coup la respiration ?* (p. 23)

There's also a dust mask in amongst all my gear but how am I supposed to work with a thing like that on my face? It **filters** out the **filth**, sure, but it also stops you being able to breathe freely at the same time.

*Les supplications n'existent pas, c'est du flan, je suis enfermé et ça me tape sur le système, faut que je sorte.* (p. 24)

*The pleas don't exist, it's all just make-believe. I'm locked **in** and it's really getting under my **skin**. I've got to get out of here.*

*Elle s'est retournée sur sa collègue, la machouilleuse moche, qui a haussé mollement ses épaules voûtées.* (p. 19)

She turned around to look at her ugly colleague who just **shrugged** her slouchy **shoulders nonchalantly**, smacking her lips.

*Juste je suis assis là, à me répéter des mensonges, à regarder ma chemise en soie salopée par le cambouis du Tanplain.* (p. 22)

So I just **stay sitting** where I am, **silently reciting** the same old lies, looking at my silk **shirt, shit-soiled** by the grease of Diorestore.

The last example that I have presented here also includes a compound adjective, which I coined specifically for this sentence. I was able to combine words in other parts of the translation in this way to create such compound words that add liveliness and punchiness to the text in English, in a manner similar to the brevity of rap lyrics required by the restrictions related to the number of beats per bar as well as to the use of neologisms that often establish unexpected links between words. The two examples below demonstrate how I made use of this technique elsewhere in the translation:

*Paul, je suis pas trop de son avis pour ce qui se passe à l'intérieur. Si on avait été admis avec les potes, je crois qu'on se serait bien marrés quand même.* (p. 57)

I don't really agree with Paul about the whole **what-goes-on-inside** thing. If my buddies and I had got in, I think we'd've had a pretty good time.

*Pour l'instant, c'est lits superposés pour les familles nombreuses mais ça viendra, le principe des étagères aux murs.* (p. 45)

For now, it's bunk beds for big families but the **shelves-on-walls** concept will come.

This attention to flow created by sound and rhythm throughout my translation might be seen as a means of replicating the playful aspects of the slang in the original text not always able to be conveyed in colloquial speech in English. The spirited nature of slang is therefore carried across in the translation through the way in which I tend to bend the English language to play with sound and create non-standard expressions. Outside of these techniques applied on a macro level in the translation, I also made a concerted effort to maintain the playfulness of the rap lyrics and rap-like prose existent in the source text. Where wordplay makes an appearance in the narration of *Moi non*, it is primarily deployed through the use of homophones. Instead of striving for an exact replication of the type of wordplay used in the original, I prioritised sound. Therefore, when the use of a homophone in English risked hindering the flow of the translated text or appearing forced and artificial, I chose to focus on imbuing the text with rhythm and sound through the use of complementary literary devices such as assonance and consonance, while ensuring that I was making use of imagery and figurative language.

When translating rap-like narration as opposed to formal rap, I was able to take more liberties in terms of rearranging syntax and shuffling word order so that the translation would flow in a manner that was pleasing to the ear. The techniques employed in the following examples are representative of my general approach to the translation of rap lyrics throughout the novel, and I have added bold for emphasis. The first example is taken from the beginning of the novel, when Hoch and Flex are in a department store. Hoch is attempting to steal a silk shirt, and his friend Flex is distracting the security guard so that they won't be caught:

*Mon ami est mon **paravent** et d'ici que* My friend's my shield and, by the time  
*le type calcule, je prends ma **part*** the guy's put **two and two together**,  
**avant.** (p. 13) I've already **sealed the deal**.

The homophonic wordplay of the French is not reproduced in my translation into English. I opted instead for a rhythmic translation that channelled assonance and consonance, using the expression “to put two and two together” for “*calculer*”, and “to seal the deal” for “*prendre ma part avant*”. Though establishing homophonic wordplay in the English could have been a possibility, through playing with the word “shield,” for example, I preferred the

final solution without homophones in English as I found the flow of the sentences to be particularly forceful, therefore placing the emphasis on rhythm.

A second example, also taken from the first chapters of the novel, displays a contrasting approach to the translation of homophonic wordplay. Hoch is describing his relationship with his friends and the kinds of activities and discussions in which they partake together:

*J'avais dit à Flex que je passerais au centre et je suis pas passé. La vérité c'est que je flippe de ce que les autres vont dire. Tu sais, on fout rien de nos journées quand on n'a pas de boulot. On est dans les parages, au centre commercial, à la gare, dans les halls, sur les bancs près des terrains, et la vie suit son cours à sa façon. On a l'impression **tenace** que rien **se passe**, qu'on **gâche** les heures et que les jours **rabâchent** les mêmes démonstrations. On se raconte nos petites histoires, enfin je t'ai déjà dit, les **taffes** soporifiques et les **tafs** en sous-marin, les coups de vices à la scred'. Bref, on le sait qu'on piétine, mais si tu t'absentes ne serait-ce qu'un jour, t'as l'impression de tout rater, et c'est vrai que t'as intérêt à revenir vite sinon tu calcules plus rien. Ouais, ça fait un peu comme les feuillets à la télé. Les mêmes personnages qui jactent, les mêmes embrouilles sans réel intérêt, les mêmes décors bon marché d'un épisode sur l'autre mais l'impression bizarre de plus rien suivre quand t'en rates un. (p. 21)*

I'd told Flex I'd go to the shopping centre and I didn't. The truth is I'm freaking out about what the others'll say. You see, when you don't have a job you do nothing all day. You hang around, at the centre, the train station, in lobbies, on benches near sports fields, and life follows its own course. Same shit, different day: you're well **aware**. You get the nasty feeling that you're headed **nowhere**. We **trade** stories, like I said, **trading** under the table – **smoking and joking, puffing to relax – wheeling and dealing, covering our tracks**. Anyway, you know you're treading water, but if you leave, even just for a day, you feel like you've missed everything, and you'd better get back there ASAP or otherwise you're completely out of the loop. Yeah, it's kind of like watching soap operas on TV: the same characters, the same pointless dramas, the same cheap set episode after episode, but the strange sense you're not up-to-date when you miss one.

I have played here on the double meaning of “trade”, used in two forms (“trade” and “trading”), and tried to emulate the use of homophones in the original. In this example as in the previous, it is clear that I departed considerably from the syntactic arrangement of the original text. I took the first use of a gerundive and built it on in the second part of the passage, seeking to achieve a robust flow. This flow is different from that of the original, but has more impact on an

acoustic level than what I might have obtained had I followed the syntax of the original more closely.

The third and final example of rap-like prose that I will discuss here, again translated using a partial homophone, appears towards the end of the first half of the novel. Hoch is reflecting on consumerism before an event at Diorestore.

<i>Oublie la qualité, pense cadeaux, promos, remises, soldes, crédits. File des lunettes de soleil pourries et des stylos plume. Oublie la <b>franchise, franchise</b> les détours de langage et fais des petits. Fais du fric, du fric, du fric et à la fin de la journée, lave-toi les mains.</i>	(p. 54)	Forget quality, think gifts, special offers, discounts, sales, store credits. Stock up on shitty sunglasses and fountain pens. Forget being <b>earnest</b> . Roll out the smooth talk so you're the one raking in the takings. <b>Earn</b> money, money, and more money and then, at the end of the day, wash your hands.
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In this example I was again able to use a partial homophone in “earn” and “earnest”, though these two words are not juxtaposed as explicitly in the translation as in the original, since they are separated by a sentence, rather than appearing side-by-side. I attempted to balance out the impact by instilling a distinctive and mirroring rhythm in the English lines, achieved especially through the rhymed use of the sound “aking” in “raking in the takings”. Although wordplay is prominent in the form of homophones in the above examples, I reckoned that it came second to sound and rhythm, and this hierarchy of priority provided ideal reasoning to focus on flow in the translation when the use of wordplay was either clumsy or forced. I adopted the same logic when translating rap lyrics, but the more formal constraints did not afford me as much flexibility in fleshing out the verses in English.

When translating rap lyrics, the rhythm that I was able to employ was determined more forcibly by the structure of the original text since I needed to maintain rhymes and keep a similar number of beats per bar. That said, Adam Bradley reminds us in *The Book of Rhymes* that an MC is able to alter and play with standard pronunciation in performance to stress and accentuate certain parts of the lines, which means that an exact number of syllables per bar is not always indispensable, so long as the verse “balances its linguistic weight in such a way that it can be performed without awkward pauses, gasps for breath, or other infelicities” (2008, p. 27). Sound and rhyme in particular played a

significant role in dictating my translation choices, as I attempted to ensure that the English bars featured elements of consonance, assonance, and alliteration, and that a coherent and consistent rhyme scheme rippled through each passage.

The first example of rap lyrics that I will comment is taken from the second half of the novel where Flex expresses his thoughts and fears about the future:

<p><i>Je veux pas me sentir enfermé, l'cœur en ciment en si peu d'temps / m'retrouver dans une peau que je kifferais pas, du vent / sur mes couplets, dans les poches de mes vêtements / le regard fatigué et froid de ceux qui squattent les bancs, mais bon / c'est comme ça nos vies, on pense qu'à se plaindre et à <b>se tirer</b> d'ici / c'qu'est toujours mieux que <b>se tirer</b> dessus / J'ai vu tellement de rêves échouer dans le décor / emboutir des hommes et des femmes sans même leur donner la mort / les r'garder droit dans les yeux, sans même les plisser / leur dire « à compter d'aujourd'hui ton seul bonheur s'ra d'aller pisser ».</i></p>	<p>I don't want to feel trapped in this urban sprawl, heart like a stone wall in no time at all / end up with a skin I don't want to be in, scrawl / lyrics as thin as the clothes beneath my chin, crawl / tired and cold, like drifters idling in a hall, but, after all / that's our life, we think only of complaining and of escaping on the next <b>bullet train</b> / which is always better than putting a <b>bullet in the brain</b> / I've seen so many dreams drown with the fish / crush men and women, not even grant their death wish / look them right in the eye and not even blink / tell them "from now on in your only pleasure will be smelling your shit stink".</p>
<p>(p. 160)</p>	

Arriving at and settling on this translation was by no means a fast or facile process. I departed from the two meanings of the verb “*se tirer*” evoked here, that of leaving and that of shooting, to brainstorm a list of words and expressions with similar meanings. Somewhere in this mess of notes was the word “bullet” that I had noted to correspond with the idea of shooting oneself. When fleshed out into an expression, the word “bullet” could become “bullet in the head” or, indeed, “bullet in the brain”, which conveniently rhymes with the idea of “escaping on [a] *bullet train*”. While they adjust the exact images projected by the original text, these two bars in English reflect the general idea elicited by the French lines. The two expressions also function in terms of flow and establish a consistent and mirrored rhythm over the two bars.

The second example that I will analyse contains partial homophones which make a frequent appearance throughout the entire original text. In the rap lyrics of the novel, partial homophones are often used to make half or slant

rhymes. In this instance, the term partial homophones refers not only to the use of words with similar sounds, but to the repetition of entire syllabic sounds through the use of the same base word or sound with different endings. The following passage is taken from the second part of the novel:

<p><i>On est <b>paumés</b>, on compte pour des <b>pommes</b> et on tombe comme des <b>mouches</b>, pas de <b>mouchoirs</b> quand on meurt, les langues de putes se touchent et nous goment, la vie est tellement conne parfois qu'on peut dégommer son voisin et rester sans <b>voix</b>, vis ce que je vis <b>vois</b> ce que je <b>vois</b>, j'ai la rage, la gorge et le poing serrés, elle pour le lancer lui et lui pour me rassurer...</i></p>	<p>We're <b>spaced</b> out, a <b>waste of space</b>, and we're <b>dropping</b> like flies, not a tear will <b>drop</b> at our death, the <b>catty</b> bitches come out and <b>drown</b> us out, life's so dim sometimes you can make your bro your foe, <b>drown</b> him, take him out, and see the <b>cat</b> get your tongue, live what I live, see what I see, I'm riled up, throat tight, fist out to fight, the throat to thrust the fist and the fist to ease my mind...</p>
<p>(p. 150)</p>	

“*Paumés*” and “*pommes*” are translated as the slightly different sounding “space” and “spaced” in “spaced out” and “a waste of space”, and “*mouche*” and “*mouchoir*” through two forms of the verb “to drop”: “dropping” and “drop”. This same technique of building on base words by changing the ending was also adopted further down in the passage where a partial homophone was added through the noun “cat” and adjective “catty”. One might argue that this addition of a partial homophone fills the void left by the lack of homophone in the translation to translate the different uses of “*vois*” and “*voix*”.

These two examples of rather dense rap lyrics demonstrate the difficulties involved in translating rhythm and rhyme in such a way that the translated text functions as a performable piece of music while also reflecting the ideas communicated in the original text. Structural compromises through syntactical rearrangement in the translation were often necessary to allow the sounds and images to reflect what I perceived to be the essence of the ideas conveyed in the original lines. The passages in English are markedly different from their French counterpart, but each pair, original and translation, is comparable in the use of rhythm and sound to communicate very similar messages. Throughout my translation of *Moi non*, I adopted and adapted these features of rap music present in the original text, explicitly in rap lyrics and in rap-like prose and implicitly in the formation of banlieue slang more generally. This technique lies at the heart of the strategy of Global Youth Speak since it

allowed me to establish a rhythmic and lively style of writing in English that finds its foundation in the most playful structures and lexis of colloquial speech.

