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Rewriting and the translation of autobiography: a critical analysis of
rewriting in relation to *Passion simple* and *Se perdre* by Annie Ernaux

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Introduction

I first encountered Annie Ernaux's works during a trip to Geneva in 2021, where the friend I was visiting gifted me a copy of *Mémoire de fille*. I found Ernaux's prose striking – precise but not clinical – and her unsentimental portraits of people, places and times to be deeply moving. She is unflinching in her assessment of her younger selves, yet committed to a portrayal without shame or judgement. There is a warmth to Ernaux's writing that stems from her insistence on the place of her voice, her experiences and those of 'her people' – her family, friends, neighbours, social class and generation – in the world of literature.¹ I have since found myself returning to Ernaux's work time and again, fascinated by the question of what it means to use one's own life as the medium for literary experiment and the implications this has for the critical reception of autobiographical literature broadly.

Born to a working-class family in Lillebonne, Normandy, in 1940, Ernaux worked as a teacher before embarking on her writing career in her mid-thirties. Her first work, the autobiographical novel *Les Armoires vides*, was published in 1974. While her early work was largely well-received by French critics, she received widespread critical acclaim for *La place* in 1984, for which she won the Prix Renaudot of that year. Ernaux left her teaching post in 2000 to devote herself to writing full-time. In 2022, she became the first French woman to win the Nobel Prize in Literature, spurring critical interest in her work in and outside of France. Her work both reflects and continues the breadth of autobiographical literary experiment in France and places her in the lineage of authors like Marguerite Duras and Simone de Beauvoir.

¹ Annie Ernaux, *I Will Write To Avenge My People*, trans. Alison L. Strayer and Sophie Lewis (London: Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2023), 12.

While the genre of autobiography is characterised by the act of returning to events, people and places of the author's past, the conflation of the author's life and praxis is often an uneasy one. In *Mémoire de fille*, Ernaux has the disturbing realisation that her younger self was living so as to be written by her present self, that perhaps she has only ever belonged to a scriptural world, always conscious of her present self writing at her desk:

C'est comme si la réalité se mettait d'elle-même à distance. J'ai commencé à faire de moi-même un être littéraire, quelqu'un qui vit les choses comme si elles devaient être écrites un jour.²

Ernaux, like many authors of autobiographical literature, wrestles with this tension between the acts of returning, writing and being read. Although many of her works have been described as memoirs, primarily focusing on a single year or experience or on a series of interrelated experiences, Ernaux often revisits her previously published material, weaving her changing reflections into the body of her most recent text. Sometimes, she has rewritten her past work entirely, publishing new material such as in the case of *Passion simple* and *Se perdre*. Here, Jonathan's Culler's reflections are particularly salient:

[T]he very fact that the novel is tied to the world... Precisely because the reader expects to be able to recognise a world, the novel he reads becomes a place where modes of intelligibility can be 'deconstructed', exposed and challenged.³

Although Culler's comments are in reference to fiction, I believe that autobiographical literature affords privileged insight into the processes of textual construction. Autobiography, more so than other literary genres, grapples with questions of metonymy, genre and social and cultural norms. When an author rewrites their experiences, they highlight the processes of textual construction at work in both the original and rewriting, deconstructing the image of the

² Annie Ernaux, *Mémoire de fille* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2016), 156.

³ Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics, and the Study of Literature* (London: Routledge, 1975), 190.

text as an independent cohesive unit. By subverting readers' expectations, at times even eschewing them altogether, autobiographical rewriting sheds light on broader cultural and social norms and expectations. In this way, the metonymic relations at work in autobiography mirror those in translation and raise additional challenges for any translator of autobiography.

In light of the recent surge of interest in Ernaux's oeuvre, it struck me that the application of André Lefevere's rewriting theory to autobiography could yield fruitful and interesting insights into the metonymic relations at work in self-referential texts. Autobiography could also test the bounds of rewriting theory in interesting ways. This thesis will therefore investigate rewriting both within the source text and in translation. I am interested in exploring how different instances of rewriting differ from one another and how, according to Lefevere's paradigm, this affects the micro-, meso- and macro-level relations between the original and rewritten texts and the source and target literary and cultural systems. The corpus for this study will comprise *Passion simple* (1992), *Se perdre* (2001) and their English translations, *Simple Passion* (1993) and *Getting Lost* (2022). In *Passion simple*, Ernaux recounts her affair with a Soviet attaché that ended a couple of years prior. She later published the diary that she had kept during the affair, *Se perdre*, on which she had based *Passion simple*.

I will begin with an examination of how autobiography has been defined in literary studies and approached by translation studies scholars. I will use autobiography throughout this thesis to refer to the genre of literature that encompasses subjective, self-referential narratives broadly, which are not exclusively fiction or nonfiction. Next, I will present a critical reading of Lefevere's rewriting theory and discuss its relevance to this study. I will then outline my approach for analysing Ernaux's *Passion simple* and *Se perdre* alongside the English translations and discuss the results from the preliminary data. Lastly, I will analyse a selection

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of passages from the French and English texts and examine the effects of translation decisions at the micro and meso-levels in relation to the macrostructure of the texts and critical framework.

I. Defining Autobiography: *le pacte autobiographique*

Introduction

Debates on autobiography have fuelled research in literary studies since the mid-twentieth century and continue to contribute to the expansion of the discipline. Prior to the 1970s, scholars were primarily concerned as to whether or not autobiography could be considered a discrete literary genre given its self-contesting nature.⁴ Autobiography proper has traditionally been defined as a first-person non-fiction prose narrative in which the author chronicles the trajectory of their life up to the point in time at which they are writing the autobiography.⁵ These early definitions of autobiography reflected the concern with biography in the twentieth century and beginnings of the conflict between structuralist and poststructuralist thought that would play out in linguistics and literary studies. As a result, literary critics commonly viewed autobiography as a ‘failure’ of biography: the autobiographer is unable to give a full, comprehensive and objective account of their entire life, or even of the events up until the time of writing.⁶ The fallacies of memory, the author’s motivations, prejudices and biases all interfere with the objectivity of the narrative, whether or not they are apparent in the text itself.⁷ While some critics argued that the author as autobiographer lent autobiography some degree of authenticity, even providing privileged insight into the author’s psyche, the majority considered the author’s subjectivity to undermine the nonfiction status of autobiography – how

⁴ Shirley Jordan, ‘Autofiction in the feminine’, *French Studies* 67, no. 1 (2013): 76.

See also: Anne Jefferson, *Biography and the Question of Literature in France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Leah D. Hewitt, *Autobiographical Tightropes: Simone de Beauvoir, Nathalie Sarraute, Marguerite Duras, Monique Wittig, and Maryse Condé* (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1990).

⁵ Susan Xu Yun, *Translation of Autobiography: Narrating Self, Translating the Other* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2017) 24–25.

⁶ See: Jefferson, *Biography*.

⁷ Jean-Philippe Miraux, *L'autobiographie : Écriture de soi et sincérité*. (Paris: Armand Colin, 2009), 3.

objective can a first-person account really be?⁸ Likewise, critics debated whether or not an autobiography could be considered a work of literature. The fact that autobiography was not exclusively nonfiction did not mean that it belonged to the category of fiction, or that it was even interesting as a fictional work.

Philippe Lejeune, Jean Starobinski, James Olney and Paul Eakin are among the scholars who have helped establish the legitimacy of autobiography as a literary genre and object of study. While autobiography as a literary genre is no longer the contentious issue it once was, literary and genre studies continue to produce a minefield of competing definitions and theoretical frameworks in an effort to keep apace with the evolution of autobiographical experiment. To date, the most important intervention in the literature on autobiography remains *Le pacte autobiographique* by structuralist literary critic Phillipe Lejeune, published in French in 1975 and later in English as *On Autobiography* in 1985. The following section will present a critical overview of Lejeune's *pacte autobiographique*, which remains the most cited definition of autobiography in both literary and translation studies.

Le pacte autobiographique

In *Le pacte autobiographique*, Lejeune provides the following definition of autobiography: 'Récit rétrospectif en prose qu'une personne réelle fait de sa propre existence, lorsqu'elle met l'accent sur sa vie individuelle, en particulier sur l'histoire de sa personnalité'.⁹ He then proceeds to elaborate his genre model for autobiography, which is based on four categories

⁸ Yun, *Translation*, 25.

⁹ Philippe Lejeune, *Le pacte autobiographique* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1975), 14.

(further divided into subcategories): the form of language, the subject matter, the author's situation and the narrator's position.¹⁰ Of these four categories (and sub-categories), autobiography is based on two: the author's situation (3) and the identity of the narrator and main character (4a).¹¹ The constituent elements of autobiography do not necessarily emanate from the text itself, for example, from its formal or stylistic characteristics, or even from its subject matter. Whether or not a text belongs to the genre of autobiography depends on whether it establishes that the 'author = narrator = main character', that is, 'the autobiographical pact'.¹² As such, according to Lejeune's model, it is possible to establish a corpus of texts that belong to the literary genre of autobiography based on the autobiographical pact.

Lejeune's definition of autobiography sits between the internal and external characteristics of the text; the genre does not dictate the actual form of an autobiographical text, but instead suggests a mode of reading or reception that can influence its formal features.¹³ Lejeune claims that the identity of the author, narrator and main character can be established either implicitly or patently in the text, but, in either case, the paratext (such as the title, introduction, preface or footnotes) plays an essential role in establishing this relation.¹⁴ Unlike biography, autobiography is not bound to nonfiction: it may resemble the truth, which Lejeune understands as the external reality to a text, but is not limited to a strict resemblance in order to achieve the appearance of reality.¹⁵

¹⁰ Lejeune, *Le pacte autobiographique*, 14.

¹¹ Lejeune, *Le pacte autobiographique*, 15.

¹² Lejeune, *Le pacte autobiographique*, 15.

¹³ Raluca-Nicoleta Balatchi, 'Défis de traduction d'un genre : l'autobiographie', *Atelier de Traduction* 18 (2012): 115–130.

Lejeune, *Le pacte autobiographique*, 46.

¹⁴ Balatchi, 'Défis de traduction d'un genre', 120 & 126–128.

