

# Intercultural relations between French and English literature in the 18th century

Towards an analysis of socio-cultural discourse in translated prose fiction

Beatrijs Vanacker - CETRA 2005

# 0. Introduction

- **General research-context:**

translations of prose fiction in the 18th century:

- from English into French
- from French into English

- Previous studies:

⇒ Shelly Charles : analysis of the intersystemic relations between England and France in the 18th century

⇒ Grieder (1975, 1985); Graeber (1995): focus on translations into French

# 0. Introduction

- **Restrictions:**

Most studies are :

- (1) either very general (on the relations between the systems as a whole)
- (2) author-oriented
- (3) mostly from the English into the French

## 2. Topic

A. Representation of

→ fictionalized

→ intercultural discourse

→ in (French and English) prose fiction

B. the way it is represented in translation

## 2. Topic

- “intercultural discourse”

= the different means by which the relationship between the French and the English and the conceptions they have of one another are represented in fiction.

Ex.: characters, vocabulary, explicit socio-cultural criticism

## 2.1. Cross-cultural discourse fictionalized...

→ First set of questions:

- way of insertion into fiction
- importance in the plot
- fictional vs non-fictional sociocritical assertions (heterogeneity? Diversity?)

...

## 2.2. ...in translation?

- Second series of questions:
  - Does the presence of cross-cultural discourse have an effect on the translations?
  - Does the translator's approach inform us about the perception of fiction in 18th century France/England?
  - ...

### 3. Dealing with the texts: some first examples

#### Different strategies :

- from rewriting...

E.g.: Haywood →Crébillon→Kimber

- to respecting(?) the original

E.g.: Riccoboni→Stockdale

# To illustrate...

Ex.:

- « Je trouve les Français, s'il m'est permis de le dire sans enfreindre les lois de l'hospitalité oui, ma foi, Charles, je les trouve tout aussi ennuyeux que nous. »
- “I find the French, as I may speak freely without a Contempt of the laws of hospitality; - in truth, Charles, I find the French as dull and stupefying Companions as the English.”

Kimber's comments :

- “The attempts, in this letter, to prove that there is a similarity of character in the different Nations of the world, is too absurd, and trivial to deserve an accurate, and decisive Answer. No unprejudiced person, who can enjoy the Variety of Human nature, who can enjoy the Genius of the philosopher or the poet, and who is conversant with Englishman, will call them *dull and stupefying Companions.*”

# To illustrate...

→ The importance of translation for the study of cross-cultural discourse

- **Ex.1 :**

- « Quoi ! Vous retirez votre main ! »
- « How ! 'ye pull away your hand from me ? » (38)

- **Ex. 2:**

- « D\_mn me, have my good Stars at length, conducted me 'thro' the right road to happiness? Yes, by G\_d, I have now found my little coy slut, who has never been absent from my Mind, since I first set eyes on her bewitching face” (203)

## 4. Bibliographical research

- *Bibliography of French translations of English works 1700-1800* by Rochedieu (1948)
- *The eighteenth century English novel in French translation: a bibliographical study* by Streeter(1936)
- *The story of French prose fiction in late XVIIIth century England* by Grieder (1975)

Additional sources :

- *Bibliographie de la littérature française du XVIIIe siècle* (Cioranescu)
- *The new Cambridge bibliography of English literature*
- ...

# 5. Provisional corpus

## Author-based

\* disadvantages:

- unrepresentative corpus
- difficult to justify

\* advantage:

- “intercultural” approach

⇒ disadvantages > advantage

## 6. Our delimitation parameters reoriented

Different set of parameters in order to construct a more representative corpus:

- “nation-bound fiction”
- in translation
- chronological restrictions
- mono- or bi-directional?

# 7. Methodological framework

## Various proposals :

- - sociology
- - narratological concepts
- - imagologie
- - polysystem – theory (and beyond)
  
- → resignation to interdisciplinarity

## 7. Methodological framework

- corpus-based methodology :

“The lesson to be learned from the models [...] is undoubtedly that schemes and procedures can help and offer hints and pointers, but they remain ancillary. In the end it will be the questions to which the researcher seeks the answers, on whatever grounds, which focus the attention.” (Hermans 1999 : 71)