### **Non-specific Colloquial Style v. Global Youth Speak**

Several of the even-numbered chapters in *Moi non* illustrate the difference between Global Youth Speak and a non-specific colloquial style. As the descriptions and examples that I have provided in this chapter demonstrate, the voice that I created in English for Hoch, Flex, and some of their friends, relies on aspects of colloquial, speech-like language to ensure its fluidity. However, this voice remains distinct from the voice used for other characters in the text who are of a different age and/or background since it is characterised by features more specific to youth speech. As I explained in Chapter 1 of the thesis, young people, and especially marginalised young people, tend to prefer the use of words and structures that stray from standard usage. Although I did not use marked non-standard language in my translation since such types of slang are, as we have seen, generally restricted to usage by groups in specific geographical areas, I did strive to employ playful and informal language used by young people. Although the colloquial style of older or non-marginalised characters shares similarities with the basis of Global Youth Speak, their language is more likely to contain run-of-the-mill set expressions and idioms. Additionally, the syntax and grammar of Global Youth Speak is generally less structured and more relaxed than in the sentences pronounced by other characters.

An ideal point of comparison can be found in Chapter 2 of the novel narrated by a “A Barefoot Woman” (who appears to be Hoch’s mother). When the structures used in the translation of this chapter are compared with the style that runs through the passages containing the voice of Hoch, Flex, and their friends, we see that the language conforms more closely to standard usage. Despite the fact that this passage is written in a stream-of-consciousness style to convey the woman’s stress and emotion, it contains fewer instances of the types of contractions, general extenders, and vulgarity used in Global Youth Speak, and it does not omit subject pronouns or auxiliary

verbs. It also features colloquial words and phrases which, while often colourful, are less creative than those used by Hoch and Flex, and are more commonly used by older people. The expression “give a wallop”, for example, used to translate “*filer une rouste*”, is unlikely to be used by young people. In both French and English, the words “walloping” and “*rouste*” are informal but slightly dated. The same can be said of the word “trendy”, used to translate “à la mode”, and of the expression “worry myself sick” to translate “*me ronger les sangs*”. The lexis that I chose in English is thus symbolic of the voice of a middle-aged woman communicated in the source text, and distinct from the sprightly speech of marginalised youth.

These examples show the ways in which Global Youth Speak shares many of the characteristics of the fifth strategy of translation outlined in my typology. At the same time, they demonstrate that the strategy that I developed engenders a style which is visibly more relaxed and features fewer cases of standard language usage. Global Youth Speak manipulates and accentuates the basic elements of colloquial speech and takes inspiration from the formation of slang and rap to create a playful style more representative of the voice of marginalised youth in English, without restricting this voice to one specific place within the Anglosphere. In the next subchapter, I will explain in more concrete terms the tools I used and techniques I developed to apply the strategy of Global Youth Speak throughout the translation.

### **9.3 The Translation Process**

Once I had decided that I would translate *Moi non* by harnessing features of informal English common to young people throughout the Anglosphere, I needed to ensure that the choices I made during the translation process aligned with this overall strategy. Especially during the initial drafting phase, my intuition and prior exposure to slang in French and English guided most of the choices I made. I also used a number of online tools to help me to grasp the nuances of the original slang so that I could confirm that the words and structures I chose in English were appropriate. These include the slang dictionaries previously cited in the thesis (*Bob*, *Le Dictionnaire de la zone*, *Le Dico de rue*), as well as other generalist dictionaries to research etymology, and

online resources such as *Wiktionnaire* and various articles or forums. To complement my research, I asked friends and colleagues familiar with banlieue slang, and occasionally checked with the author. When it came to the task of selecting unmarked lexis and relaxed grammar and syntax, I again relied primarily on my own exposure to different Englishes. However, whenever I was unsure of the usage of a term or expression or when I did not know if it were limited to a specific area, I would either look it up immediately or flag it to address later. The *OED* was generally my first port of call, followed closely by online slang dictionaries and the opinions of the native speakers of different Englishes off whom I frequently bounced ideas.

I decided to translate the chapters in the first half of the novel, narrated by Hoch first, together, in order to develop and maintain a coherent voice for the character in English, before translating the smaller chapters in between each of his chapters and moving on to the second half narrated by Flex. I may have waited to translate the smaller chapters after having translated all of the chapters narrated by Hoch and then all of those narrated by Flex, but, practically speaking, it seemed more logical to finish translating the first part of the novel in its entirety before moving on to the second: each half of the novel is treated as a separate entity. Whenever I stumbled across an instance of wordplay or a passage of rap, I left a gap in my translation and a note to return to the problematic passage later. Translating these extracts demanded considerably more concentration and creativity than the remainder of narration and dialogue in the text. I had gradually grown accustomed to translating and for which I had developed strategies to render the style and voice in accordance with the overall strategy and I depended more on rhyming dictionaries and on brainstorming with pen and paper for rap and wordplay<sup>103</sup>.

Throughout the translation process, I read each paragraph aloud to assess the orality of the voice I had created in English for the French characters. This allowed me to reformulate and eliminate the inevitable occasional calques so that the text sounded as natural as possible. I also read many sections of the French text aloud, especially in the early stages, to get a sense of the flow of the text so that I could develop techniques to establish an appropriate rhythm in English. Many of the techniques that I adopted to

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<sup>103</sup> I have included a number of examples of the brainstorming process in Appendix 1.

translate the slang of the original text might be compared with techniques used when translating dialogue and oral texts. My goal was to achieve a fluid flow in my translation to avoid drawing attention to the artificiality of the text. In this way, I strove to imitate the function of source text as an engaging piece of fiction that shares an unfamiliar story with readers in an artistic and pleasing manner.

I used the word-processing programme and outliner “Scrivener” to complete the translation, since it allowed me to keep track of the changes I made to my translation, as well as of the various trends I noted when translating and of the unresolved questions. The Snapshot function in particular allowed me to record each version of the translation before I edited it so that I could compare the updated version with the previous one/s, within the same file. I used a separate page for each chapter within the project file that I had created for the entire project, and took a snapshot of each chapter before making any changes. I was also able to maintain a highlighting system to flag challenging words or passages. This system became a vital resource in the translation process since it further allowed me to identify the key issues I faced in establishing Global Youth Speak and in ensuring the consistency of the techniques I used as part of this strategy throughout the process. I used the following code to highlight the various aspects of the translation which required further attention, or on which I intended to comment:

- Yellow: translation needs reworking
- Light green: problematic recurring lexis (e.g. UK/US, spelling, unsure of ideal translation)
- Light blue: problems understanding the source text
- Dark blue: dialogue, revise to ensure spontaneity and liveliness
- Pink: slang in the original or translation currently translated in Standard English that needs to be given more bite
- Grey: use of fillers/markers/intensifiers like some/these/this/that/kind of/sort of/pretty etc. (added to translation, not present in original)
- Dark green: figures of speech, wordplay, particularly poetic prose

This code conveniently allowed me to regroup the examples in the categories I had identified, facilitating the task of identifying the trends I wished to note and discuss.

Using Scrivener also facilitated the addition of comments in the margins. These comments contained ideas for other possible translations, or brief justifications of the translation I had adopted for particularly problematic parts of the text. I found that this commenting system was more user-friendly than that proposed by Microsoft Word, especially since adding a comment did not mask any coloured highlighting which needed to remain visible. As in Word, the comments appear on the right-hand side of the screen, but they are separated by a tab and the relevant section of the text is highlighted in light yellow and/or encircled with a black border. Clicking on the comment box in the tab automatically directs the cursor to the relevant section of the text. I eventually exported the translation to Microsoft Word when I had finished the majority of the editing so that I could format the document appropriately. This also allowed me to read the translation as a whole, rather than in separate chapters or sections, and to garner a more thorough grasp of the implications of strategy when it is applied to an entire book.

I completed a first draft of the translation of the entire novel over a nine-month period at the beginning of the PhD, systematically proofreading each chapter after translating it. Once each half of the translation was finished, I performed more comprehensive editing to gauge and evaluate the effectiveness of *Global Youth Speak* when applied across a number of chapters. I was eager to determine if the text in English could convey as many of the functions of the original slang as possible. To ascertain the validity of my efforts to create a global voice, I asked several native speakers of different Englishes to read extracts of the translation and indicate where the voice I had used appeared to be particularly representative of one English or one slang. Their comments can be read in Appendix 5. During the second and the third year of the PhD when I devoted my attention to more extensive critical reading and writing, I returned to isolated extracts of the translation that I chose as supporting examples when presenting papers at conferences or writing articles. Each time I relied on examples in this way to illustrate my strategy, I was faced with the necessity of tweaking these passages if the techniques employed did not align coherently and consistently with the ideas that I put forward.

Two years after I had finished translating the novel, I attempted to fine-tune the entire translation in a thorough and systemic manner. The beginning of this stage of the editing process was marked by my participation in June 2018 in the Bread Loaf Translators' Conference in Vermont. During the conference, I workshopped the first pages of the first chapter of the novel with a group of translators who translate from a number of other languages into English. After reading and digesting theory about the ways in which slang is formed, used, and translated, and after analysing a number of translations of texts containing banlieue slang, I was better equipped to assess the quality and coherence of my choices.

### **Contact with the Author**

I was in regular contact with Patrick Goujon before and during the translation of Part One, though I avoided asking him too many questions about the intended meaning of specific parts of his work. I reasoned that it was often more logical to seek out the opinion of other readers, since the meaning that Goujon ascribed to his words was intended but not necessarily carried across in the final product. He expressed an interest in being involved in the translation if I ever required or wanted his assistance or explanations, but he also made it clear that he would leave the final decisions up to me, as the translator. It was useful to discuss certain aspects of his book with him to better understand his approach and objectives while also maintaining a critical distance. As such, I was cautious not to attempt to emulate his desires, but to translate the words as they appeared on the page since I am aware that these can be interpreted in different ways by different readers.

Most of our exchanges occurred in person, but the questions I asked Goujon by email can be found alongside his responses in Appendix 6. It was especially enlightening to talk with him about his perception of the banlieue and its treatment in the media and in fiction, and to hear about his experiences with marginalised youth in various circumstances in his personal and professional life. One might say that many of our exchanges were more of an extratextual nature, shedding light on what lay between the covers of the book rather than addressing the words themselves directly. The reading that I did

for Chapter 6 in particular allowed me to put his views into context and to understand better how his approach to giving a voice to banlieue youth fits in with other works of fiction and non-fiction. In terms of the way in which he was able to shed light on more concrete aspects of his text and writing style, it was useful to hear his explanations of some instances of wordplay (especially the store name *Tanplain*), and also of the quality of some of the characters' rap lyrics. Although it is generally quite clear in the text itself, Goujon's insistence on the forced nature of the rap written by Flex helped me to see that I should not hesitate to resort to clumsy and overdetermined rhymes when translating these passages. Finally, he was able to confirm the presence of a linguistic oversight in the source text, provided below. This allowed me to correct his use of the word "*pudeur*" (modesty or prudishness) so that the passage was more logical in English.

<p><i>Pour Estelle, je peux pas, putain, même avec toute la <b>pudeur</b> du monde considérer autrement mon affection pour elle. Je peux pas la souiller, ou avoir la trique comme pour les autres pétasses, gérer pareil, alors j'ai l'air d'un demeuré. J'ai l'air de verser dans le mélo, dormir sur des kilos de guimauves et tout le monde se fait une montagne de lamentations.</i></p>	<p>With Estelle, I can't fucking do it. Even with all the <b>vulgarity</b> in the world, I can't think about my affection for her any other way. I can't degrade her, get hard just looking at her like I would with any other slut, handle things the same way, so I end up looking like a half-wit. Look like I'm spouting sap sweet enough to make cake, and everyone makes a song and dance out of their moaning.</p>
<p>(p. 42)</p>	

## **The Translator or "The Subjective I"**

The theories explained and analysed throughout the thesis have revealed that it is impossible to achieve the effects and functions of slang in translation in a way that corresponds exactly with its use in an original text. For this reason, my translation lacks the same sense of place, dissidence, and group identity as the source text. Although I have endeavoured to eschew the strategy of standardisation as far as possible, any translation of a text containing slang performed using Global Youth Speak will necessarily resemble the standard variety of language more closely than the original. This is simply because the bank of colloquial, relaxed, speech-like language is not as extensive as that of any specific slang used by a group seeking to set

themselves apart from speakers of the standard language. The consequences of this slight standardisation have been softened, however, through my use of a playful style that frequently strays from standard colloquial usage. By manipulating the language at my disposal, I created a distinct rhythm in the translation that takes inspiration from the formation of slang and the features of rap lyrics. In doing so, I was able to bring the voices of banlieue youth from French into English without resorting to appropriation. Furthermore, I succeeded in maintaining an overall impression of the characters' resistance to flat and rigid language.

I would like to close this chapter with a final assessment of my own role in the creation and implementation of Global Youth Speak in the translation of *Moi non*. The discussions in these pages detail the techniques that I developed and the tools that I used to attempt to ensure the coherence of the strategy when applied throughout the translation. Despite my scrupulousness, I recognise the impossibility of guaranteeing complete consistency in all sections of the translation. As a translator who is also a human being, I am unable to remove myself entirely from the translation process and unwilling to claim that the translation that fills the pages of Volume 2 of this thesis is entirely flawless. Even if I have endeavoured to embody the voice of banlieue youth in my translation and to remove my own voice and style from the process, it is inevitable that cracks will be apparent in the veneer of my translation performance. I encourage readers of this thesis to observe and assess how the techniques I have described are applied across the length of a novel by consulting my translation of *Moi non*, contained in Volume 2. Following on from the theories that I summarised, analysed, and developed in this critical component, I hope that the translation can now speak for itself and demonstrate that Global Youth Speak is a viable option for the translation of fictional texts that showcase the repertoire of characteristics of the non-standard language used by marginalised youth.