Lejeune, *Le pacte autobiographique*, 27 & 36.

¹⁵ Lejeune, *Le pacte autobiographique*, 37.

Consequently, the person of the author is the model for the narrator-character, but the latter can make mistakes, forget, even lie, because she exists within the text, not its external reality.¹⁶ Identity then becomes the starting point for autobiography, in which the author (subject of enunciation) elaborates a personal myth in place of the narrator-character (subject of utterance).¹⁷ In other words, the autobiographical pact is characterised by ‘the autobiographical paradox’, whereby

[...] l’écrivain pénètre dans un espace qui, par sa spécificité même, est celui de l’imaginaire, espace paradoxal qui vise ici à représenter ce qui, s’étant présenté une fois dans le phénomène existentiel, refuse de se représenter, sinon dans le lieu scripturaire qui représente selon ses propres lois.¹⁸

According to Lejeune’s autobiographical pact, the translator can be seen as a force that intervenes between the complex relationship of identity between author, narrator and character, and finds herself at the heart of this paradox on two levels. On the one hand, the translator must orient her translation to the target audience, thereby making herself invisible, indistinguishable from the author’s voice, in order to render a text that is ‘authentic’ to the target language for a foreign audience. On the other hand, the translator’s role as mediator is more visible, since we accept that a translation is very much a reading, an analysis or even a form of paratext itself.¹⁹ Cecilia Alvstad proposes the ‘translation pact’ as a way of reading and critiquing the text, and can also reinforce the reader’s confidence that it is a faithful translation.²⁰

¹⁶ Andrea Smorti, ‘Autobiographical memory’, 305-306.
Miraux, *L’autobiographie*, 1.

¹⁷ Lejeune, *Le pacte autobiographique*, 39.

¹⁸ Miraux, *L’autobiographie*, 1.

¹⁹ Cecilia Alvstad, ‘The Translation Pact’, *Language and Literature* 23, no. 3 (2014): 272.

²⁰ Alvstad, ‘The Translation Pact’, 271 & 275.

II. Autobiography in Translation Studies

For the most part, there are relatively few comprehensive studies on the translation of autobiography in translation studies compared to those on other literary genres.²¹ While this is especially true of non-fiction autobiography, studies on literary autobiography and its sub-genres – such as memoir, autofiction, diary and self portrait – still remain relatively few and far between.²²

The first strand of translation studies scholarship on autobiography draws on narratological concepts of voice and visibility to problematise the presence and intervention of the translator in subjective narratives. Jane Brierley draws on her experiences as a literary translator and claims that translators have a ‘double responsibility’ when translating intimate aspects of autobiographical works or even fiction where there are moments of strong subjectivity or emotions:

Not only do they need to know what is being said in the superficial sense, they need to be especially sensitive to underlying currents, to the writer’s un-avowed aims or preoccupations, and to the influences that surrounded him or her at the time of writing.²³

While the subjectivity that characterises autobiographical narratives can lead to interesting formal and linguistic developments, the fallibility of memory can pose particular challenges to the translator.²⁴ This raises a number of ethical issues concerning how far a translator should intervene in the text and influence its reception. Sharon Deane-Cox explores these issues in ‘The translator as secondary witness: Mediating memory in Antelme’s *L’espèce*

²¹ Yun, *Translation of Autobiography*, 37.

²² Yun, *Translation of Autobiography*, 38.

²³ Jane Brierley, ‘The elusive I’, *Meta* 45, no. 1 (2000): 105.

²⁴ Balatchi, ‘Défis de traduction d’un genre’, 120.
Miraux, *L’autobiographie*, 2–3.

humaine’, where she defines and problematises the role of translator as a ‘secondary witness’ in translating Holocaust narratives. Here, the translator’s responsibility extends to an awareness of their role in memory transmission – both in accurately representing the memories of the victims as well as in shaping the collective memory of the Holocaust and how it is recorded in history.

Mateusz Churmski offers an alternative perspective to the intervention of the translator in the translation of diaries, questioning whether the translator consciously or unconsciously fulfils the role of biographer.²⁵ He argues that the translator undertakes many of the same tasks, such as fact-checking the events described, thereby shaping the text according to their own interpretation of the next (implying a causality of the events in a diary) and presenting a representation of the author’s life and the literary qualities of the work. The translator as biographer constructs the author’s persona and shapes their reception in the target culture. In this way, Churmski’s study falls into the strand of translation criticism in which translations of autobiography are evaluated through the lens of the implied author versus the implied translator, whereby the presence of the translator in the body of the text and/or in paratexts can either hinder or aid the success of the translation. However, Cecilia Alvstad argues that the intervening force of the translator in autobiographical narratives does not necessarily impede their subjective force or negate the pact-inviting mechanisms at work in the translation pact.²⁶ In fact, the presence of the translator in the text is often assumed by the reader to be the author – readers do not actually need much information to assume the ‘authenticity’ of a work of autobiography, including in translation.²⁷ Where the translator exercises her subjectivity, for

²⁵ Mateusz Chmurski, ‘From Autobiography to Fiction, or Translating Géza Csáth’s Diary from Hungarian to French and to Polish’, *Hungarian Cultural Studies* 6 (2013): 73.

²⁶ Alvstad, ‘The Translation Pact’, 282.

²⁷ Alvstad, ‘The Translation Pact’, 270.

instance discussing translational decisions in the paratext, this can enrich the reader's understanding and appreciation of the text.

The second strand of translation studies research comprises (albeit few) stylistic studies of autobiography in translation, which attempt to evaluate the quality of the translation in terms of the translator's ability to convey the author's style/signature, according to the norms of faithfulness and untranslatability. This is premised on the idea in structuralist linguistics that literary language is necessarily 'deviant' compared to standard language use. However, these studies tend to relegate themselves to linguistic analysis and lack the context that literary studies research on autobiography can provide.²⁸ Those examining the author as self-translator of autobiographies, such as Shafag Dadashova, have been unable to form consensus or provide sufficient evidence of authorial signature in terms of stylistic analysis or definitively parse out the stylistic presence of the translator from the author.²⁹

Following the cultural turn and the growing influence of postcolonial approaches in descriptive translation studies, a growing body of research has focused on issues relating to cultural translation and bilingual identity in autobiography. Prominent scholars include Mary Besemeres who explores the relationship between linguistic and cultural selves in the writing and self-translation of autobiography, and Tomoko Takahashi who explores self-translation of autobiography in terms of the narratological impacts on the text as well as the psychological impact on the author/translator.³⁰

²⁸ Yun, *Translation*, 37-38.

²⁹ Yun, *Translation*, 38.

Shafag Dadashova, 'Auto-Translation and Nabokov's Autobiography / Autotradução e a Autobiografia de Nabókov', *TradTerm* 28 (2016): 76-88

³⁰ Mary Besemeres, 'Language and Self in Cross-Cultural Autobiography: Eva Hoffman's Lost in Translation', *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 40, no. 3-4 (1998): 327-44.

Besemeres, *Translating One's Self. Language and Selfhood in Cross-Cultural Autobiography* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2002).

Nevertheless, the reticence of translation studies scholars to engage in a sustained way with autobiography is perhaps due to the diversity and complexity of literary studies scholarship on the genre as well as the nature of autobiography itself. The proliferation of sub-genres and new experimental forms of autobiography over the past fifty years have only complicated its study. Consequently, translation studies research on autobiography lacks a comprehensive theoretical framework with which to analyse and evaluate autobiographical literature in translation.

Translation studies frameworks:

Susan Xu Yun's *Translation of autobiography*

One crucial exception is Susan Xu Yun's *Translation of autobiography*, which combines stylistics with translation studies to identify the intervening presence of the actors (such as the author, translator and editor) involved in the production of translated autobiographies and the effects of these interventions on the construction and reception of the autobiographer's persona.³¹ Yun combines stylistic analysis, narratology, inter/intra/paratextual analysis and cultural translation. She claims that translation studies can provide privileged insight into the many deadlocks of the study of autobiography in literary studies, such as the place of literariness in autobiography, the distinction between fiction and nonfiction, the enactment of

Takahashi, Tomoko. 'Autobiographical Self-Translation – Translator as the Author, Narrator and Protagonist', *The Translator* 25, no. 2 (2019): 118–29.

Takahashi, Tomoko. 2020. 'Self-Translation as Translation of the Self — Translating the Hybrid Self'. *Asia Pacific Translation and Intercultural Studies* 7, no. 1 (2020): 23–38.

³¹ Yun, *Translation of Autobiography*, 2.

point of view and its effects within the text and on its reception.³² Moreover, she claims that autobiography engages particular functions of language:

The language of autobiography serves to project objective reality, achieve comprehensibility and fulfil the mission of telling the truth. It also has to express subjectivity, create the feeling of reliving the past, and thus invent the exceptional experience of its readers.³³

Research on autobiography in translation and literary studies must therefore draw on the methods and frameworks offered by both: ‘literary critical interpretation, coupled with linguistic analysis, gives literary criticism the unique advantages of objectivity and neutrality’.³⁴ Her work remains the most comprehensive and coordinated attempt at a general theory of translating autobiography in translation studies scholarship.

To define autobiography, Yun draws on the frameworks of Lejeune, Cohn and Renza to construct a genre matrix for autobiography, distinguishing autobiography from biography, historiography and canonical literature. She states that Lejeune does not account for memoir and fictional autobiography, yet this is not entirely accurate – in later essays, such as ‘Autobiography in the Third Person’, he mentions autobiographical fictional literature in relation to the *pacte fantasmatique*.³⁵ Yun also makes an unusually hard distinction between canonical literature and autobiography in her genre matrix. I believe that Yun’s genre matrix and critique of Lejeune lack an acknowledgement of cultural specificities of genre. That is, in separating canonical literature from autobiography, Yun potentially misrepresents the

³² Yun, *Translation of Autobiography*, 6 & 36.

³³ Yun, *Translation of Autobiography*, 44.

³⁴ Yun, *Translation of Autobiography*, 36.