# Conclusion

In Chapter 4, I referred to the work of Edwin Gentzler and Maria Tymockzo in which they relate the momentum that led to the launch of the Cultural Turn in translation studies. In full, this citation reads:

Frustrated that translation studies scholarship was spending so much effort analysing minute literary and linguistic differences, such that often the forest could not be seen for the trees, Bassnett and Lefevere wanted to *explain* the shifts that occur in translation, not just by poetic devices but by ideological forces as well.

(2002, p. xiii)

I have endeavoured to sidestep these shortcomings in my thesis and, in turn, to identify both the forest and the trees by adopting a combined macro and micro approach to the study of the translation of slang, reflective of my background as a teacher and student of translation, translation studies, and *traductologie*, in France and in Australia. In Part One, I laid the groundwork for a thorough analysis of the slang that appears in the source and translated texts in my corpus. By exploring theories of sociolinguistics related to the language of marginalised youth, I sought to garner a confident grasp of the features and functions of non-standard language in order to understand better the motivations behind its use. I also considered the range of changes that writers must or may make to the features of linguistic varieties used in real-

world situations when they transfer these varieties to fictional texts. My account of the concrete changes made to language in its voyage from one medium to another is complemented by a number of more abstract questions that should be contemplated, I proposed, when considering the shape that non-standard language takes in fiction. Finally, I drew parallels between the Hip-hop Movement and the feeling of relegation that tends to instigate young people's use of slang, and examined the stylistic devices used in rap lyrics.

I opened Part Two by shifting the focus to questions of translation, firstly by applying broader theories related to the function of source and translated texts and to the context in which they are produced, and secondly by studying the work of scholars dealing more specifically with the translation of sociolinguistic variety, of culture-bound lexis, of heterolingualism, and of music. I was able to build on the theories of translation and of sociolinguistics presented in the first four chapters of the thesis to create my own typology for the translation of slang, seeking to expand on and extend the existing work on the topic by incorporating ideas from a wider range of sources. Devoting a chapter to the banlieue before delving into the case studies presented in Part 3 allowed me to situate the source texts within the social, historical, and political context of their production, as well as within the body of fictional work to which they belong.

The discussions that framed the first two parts of the thesis culminate in Part Three when I sought to identify both the salient and specific aspects of a selection of texts set in the banlieue. The reflections that had preceded this series of analyses set the scene for a comprehensive means of interacting with the works as I aspired to unpack the use of slang in French and to gauge the shape of its translation into English. In this way, I studied the linguistic and extralinguistic features of the works in my corpus so that I could take into consideration the scope of the consequences that arise from the choices made by writers and translators.

At different stages of the thesis, I raised a number of complex and multifaceted questions related to the theories and texts under study, and intentionally left many of these open. Instead of offering a direct and definitive answer, I chose to respond to these issues through inferences or hypotheses, or otherwise through a recognition of the vast range of answers available. This

decision was made consciously, since I acknowledge that reactions to texts vary depending on a number of factors, and especially on the position and point of view of each individual reader. At this juncture, it is fitting to return to a selection of these questions which seem to me to be pertinent for the reader of this thesis wishing to pursue the line of thought that has led us here. Firstly, I will devote some attention to the perceived “translatability” of texts characterised by a marked presence of slang. It became increasingly apparent through my presentation and analysis of the various theories and perspectives in the thesis that it is impossible for the language of the translated text to perform the same functions in suggesting a character’s physical and political place in society in the same way as the language of the original text, regardless of the strategy selected.

When the use of a particular type of language (slang, in this case) serves to anchor a text firmly in one time and place, and to represent the speech habits of a particular group of people within the source culture, the translation of this language raises a number of questions, both concrete and abstract. One might be inclined to see slang in particular as “untranslatable” or to focus on the loss involved in its translation, but I argue that the adoption of such a perspective is detrimental to constructive study. Certainly, the language of translation cannot be expected to suggest the exact characteristics of the speakers in their original context. Nevertheless, the translator is able to use various techniques so that a number of these suggestions are maintained, even if their form and shape will inevitably be altered, and in such a way that the language can still function, and indeed flourish, in translation. This reasoning also led me to avoid applying the word compensation in my discussions of the translation of slang. I believe that the idea according to which translated texts should necessarily be required to “compensate” for something is an inherently negative stance which assumes the perspective of inevitable loss rather than focusing on the potential for the language of the source text to perform in a satisfying, and indeed pleasing, manner in the translated text. Texts which provide ample space for the presence of slang are unquestionably “translatable”, through mindful and resourceful decision-making on the part of the translator.

Furthermore, I believe that the perceived impossibility of translating slang should be considered in a positive light, since it indicates the courageous and opinionated stance of the writers of such culture-specific texts. These writers are committed to giving a voice to individuals who use language that differs from the standard, and literary, style of language which is often included in literature, and this in spite of the inevitable loss they will encounter through a change in language. Since, as we have seen, English is the primary language of global conversation, writers who seek international success require their work to be translated into English. In order to facilitate this process, they might be inclined to avoid using language that could prove either stylistically difficult in translation or overly specific to the source culture in a way that might hinder interlingual and intercultural travel. With regards to the latter, they might choose to offer material that can be swiftly slotted into the “global conversation” as we saw in the comments by Tim Parks.

Parks expounds on these ideas of the translatability of texts destined for an international audience in an essay featured in his book *Where I'm Reading From*, suggesting that the content and style of the “global novel” is affecting writing practices:

[...] there is a spirit abroad, especially in the world of fiction, that is seeking maximum communicability and that has fastened onto the world's present lingua franca as something that can be absorbed and built into other vernaculars so that they can continue to exist while becoming more easily translated into each other.

(2014, p. 200)

We can see echoes of his views in the words of Zadie Smith. In an interview with Synne Rifberg at the Louisiana Literature Festival in 2013, Smith responds to a question about the sense of place she manages to instil in her novels by offering fervent arguments in favour of presenting readers with a “genuine” snapshot of the place being portrayed. She refers to what she calls the “blank international novel” and the growing trend in literature to write texts that will appeal to a global audience, stripped of their local specificity:

Because we're aware that novels are published globally and are translated globally, there is a way you can kind of flatten out the prose. First of all, so that it's comprehensible everywhere, in every zone. And you can also try to flatten out place, so that your basic international global reader travel person can recognise the basic cities... But I like things that are really, genuinely local. And

you have to have a little faith that a reader will come to that locality and try to have it in their brain and try to comprehend it.

(2013, online)

It is likely that Smith would therefore approve of the use of slang to help instil a sense of place in a text, and I believe that Global Youth Speak is an appropriate means of minimising the negative repercussions of other strategies that might overly simplify or efface the functions of the use of slang in the source text.

It would like to insist here on the fact that I am advocating for the use of this strategy in the context of translation, and not in original acts of writing. Without going so far as to suggest that translated texts should be considered as subsidiary texts, I argue that a translation should seek to uphold its foreign roots and, as such, offer a rendition of the source text that pays testament to its uniqueness. The individuality of a text which features slang is entrenched in a type of language which delivers a sense of the text's specificity and its setting. Through the strategy that I propose for the translation of slang, and for banlieue slang in particular, I seek to maximise the potential for the voice of marginalised youth to travel further afield, allowing it to enter into a global (one might say globalised) space while retaining aspects of its playfulness and dissidence. However, I believe that texts with the potential to resonate more loudly with small groups of people through the use of a specific variety of language should continue to be written in such specific language, and that the strategy I propose might be used to make them available to readers without access to the initial text.

It is important to recognise that a translated text will necessarily perform for foreign audiences in a way that differs from how an untranslated text will perform for the first audience and, additionally, to reiterate that this first audience is comprised of people who do not necessarily master the variety featured in the text. As such, even within the first audience, the source text will encounter a vast range of reactions. A translator cannot reproduce the possibility of these varied responses, but, in identifying the function of the stylistic choices made by the writer, they can endeavour to establish solutions that reflect these choices and that allow the translated text to honour the form of the source text. The arguments that I have put forward here are indicative of the way in which I envisage the goal and the role of translation. I have

explained my own views, but acknowledge that the angle from which another translator may approach the translation of a text such as *Moi non* or the analysis of the translations in my corpus may be shaped by a contrasting perception of the essence of translation.

There are, of course, innumerable and intricate opinions on the role of translation, but I would like to return to three distinct approaches visible in the translation theory and the case studies I have presented in the thesis. Firstly, translation can be viewed as a port of entry to the original text and/or to the context it depicts, not intended to stand alone as a new text but rather to support the source text. Secondly, one might consider that a translation should act as a replacement for the source text, providing foreign audiences with a version in their language that can function in its own right. Finally, one might see translation as an opportunity for intervention or activism, and, as such, seek to draw attention the foreignness of the work, to increase the visibility of the translator or of the act of translation, or to play with the foundations of the language of translation. Establishing the aim of a translation is already a question that divides translators and scholars of translation, and the debate is arguably complexified when it comes to determining the effectiveness and appropriateness of the strategies and techniques implemented as part of this thesis to allow the translated text to fulfil its allocated role.

I stated at the beginning of the thesis that the use of slang by marginalised youth might be seen as a linguistic performance of identity. Throughout the thesis, I have made use on several occasions of the metaphor of theatre or of performance when discussing the different ways in which slang can be presented to audiences. I would like to return to this concept now by unpacking more explicitly the *mise en abyme* of the performative process of banlieue slang. The first instance of the performance of slang adopts the streets and spaces of the banlieue as its stage: marginalised youth bend the rules of the language promoted by dominant social groups in an act of rebellion. Their use of non-standard language constitutes a conscious or unconscious expression of identity, among peers and occasionally in front of outsiders. When banlieue slang is included in fictional texts, it might be seen as a performance of a performance conducted by a writer or a text producer, which provides the voice with a broader audience, but in an altered, sanitised state.

If this slang is rendered in another language for a foreign audience, the translator becomes engaged in a performance (translation) of a performance (slang in fiction) of a performance (expression of identity).

With each separate performance of banlieue slang comes a new audience, and a new performer. This process inevitably involves a gradual increase of the dilution of the initial voice, since the personal identity of subsequent performers necessarily seeps through each production. The translation that I have produced of *Moi non* has required me to perform the foreign voice of an author by bringing it into my own language, just as Patrick Goujoun's performance took on the voice of a series of characters whose existence he conjured up in his mind and gave life to on the page. Despite his attempt to remove himself from the performance and to adopt fully the voice of the characters he has invented, his writing necessarily contains traces of his own identity since it is dictated by his own style as a writer and by his background as a human being who is fluent in two varieties of one language. The same can be said of my translation: I have striven to remove myself from the performance, but there is necessarily a remainder of sorts. My choices are influenced by my style as a translator and as a writer and by my background as a human being fluent in two languages.

In 1961, Kenneth Tynan argued that "two schools of thought dispute the field of Western acting": on the one hand sat Constantin Stanislavsky whose "deep-burrowing naturalism" was practised in American theatres, and, on the other, theatre-makers in East Berlin wielded the rejection of illusion found in Bertolt Brecht's "Epic Theatre" in an explicit espousal of detachment (1961, p. 87). He sums up the opposing approaches as follows:

"You are in a drawing-room," says Stanislavsky to his audience,

"watching life."

"You are in a theatre," says Brecht,

"witnessing actors."

(ibid)

Based on the two statements offered by Tynan, we might apply this contrast to the act of translation. I argued in Chapter 4 that the binary divisions that characterise many discussions in translation studies can be more aptly viewed

as a spectrum rather than as two distinct counterparts. I further suggested all strategies used in translation can be placed somewhere on the scale between the two opposing ends, and that the techniques implemented within an overall strategy may also fluctuate between the two without the need to consistently equate each choice with the overall approach adopted. In line with this reasoning and this theatre-related discourse, I believe that it is possible to assert that the majority of the techniques employed in the strategy used to translate *Moi non* lean further towards the mentality proposed by Stanislavsky than that put forward by Brecht.

In my translation, I have adopted an approach that favours fluency. However, the means through which I achieved fluency in my translation differ from the strategies that governed the translations of the other banlieue texts studied in this thesis, undertaken in commercial contexts. The fact that I translated the novel within the context of a PhD thesis allowed me to establish and employ my own strategy to translate the slang in *Moi non*. The numerous players involved in the translation process mentioned by Holz-Mänttari (the initiator, the commissioner, the source-text producer, the target-text producer, the target-text user, and the target-text receiver) did not form part of the picture for me: I was the sole player, able to take on the roles of these different entities and individuals by myself, all at once.

Tynan identifies three main parties involved in the performance of theatre texts: “Dramatists utilise acting styles, and playhouses preserve them, but directors create them” (1961, p. 87). If we were to attribute these three roles to players in the translation process, we could say that the dramatist Tynan mentions is the translator, that the playhouse is the publishing house, and that the director is the editor or the commissioner. In my translation, I have been able to play the role of both the dramatist and the director, since, in a sense, I wrote the brief for my own translation, and subsequently developed techniques to support the strategy I chose for translating *Moi non*. If this strategy were to be utilised by other translators, I might, to extend the analogy further, also become the publishing house.

In contrast to the naturalism overarching my approach to the translation in the second volume of the thesis, this first volume, and especially its final two chapters, might be seen as a reflection of Brecht’s approach to

theatre-making: I have endeavoured to draw attention to the artifice of translational performance and to shed light on the decision-making process that led to the production of the translated text contained in Volume 2. Tynan quotes Brecht in his book as having described his approach to theatre-making in the following manner:

... don't show him too much

But show him something. And let him observe

That this is not magic but

Work, my friends.

(Brecht in Tynan 1961, p. 460)

Therefore, in Brechtian terms, after having shown “something”, and before showing “too much”, I would now like to close the curtains on the first act of the thesis. As I open the curtains to the second, this production moves from a performance of theory to a performance of practice, staged within the pages of Volume 2. These two volumes, I believe, form a complementary whole.



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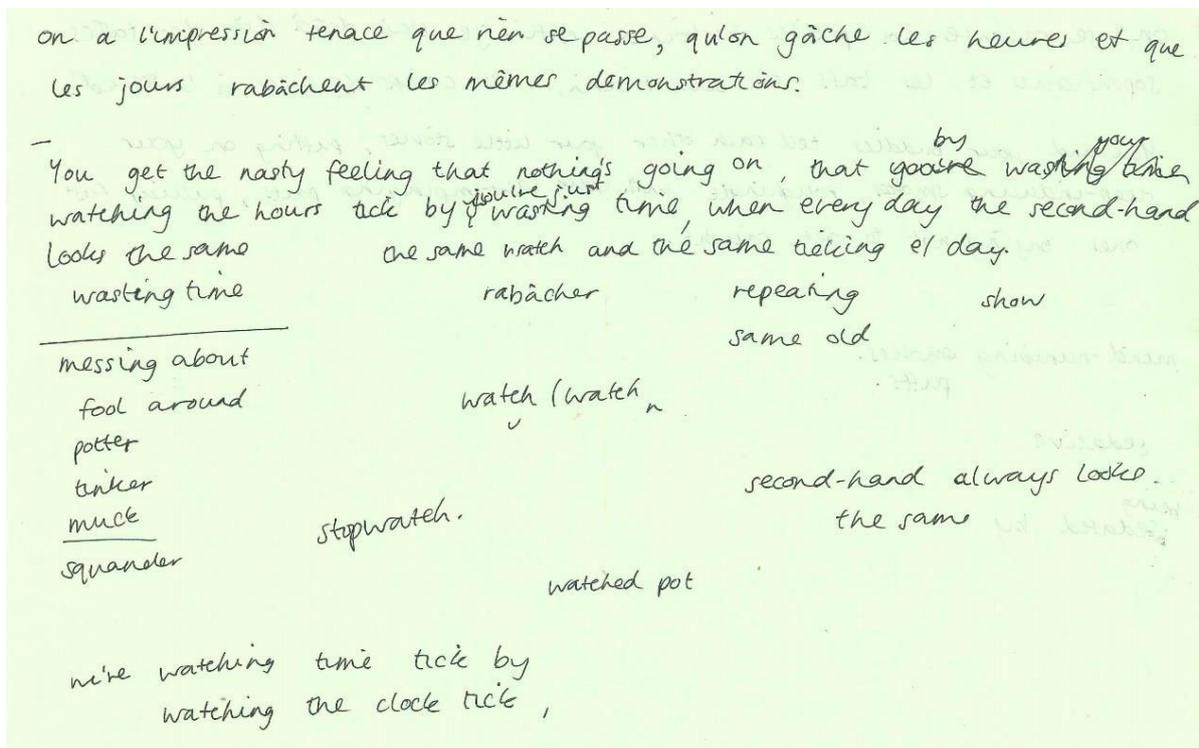


# ***Appendices***



# Appendix 1: Translator's Notes on Paper

The images contained in this appendix are samples of the pen-to-paper brainstorming process that lead to the creative solutions adopted to translate the playful and challenging use of words, phrases, and rap lyrics.



avec le caisson de basses dans le coffre,  
faudrait que j'aie plus de coffre encore  
pour greuler ma question

beat the beat	to be heard	place.
roaring / roar / raw	base / bass	face
surround / around		case
pour / pour / paw.	subwoofer	raco.
hear	howl like a dog	purr / cat.
ask	purr of the subwoofer	
scar / saw	howl and not meow X	
	fowl owl	
	growl	
beat / seat		

beat / seat / neat

The subwoofers thumping in the back <sup>seat</sup> and "do  
have to yell pretty loud(ly) for my gn

The bass is p. loud in the back + my gn ~~have~~  
~~to be p.~~ I'd really have to yell for ~~them~~  
to ~~hear~~ <sup>beat</sup> my gn over the beat

on se raconte nos petites histoires, enfin je t'ai déjà dit, les taffes soporifiques et les tafs en sous-marin, les coups de vice à la scrod!

trade stories

soothing

trading under the table

dealing under the table

rolling

the soothing puffs, the

illicit

gimmick  
fast one

scuff  
scuffle

drag

cheating  
fooling  
swindling  
trickery

sneak

leak.

wheeling and dealing w/ no one  
down low on our heels  
keeping quiet <sup>backs</sup> lips are sealed.

covering up our tracks  
putting to relax

we trade stories, vice I said, about trading under the table; about smoking and joking, puffing to relax; about wheeling and dealing, covering our tracks.

Mon ami est mon paravent et d'ici que le type calcule je prends ma part avant.

hide / screen / shield      side / yield      <sup>coaster</sup> hide / hide      <sup>peau</sup> side / field      make my move / cried / side

conceal (seal)      figure out / cottons on      put two and two together

seal the deal      shield / He's got my back      while I seal the deal before the <sup>other</sup> guy can <sup>even</sup> scan the field.

Les taffes soporifiques et les tafs en sous-main, les coups de vices à la 'scred'.

putting on your sleep-inducing smokes  
 roughing it with your law-impinging pacts  
 pulling fast ones trying not to get caught

taffe	taf	soporifique
puff	job	sedative
drag	gig	sleep-inducing
pull	work	soporific

<sup>en</sup> sous-main  
 surreptitiously



insincerity  
bad faith  
hypocrisy  
dishonesty

on the wrong path  
track

sidetracked

La mauvaise voie  
La mauvaise foi

shattered  
shattered toy of  
a shattered boy

faith

dishonest  
distracted

wrong  
reflection  
wrong way

wrong  
direction

wrong  
way

insincere  
in the dear

here

mere

hear

fear

near

sear

dear

hear

# MC Preker.

Preker - précaire  
precarious

+ traduct<sup>n</sup> de noms propres → jeu de mots  
 ↓ suggest<sup>n</sup> / b sens sous-jacents  
 déplacement implicite

unstable  
 on the edge  
 volatile +  
 shaky

teetering  
 tottering  
 rickety  
 + Voler Tile  
 insecure

**#Shay key** ?

Ricket Tee

vulnerable  
trop compliquée  
~~Vut nr~~

perilous ?

Pairy Less. X

OPTIONS:

Shay key  
Voler Tile  
Ricket E.

nights / I don't know about me, where I'm going to go.

Je passe mes mains sur mon cou, je sens encore les doigts de mon père serrés tout autour.

For my part?

En ce qui me concerne, je sais pas où aller. Vivre aux crochets de la mère de Lionel est pas une solution durable... J'ai bien pensé à la mienne, de mère, mais la dernière fois que je l'ai vue, avec mon frère, j'avais douze piges, c'était pour Noël. Même mon frangin, le seul souvenir valable que j'en ai, il est en train de prendre ma défense et s'oppose à son meilleur ami qui veut pas me laisser jouer tranquillement à la console de jeux.

J'arrive pas à ravalier ma fierté, c'est mon problème, ça me fait défaut pour dénicher des issues de secours... Je déteste la vie pour ne pas ressembler à ses pubs de produits miracles *Avant / Après*. Quand tu vois la photo d'un gros chasseur dans le journal, qui se retrouve en clou avec une touffe, j'aimerais parler, et parler encore, pour me sentir maître de mes problèmes l'instant d'après.

LEXIQUE  
MUSICAL  
Vocabulaire

Ma première visite de studio, je la dois à El Mano. Un pote à lui enregistré un morceau et, si j'ai d'abord hésité à me joindre à Paul, c'était surtout à cause de ma honte de la dernière fois.

Dans mon imagination, un studio d'enregistrement ressemblait plutôt à ces gigantesques salles froides, un peu cliniques, en photos dans les livres à l'intérieur des CD. Le nôtre est plus modeste même s'il y a bien la console costaud avec tous ces boutons pour régler indépendamment chaque piste sonore. Un ingénieur est assis devant la machine pour aider à équilibrer le son. Juste en face, il y a l'artiste, dans la pièce insonorisée avec ses miroirs qui pendouillent et se croisent.

En l'occurrence, l'artiste, c'est Preker, Jay et El Mano le

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console table / mixing console  
mixing desk

vie off  
scab off  
sport off

arrivent / au ring  
pourquoi?  
pourquoi?  
pourquoi?

sound? / what  
sound? / what  
X sound track  
audio  
vix

get a wide out of  
balance out / even out.

18 | 05

his first EP? extended play

connaissent depuis qu'il a commencé à rapper, il y a plus de six ans. Aujourd'hui, il enregistre son premier maxi en espérant se faire connaître autrement qu'avec des apparitions sur les albums des autres et entamer une carrière solo. De lavis de Jay, Preker est une crème, un cent pour cent hip-hop qui ne vi que pour ça...

Nous voilà donc accueillis comme des messies. On s'assied dans des petits canapés, prêts pour les collaborateurs, et on pique de la bouffe et à boire sur une petite table. Preker prend cinq minutes pour plaisanter avec nous. El Mano lui demande *Alors, comment ça se passe ? Oh, c'est chiant. Pour pas changer.*

Je demande pourquoi. Je vois pas bien comment ça pourrait être aussi emmerdant d'enregistrer un disque.

*Bah, ça a rien à voir avec les concerts ou quand tu presses juste pour le plaisir. Ça colle la peau du cul de bouer ça endroit à la journée alors c'est galère, t'es obligé d'être supercarrié, pour rater un minimum de prises.*

Jay ajoute *Tu es fionne... C'est la ruine sinon !*

*Ça pourrait pas être pire... Entre ça et le passage des disques, j'ai déchiré toutes mes économies. Bon, faut que je m'y mette.*

Preker passe dans l'autre salle. Il fait absolument qu'il boucle son morceau d'ici demain matin. C'est tout le truc qu'il a gagné dans son boulot de manutentionnaire à mi-temps qui se joue maintenant. Tous les câblons qu'il a vides, tous les cartons qu'il a portés, tous les tire-palles qu'il a trainés, tous les jours où il se levait à trois heures du mat' pour aller bosser et se faire engueuler comme un esclave, c'est tout ça qu'il mise dans sa partie de poker. Soit ça marche pour lui, soit il retourne se coltiner la merde.

J'ai jamais vu quelqu'un phraser comme lui. Bien sûr, j'ai vu des mecs se défoncer au micro, prendre un panard

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smash it all together for the  
give it all together for the  
solidarity made

avec le caisson de basse dans ce coffre, faudrait que j'aie plus de coffre encore pour greuler ma question

bellow  
below

purred/heard  
beheard  
herd  
bass  
base

in the back  
behind  
kind find  
mind

thumping  
beat

boof  
trunk.

Jump | thump/pump

loud allowed  
sound round  
mud  
around

yell  
scream  
shout

volume  
quer the  
volume, to  
id have to  
turn it up a  
notch-

beat

deafening

boombox  
subwoofer

surround sound/  
bound.

pound  
thud

rap

bawl  
blare

purr  
spur

speaker

throb pulse

loud  
strong

roar  
raw

can

with the beats  
thumping behind,

blast

my  
quid need  
to be  
louder  
to

id need more  
comph to beat  
the beats

loud  
roar

John Fante

paumé

messed up  
lost  
out of it  
spaced out  
unplugged

got no idea  
clueless  
disconnected

on tombe comme des mouches

we're dropping like flies

fly drop not a drop of pity  
at our funeral

no tears will be dropping  
at our funeral.

not a tear  
will drop.

if we're spaced out, a waste of  
space

DROP

mouch /  
mouchoir

↓  
paumé  
pomme

drop → die. → drop <sup>sim</sup> <sub>drop</sub> like flies

sim.  
↓  
même le radical  
le changement de son  
changement complet de  
sens

there'll be no tears when we  
drop and die.  
~~there no tears'll drop  
when we die.~~

-192-

gommer /degommer

on est paumés, on compte pour  
des pommes

worth no  
more than?

lost stray adrift  
fucked off course  
screwed helpless  
lost souls damned  
drop outs flunk.

- les langues de putes se touchent  
et nous gommen  
- la vie est tellement conne des  
fois qu'on peut degommer son  
voisin

kill erase  
knock off  
aim at

on tombe comme des mouches,  
pas de mouchoirs quand on  
meurt

the bitch talk spiteful tongues  
one bitching touch  
dirt dished

falling  
we're dropping like flies  
no tears when we die

all the dirt dished piles up and  
buries us, life's so shit  
sometimes we can ditch <sup>bing</sup>  
our neighbours

fly v/n.