³⁵ Philippe Lejeune, ‘Autobiography in the Third Person’, trans. Annette Tomarken and Edward Tomarken, *New Literary History* 9, no. 1 (1997): 29.
Yun, *Translation of Autobiography*, 29.

canonical force of genre in literary history. In addition, many authors of autobiographical literature, including Ernaux, actively engage with the history of autobiography in order to shed light on processes of canonisation – that is, which texts become canonical to a literature and the values (social, cultural, aesthetic, political, and so on) that inform these processes.³⁶

Raluca-Nicoleta Balatchi's 'Défis de traduction d'un genre : l'autobiographie'

Another notable exception is Raluca-Nicoleta Balatchi's article 'Défis de traduction d'un genre : l'autobiographie', which draws on the theoretical frameworks of Lejeune and Starobinski in order to explore the peculiarities of autobiography as a literary genre and the unique challenges it poses to the translator. She draws on a corpus of French autobiographical works that are considered canonical (e.g. Rousseau's *Confessions*) in order to ground her analysis of the translation of French autobiography into Romanian in historical developments and literary history. She recognises the fact that genre is a travelling framework/set of ideas that are not just historically bound but culturally contingent.³⁷ She concludes that translating autobiography entails a renegotiation of the autobiographical pact between author and reader due to the intervention of the translator, who, while following the emergence of a consciousness that replaces and accentuates the voice of the author-narrator, or interferes in the paratext with the voice of the author-narrator-character.³⁸ This reflects Starobinski's approach to autobiography, which is described by Olney as 'a consideration of style as a metaphoric representation of the present writing self and, at the same time, of the past written self'.³⁹ By

³⁶ Ernaux, *I Will Write*, 14.

³⁷ Balatchi, 'Défis', 117.
Yun, *Translation*, 29.

³⁸ Balatchi, 'Défis', 126

³⁹ James Olney, *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 18.

analysing the translations and retranslations of autobiography, this can expand the field of translation studies in terms of the relationship between translating and identity.⁴⁰

However, neither Balatchi or Yun engage with the breadth of Lejeune's work on autobiography: for example, both assume that autobiography entails a first person narrative, whereas Lejeune also wrote extensively on autobiography in the third person. The use of the third person in women's autobiography has formed a large part of the autobiographical studies since the 1990s, which saw a rise in feminist approaches. Scholars have observed that women writers of autobiographical literature tend to switch between the first and third person, often when recounting traumatic experiences or to draw attention to their 'culturally hybrid identities', such as cases where Ernaux refers to her younger self as 'Annie D.' or in her recent experiments in 'autosociobiography'.⁴¹ This gap in translation studies is perhaps emblematic of the lag in translation studies research on autobiography compared to the long-established body of research in literary studies, which continues to proliferate.

Gaps in the literature

There remains virtually no scholarship on the fact that autobiographers often rewrite themselves, returning to the same life event/s and producing a new literary work. The closest strand of research in translation studies is that of self-translation. Yun briefly mentions rewriting theory as an area for further translation studies research as a way of exploring the

⁴⁰ Balatchi, 'Défis', 117.

⁴¹ Jordan, 'Autofiction', 78–81.

Janice Morgan, 'Fiction and Autobiography/Language and Silence: *L'Amant* by Duras', *The French Review* 63, no. 2 (1989): 273.

See also: Valérie Baisnée, "'I am She who does not speak about herself': Annie Ernaux's Impersonal Autobiography *The Years*", *The European Journal of Life Writing* VII (2018): 72–89.

broader cultural forces that shape representations of a text, author, movement, time or place.⁴²

Rewriting also poses an interesting counterpoint to the trend in translation studies research on autobiography to focus on self-translation across different cultural and linguistic contexts, by exploring the many hands a text passes through before entering into circulation. Rewriting theory allows us to explore autobiography as a genre, one that has proven a particularly mobile and popular form.

⁴² Yun, *Translation*, 4.

III. Rewriting

Introduction

Rewriting is one of the most important and influential theories in translation studies, combining systemic descriptive approaches with sociological and cultural approaches.⁴³ It is often credited with helping to establish translation studies as a standalone discipline, distinct from linguistics and comparative literature, and move it past the traditional deadlocks of linguistic equivalence. It was developed by André Lefevere (1945–1996) and underwent several iterations over the course of the 1970s and 1990s. The main point of reference for this chapter will be *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* (1992), which remains Lefevere's most comprehensive account of rewriting theory and which focuses exclusively on literature. This chapter will present a critical overview of Lefevere's rewriting theory and evaluate its relevance to this study.

The Manipulation School and the cultural turn

Lefevere has often been associated with the Manipulation Group or School, a collection of scholars who, from the 1970s onwards, sought to carry out descriptive research on the manipulative function of translations in society. The group was named after the 'manipulation thesis' posited in the 1985 essay collection entitled *The Manipulation of Literature* edited by

⁴³ David Asimakoulas, 'Rewriting', in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, 3rd ed., ed. Mona Baker and Gabriela Saldanha (London: Routledge, 2019), 494.

Theo Hermans.⁴⁴ According to the manipulation thesis, the source text undergoes manipulation as a result of textual strategies employed by the translator and/or constraints imposed on them by the target literary system.⁴⁵ Manipulation in this instance describes the functional purpose of a translation, which is directed to produce some kind of effect on the receiving audience in the target culture. The mechanics of this manipulation are therefore influenced by cultural norms in the target culture at the time of the translation's production.⁴⁶ Since 'all translation implies a degree of manipulation of the source text for a certain purpose', the group argued that translation studies research should be target-oriented and descriptive rather than source-oriented, prescriptive and evaluative, as was common in linguistic approaches.⁴⁷ The descriptive method proceeds from the empirical fact of translation in order to 'delve into translation as cultural and historical phenomena, to explore its context and its conditioning factors, to search for grounds that can explain why there is what there is', rather than prescribe the nature of a translation based on preconceived notions of what translation is.⁴⁸ While the scholars of the Manipulation School diverged in their understanding of systems, the functional purpose of a translation and the motivations behind the manipulation of the source text, they shared an approach that was historical, functional and systemic.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Alexandra Assis Rosa, 'Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS)', in *Handbook of Translation Studies Online: Volume 1*, ed. Yves Gambier and Luc van Doorslaer (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2010), <https://doi.org/10.1075/hts.2016.des1>.

⁴⁵ Theo Hermans, 'Introduction: Translation Studies and a New Paradigm', in *The Manipulation of Literature: Studies in Literary Translation*, 2nd ed., ed. Theo Hermans (New York: Routledge, 2014), 13.

Rosa, 'Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS)', <https://doi.org/10.1075/hts.2016.des1>.

⁴⁶ Hermans, 'Introduction', 13.

Anne Schjoldager, 'Interpreting Research and the 'Manipulation School' of Translation Studies', *HERMES – Journal of Language and Communication in Business* 7, no. 12 (2017): 82–83.

⁴⁷ Hermans, 'Introduction', 11.

⁴⁸ Hermans, 'Introduction', 15.

Hermans 'Introduction', 12–13.

⁴⁹ Hermans, 'Introduction', 13–14.

Lefevere's emphasis on the translated text's function and reception in the target culture and use of diachronic analysis and 'systems thinking' locates rewriting theory firmly in the descriptive branch of translation studies born from the Manipulation School. Unlike other systems theories (notably Polysystems) that were popular among Manipulation School scholars, rewriting is a heuristic model since it takes place in contrived cultural and literary systems created as a result of human action and human-made phenomena.⁵⁰ Lefevere intended 'systems' as a neutral term, viewing cultural and literary systems as stochastic, rather than rigidly mechanistic. In this way, Lefevere proposed rewriting as a lens that could be applied to any culture throughout history, with the aim of understanding the social and cultural forces that shape the material production of translations and other forms of rewriting.

The cultural turn of the 1990s saw the integration of postcolonial studies and sociological concepts, frameworks and methods in the discipline of translation studies. As translation studies research became increasingly interdisciplinary, the manipulation thesis evolved into that of 'cultural construction':

[...] translation studies scholars were beginning to show that translations, rather than being a secondary and derivative genre, were instead one of the primary literary tools that larger social institutions – educational systems, arts councils, publishing firms, and even governments – had at their disposal to “manipulate” a given society in order to “construct” the kind of “culture” desired.⁵¹

To this end, Lefevere produced a number of works in collaboration with Susan Bassnett, another translation studies scholar associated with the Manipulation Group and the cultural

⁵⁰ André Lefevere, 'Mother Courage's Cucumbers: Text, System and Refraction in a Theory of Literature', *Modern Language Studies* 12, no. 4 (1982): 5.
Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting*, 12.

⁵¹ Edwin Gentzler, 'Foreword', in *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation*, ed. Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere (Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 1998), x.

turn, emphasising the role of various actors involved in textual production and circulation, the constraints on these processes and the translated text's impact on the receiving audience and culture.

It is worth outlining the context in which Lefevere developed rewriting theory and his ties to the Manipulation School since 'manipulation' is a particularly loaded term in translation studies, for, as Lori Chamberlin notes, it has often been the reason for the inferior status of translations in the study of literature and its history.⁵² This is precisely the image of translation that Manipulation School scholars were attempting to push back against, in order to establish translation studies as a legitimate and necessary field of research in its own right. Perhaps manipulation scholars were responding to the stigma of the term in the context of translation and used manipulation as a way of subverting the trope of 'les belles infidèles'. Nonetheless, there is a striking absence of commentary among Manipulation School scholars on their use of the term manipulation, especially with regards to the translator's handling of the source text. There is also a danger of misunderstanding manipulation as a deterministic concept when its use in both the manipulation and cultural construction theses seems to be more relative and perhaps even intentionally ambiguous.

On this point, I am wary of drawing a false binary between the Manipulation School and cultural approaches in their use of the term manipulation. As Hermans notes, the Manipulation School was a diverse group of scholars spread across the world, whose ideas sometimes diverged greatly.⁵³ This continued into the 1990s with the cultural turn, however, hindsight has somewhat artificially sharpened this distinction. Instead, I think that it is more

⁵² Lori Chamberlain, 'Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation', *Signs* 13, no. 3 (1988): 455.