↓  
shit

on a l'impression tenace qui  
ne se pass, qu'on gâche  
les heures et que les jours  
rabâchent les mêmes  
démonstrations

waste time  
haste / paste  
waist / placed  
chased / taste  
faced

You get the nasty feeling that  
nothing's going <sup>happening</sup> on, that  
you're  
You feel like

feeling reeling ceiling  
concealings wheelings  
appealing

just watching the clock  
chime

## Homographs

game duck even  
remote ground light  
lie mean pound  
race ring jet  
wasted

same shit, different day  
? You get the nasty feeling  
that <sup>it's</sup> you're ~~working~~  
you're headed nowhere  
you're well aware

~~sharply own <sup>more</sup> feelings made  
of stone  
or else after six years down  
and you'll find me with scissors  
in my head  
blood bath for a bed.~~

## Homophones

air/there eye/I bare/bear  
bel/bee brace/break buy/by  
cell/sell cent/scent<sup>sent</sup> fair/face  
heat/heel knot/not know/no  
maid/made meat/meet  
maining/morning none/num  
car/or one/two peace/piece  
prophet/profit pray/prey  
plane/plain real/reel  
night/wate sail/sale send/so/w  
ream/reem share/sure  
sight/site sole/soul some/soun  
stair/stare steal/steel san/sun  
tail/tale their/there to/too  
toe/tow waist/waste  
wait/weight weak/week  
wear/where

# Tanplain

# DIORSTORE

#1 Temps plein      full time      à temps plein  
 #2 Partemps      #2      major dep store?      imposs to rep. in Eng

Dior = bore / more / drawer / poor / store / sure  
 door / sore / galore / tore / wore / war  
 employe / adore / flaw  
 store / claw

Major international dep. stores / European / French

males + specul

Zara	H&M	Prada	Bucci
Christian Dior		<u>Armani</u>	versace
Chanel		LV	Tiffany + Co.
Topshop		Uniqlo	Burberry
			YSL

Dior

at Diorstore

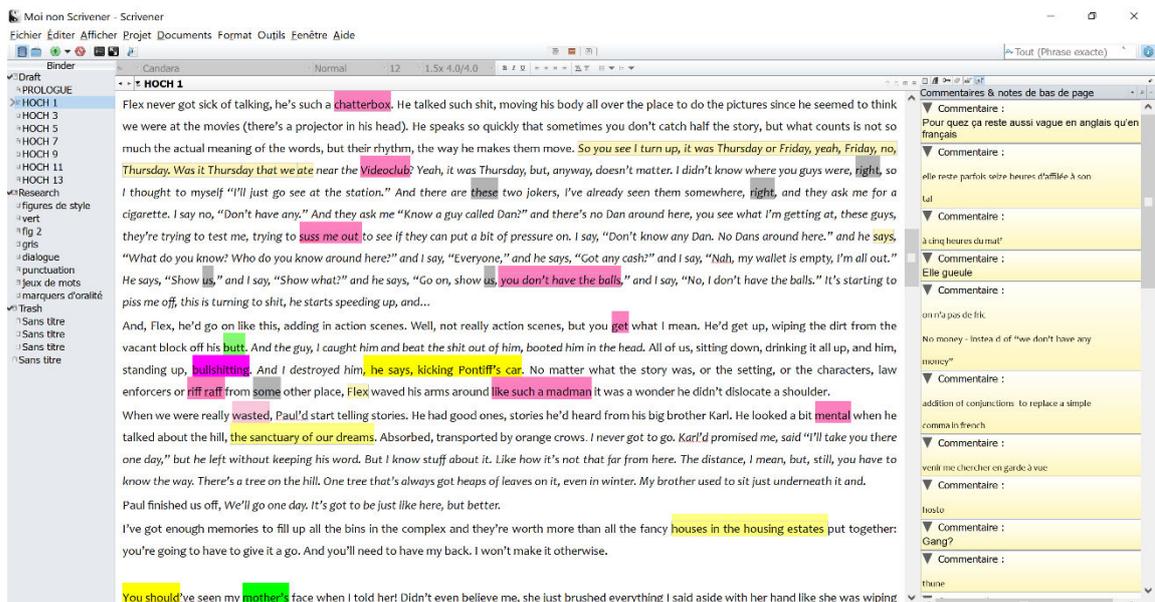
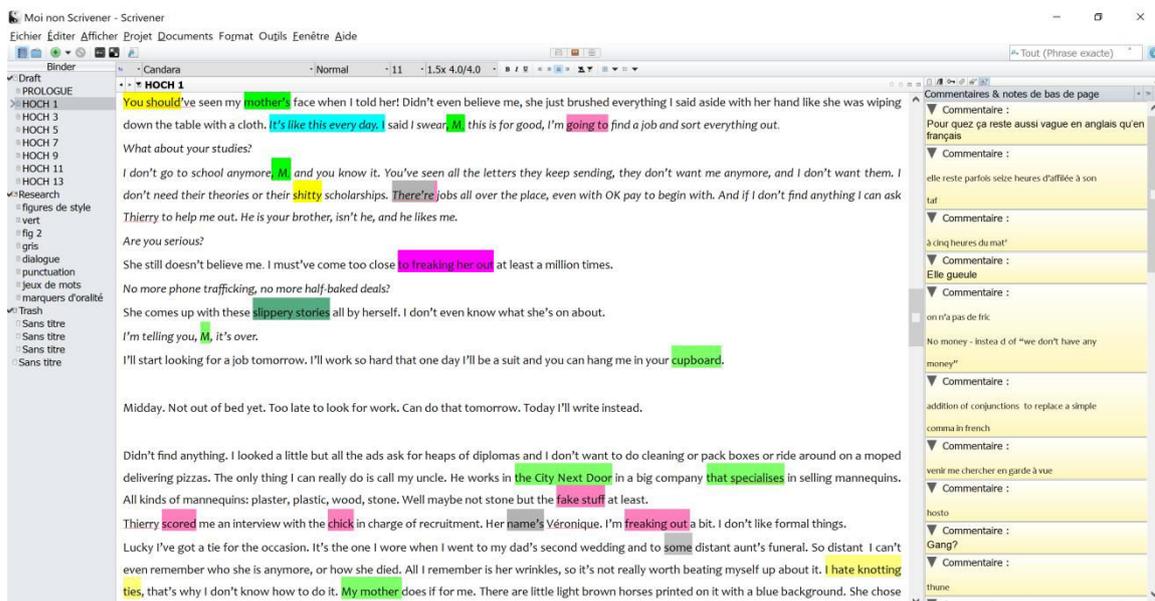
CHANEL →

can fan than

sham

# Appendix 2: Scrivener

As I explained in Chapter 9, I wrote the first draft of the translation using the programme Scrivener. Below are two examples from Chapter 1 of the novel that illustrate the commenting and highlighting system I developed to keep track of the challenges I faced in implementing Global Youth Speak.



## Appendix 3: Avoiding Marked Standard Lexis

As stated in Chapter 9, I generally avoided using standard lexis from any one English, in line with the concept of Global Youth Speak. Below are the tables that I created, organised into categories based on the type of solution I adopted.

### 1. Using a general term to translate

Original	Possible translations	Chosen translation	Notes
rez-de-chaussé	ground floor, first floor	at the bottom	Avoids picking one or the other and provides a clear image of location
culotte	knickers, panties	underwear, undies	Use of the more neutral term
terrain vague	vacant block, plot of land, wasteland	vacant block	Wasteland – potential intertextual reference? not present in French block more UK than US?
coffre	boot, trunk	behind us	<i>Avec le caisson de basses dans le coffre</i> / With the subwoofer thumping behind us Transposition, location rather than object
canapé	couch, sofa, two-seater	chair	I chose to translate this hyponym by a hyperonym

## 2. Changing image while maintaining general idea

Original	Possible translations	Chosen translation	Notes
confiserie	candy store, sweets shop, lolly shop	chocolate shop	Chocolate shop is widely used across the globe and does not evoke a particular setting. Though the idea of “candy” or “sweets” is lost, the same idea of a store selling something sweet to eat and that is a treat for children is kept.
chips	chips, crisps	peanuts	I needed to identify a type of food that a person could easily snack on while watching television, and peanuts seemed a universal option and avoided the dilemma of having to choose between “crisps” and “chips.”
(different wordplay in original)	wardrobe, closet	cupboard	“I’ll work so hard that one day I’ll be a suit and you can hang me in your <b>cupboard</b> .” J’veis bosser dur et quand je serai cadre tu pourras m’accrocher dans le salon.
soda	soft/fizzy drink, soda	lemonade	Lemonade is a type of sugary drink with bubbles consumed across the globe and I feel that the limiting of the type of drink to a sort of soda did not considerably change or hamper the original image, deciding that the fact that they were drinking a non-alcoholic drink was the most important factor to maintain. I also did not wish to use a brand name, such as Coca Cola, despite its international distribution.
pantalon			Trousers? Mon pantalon à pinces p. 71 my dart suit bottoms Véronique portait un <b>pantalon</b> moulant beige et un petit haut bleu clair. P. 85 Véronique was wearing tight beige <b>bottoms</b> and a little light-blue top

cul/fesses	bum/butt ass/arse tail buns fanny	butt	Bum too UK/Aus, ass/arse US/UK, fanny means something else in UK English Butt – a word that has become more universally employed because of globalisation? Plus it is simply a contraction of the more clinical term buttocks.
------------	---	------	---

### 3. Admitting Defeat

Original	Possible translations	Chosen translation	Notes
ascenseur	lift/elevator	lift	UK option, consistent with UK spelling
parking	parking lot, parking garage, car park, parking spaces	car park	UK option, consistent with UK spelling
maman	mum/mon/ma/mam/mama etc.	mum	Mum is used in Britain/Canada/Aus/NZ Mom is used in the US, South Africa Mam Ireland/Wales I had originally decided to have Hoch refer to his mother as “M”, to avoid having to choose between one of the ways in which people refer to their mothers in the English-speaking world. Once I had made the decision to adopt UK spelling, however, and to use UK lexis to translate words such as <i>ascenseur</i> and <i>parking</i> , it seemed logical to use “mum”. I also concluded that the fact that “M” is not commonly used as a way of saying mother would add an idiosyncrasy to the character’s language that is not present in the original.

## Appendix 4: Translating Proper Nouns

When approaching the translation of proper nouns, I chose to translate those which carried meaning and/or which would appear obscure if left in French. A selection of the most frequent or prominent proper nouns are listed below, accompanied by an explanation of the solution adopted to translate them.

### *Pierre/Re-Pié*

Le mec à côté de Marc, c'est Pierre, mais il se fait appeler Re-Pié, sans doute en raison de l'air tendance qu'il essaie de se donner, un soupçon de Je nique la société qui passerait assez bien s'il était plus consistant qu'un boudoir.	The guy next to Marc, his name's Pierre, but he gets people to call him Pierro, probably to match this fashionable look he's going for, a hint of Fuck you, society, which might work a bit better if he weren't as thin as a piece of string.
---	--

I felt that it was important to find a way to make the name appear “fashionable” in English and leaving it in French would not have communicated what Hoch seems to consider to be a poor attempt on the character’s part to make himself look cool. “Pierro” seemed to me to be an appropriate choice.

### *Étanchée, Chipée*

Alors je l'ai emmenée à l'Étanchée, où bosse Chipée.	So I took her to The Quencher where Player works.
--	---

*Étancher*: satiate, satisfy, quench / *Chiper*: steal, rob, pinch, to get s.o. to fall in love with you

### *Tanplain*

This was the most difficult proper noun to translate since it contains several layers of wordplay:

- *Temps plein* / full time
- A modified version of *Printemps* in *verlan*: Goujon explained to me that he believed that it would be too obvious if he decided to use “*Temps prin*” or a similarly spelt version of the large and expensive department store Printemps,

so he decided to use *Tanplain* which bears traces of the play on words, but which creates a new one in the idea of *travailler à temps plein*.

- Another possible interpretation of the name could be in the idea of the job being a *tremplin*, a first position that would be a stepping stone to a more advanced job.

Finding a solution:

- Impossibility of maintaining the three perceived interpretations – compensation? Or accept loss? Create new wordplay with similar ideas?
  - *Je travaille à Tanplain / je travaille à temps plein*, impossibility of keeping this wordplay in English because of syntactical differences
    - “I work at Full Time”
    - I work at...
- Idea of Printemps, department store
  - Idea of consumerism, materialistic society
  - Version of The Body Shop
    - new play on words (mannequin, body), while still maintaining the idea of a department store / consumerism – and The Body Shop is an international corporation, known in many parts of the world, including France
    - Bawdy Shop (modified pronunciation of body too marked?)
    - The Noddy Shop
- Idea of *temps plein*
  - Fool Time (too obvious and pejorative)
  - Hours: 9-2-5
- Idea of conformity, normality
  - Hoch now works a full time job, like everyone else (quote “*toucher des thunes honnêtement, faire comme tout le monde*” p. 13)
  - Play with an expression linked to conformity? Sheep, crowd, follower, flock, shadow, imitation/mock
    - The Shadow Shop (sh)
    - The Flock Shop
    - “I work at...”
- Probably not really necessary to keep the possibility of this confusion (*travailler à temps plein* v. *travailler à Tanplain*) since it is not repeated throughout the novel and not as important as the other aspects of the wordplay
- Idea of *tremplin*
  - Bootstrap, initiation, stepping stone, springboard (bored)

# Appendix 5: External Input

The following pages contain samples of comments made by the native speakers of different Englishes or of French who proofread my translation

## Blair Hunniford

Blair Hunniford is British and speaks French. He read the first half of my translation, narrated by Hoch, and indicated where he found the language unclear or markedly American.

Outside of writing, my world is restricted to a few common places. Conversations in foyers, road trips to the City next door, football games between the Caddies to make the cages, mayo/white sauce sandwiches, experiences with chicks. All these images are dotted in my head like magnets on a fridge. Whenever I **get snacky**, I pick on a thumbnail to feed myself. And, straight away, I feel much better. Like when we'd have our evening chats. We'd smoke and our worries seemed so far away that after we could fuck around for hours.