⁵³ Hermans, 'Introduction', 8.

productive to view both approaches as responding to the most pressing issues in translation studies at the time and building off the different ideas and approaches.⁵⁴ The manipulation thesis deals with the reality that all translations are metonymic and that this difference or ‘loss’ is an interesting source of study in itself.⁵⁵ Systems theories allowed translation studies to move past unproductive binaries, such as linguistic equivalence and faithful versus free translation, and contextualise the decision-making processes involved in text production at the linguistic-level. In other words, systems theories provided a systematic way for scholars to connect linguistic analysis of translations at the micro- and meso-levels to the macro-level of literary, cultural and social systems.⁵⁶ Cultural approaches extended the manipulation thesis by providing additional context, demonstrating how the decisions involved in text production influence its reception in the target literary and cultural systems. While many cultural approaches eschewed systems thinking in favour of the study of ideology and power – systems being seen as too simplistic a model of culture – both approaches use manipulation to describe the act of producing a translated text for a particular purpose, which produces some kind of effect in the receiving culture that has the potential to be negative. This is reflected in Lefevere’s ideas on rewriting, which represent a ‘bridging point’ between the systems theories of the Manipulation School and the cultural turn.⁵⁷

Refractions, rewriting and translation

⁵⁴ For instance, Lefevere draws on the ideas of postcolonial scholar Edward Said in his contribution to Hermans’ 1985 essay collection.

⁵⁵ Lefevere, *Translation*, 99.

⁵⁶ Lefevere, *Translation*, 51.

⁵⁷ Jeremy Munday, Jacob Blakesley, and Sara Ramos Pinto, *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and Applications*, 5th ed. (London: Routledge, 2022), 169.

In his theory of rewriting, Lefevere claims that translation – both as an object and a process – can be understood as a rewriting of an original or a source text.⁵⁸ A rewriting involves the adaptation of a source text, which projects an image of the source text and culture in the receiving culture as a result. Lefevere initially defined rewritings as refractions, which he defined as ‘the adaptation of a work of literature to a different audience, with the intention of influencing the way in which that audience reads the work’.⁵⁹ Nonetheless, what is striking about Lefevere’s theory is that he does not define a rewriting in terms of a particular media or text-type. Translation is one type of rewriting, which may also include anthologies, reviews, critiques, and historiographical and edited works.⁶⁰ While Lefevere points to multimedia and audiovisual adaptations as avenues for future research, his primary focus is on literature.⁶¹ Unlike other instances of rewriting, translation is unique because it can occur between languages and is therefore capable of traversing greater linguistic and cultural distances. As a literature is a subsystem of larger social and cultural systems, translation is primarily responsible for the interpenetration and innovation of these systems.

Rewriting implies some kind of metonymic, intertextual relationship with a source text insofar as it results in ‘partial representations of literary oeuvres or aspects of reality’.⁶² Rewriting therefore manipulates: all rewritings, irrespective of intent, express the dominant ideology and poetics in the society and culture of their creation, albeit to varying degrees.⁶³ Together, ideology and poetics form the ‘logic of culture’ that directs the interplay of different

⁵⁸ Lefevere, *Translation*, vii.

⁵⁹ Lefevere, ‘Mother Courage’s Cucumbers’, 4.

⁶⁰ Lefevere, *Translation*, 9.

⁶¹ Lefevere, *Translation*, 9.

⁶² Lefevere, *Translation*, vii.
Asimakoulas, ‘Rewriting’, 495.

⁶³ Lefevere, *Translation*, vii.

literatures and the broader social and cultural environment.⁶⁴ In the case of translated literature, the partial nature of the translated text – and consequently its manipulative function – is shaped by the translator's ideology and, to a lesser extent, the dominant poetics in the target culture at the time of the translation's production. Through their choice of translation strategy, consciously or otherwise, the translator manipulates the direction of the translated text and is able to influence its reception in the target culture in terms of the image it projects of the source text and culture. However, manipulation does not refer to the action of the translator alone. Lefevere incorporates systems thinking and cultural approaches to bring to the fore the various actors involved in a text's production, including the editor, publishing house, marketing team, among others. The metonymic aspect of rewriting also refers to the intertextual relationship between a rewriting and other rewritings:

[...] translation does not manage to subvert or transform a literature all on its own. Translation does so in conjunction with other forms of rewriting, which explains why translation should also be studied in conjunction with other forms of rewriting, and not on its own... translation can no longer be analysed in isolation, but that it should be studied as part of a whole system of texts and the people who produce, support, propagate, oppose, censor them.⁶⁵

Patronage

⁶⁴ Lefevere, *Translation*, 11.

Philip Rice and Patricia Waugh, eds., *Modern Literary Theory*, 4th ed. (London: Bloomsbury, 2001), 43.

⁶⁵ André Lefevere, 'Why Waste Our Time on Rewrites? The Trouble with Interpretation and the Role of Rewriting in an Alternative Paradigm', in *The Manipulation of Literature: Studies in Literary Translation*, 2nd ed., ed. by Theo Hermans (New York: Routledge, 2014), 237.

It is essential to note that where Lefevere refers to the rewriter, this is not limited to any one actor involved in the production of a text. Lefevere is less interested in the rewriting/translation process at the cognitive level, but in the forces that guide the rewriter/translator at the level of a given social and cultural system, and how the rewriter/translator may operate within these systems. The rewriter's agency and subjectivity act as internal constraints on the process of rewriting. To this point, Lefevere introduces the notion of patronage, which refers to the powers (individuals, groups and institutions) that regulate a literary system.⁶⁶ Rewriters are required to navigate the framework of patronage in order for their work to enter into circulation and be received by an audience. Power, here, is understood in the Foucauldian sense as having the potential to coerce, restrict and/or innovate.⁶⁷ It is not a quality that can be possessed, but rather 'something that is *exercised* [...] it is not attached to agents and interests but is incorporated in numerous practices'.⁶⁸ This is perhaps most evident in rewritings compared to other literary works due to their metonymic nature, the result of a selection and decision-making process that reflects the ideological and poetological motivations of the various actors whose hands a rewriting must pass through before it can reach an audience. Whether a translation or an anthology, rewritings are highly-curated works of literature. For example, the decision to include a poem in an anthology is the decision to exclude other poems that may share similar characteristics. According to Lefevere, these decisions are informed by the interactions of ideological, economic and status-related factors, which combine in various ways according to the type of patronage (undifferentiated or differentiated) in a literary system.⁶⁹ In this way, patronage both regulates and helps to establish the dominant ideology and poetics of a given culture and society by serving as an external constraint on the rewriter's activity and the form

⁶⁶ Lefevere, *Translation*, 15.

⁶⁷ Lefevere, *Translation*, 15.

⁶⁸ Barrett, *The Politics of Truth*, 135.

⁶⁹ Lefevere, *Translation*, 16-17.

and manipulative function of a rewritten text. While rewriting – translation in particular – allows for the interpenetration of different literary systems and their broader social and cultural environments, patronage is what regulates this process.

Reception and readership

The relationship between the source and rewritten text is oriented towards the receiver of the rewriting, towards a particular target culture and society. Rewriting involves a redirecting of the source text and the target audience. Here, Lefevere makes an interesting distinction between professional readers, that is, teachers and scholars of literature, and non-professional readers, who make up the majority of readers.⁷⁰ This distinction was not intended to be derogatory in any way, although it has some problematic connotations. While professional readers may engage with the patronage framework of a given society and culture, for instance, by advising on the texts to be included in an edited volume or anthology, they also form a control factor separate to patronage, helping to regulate a literary system.

On the one hand, professional readers exercise a conservative force on a literary system through their affiliation with a society's educational institutions. Whereas the type of patronage framework in a society establishes parameters for the production of rewriting according to the dominant ideology and poetics, such as selecting new works to admit to the literary canon and republishing or rewriting old ones, the educational establishment reinforces canonisation by sustaining (somewhat artificially) the production of 'the classics' and establishing what is

⁷⁰ Lefevere, *Translation*, 3-6.

considered ‘highbrow’ and ‘timeless’ literature.⁷¹ In this way, the institutions of academia are organised in reverence to the canon. Professional readers are more likely to read ‘highbrow’ literature, in contrast to non-professional readers, whose exposure to these works is often through rewritings. Lefevere suggests that this growing disconnect between the literary tastes of professional and non-professional readers has circumscribed the professional reader’s influence and prestige mainly to the education establishment itself. For example, professional readers hoping to advance their academic careers face pressure to engage with ‘highbrow’ as opposed to ‘lowbrow’ literature in order for their work to benefit from serious critical engagement.⁷² Not only does this further insulate academia from contemporary culture, particularly popular culture, but as a consequence, it has a neutralising effect on the creativity of individuals associated with educational institutions.⁷³

On the other hand, rewritings are primarily aimed at and consumed by non-professional readers, yet are mainly produced by professional writers. Whereas patronage acts as an external constraint on a literary system, professionalism operates as an internal control factor, determining who is deemed sufficiently qualified to produce rewritings. As such, Lefevere turns to the Weberian conception of power as monopoly: professional rewriters, in their capacity as service providers, ‘[...] are regarded as possessing a monopoly of competence in their particular “field”.’⁷⁴ Where professional readers work as professional rewriters, their ties to academia afford them a higher degree of authority and prestige, that is, a higher degree of cultural and social capital.

⁷¹ Lefevere, *Translation*, 20-22.

⁷² Lefevere, *Translation*, 3-4.

⁷³ Lefevere, *Translation*, 22.

⁷⁴ Weber in Lefevere, *Translation*, 14.

Lefevere observed that while there seemed to be greater demand for rewritings in the early-1990s than ever before, paradoxically, professional readers and academia as a whole seemed unwilling to engage with this phenomenon.⁷⁵ While Lefevere does not provide an explanation for why this is the case, this could be the result of both globalisation, which saw an influx of texts in translation, and technological developments, which radically altered the nature of their consumption.⁷⁶ Yet, the larger point Lefevere is trying to make is that rewritings are crucial for understanding how literary systems can evolve and transform – how creative progress can even occur in the face of the constraints of patronage and professionalism, and how change can be introduced to literary, cultural and social systems. In a postmodern context, where deconstruction has shown ‘[...] that what we call “reality” is a construct’, images of reality are more mobile and hold more sway over readers than reality itself.⁷⁷ Lefevere takes the claim that a translation is only a translation in the target culture (because it is so perceived by the target audience) further than other descriptive translation theories at the time, including polysystems. For the general reading public

[...] who cannot check the translation against the original, the translation, quite simply, is the original. Rewriters and rewritings project images of the original work, author, literature, or culture that often impact many more readers than the original does. Rewritings [...] often conclusively shape the reception of a work, an author, a literature, or a society in a culture different from its culture of origin.⁷⁸

On this point, Lefevere uses the example of Anne Frank’s diary to demonstrate how, in the case of autobiographical literature, rewriting can have serious consequences. Anne Frank, a real person, is flattened and manipulated into the form of Anne Frank the character and this is

⁷⁵ Gentzler, ‘Foreword,’ x.

⁷⁶ See for example: Karin Littau, ‘Translation in the Age of Postmodern Production: From Text to Intertext to Hypertext’, *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 33, no. 1 (1997): 81–96.

⁷⁷ Lefevere, *Translation*, 5.

⁷⁸ Lefevere, *Translation*, 109–110.

the image of Anne Frank the real person that has become standard. The fullness of her being has been flattened and at times depoliticised to conform to the ideological, poetological and patronage constraints at the time of rewriting:

Once the person Anne Frank took the decision to rewrite for publication what Anne Frank had written, the person Anne Frank split up into a person and an author, and the author began to rewrite in a more literary manner what the person had written. Others responded to the constraints of ideology and patronage in her stead, and they did so as they saw fit. She had no say in the matter. That is why part of her experience, very definitely a formative part, is missing from the 1947 Dutch text, and why she has been made to conform, in German, to a cultural stereotype and made to water down the description of the very atrocities which destroyed her as a person.⁷⁹

The fact that rewritings are more mobile and more accessible to non-professional readers is because they are accessible outside of the academic institution, and because they involve some degree of travelling, directionality, transfer and *translation*, this is what makes rewritings able to manipulate. Rewritings can introduce change into a literary system by altering the logic of culture: the dominant ideology and poetics that govern a literary system. Following the logic of polysystems theory, Lefevere claims that a literary system, like all systems, seeks to reach a state of equilibrium, which is then maintained by patronage, and to a lesser extent, professionalism.⁸⁰ Changes in the patronage framework and the status of professional service providers provoke change in a literary system according to the opposing principles of polarity or periodicity.⁸¹ It is through rewritings that a literary system is able to

⁷⁹ Lefevere, 'Why Waste', 72.

⁸⁰ Lefevere, *Translation*, 38.

⁸¹ Lefevere, *Translation*, 38.

innovate itself through cross-cultural interaction and exchange. According to Lefevere, the history of literature *is* the history of rewriting.

Why rewriting?

In this thesis, I am interested in exploring the differences between different types of rewriting, particularly in relation to autobiography, with authors often rewriting themselves. I find it striking that Lefevere skirts around the question of what distinguishes translation from other instances of rewriting. While he claims that translation is a ‘special case’ in that it renders the mechanisms of rewriting more explicit, he refuses to engage with the interlinguistic dimension of translation, claiming that language is subsumed by larger issues of culture. In this way, the status of the source and the rewriting remains unclear in Lefevere’s account. I believe that starting from the empirical fact that translations and rewritings exist does not mean that we can presume that they are self-evident – Lefevere still has to define the rewriting as an ontological object separate from the source text. He still has to account for the role of language in translation in order to move beyond it. Moreover, if rewritings are embedded in rewritings, how do they influence one another? Can we really distinguish between an original text and rewritings if all texts embody a degree of metonymy given their relationship to cultural and literary systems? More so than other genres, autobiography highlights the instability of the text and the processes of textual construction and production. In rewriting her previously published work, not just in terms of content but also form, Ernaux brings to light the instability of a text, its ephemeral nature as a measure of her creativity and personal evolution over the course of her oeuvre and life. This study seeks to test whether Lefevere’s claim that it is not useful to investigate the differences between different types of rewriting by investigating how the

linguistic features of translation at the micro- and meso-levels relate to the macro-level of cultural and literary systems.

Lefevere's account of rewriting also leaves unclear the extent to which ideology and patronage are two distinct things. According to Lefevere, patronage mostly concerns ideology, while professionalism is more concerned with poetics, however this distinction seems to be fluid. How patronage functions and who the actors in a system of patronage are remain largely undefined in Lefevere's theory. I am curious to see whether we can distinguish between an author's ideology and poetics in translation criticism and whether we can identify differences in the author's and translator's poetological and ideological motivations in producing a rewriting.

More broadly, I am interested in applying Lefevere's theory to explore what happens when the author is rewriting herself parallel to her work being translated. When applied to the rewriting of contemporary literature, what can rewriting theory tell us about how the history of literature is constructed and how a literary system evolves in real-time? What does this tell us about the nature of cultural and societal systems at large – temporally and structurally? And what can it tell us about the state of patronage and professionalism in different societies and cultures, how they interact and how canonisation unfolds? While these questions may be beyond the scope of this study, they offer potential areas for further translation studies research.

IV. Methodology

Introduction

This study, situated within the descriptive branch of TS, will take a product-oriented approach to the translation of autobiographical literature in order to examine how forms of rewriting differ from one another. It will not focus on the translation process in relation to the translator's approach and choice of strategies, however, translation decisions at the micro- and meso-levels, as well as the macro-level of the source and translated texts will be incorporated in the analysis insofar as they reflect the source and translated texts' respective ideological and cultural positioning. In other words, I am interested in the 'image' of the source text in the target culture that is projected by the translated text. Yet, as we have seen, autobiographical literature is frequently characterised by the act of returning, with authors rewriting and releasing new work based on their previously published material, which may differ from the original text in terms of approach, style, genre, and more. Rewriting in this instance operates within the same literary and cultural system as the original text but still echoes the metonymic relationship between the source and translated texts. The rewritten text projects an image of the original text within the same culture, which influences the reception of both the original and rewritten text within the source culture. This may also influence the translation of both the rewritten and original texts, as well as their reception in the target culture. How, then, does the author as rewriter differ from the translator as rewriter? How may different instances of rewriting affect the micro-, meso- and macro-level relations between the original and rewritten texts, as well as the source and target literary and cultural systems?

In the sections below, I will outline the theoretical underpinnings and methodological challenges that informed my choice of methodology and the method of data collection.

Image, ideology and poetics

Lefevere argues that two main factors determine the nature of the image projected by the translated text in the target culture: the translator's ideology and the dominant poetics in the literary system of the target culture at the time of the translation.⁸² The translator's approach and strategy at the micro- and meso-levels of the text therefore reflect the dominant poetics and ideology at the time the translation was produced. While both inform the translator's approach, according to Lefevere's model, ideology plays a more significant role than poetics in this process:

The ideology dictates the basic strategy the translator is going to use and therefore also dictates solutions to problems concerned with both the "universe of discourse" expressed in the original (objects, concepts, customs belonging to the world that was familiar to the writer of the original) and the language the original itself is expressed in.⁸³

Ideology is either imposed on the translator as a constraint by some form of patronage or it is the result of subjective cognitive processes that reflect and connect to the broader forces at play in a literary and cultural system, which influence the translator's ideological positioning.⁸⁴ Moreover, the ideological and, to a lesser extent, poetological forces that inform the translator's approach are expressed in their handling of universe-of-discourse features and

⁸² Lefevere, *Translation*, 41.

⁸³ Lefevere, *Translation*, 41.

⁸⁴ Lefevere, *Translation*, 41 & 61.

in their choice of illocutionary strategies. To this end, the critic must be able to differentiate between isolated instances and human error and recurrent patterns, so as to avoid a prescriptive or deterministic reading of a translation or rewriting.⁸⁵ This can be overcome by conducting a diachronic and/or comparative assessment of multiple translations (and other rewritings) of the same source text and identifying any patterns that emerge. The critic should then draw on supplementary material such as notes and writings by the translator and marketing information to contextualise their findings.⁸⁶ This provides evidence of who was involved in the production of the rewritten text and their contribution to its production, the context of the text's creation in the source culture, its intended manipulative function and its reception in the target culture. The sum of translation decisions often reveal the complex interaction of cognition, poetics and ideology as the text will not necessarily be internally consistent.⁸⁷

Universe-of-discourse features refer to the aspects of language that are 'intricately bound up with the foreign [target] culture itself', such as literary illusions or sociolect.⁸⁸ This study will expand on Lefevere's definition of universe-of-discourse features, as it is evident that in the context of autobiography, these may also encompass references to events, experiences, people, places and things that are part of the author's reality and that are referenced to in their other works. The translator's approach to universe of discourse features depends on the status of the source text in the source and target cultures, the self-image of the target culture, the types of texts and levels of diction deemed acceptable in the target culture, the target audience of the translation and the 'cultural scripts' that the target audience is willing

⁸⁵ Lefevere, *Translation*, 97.

⁸⁶ See for example Chapter 5 of Lefevere's *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* in which he conducts a comparative study of the Dutch, German and English versions of Anne Frank's Diary.

⁸⁷ Lefevere, *Translation*, 61.

Maria Tymoczko, 'Connecting the Two Infinite Orders: Research Methods in Translation Studies', in *Crosscultural Transgressions: Research Models in Translation Studies II: Historical and Ideological Issues*, ed. by Theo Hermans (Manchester: St Jerome Publishing, 2002), 19–20.

⁸⁸ Lefevere, *Translation*, 56–7.

to accept.⁸⁹ These factors influence the translator's choice and combination of illocutionary strategies – the use of linguistic devices that allow a text to affect the reader in some way.⁹⁰ Here, it is useful to return to Lefevere's views on the distinctiveness of translation in comparison to other forms of rewriting and his views on language. While translation is the most obvious and self-evident form of rewriting because it involves the interaction of different linguistic systems, language in its locutionary aspect is not a defining feature of translation: 'Rather, language as the expression (and repository) of a culture is one element in the cultural transfer known as translation'.⁹¹

However, Lefevere does not provide a clear or comprehensive method as to how to collect data and conduct an analysis of rewriting. This is a result of his not accounting for the linguistic dimensions involved in translation in favour of a cultural approach. While his emphasis on the universe-of-discourse features is particularly salient in the context of this study, he does not provide a list of illocutionary strategies or micro-level linguistic effects for the critic to identify and thereby link translation effects at the micro- and meso-levels to the broader forces at play in cultural and literary systems.