Flex never got sick of talking, he's such a chatterbox. He talked such shit, moving his body all over the place to do the pictures since he seemed to think we were at the movies (there's a projector in his head). He speaks so quickly that sometimes you don't catch half the story, but what counts is not so much the actual meaning of the words, but their rhythm, the way he makes them move. So you see I turn up, it was Thursday or Friday, yeah, Friday, no, Thursday.

When we were really **tripping**, Paul'd start telling stories. He had good ones, stories he'd heard from his big brother Karl. He looked a bit mental when he talked about the hill, the sanctuary of our dreams. Absorbed, transported by orange crows. I never got to go. Karl'd promised me, said "I'll take you there one day," but he left without keeping his word. But I know stuff about it. Like how it's not that far from here. The distance, I mean, but, still, you have to know the way. There's a tree on the hill. One tree that's always got heaps of leaves on it, even in winter. My brother used to sit just underneath it and.

Paul finished us off, We'll go one day. It's got to be just like here, but better.

I've got enough memories to fill up all the bins in the complex and they're worth more than all the fancy houses in the housing estates put together: you're going to have to give it a go. And you'll need to have my back. I won't make it otherwise.

I told you that Tamplain was fifteen stories high. I was actually wrong; there are three more dug into the ground. I had figured that the buttons -1, -2 and -3 must lead somewhere but the **parking lots** seemed to take up the entire surface. There's actually another wing reserved for staff, accessible only by the goods lift. Five or six guys sweat it out underground and it's all pretty far removed from the world of sales.

'Whenever I have the munchies'? I'm assuming this is to avoid a UK/US word - I think 'munchies' is pretty universal?

Blair Hunniford  
What does 'tripping' mean? It's definitely American.

American.

## Bill Johnston

Bill Johnston is British and lives in the United States, where he works as a professional translator of literary fiction from Polish and French and as a professor at Indiana University. He read and commented on the first chapter of my translation within the framework of the Middlebury Bread Loaf Translators' Conference in Vermont in June 2018. The first three pages reproduced below provide a snapshot of his approach to editing my work.

Extracts from *Moi non*, by Patrick Goujon, translated by Tiffane Levick

3988 words

Don't stick any labels on me, don't try and classify me – there's nothing true about me.

### 1. Hoch

You shouldn't think it's always been like this. There've been good times, and when you don't think too much about what you're doing, even now times aren't that bad. I'm not saying the facts aren't grim, like with that girl yesterday – I just think that if no one's doing you any favours, it's only natural you don't do anyone any favours either.

Imagine one day, you go out in the street, and for no reason, without any warning, someone slaps you in the face. And imagine, you turn the other cheek and then they lay another one on you, a smack in the face like nothing you've ever felt before – what do you do? Do you keep on going, begging *Leave me alone, I don't know you*, and just suck it up, while the blows keep coming and you're there wondering when it'll all end? I'm not one for violence, or for fighting evil with evil, but I'm not going to hold it against you if the next time you go out in the street you're not all smiles. If the next time someone humiliates you or steals something from you that took you ten years of working like a dog to buy, I'm not going to hold it against you if you decide to defend yourself with your fists, or with a weapon or whatever else. And, you know, the saddest thing about it is it's all just for show. If it were just physical abuse or a lack of safety I was talking about, then I could deal with that – all you've got to do is learn how to box to protect yourself and then it's each for their own. But what I'm talking about here is subtler forms of violence – the kinds you don't see out of the corner of your eye, like a knife handle. It's reactions to those kinds of violence that I'd like to weigh up. I'd like you to get your head around the fact that when the

blows come out of nowhere and they cover your heart with bruises, that's exactly where you send them: back to nowhere.

I'm mad, you see, but I'm also scared, and I also feel guilty.

I could come up with explanations, why every day we're pushed into the same old shit, but I don't feel like playing lawyers. And, plus, all that's just hot air. The only thing that's really certain is that I can't deal with the consequences anymore. Seeing Paul beating the crap out of that innocent chick, straight away, I realised ~~that~~ it was all over for me. I don't get why he lost it like that, and I don't want to know. My mother paces back and forth in the hallway waiting for me every night and every night I don't give a shit. But, you know, it seems a bit stupid to say this, but I really do care about her. It's not like it's life-changing stuff or anything, but you can tell by the silly little things she does – like how sometimes she slaves away at work for sixteen hours straight when it's actually illegal but her boss waves cash in her face and she works double shifts so that the shoes she buys me don't make me look too ridiculous. You can also tell by the fact that when I get home at five in the morning, my plate's still sitting on the table and there's food in the microwave, even though I haven't called to say I won't be home for dinner. My mother complains a lot. She complains because we've got no money, because she's the only one paying the rent. And it's not even my father's fault – his wage is so measly that the child support doesn't even pay the phone bill.

My mother's going to get old someday. She's already on her way. And there's no way I want her being assaulted for an empty handbag. <sup>That's</sup> This is what I'm getting at, about feeling guilty – that girl yesterday, she could've been my mother. Things could've gone wrong, too. This is what I'm getting at, about being scared. It would've killed my mother to have had to come and get me from prison or to sit by my bedside in the hospital.

I'm leaving the crew. I've got to try. There's another life out there for me. Working an honest job, making an honest living, doing the same shit everyone else does. Plus at least then I'll be able to look at myself in the mirror when I write poetry. When I say *I want to get out of this*,

my actions'll match my words. I still feel the hate, you know, but I've really got to do something else with it. I have faith.

I can smell it from here – the look on their mugs when I talk about poetry. Right from the get-go, they start <sup>?</sup>rooting around, sneering. What kind of little gems're there in his work? He can't even string a sentence together. Sometimes they zone out, other times they go off on tangents.

They study the questions, in this case mine, and try to understand when actually there's nothing <sup>? there? in it?</sup> underneath.

Nothing to understand. I take out my sheet of paper and I scribble. Alone. It's kind of like I'm masturbating with my pen. It's a need, a release. Like how I refuse to write something about the green grass or the blue sky, seeing as though I'm blinded by concrete and asphalt all day long.

I write because I have to, because I have to find the answers. If you really want to know, and <sup>stays between...</sup> this stays between us, I write because I'm desperate. I'm desperately in love with someone, but I don't know who. So I can't lie, can't cheat. They have to be my words, not some puppet's. I'm not one of those pen whores, looking to make their mark in some literary movement with their phoney, snobby, flashy prose.

That's what poetry is for me. The cool thing about it is that, even if the <sup>?</sup> syntax or the content's not right, there're so many ways to make the words sing, to mix them up, even make them up – it's always there to stop you cheating yourself. But don't think I'm going to go writing a long piece with that kind of language! No matter how honest it might be, they don't give a fuck.

Outside of writing, my world is <sup>?</sup> restricted to a few ordinary places. Conversations in foyers, road trips to the City Next Door, football games using supermarket trolleys to make the goal <sup>?</sup> cages, <sup>?</sup> mayo/white sauce sandwiches, <sup>?</sup> girl stories – all these images are dotted in my head like magnets on a fridge. Whenever I get the munchies, I pick on a thumbnail to feed myself. And

## Morgan Levick

My brother Morgan Levick read the first chapter and added occasional comments or suggestions. He is Australian and does not speak French.

Do you keep on going, begging *Leave me alone, I don't know you*, and just suck it up, while the blows keep coming and you're there wondering when it'll all end? I'm not one for violence, or for fighting evil with evil, but I'm not going to hold it against you if the next time you go out in the street you're not all smiles. If the next time someone humiliates you or steals something from you that it took you ten years of working like a dog to buy, I'm not going to hold it against you if you decide to defend yourself with your fists, or with a weapon or whatever else. And, you know, the saddest thing about it is it's all just for show. If it were just physical abuse or a lack of safety I was talking about then I could cope with that; all you've got to do is learn how to box to protect yourself and then it's (each for their own) (EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF). But what I'm talking about here are subtler forms of violence, the kinds you don't see out of the corner of your eye, like a knife handle. It's reactions to those kinds of violence cause that I'd like to weigh up. I'd like you to get your head around the fact that when the blows come out of nowhere and they cover your heart with bruises, that's exactly where you send them back: nowhere.]

I felt like explaining right then and there, before he left, what level he was on. But what good would it do? There was so much of him in those poems that he was bound to identify with them. So much truth in what I had written. You know that I never lie. You can read the truth within my lines, not between them. Even if it means sacrificing modesty, I don't really care, but I already told you that, you can only grow up when you believe. Anyway, if there's one thing I'm sure of, but it's not really that important, it's that the people who can't identify with my poems couldn't care less. Just like they (couldn't) (DON'T) give a shit about the kids at the bottom of my building; the ones playing football in the mud who'll never be world champions.

# Marine Riou

Marine Riou is French and fluent in English. She read and commented on a selection of passages of rap.

FLEX 11

Tous dans la même galère, tous avec la même toux sèche, / tous soudés et unis chaque fois qu'tombe cette putain d'panne sèche. J'prêche la bonne parole dans le rap et c'est pour ça qu'j'repêche / mon prochain quand il dérape et dégringole en flèche / J'peux pas le laisser dans la dèche, j'peux pas le laisser sur la brèche, je suis El Mano rimes fraîches / Mc Ardent Narcissique Ouvertement j'empêche / le débutant de cramer quand j'ai allumé la mèche !

All in the same boat, all with the same sore throat / all stick together, united, when one can't hit the right note. I promote the good word in my rap and that's why I don't demote / my neighbour when he starts sinking, struggling to stay afloat / I can't leave him adrift in the moat, can't leave him out there to bloat, I'm El Mano and these are rhymes you can quote / Mc Ardent Narcissistic Openly I vote / the new guy won't drown when I started this anecdote!

MR

**Marine Riou**

Je propose « lame boat » pour rajouter un beat et que les deux premières phrases se ressemblent plus. En plus le fait de rendre de nouveau créative la métaphore « to be in the same boat » en ajoutant un mot peut de permettre de compenser pour un truc qui se perd plus loin

FLEX 13

Le thème c'est j'veux pas crever avant d'kiffer / avant de me faire bouffer par les vers, bouffer des tonnes de versets.

Je veux pas me sentir enfermé, l'cœur en ciment en si peu d'temps / m'retrouver dans une peau que je kifferais pas, du vent / sur mes couplets, dans les poches de mes vêtements / le regard fatigué et froid de ceux qui squattent les bancs, mais bon / c'est comme ça nos vies, on pense qu'à se plaindre et à se tirer d'ici / c'qu'est toujours mieux que se tirer dessus / J'ai vu tellement de rêves échouer dans le décor / embourber des hommes et des femmes sans même leur donner la mort / les r'garder droit dans les yeux, sans même les plisser / leur dire « à compter d'aujourd'hui ton seul bonheur s ra

The theme is I don't want to perish before I cherish / before being a feast for birds, I want to feast on endless words.

I don't want to feel trapped in this urban sprawl, heart like a stone wall in no time at all / end up with a skin I don't want to be in, scrawl / lyrics as thin as the clothes under my chin, crawl / tired and cold, like drifters idling in a hall, but, after all / that's our life, we think only of complaining and of escaping on the next bullet train / which is always better than putting a bullet in the brain / I've seen so many dreams drown with the fish / crush men and women, not even grant their death wish / look them straight in the eyes and not even blink / tell them "from now on your only pleasure will be smelling your

MR

**Marine Riou**

Super bien trouvé pour la rime et le rythme !! Mais dommage que de nouveau ta version soit moins familière en termes de style. Peut-être remplace « I don't want » par « don't wanna » ou un truc du style pour compenser ? Si tu as choisi de ne pas utiliser de formes contractées du type wanna gonna etc., tu peux au moins jouer sur l'éllision du sujet quand il s'agit de « I », je ne crois pas que ça soit très très marqué régionalement ... ?

MR

**Marine Riou**

Sinon autre idée : jouer sur la rime « kick the bucket » et « sonnet » (qui du coup redonne un effet plus oral et familier) Et je propose un verbe du type « splurge » ou « binge » plutôt que « feast », encore une fois pour une question de registre de langue

MR

**Marine Riou**

Je trouve qu'il y a au moins un beat en trop, non ? je veux dire par rapport aux phrases précédentes

d'aller pisser ».

Le thème c'est j'veux pas crever avant d'kiffer / avant de me faire bouffer par les vers, bouffer des tonnes de versets.

On est des étoiles filantes alors filons / déchirons la toile comme un bas Nylon, nions que nous n'irons jamais au paradis, même sans un radis / la vie est ici, pillons ce jardin d'Éden dégarni / Je n'irai pas là où vont les autres gens / je nierai chaque fois que me parlera un agent / Je n'ai que mes feuilles mes amis mes yeux et mes pieds / la transcription de tout ça se retrouve dans mes papiers, j'épiais / le mouvement, la solitude, le temps le bon comme le mauvais, celui qu'on a pas, celui qu'on vend / Je veux gifler la vie

shit stink"

The theme is I don't want to perish before I cherish / before being a feast for birds, I want to feast on endless words.