Metonymy and rewriting

In 'Connecting the Two Infinite Orders: Research Methods in Translation Studies', Maria Tymoczko provides a comprehensive framework that combines micro-level linguistic approaches and macro-level cultural approaches in translation studies, taking advantage of the

⁸⁹ Lefevere, *Translation*, 87–95.

⁹⁰ Lefevere, *Translation*, 99.

⁹¹ Lefevere, *Translation*, 57.

infinite possibilities for analysis offered by both. She draws on Lefevere's understanding of translation as rewriting, her earlier work on the metonymics of translation and deconstructionism more broadly. Tymoczko views texts as socially-situated objects that operate within a given culture and literary system, which they reflect in turn. I am particularly interested in her understanding of texts as 'organized artefacts', constructed from layers of context, in relation to autobiographical literature.⁹² While this echoes Lefevere's ideas of rewritings being surrounded by rewritings, Tymoczko extends Lefevere's model to incorporate the interlinguistic dimension of translation.⁹³ That is, Tymoczko understands translation effects at the micro-level to be embedded in the text's particular context of construction and production:

Frequently it will be not only helpful but essential to identify and retrace linguistic specificities of textual construction, so that translation effects are understood as products of textual construction and production.⁹⁴

In this way, she accounts for the possibility of a disconnect between the motivation, intention and reception of translation decisions, which is somewhat obscured in Lefevere's analysis of rewritings. While Lefevere acknowledges that translation decisions are sometimes arbitrary or the inevitable result of human error, his model does not provide a clear method for data collection and analysis where there is a lack of secondary source material to contextualise the translator's approach. He also does not sufficiently address the fact that the reception to rewritings can change over time and that scholarly research is also time-bound. To accommodate this, Tymoczko argues that research should rigorously incorporate micro- and

⁹² Tymoczko, 'Connecting the Two Infinite Orders', 15.

⁹³ Lefevere, 'Why Waste Our Time on Rewrites?', 237.

⁹⁴ Tymoczko, 'Connecting', 15.

macro-concerns and approaches at each stage of the research design, so that all judgements and decisions are justified throughout.⁹⁵

Since all translations are rewritings and therefore culturally and socially-situated metonymic objects, she argues that successful research must move from the micro- to the macroscopic or vice versa, so that data collected on both levels complement and reinforce one another.⁹⁶ Following Tymoczko's method, this study will move in the direction of the macroscopic to the microscopic in order to determine how different instances of rewriting differ from one another and whether we can distinguish between the action of the author and translator in rewriting. It is firmly situated within the theoretical framework of rewriting and will attempt to test the bounds of rewriting as defined by Lefevere, namely, whether or not the interlinguistic dimension of translation is a crucial factor in distinguishing it from other forms of rewriting. While Lefevere argues this is not the case, in order to test this hypothesis, I will need a method of integrating linguistic analysis into my approach.

The last two steps of Tymoczko's methodology, however, are unclear. She states that the research should select relevant passages of the translations in question, which 'set in high relief the cultural or ideological issues related to the cultural interface at hand'.⁹⁷ The researcher must then examine the texts and systematically record 'linguistic anomalies and perturbations reflecting the cultural issues that are being investigated'.⁹⁸ Yet, like Lefevere, she does not provide a list of criteria for the researcher to identify these linguistic anomalies and their

⁹⁵ Tymoczko, 'Connecting', 23.

⁹⁶ Tymoczko, 'Connecting', 15 & 17.

Maria Tymoczko, *Translation in a Postcolonial Context* (Manchester: St Jerome Publishing, 1999), 41.

⁹⁷ Tymoczko, 'Connecting', 18.

⁹⁸ Tymoczko, 'Connecting', 18.

relation to the cultural and ideological issues under investigation, assuming that these will become self-evident in the process of data collection.

Lance Hewson's *Approach to Translation Criticism*

Unlike Lefevere and Tymoczko, Lance Hewson's *Approach to Translation Criticism* includes clear guidelines for constructing a metalanguage for translation critique and relating this to the macro-level analysis and critical framework of the text. Given the focus of this study, I agree with Hewson that style is an important element of translation critique of autobiography as it contributes to the 'image' of the author and their work in the source and target cultures as well as critical reception. While Lefevere and Tymoczko discuss the dangers of producing a prescriptive account of style, particularly when working from microscopic to macroscopic analysis, they do not provide clear solutions as to how to critique style in the translation of literary texts. By contrast, instead of locating style at the linguistic level of a text, Hewson understands style not as a particular combination of locutionary devices but as fundamentally linked to the critical context of the text as a whole, that is, whether or not this combination can be regarded as the result of choice.⁹⁹ The task of the critic is thus to compare the 'interpretative potential' of a number of texts.¹⁰⁰

First, the critic collects the preliminary data in which to ground the micro- and meso-level linguistic analysis. This includes general contextual information as well as analysis of the

⁹⁹ Lance Hewson, *An Approach to Translation Criticism: Emma and Madame Bovary in Translation* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2011), 75.

¹⁰⁰ Hewson, *Approach*, 23.

macrostructure of the editions consulted.¹⁰¹ The critic then devises her critical framework for interpretation, drawing on evidence of the texts' critical reception. Lastly, the critic conducts micro-level linguistic analysis of the texts, identifying a number of interpretational and voice effects at the meso-level. Hewson's approach is particularly useful when examining rewriting in relation to autobiographical literature. By grounding the critical framework in the macrostructure of the texts and surrounding critical discourse, the critic can readily identify key features in their presentation and reception and understand the image projected by the text in the source and target cultures and literary systems. The critic can identify differences that may be the result of editorial policies and/or decisions made by the publisher, editor, translator, etc. or differences between the source and target cultures. This ensures that inevitable linguistic differences at the micro- and meso-levels are grounded in the material context of production and the contexts of circulation and reception, rather than in the fact of linguistic difference, which otherwise regulates translation critique to unproductive binaries of linguistic equivalence, needlessly privileging one translation strategy above another.

¹⁰¹ Please see the introduction to the Macrostructural Analysis Section for clarification on the use of 'macrostructure' in this thesis.

V. Preliminary Data

Introduction

According to Hewson, preliminary data concerns background information on the texts to be analysed in both the source and target cultures.¹⁰² This includes the publishing history, editions available as well as information on the linguistic and cultural background of the translator/s. Hewson supplements this contextual information with analysis of the macrostructure of the texts, considering how the construction of the text as a material object may influence its reception. Given the focus of this study being rewriting in relation to autobiographical literature, paratextual information can provide insight into the articulation of the autobiographical pact. The critical framework structures linguistic analysis at the micro-level and provides the interpretative framework for translation effects at the meso-level. This ensures that observations at the micro-, meso- and macro-levels are integrated at every stage of analysis:

It aims on the one hand to identify the key stylistic characteristics of the work, and on the other hand to explore the underpinnings of major potential interpretive paths, taking into account critical orientations that have already been published, and other potential directions for interpretation.¹⁰³

Ernaux is frequently involved in the epitextual reception of her work, attending academic conferences and seminars and in recent years, she has featured on several podcasts

¹⁰² Hewson, *Approach*, 24.

¹⁰³ Hewson, *Approach*, 26.

to discuss her work.¹⁰⁴ The critical framework will therefore examine the critical reception to her work and where, how and why this may differ from Ernaux's own view of her writing.

This chapter will therefore examine the results from the preliminary data and illustrate how I arrived at the critical framework for data analysis.

Background

Passion simple and *Se perdre*

Both *Passion simple* and *Se perdre* were written out of Ernaux's affair with a younger married man. Ernaux refers to her lover as 'A.' throughout *Passion simple* and as 'S.' in *Se perdre*. They met at a writer's junket in Leningrad. He was an attaché to the Soviet embassy in Paris and had been accompanying the group on their tour. She was in her mid-forties, divorced, her two sons grown up, and living in the suburbs of Paris. The affair ended abruptly with the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 and subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union.

Passion simple was first published by the prestigious literary publishing house Éditions Gallimard in 1991 under the category of 'Mémoires et autobiographies'.¹⁰⁵ It was Ernaux's sixth work and won her a wide readership.¹⁰⁶ At only eighty pages, it remains one of her shortest novels to date. *Se perdre* was published by Éditions Gallimard in 2002, ten years after

¹⁰⁴ Loraine Day, Lyn Thomas, and Annie Ernaux, 'Exploring the Interspace: Recent Dialogues around the Work of Annie Ernaux', *Feminist Review*, no. 74 (2003): 100.

¹⁰⁵ 'Passion simple', Gallimard, accessed August 10, 2024, <https://www.gallimard.fr/Catalogue/GALLIMARD/Blanche/Passion-simple#>

¹⁰⁶ Claire-Lise Tondeur and Annie Ernaux, 'Entretien Avec Annie Ernaux', *The French Review* 69, no. 1 (1995): 37.

Passion simple, under the category of ‘Mémoires et autobiographies’.¹⁰⁷ It is significantly longer at 304 pages. *Passion simple* and *Se perdre* were included in the anthology *Écrire la vie* published in 2011. It included all of Ernaux’s published works under Éditions Gallimard at the time, alongside unedited extracts from her diaries, photographs as well as short stories published in newspapers and magazines. She is the first woman writer to have her works published in the Quarto Gallimard series during her lifetime.¹⁰⁸

Simple passion and Getting Lost

Shortly after the release of *Passion simple* in France, the English translation rights were acquired by the American publisher, Seven Stories Press, who released the English translation, *Simple Passion* in 1993. Dan Simon, Ernaux’s former editor at Seven Stories Press, claimed that the short length was one of the major sources of appeal for publishing *Passion simple* in English; it was thought to be an accessible introduction of American audiences to French literature.¹⁰⁹ It was translated by Tanya Leslie. Unfortunately, there is very little information available about Leslie, however, she has been the primary English translator of Ernaux’s works since the early-nineties.¹¹⁰ The edition of *Simple Passion* consulted for this study is the 2022 re-release of Leslie’s 1993 translation.

¹⁰⁷ ‘Se perdre’, Gallimard, accessed August 10, 2024, <https://www.gallimard.fr/Catalogue/GALLIMARD/Blanche/Se-perdre>

¹⁰⁸ Elise Huguency-Léger, and Lyn Thomas, ‘Biography’, Annie Ernaux, accessed 10 August, 2024, <https://www.annie-ernaux.org/biography/>

¹⁰⁹ Adam Biles, host, ‘Annie Ernaux, Nobel Prize in Literature’, Shakespeare and Company Interview (podcast) 7 October, 2022, <https://open.spotify.com/episode/1eHMZYsNNpLDYOeEIXfP7W?si=3cced52737d649ff>

¹¹⁰ Elise Huguency-Léger, and Lyn Thomas, ‘Publications’, Annie Ernaux, accessed 10 August, 2024, <https://www.annie-ernaux.org/publications/>

The English translation of *Se perdre* was released in 2022 by Fitzcarraldo Editions in the UK and Seven Stories Press in the US, entitled *Getting Lost*.¹¹¹ The translator is Alison L. Strayer, a Canadian translator who first started her career translating screenplays, which is where she first encountered Ernaux's work – incidentally, *Passion simple*.¹¹² She has received widespread acclaim for her translations of Ernaux's works, notably *The Years*, which was shortlisted for the Man Booker International Prize in 2019.¹¹³ Unlike Leslie, Strayer has participated in a number of interviews and even appeared alongside Ernaux at book and panel events.

Macrostructural Analysis

Introduction

In this section, I will diverge slightly from Hewson's critical apparatus and define 'macrostructure' as the formal and para- and peri-textual elements of the text, that is, the book type, images and text on the front and back covers, the introduction, footnotes, translator's notes, and so on. Both Hewson and Tymoczko stress the importance of incorporating the material form of the text in translation analysis.¹¹⁴ Hewson uses 'macrostructure' to refer to the critic's macro-level analysis based on the results gleaned from the micro- and meso-levels in which she assigns the translation to one of four categories: divergent similarity, relative

¹¹¹ Elise Hugueny-Léger, and Lyn Thomas, 'Publications', Annie Ernaux, accessed 10 August, 2024, <https://www.annie-ernaux.org/publications/>

¹¹² Adam Biles, host, 'Annie Ernaux, Nobel Prize in Literature', Shakespeare and Company Interview (podcast) 7 October, 2022, <https://open.spotify.com/episode/1eHMZYsNNpLDYOeEIXfP7W?si=3cced52737d649ff>

¹¹³ 'Alison L. Strayer', Granta, accessed 10 August, 2024, <https://granta.com/contributor/alison-l-strayer/>

¹¹⁴ Hewson, *Approach*, 26.
Tymoczko, 'Connecting', 18.

divergence, radical divergence or adaptation.¹¹⁵ While the macro-level effects are briefly discussed in the conclusion, Hewson's four categories are not useful to this study, given its focus on rewriting. The notion of macrostructure has a rich body of scholarship behind it in linguistics and related disciplines, such as narratology and discourse analysis. I will use macrostructure as a general term to describe the overarching physical and material form of the text that structure and influence the text's reception and consumption as a material object. In this way, the macrostructure can provide insight into the text's intended manipulative function, which is not limited to linguistic effects at the micro- and meso-levels, but constituted through the reader's experience of the text as a material object.

A note on the editions consulted

While Hewson advocates for the use of the same editions as consulted by the translator when conducting analysis, I have chosen to refer to the French texts as they are presented in *Écrire la vie* for several reasons.¹¹⁶ First, while examining the same editions of the source text consulted by the translator can serve as a useful control factor, I am wary that this could be misleading in the case of contemporary autobiographical literature, especially as the genre continues to evolve and Ernaux continues to respond to her previous work. As a researcher, I am influenced by my experience with Ernaux's works as well as the image of her oeuvre in critical reception. In producing this study, I am also producing a rewriting. Where rewriting and autobiography are concerned, I think this exposes a fallacy in Hewson's approach as it envisages the source text as a cohesive whole, which rewriting theory and the genre of autobiographical literature necessarily contests.

¹¹⁵ Hewson, *Approach*, 27.

¹¹⁶ Hewson, *Approach*, 24.

Secondly, The English translations were influenced by a myriad of unknown factors – it is impossible to know the layers of context that have informed the translator's decisions. Yet the publication of the anthology signifies the status of the source texts in the source cultural and literary system. In other words, it demonstrates that in 2011 there was an acceptance among French-speaking audiences for this kind of autofictional experimentation. This has not changed: Ernaux's prestige as a writer is undeniable in the Francophone world and following her Nobel win in 2022, on the global literary stage. I think this exposes how processes of canonisation, reception and criticism and research more broadly are culturally contingent and it also makes my role and stance as a researcher more visible.

Écrire la vie

The anthology takes the form of a paperback and is protected by a hard book cover, which features images of pressed flowers on the front and back and a cropped photo showing half of Ernaux's face on the spine. The front presents the title and Ernaux's name, while the back lists the works included in the volume. The book follows the same format, but features various photographs of Ernaux throughout her life, as well as a quote from Ernaux's introduction to the work.

After the title page, there is a short introduction written by Ernaux, dated to July 2011. She outlines her motivation for gathering her texts in one edition:

À une biographie, qui laisse souvent une impression décevante par son caractère purement factuel, j'ai préféré l'alliance de deux documents personnels, l'album photo et le journal intime : une sorte de photojournal. En regard des photos d'êtres, de lieux,

qui ont compté, comptent toujours pour moi de toutes les manières – dans ma vie, mon écriture – j’ai fait figurer des extraits de mon journal. Une façon d’ouvrir un espace autobiographique différent, en associant ainsi la réalité matérielle, irréfutable des photos, dont la succession « fait histoire », dessine une trajectoire sociale, et la réalité subjective du journal avec les rêves, les obsessions, l’expression brute des affects, la réévaluation constante du vécu.¹¹⁷

Interestingly, Ernaux decided to order the texts following when they occurred in her life, rather than in order of publication date.¹¹⁸ As such, *Passion Simple* (1991) features before *Se perdre* (2001), even though the former was based on the latter. It would seem that Ernaux has chosen to order the texts in terms of her writing life, rather than when these events occurred in her personal life. Two short magazine pieces feature in between: ‘Leipzig, passage’ (1990, 1991) and ‘De l’autre côté du siècle’ (1998, 1999).

Simple Passion

The Fitzcarraldo Editions copy of *Simple Passion* bears its characteristic plain style: the book is white with Klein blue font. All of her works are printed in the same variation – white and blue – to show that they belong to the same author’s oeuvre, despite the lack of images or other design decoration. The book is only 48 pages in total. A sticker on the front cover states ‘Winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature’ in gold writing, referencing Ernaux’s win in 2022. On the back, Tanya Leslie is named as the translator. The blurb introduces the reader to the features of Ernaux’s prose: it references ‘her spare, stark style’, ‘[b]lurring the line between fact and fiction’, ‘with courage and exactitude’. It also features a quote from Sheila Heti

¹¹⁷ Ernaux, *Écrire la vie*, 8.

¹¹⁸ Ernaux, *Écrire la vie*, 8.

praising the work. Heti is the author of *Pure Colour* (2022), which is an experimental prose piece based on the author's diary entries. This situates Ernaux within the sphere of Anglophone autofiction and autobiographical writers of a certain literary prestige and ilk – she is a woman writer, writing her story in an experimental prose that pushes the bounds of literary form.

The first page includes a brief biography of Ernaux, where she grew up, her university and career achievements and two notable works: *A Man's Place* and *A Woman's Story*, which it notes 'have become contemporary classics in France'. The final line reiterates that she was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2022. Below, a short introduction of Tanya Leslie is included. It notes that she is the first English translator of Ernaux, and lists a number of Ernaux's works that she has translated.

The next four pages consist of reviews of Ernaux's work: the first two pages contain praise for *Simple passion*, while the next two pages are praise for her latest work, considered her magnum opus, *The Years*. The reviews come from highly regarded newspapers and literary journals, including the *London Review of Books*, *New York Times* (and *New York Times Book Review*), *the Observer* and *the New Statesman*. The authors whose words of praise are included are also critically acclaimed women authors of memoirs and other autobiographical works, including Heti and Deborah Levy. Lauren Elkin, a prominent translator and scholar of French women writers including Simone de Beauvoir, is also featured.

The edition information confirms that the body of the text consists of Leslie's 1993 translation. The title page that follows is the last mention of Leslie in the body of the text. No more para- or peri-textual information accompanies the text; there are no notes or footnotes by the translator.

Getting Lost

The cover features the same design as *Simple Passion*: a plain white background, with blue font. Like *Simple Passion*, the translator's name does not feature on the cover, however, unlike the aforementioned work, 'Winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature' is typed under Ernaux's name. The first mention of Strayer is on the book's back cover. The blurb is slightly more extensive than *Simple Passion*, however it follows the same format – blurb and a review. The book is 240 pages, significantly longer than *Simple Passion*. On the back cover, *Getting Lost* is described as 'the diary kept by Annie Ernaux during the year and a half she had a secret love affair with a younger, married man, an attaché to the Soviet embassy in Paris'. The connection between *Getting Lost* and *Simple passion* (which is described as a novel) is then made explicit: the latter was based on the events recorded in *Getting Lost*. Interestingly, the blurb switches between Annie and Ernaux: Annie seems to be the character while Ernaux is the writer/narrator, associated with the act of writing. This is certainly reflected in her earlier works, such as in *Mémoire de fille*, where she refers to her young self by her maiden name, Annie D. The last line places *Simple Passion* in the lineage of great literary affairs, *Anna Karenina* and *Madame Bovary*.