We're shooting stars so let's shoot off to Mars / shoot off bullets in a storm, tear a pair of nylons never worn, dare not to care that we'll never be reborn, even if we're poor and torn / life is down here, let's loot this Garden of Eden so forlorn / I won't go where the others go / dare not to bear the book officers want to throw / My papers my friends my eyes and my feet – that's my whole fleet / In my ID you can see this whole feat, I made my eyes greet / movement, solitude, times good and bad, the one we don't own, the

MR

**Marine Riou**

Autre idée : traduire « squatter les bancs » avec le mot « ghetto » (genre « straying/idling in/through the ghetto », et traduire « mais bon » par « you know » voire « but, you know »

MR

**Marine Riou**

Je rajouterais « well » devant pour rajouter à la fois un beat, et un marqueur d'oralité (et de dialogue)

MR

**Marine Riou**

Pour rajouter un beat (voire deux avec « right down here »)

MR

**Marine Riou**

My notes ? je pense qu'il parle de ses brouillons de chansons, et « papers » ça me fait trop penser à papiers d'identités

## Sally Whittler McCallum

Sally Whittler McCallum is American and speaks French. She offered to read the translation and indicate when the language I had used struck her American eyes and ears as unusual or when it seemed unfamiliar.

And, Flex, he'd go on like this, adding in action scenes – well, not really action scenes, but you get what I mean. He'd get up, wiping the dirt from the vacant block off his butt. *And the guy, I caught him and beat the shit out of him, booted him in the head.* All of us, sitting down, lapping it all up, and him, standing up, bullshitting. *And I destroyed him,* he says, kicking Pontiff's car. No matter what the story was, or the setting, or the characters, **law enforcers** **law enforcement** or riff raff from some other town, Flex waved his arms around like such a madman it was a wonder he didn't dislocate a shoulder.

When we were really wasted, Paul'd start telling stories. He had good ones – stories he'd heard from his big brother Karl. He looked **a bit mental** when he talked about the hill, the sanctuary of our dreams. Absorbed, transported by orange crows: *I never got to go there. Karl'd promised me, said "I'll take you there one day," and he left without keeping his word. But I know stuff about it. Like how it's not that far from here. The distance, I mean, but, still, you have to know the way. There's a tree on the hill. One tree that's always got heaps of leaves on it, even in winter. My brother used to sit just underneath it and.*

Paul finished us off, *We'll go one day. It's got to be just like here, but better.*

I've got enough memories to fill up all the bins in the Complex and they're worth more than all the fancy houses in the housing estates put together: you're going to have to give it a go. And you'll need to have my back. I won't make it through otherwise.

She said, *No, he's not here.* I said *Oh well, I'll come back later.* She said *I'll let him know* and she closed the door and locked it.

Gone are the days when all we thought about was having fun, and when we didn't stress about our problems, so to speak. As time went on, **it** kind of became the opposite. Today we could **actually put** a cross in the calendar on all the days we laugh. Not counting the forced, cynical laughter, I mean. Because laughing about your misfortune is **fine.** **F**for five minutes.

If only we could've jammed the machine when we were around ten or twelve. Given time a bit of a kick and let it break down. Hoch's mum'd open the door with a smile on her wrinkle-less face. I go inside lifting my bike wheels up and say *Come on, hurry up!* Hoch quickly gets dressed and pulls his bike out of the cupboard. He's put his seat up to play the big **kid** but he can hardly get on. *Do you think you could come home a bit later?* I ask. His mum gives us 'til 7 and, as a bonus, I can have dinner at their place if I want to. **Of course** I want to! We'll play video games after eating and I'll stay the night, in my regular sleeping bag. We'll talk 'til late, about stupid shit – laughing about nothing.

We **fang it to the wasteland** but I take it easy – Hoch has trouble keeping up. The wind hits my face – at every bump I stand up in my seat. Riding around town is cool,

SM Sally McCallum  
really UK

SM Sally McCallum  
?

15 making from the City Next Door. When she hears them coming, the chicken-coop girl disappears from her office. The place looks like some kind of ghost town in a Western now. Three of the guys pretend to be beating each other up, punches for nothing, until a fat guy pulls out a switchblade and holds it under another guy's nose.

*What! What is it now?! What is it?!*

20 *Come off it, dickhead! Stop showing off!*

*I swear, nigger, I'll fuck you up, you dirty cunt.*

The guys're having fun. I do my best to fade into the surroundings like a chameleon. I mustn't be too good at it – the fat guy walks towards me, eyeballing my shoes. The group looks detached – I can feel the tension flooding slowly into my veins but I have to stay calm.

25 *Hey, you, got a cigarette?*

I put a cigarette in my mouth and light it up.

*No, I don't.*

Shit for shit – may as well jump in feet first and splash everyone. Another one of those sayings I'm fond of.

## Appendix 6: Clarifications from Patrick Goujon

I was able to ask Patrick Goujon questions in person about the passages I had difficulty translating in the first half of his novel. Since I was in Australia when translating the second half, we exchanged emails related to the clarifications I sought. Below is a selection of questions I sent him with his answers.

p. 135

*Là, je comprends qu'ils essaient d'ouvrir la porte de mon voisin d'en face, qu'est un de leur collègue. Un des flics est penché sur la serrure et peine à la crocheter. La télé du voisin gueule comme un macaque au zoo et sans doute que quelqu'un de l'immeuble s'est plaint. Je le connais, le voisin, il doit être raide chiré sur sa moquette. Un jambon gros comme un sanglier, flic quand il est en état d'aller bosser. Sinon, il tombe en se ruinant la gueule, pisse et chie sur le lino et se réveille dans son vomi, gnons sur le front. Le genre de mec sur lequel j'aimerais mieux pas tomber lors d'une interpellation. Il te chope en flag', ordonne Lève les mains et tire une bastos quand il est persuadé de t'avoir vu le menacer avec une fourche, des cornes sur la tête. Démerdez-vous les mecs, j'en ai rien à foutre s'il crève votre pote. C'est toujours des coups d'annuaire en moins dans les côtes.*

That's when I understand that they're trying to open my neighbour's door - he lives across the hall and he's one of their colleagues. One of the cops is bending over the lock having a hard time trying to pick it. The neighbour's TV's wailing like a monkey in a zoo and someone from the building probably complained. I know the neighbour. He must be wiped out, wrecked, on his carpet. A big, as fat as a boar, cop when he's in a suitable state to go to work. Otherwise he falls, smashing his face, pisses and shits on the lino, and wakes up in his vomit with bruises on his forehead. The kind of guy I wouldn't want arresting me. He catches you in the act, orders *Put your hands in the air* and shoots a bullet when he thinks you've threatened him with a fork - horns on his head. Work it out yourselves, guys - I couldn't give a shit if your buddy dies or not. **Makes for less whacks in the side with telephone books.**

**Q; C'est les policiers qui donnent des coups aux jeunes avec des annuaires ?**

A: Je ne me souvenais pas avoir écrit des trucs aussi cash ! Tout d'abord, juste une petite précision :

« *quand il est persuadé de t'avoir vu le menacer avec une fourche, des cornes sur la tête.* » que tu as traduit par « when he thinks you've threatened him with a fork - horns on his head. » Je pense que « horns on your head » serait plus juste. Il s'agit de dire que le flic est tellement défoncé qu'il te tire dessus car il est persuadé que tu le menaces avec une fourche et que tu as des cornes sur la tête (en somme, qu'il te prend pour un diable).

Pour la phrase en rouge, ça concerne en effet une pratique hélas connue de certains jeunes qui ont vécu des gardes à vue. Frapper dans les côtes avec un annuaire permet de faire mal sans laisser de traces, et donc moins de preuve de bavures. Je ne sais pas si ça arrive aussi aux Etats-Unis et / ou s'il existe des « techniques » similaires.

p. 149

Pontif desserre pas les dents. Transparent comme une méduse, je lui demande si ça va. *C'est foutu*, les mouches et les asticots sur la bidoche lui ont coupé l'appétit. Moi non, je serais plutôt comme Paul qui croque dans son mayo/sauce blanche comme un affamé. Je lui demande de me passer le sac, mon téléphone sonne, je m'en fous, j'ai trop la dalle, Paul est figé et me répond pas. Il affiche ce sourire flippant de **poupées de greniers**, celles qui sourient en toute circonstance, tu peux leur arracher les cheveux, leur sourire inflexible est éternel.

Paul won't unclench his teeth. You can see through him like a jellyfish - I ask him if he's OK. It's all over - the maggots on the meat've ruined his appetite. Not me, I'm more like Paul, biting into his mayo/white sauce sandwich like a starving kid. I ask him to hand me the bag - my phone rings but I don't give a shit, I'm so fucking hungry. Paul's frozen and doesn't answer me. He's got this creepy smile like those **dolls** that are always smiling no matter what – you can pull their hair out, their unwavering smile is eternal.

**Q; Je ne vois pas à quoi ressemble une poupée de grenier et je n'ai pas trouvé d'exemple sur internet !**

A: Il s'agit d'une image qui laisse de la place au lecteur pour projeter sa propre vision d'une poupée un peu vieille, un peu usée, abandonnée dans un grenier, d'un autre temps, et dont le sourire serait de ce temps-là. Mon idée, c'est plutôt

ces poupées un peu « freaky », qu'on voit parfois dans les films d'horreurs, du style poupées anciennes avec des visages genre porcelaine, teint blafard, faciès de gentilles petites filles modèles prêtes à te poignarder dans ton sommeil. Il y a, Annabelle la poupée, si tu tapes sur Google, mais que j'imagine avec un teint plus blanc.

p. 178

*Si Dieu existe, je pense qu'il m'aurait déjà fait un signe, à défaut de faire un geste. Je repense à ça, c'était en réponse à Hanane qui disait ce truc marrant : Dieu est né **In vitraux**.*

Entre elle et moi, c'est vachement détendu maintenant et j'envisage de plus en plus un rendez-vous. Si je me mets à rapper sérieusement, je pourrais peut-être rencontrer du monde et ça m'éviterait d'avoir l'air d'un **clandé** à ses yeux. Parce que si c'est pour l'inviter à manger un **salade/tomates/oignons** ou la promener en métro, c'est pas la peine.

*If God exists, I think he would've already given me a sign, even if it can't be a physical one. I think back to that – it was a reply to something funny Hanane had said: God was **born in stained-glass windows**.*

It's really relaxed between her and me now and I'm really starting to see myself meeting her in person, more and more. If I start ping seriously, maybe I could meet some people and then she wouldn't think I was such a **no-hoper**. Because if all I'm going to do is ask her out to get a lettuce/tomato/onion **sandwich** or take her for a ride in the metro, there's no point.

**Q: Un clandé – un clandestin ? Dans le contexte, je comprends clandé comme quelqu'un de minable...**

**A:** Oui, c'est en effet une expression qui signifie quelqu'un d'un peu dans la « lose », une sorte de loser en terme banlieusard.

**Q: Salade/tomates/oignons – kebab ? sandwich ?**

**A:** Oui, c'est un kebab. Un terme bien connu en banlieue, qui serait un peu un kebab avec tout dedans. Quand t'aimes pas les oignons, par exemple, tu vas dire “sans oignons” et, d'emblée, ça signifie que tu auras salade et tomates. Peut-être que ça se rapproche un peu du BLT aux Etats-Unis, sauf que c'est un kebab. Pour la petite histoire, j'avais songé un temps le proposer comme titre du livre, parmi un tas d'autres, ça ou “mayo-sauce blanche” qui fonctionne sur le même principe. Ça perd un peu de son “punch”, du moins littéralement en

français, si on y ajoute “sandwich” car c’est plutôt un synonyme en forme de nom de code, mais c’est difficilement traduisible.

Pour “Dieu est né in vitraux”, j’étais curieux de voir comment tu pourrais le transposer mais là, je crois que c’est mission impossible. Le jeu de mots avec “In vitro” (dont je dois dire j’étais assez fier) devient très premier degré, perdant le double sens mais renforçant l’image, selon laquelle Dieu aurait été conçu par les hommes et leur imagerie, dont les vitraux font partie...

p. 180

Quand je finis de chanter mes textes, Jay me donne son avis. En général, il me trouve trop catégorique, et puis aussi, trop « classique ». Il pense que je devrais plus réfléchir par moi-même et nuancer mes propos, me forger ma propre opinion quoi. Selon lui, je peux faire autant de pirouettes que je veux **si je reste droit**. Authentique, original, impertinent et juste, sans jamais suivre le troupeau, sans quoi j’en arriverais au même résultat, les trois quarts font de la merde pour la radio. Ma haine, je l’ai là, du côté gauche, et faut que je m’en serve de la meilleure façon possible pour les rares que je représente.

When I finish singing what I’ve written, Jay gives me his feedback. In general, he finds that I’m too categorical, and also too “classic”. He thinks I should think for myself a bit more and add depth to what I say – so basically he wants me to come up with my own opinion. According to him, I can do as many pirouettes as I want **if I stay straight**. Genuine, original, impertinent and fair, without ever following the crowd – if this isn’t how I approach things, I’ll end up with the same stuff: three quarters of them just produce shit for radio. My hate, I’ve got it right here, on the left, and I need to use it in the best way possible for the few people I’m speaking for.

**Si je reste droit – je pense comprendre ce que tu veux dire – mais je pense aussi qu’il y a un jeu de mots ici que je ne traduis pas, dans le sens où (je pense...) tu joues avec le sens figuré et le sens propre du mot ‘droit’ – c’est bien ça que tu fais ?**

Il a fallu que je le relise pour m’en rendre compte ! En effet, il y a bien un jeu de mots. Faire des pirouettes, c’est un peu faire le malin avec des effets de style mais il faut pour autant rester droit, c’est-à-dire intègre quant à sa pensée, et donc ses propos. Par ailleurs, faire des pirouettes est un peu le contraire, au sens propre, physique, de rester droit.

Jay interpelle El Mano, au sujet d'un scratch mortel qu'il aurait trouvé pour son refrain. Le volume monte et tout le monde bouge la tête. Tous complices, sauf moi. Avril se roule un joint, l'allume et commence à marmonner des bribes de rimes, pas sensationnelles mais bien assez carrées pour une **mise en jambes**. C'est l'échauffement et tout le monde y passe par sessions de deux ou trois minutes. El Mano explique dans son couplet pourquoi il rappe, le truc basique, sa technique consiste à couper les mots pour faire rimer leur milieu. Avril est inspiré alors il reprend le fil et tisse les phrases comme elles viennent, épaules voûtées, yeux furieux, comme une bombe à retardement.

RAP (pas encore traduit)

Le niveau commence à grimper et j'imagine qu'ensuite les mecs vont débiter des textes écrits. Avril me regarde, tire sur son joint et me fait signe d'y aller. Je peux pas reculer.

*Flex, c'est mon nom / je passe à l'action / crache mes postillons / sur microsillons / mon flot est meurtrier et j'suis... j'suis...*

Putain, j'suis comme un con ! Dixxa se fout grave de ma gueule. Je sais plus quoi dire, y a plus rien de génial dans ma tête et j'ai pas envie de phraser ma vie devant tous ces types. Ma démo est **giflée** mais El Mano vient aussitôt à ma rescousse *Tous dans la même galère, tous avec la même toux sèche, / tous soudés et unis chaque fois qu'tombe cette putain d'panne sèche. J'prêche la bonne parole dans le rap et c'est pour ça qu'j'repêche / mon prochain quand il dérape et dégringole en flèche / J'peux pas le laisser dans la dèche, j'peux pas le laisser sur la brèche, je suis El Mano rimes fraîches / Mc Ardent Narcissique Ouvertement j'empêche / le débutant de cramer quand j'ai allumé la mèche !*

Jay asks El Mano about an awesome scratch he's apparently found for his chorus. The volume is turned up and everyone's moving their head. They're all in it together. Without me. Avril rolls himself a joint, lights it and then starts mumbling bits of rhymes - they're not brilliant but definitely solid enough for an **intro**. They're warming up and everyone has a go for two or three-minute sessions each. In El Mano's verse he explains why he raps – it's basic, his technique is to split words so that their middle part rhymes. Avril's inspired so he takes over and weaves his words as they come to him, arched over, eyes furious, like a time bomb.

RAP (still to translate)

The level's rising and I'm guessing the guys'll start rolling out written texts soon. Avril looks at me, tugs on his joint and gestures me to go for it. I can't back down.

*Flex is my name / I play the game / Busting blame is my aim / Rap is my frame / My words flow and it's killer / I'm... I'm...*

Fuck, I'm fucking lame! Dixxa is making fun of me. I don't know what else to say. I've got no other bright ideas and I don't feel like rapping my life in front of these guys. I've messed up my demo but El Mano comes straight to my rescue.

**Q: Giflé – ça veut bien vouloir dire qu'il a « merdé » ?**

A: Oui. Un autre terme qu'on utilise, c'est « claqué ». Et ça s'utilise un peu pour tout. Une coupe de cheveux toute giflée, un tee-shirt claqué. Il y a un côté « faible », « ringard », « nul », à côté de la plaque. Donc c'est ça, il a merdé.

p. 193

J'arrive pas à ravalier ma fierté, c'est mon problème, ça me fait défaut pour dénicher des issues de secours. Je déteste la vie pour ne pas ressembler à ses pubs de produits miracles Avant Après. Quand tu vois la photo d'un gros chauve dans le journal, qui se retrouve **en clou** avec une touffe. J'aimerais parler, et parler encore, pour me sentir maigre de mes problèmes l'instant d'après.

I can't swallow my pride, that's my problem, and it stops me from being able to find the best escape routes... I hate life for not being like ads for miracle *Before/After* products. When you see the photo of a big fat bald guy in the newspaper, **EN CLOU**. I want to talk, talk and then talk some more, to feel freed of my worries the very next minute.

**Q: C'est "se retrouver en clou" qui me pose problème ici...**

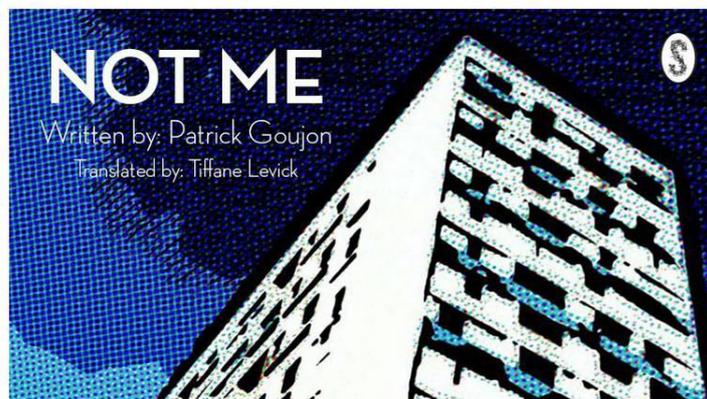
A: Il s'agit d'une image, qui convoque celle des avant / après dans les pubs pour produits miracles. Le gros chauve deviendrait, en utilisant un produit miracle, avec une touffe (beaucoup de cheveux) et en clou (maigre comme un clou). Le gros chauve se retrouve métamorphosé en clou avec une touffe.

## Appendix 7: *Seizure* Publication

I have thus far been unable to secure a publishing contract for the translation as a whole, but a selection of extracts were chosen to represent romance languages in an edition of the Australian online literary journal entitled *Seizure* in August 2016. My translated extracts were published alongside the original French extracts and accompanied by a translator's note which addresses the challenges of translating slang. Below are three images that provide an idea of the presentation of the two texts and my note.

# SEIZURE

[BROWSE](#) [ABOUT](#) [PROJECTS](#) [BOOKSHOP](#) [MEMBERS' LOUNGE](#)



NOT ME

July 31, 2016

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## THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION

### NOT ME

SELECTED EXTRACTS FROM *MOI NON* BY PATRICK GOUJON, FIRST PUBLISHED IN THE FRENCH BY ÉDITIONS GALLIMARD, PARIS, 2003

#### 1. PROLOGUE

Noises bounce off the lawn of the hills onto the concrete of the buildings. The woman's screams get lost in the residential complex, her cries for help going nowhere. I don't want to hear any more of it. I want to roll up into a ball, curl up in my blanket and go to sleep – enough's enough, leave the martyr alone, I just want some fucking peace. For God's sake, shut your traps, or I'll shut my ears, like I've done with my eyes. Believe me, I'll feel a lot better after that. Shit, stop making her scream, or tell her to shut up. Please. I'm not getting involved. Just so things are clear, I'm not going to open the shutters, or pick up the phone, or rush outside. No way. Leave me the hell alone. I'm already starting to fall asleep. Stop. I'm going to start counting. I'll count until tomorrow morning if I have to. One sheep, two sheep, three sheep, four sheep, five sheep. That's it. Keep going if you want. I don't even care anymore. I can feel sleep coming...

## THE ORIGINAL IN THE FRENCH

### MOI NON

SELECTED EXTRACTS, ©ÉDITIONS GALLIMARD, PARIS, 2003

#### 1. PROLOGUE

Les sons se répercutent du gazon des buttes au béton des tours. Les hurlements de la femme se perdent dans la Cité, ses appels au secours ne vont nulle part. Moi, je ne veux plus rien entendre. Je veux me rouler en boule, me recroqueviller dans ma couette et m'endormir, ça suffit, laissez la martyre, je veux qu'on me foute la paix. Par pitié, fermez vos clapets ou alors je boucle mes oreilles comme je fais avec mes yeux. Croyez-moi, j'irai nettement mieux après ça, cessez de la faire crier, bordel, ou priez-la de se taire, je n'interviendrai pas. Que les choses soient claires je n'irai pas ouvrir les volets, ni décrocher le téléphone, n'y comptez pas, ni me ruer dehors, foutez-moi la paix, déjà je m'endors. Arrêtez, je vais compter, s'il le faut je compterais jusqu'à demain matin 1 mouton, 2 moutons, 3 moutons, 4 moutons, 5 moutons, ça y est, continuez si vous voulez, je m'en fous désormais, je sens le sommeil qui vient...

---

## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

Patrick Goujon's novel *Moi non*, which means 'Me no', or 'Not me', tells the story of two young men, Hoch and Flex, living in the suburbs of early-2000s Paris, though this specific setting is never mentioned. Instead, language is what locates the text here, while also implying the characters' age and the position they occupy in society, among other details.

The writing style reads as a written version of the characters' speech as they relate their thoughts and experiences to the reader; it is colloquial and has strong elements of musicality. In this way, the narration is coloured by lyrical reflections that spark with immediacy, all the while remaining credible as the voices of young people living in the suburbs of Paris.

The novel is divided into two parts, each narrated primarily by Hoch (Part 1) and Flex (Part 2), with short, intermittent chapters narrated by characters from their entourage. The six extracts provide an idea of the overall tone of *Moi non*, presenting the voices of both Hoch and Flex, as well as those of 'A Barefoot Woman' and Preker, a rapper.

When translating written texts marked by orality, translators sometimes resort to standardisation or equivalence. An intralingual example of standardising might involve taking the non-standard terms 'sheila' or 'chick' and replacing them with the standard 'woman' or 'girl'. Equivalence, meanwhile, might involve translating the slang of the original text through using an equivalent slang employed by a group of speakers of the language of translation; the slang used in Paris, for example, might become in the translated text the slang used in Sydney. In translating *Moi non*, I have attempted to eschew these two strategies so as to avoid producing, on the one hand, a flat, flavourless translation and, on the other, a translation that evokes an entirely different setting. Instead, I set out to identify and harness features of English that would be at once colloquial and universal, a type of language that could be

#### TRANSLATED BY:



#### TIFFANE LEVICK

Born in Australia in 1988, has been based primarily in Paris since 2009. She holds a bachelor's degree in arts (with honours) from Monash University, and a master's degree from Université Paris 3-Sorbonne Nouvelle, specialising in translation studies. Alongside her studies, Levick has been teaching English, French and translation since 2006 for schools, associations and universities in France and Australia while also carrying out a number of freelance professional translation projects. She is currently undertaking a PhD in translation studies through Paris 3.

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## Résumé

### **Oralité et universalité : à la recherche d'un parler jeune global en traduction**

Cette thèse est le fruit d'un projet de recherche qui mêle la pratique et la théorie de la traduction. Divisée en deux volumes, elle étudie des questions liées à la traduction de l'argot tel qu'utilisé dans des œuvres de fiction. Le premier comprend un commentaire critique composé de trois parties, et le second une traduction en anglais du roman *Moi non* (P. Goujon, Gallimard, 2003). L'intrigue du roman se déroulant en banlieue parisienne, le commentaire explore la façon dont les jeunes adultes marginalisés peuvent s'exprimer par l'emploi de l'argot, une variété linguistique non-standard. Cette variété est souvent représentative d'un lieu précis et d'une identité particulière, participant à un ensemble de formes d'expression qui sert à distinguer la jeunesse marginalisée de groupes dominants. Une telle utilisation de la langue soulève des questions concrètes et abstraites quand on décide de la transcrire et de la traduire dans une œuvre de fiction. Souvent, le traducteur a recours à l'emploi d'une langue standard ou à l'utilisation d'un argot dit « équivalent ». La traduction proposée de *Moi non* s'inscrit dans une méthode alternative qui s'inspire d'un style informel ainsi que de procédés créatifs que l'on peut notamment employer dans le rap et dans l'élaboration de nouvelles expressions argotiques. Préférant éviter de situer la traduction dans une aire géographique spécifique, cette traduction invite à explorer les points communs de l'ensemble des parlers jeunes du monde anglophone. Ce projet représente ainsi une opportunité de vérifier la cohérence et la logique de cette démarche alternative de la traduction de l'argot d'un roman, et de la comparer avec l'approche empruntée par les traducteurs de textes similaires.

**Mots-clés :** traduction, sociolinguistique, banlieue, argot, rap, non-standard, oralité

## **Abstract**

### **Orality and Universality: In Search of a Global Youth Speak in Translation**

This thesis is the fruit of a research project which marries translation practice and theory. Separated into two volumes, it explores questions related to the translation of slang in fictional texts. The first volume is a critical commentary composed of three parts, and the second a translation from French into English of the novel *Moi non* by Patrick Goujon (Gallimard, 2003). Since the plot unfolds in the banlieue of Paris, the critical component investigates the way in which marginalised youth can express themselves through slang, a variety of non-standard language. Often representative of a specific place and identity, slang constitutes one of many forms of expression that contribute to setting marginalised youth apart from dominant groups. Such use of language raises a number of questions, both concrete and abstract in nature, when one decides to transcribe and translate it in a work of fiction. Translators often employ standard language to render this voice in the translated text or otherwise make use of an "equivalent" slang. The proposed translation of *Moi non* embodies an alternative method inspired by an overall informal style of writing, as well as by the creative devices employed in rap lyrics and in the creation of slang words and expressions. In an effort to avoid suggesting a specific setting outside of the banlieue, this translation seeks to identify and harness features of English shared by young people throughout the Anglosphere. This thesis thus represents an opportunity to ensure the coherence and the logic of this alternative approach to translating slang in an entire novel, and to compare this approach with that adopted by the translators of similar texts.

**Keywords:** translation, sociolinguistics, banlieue, slang, rap, non-standard, orality

UNIVERSITE SORBONNE NOUVELLE-PARIS 3

ED 514 : EDEAGE (Etudes Anglophones, Germanophones et Européennes)

EA 4398 : PRISMES (Langues, Textes, Arts et Cultures du Monde Anglophone)

Institut du Monde anglophone, 5 rue de l'école de médecine 75006 Paris