Following the title page, a short biography of both Ernaux and Strayer is provided. The biography for Ernaux is exactly the same as that in *Simple Passion*. Strayer is simply described as 'a Canadian writer and translator', however what follows is a list of awards she has received for her work as a translator, especially for her translation of *The Years*, which was published by Fitzcarraldo Editions in 2018. No examples of works of which she is the author are mentioned, and no other examples of her translation work are given.

The first review listed is an expanded version of the review quoted on the back cover, describing *Getting Lost* as an almost ethnographic project, a record of desire and humanity. ‘Her life is our inheritance’. Another review from the *New York Times* is quoted. Praise is also included for *Simple Passion*, *A Girl’s Story* and *A Man’s Place* with reviews from many of the same newspapers, literary journals, authors and reviewers.

The edition information is printed on the next page and another title page follows – this time including both the name of the author and the translator below. Ernaux opens the book with a quotation – an anonymous inscription on the steps of the Basilica of Santa Croce, Florence. ‘I want to live a fable’ not only embodies the blurring of literature/life that characterises much of her oeuvre (and especially sets and conveys the tone for *Getting Lost*), but also reinforces the reviews and paratextual framing of the diary, which places her affair in the literary lineage of *Anna Karenina* and *Madame Bovary*. The body of the text opens with a short introduction, stated to have been written retrospectively in Autumn 2000, 11 years after the events described in the book. Here, she outlines the chronology of events and what she has determined her writing project to be in retrospect. The rest of the book is organised like a diary, punctuated by dates, days and times and laid out chronologically. There are several footnotes included by Strayer, explaining certain translation choices or providing explications for culturally-specific terms and ideas. After several blank pages, the publisher and edition information are provided at the end.

Critical framework

In *Passion simple*, Ernaux is self-assured both in her writing project and in her experience of the affair. She summarises her feelings and emotional state with ease. The pain and despair are hard to imagine in a narrative that is so assured in itself, in a narrator who is so fully living out a passion, the dizzying momentum of it all. It is not that *Passion simple* is sentimental or romantic, but that it is committed to ‘living this passion through to the very end’ (17). Critics noted that it marked a shift from

[...] the wordy, angry and ironic prose of her earlier work... replaced by a highly classical condensed and sober writing, which is almost painful in its refusal to play to sentiment.¹¹⁹

It is one of Ernaux’s first forays into *écriture plate*, a writing style that she had begun exploring in *La place*. In her nobel speech, she defines *écriture plate* as follows:

I adopted a neutral, objective kind of writing, ‘flat’ in the sense that it contained neither metaphors or signs of emotion. The violence was no longer displayed; it came from the facts themselves and not the writing. Finding the words that contain both reality and the sensation would become, and remain to this day, my ongoing concern in writing, no matter what the subject.¹²⁰

This ‘violence’ refers to class violence. Given her working-class background, many of Ernaux’s novels and texts explore her experience of never quite belonging to her family’s background and to the world of middle-class literary circles. *Écriture plate* became a way for her to find a language that would afford her family the dignity that they had been denied by the world of literature, by grounding her style in the sensations themselves rather than trying to emulate examples of ‘good style’ or ‘prose’.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Sylvie Romanowski, ‘Passion Simple d’Annie Ernaux: Le Trajet d’une Féministe’, *French Forum* 27, no. 3 (2002): 108–109

¹²⁰ Ernaux, *I Will Write*, 19.

¹²¹ Ernaux, *I Will Write*, 16–17.

In a panel discussion in 2022, Ernaux and Simons (Ernaux's editor with Seven Stories Press) stated that they both disagreed with the English translation of its title as *Simple Passion*, as they felt that it misrepresented the work to the English-speaking public.¹²² Upon its release in America, the work was met with significant backlash due to the subject of the affair between an older woman and a younger married man who worked for the USSR. The French term 'simple' is used in the sense of something fundamental or primary and as a way of describing the velocity of the prose. Throughout the novel, Ernaux plays with its various connotations as she builds to the end of the affair. The novel is like a straight line; the reader is pulled in a single direction to the affair's conclusion. Yet, in English, the use of 'simple' implied that the affair itself was banal and can even be read as tongue-in-cheek.

By contrast, *Se perdre* is more uncertain, the despair is drawn out and it is aching and exhausting to read. Her prose is more fragmentary and pointed, raw and excruciating. This is likely the reason it was not translated into English until relatively recently – if *Passion simple* was seen as an accessible work for Anglophone audiences, *Se perdre* is its opposite in many ways. In *Se perdre*, the reader experiences the day-to-day of the affair and its aftermath, whereas *Passion simple* presents a vertiginous narrative. While unsentimental, *Passion simple* is not able to convey this sense of the slow passing of time, of being utterly consumed in living out the affair to its end to the extent that Ernaux has no sight or indication of what or when or how this end might be. The narrative unfolds in real time during which Ernaux lives in a state of constant tension with no relief or no sight of relief. Her voice is still self-assured but more hesitant; she is less confident in her authorial voice being unable to work on anything besides

¹²² Adam Biles, host, 'Annie Ernaux, Nobel Prize in Literature', Shakespeare and Company Interview (podcast) 7 October, 2022, <https://open.spotify.com/episode/1eHMZYsNNpLDYOeEIXfP7W?si=3cced52737d649ff>

small pieces for magazines. She reports on herself because that is all she has – she is trapped in her body, in her mind, endlessly wanting and waiting. The passion described is one of compulsion, an unconscious habit. As she states in her introduction, *Se perdre* captures something raw and dark, unlike *Passion simple*, a kind of oblation. There is nothing other than this compulsion; it is a disquieting reality of what it is like, for a writer no less ‘to live a fable’.¹²³ She returns to her old notebooks, diaries, published works. She feels nothing, she revisits her writing but it is simply an object and there is no emotion. She traces the life of Annie Dusesne becoming Annie Ernaux and it is apart from her. Instead she dreams. Both works reject sentimentality, but *Se perdre*, in form, length and prose, feels more fragile and undefinable. It is shocking to see how condensed yet substantial *Passion simple* is compared with *Se perdre*.

Se perdre has often been described as unmediated, an unfiltered version of the affair that somehow removes the artifice of *Passion simple*.¹²⁴ Yet, it is littered with references to her previous works and her social and work engagements that seem to tease the reader. There is a thrill in being able to spot these connections, which also provide moments of levity as Ernaux plays with the reader’s expectations. Like *Passion simple*, the narrative is enriched with universe-of-discourse features – lyrics of popular songs, references to fashion, magazines, films, etc. – which immerse the reader in the context of the text’s production.

¹²³ Ernaux, *Getting Lost*.

¹²⁴ Ernaux, *Getting Lost*; Ernaux, *Écrire la vie*.

VI. Data presentation and analysis

Introduction

The passages I have chosen to analyse describe the aftermath of Ernaux's affair with her Soviet lover. Because of the condensed, asynchronous nature of *Passion simple*, I first selected diary entries from *Se perdre* and tried to find their counterparts in *Passion simple*. The structural differences between *Passion simple* and *Se perdre* meant that corresponding entries in the latter were often spread across and summarised in *Passion simple*. However, the fallout of the affair demonstrates the most consistency between the two texts, and it was easier to identify specific diary entries that correlated to the descriptions in *Passion simple*. The result is not a one to one equivalence, but the differences in Ernaux's handling of universe-of-discourse features illustrate the tension between the acts of remembering, writing and being read that characterise autobiographical narratives. I will include other examples from across the span of both books to supplement my analysis, but I will focus on the passages relating to the end of the affair. *NB* The full passages can be found in the appendices. I have replicated the original format as much as possible and included the word count for each passage at the end. Please note that the footnote numbers are not the same as in the editions consulted and the correct footnote numbers are indicated in the word count.

After a discussion on the choice of passages, this chapter will present the micro- and meso-level analyses, comparing the two French texts, the English texts and the French and English texts in turn. It will end with a general discussion of all of the source and translated texts. Before proceeding with the micro- and meso-level analyses, I will first make some general points on the choice of passages.

Choice of passages

I decided against passages relating to their last encounter or the end of the affair itself, because there was relatively little data to compare between the two texts. The end of affair occurs about three-quarters of the way in *Se perdre*; Ernaux and S. last meet on 6th November 1989, the Berlin Wall falls on 9th, and Ernaux never hears from S. again. What follows are a series of descriptions of dreams and memories, punctuated by various trips and events as Ernaux struggles to come to terms with the affair's abrupt end. Her diaries reveal a drawn-out agony. In S.'s silence, the affair ends over and over again. By contrast, Ernaux devotes two sentences to the end of the affair in *Passion simple*: 'Il est parti de France et retourné dans son pays il y a six mois. Je ne le reverrai sans doute jamais'.¹²⁵ In both texts, it is clear that she is more interested in exploring the affair's aftermath rather than detailing the specifics of its end.

The entries we will examine from *Se perdre* date from 1st–9th April 1990, five months after her last encounter with A./S., and are the last entries in the book. The corresponding passages from *Passion simple* are also located near the end of the narrative. The final diary entry, 9th April 1990, marks a shift in the narrative, a moment of relief from the drawn-out agony of heartbreak. Ernaux seems to be moving on from her affair with S and is resolved to write again, presumably, *Passion simple*. However, *Passion simple* does not end in April. In the final few pages, Ernaux claims that she and A. met again in January 1991. This ending serves to culminate Ernaux's descriptions of her passion and reiterate her motivations for recording them:

¹²⁵ Ernaux, *Écrire*, 676.

Pourtant, c'est ce retour, irréel, presque inexistant, qui donne à ma passion tout son sens, qui est de ne pas en avoir, d'avoir été pendant deux ans la réalité la plus violente qui soit et la moins explicable.¹²⁶

It did not feel like the affair's true end because she had already, somewhere inside, accepted that A. and their affair had now passed into memory. Needless to say, this final encounter is entirely absent from *Se perdre*, perhaps to ensure that the text did not drag on or become too repetitive and grant the reader a sense of conclusion. Yet, this omission raises questions regarding the truth-value of the diary compared to autofictional narratives – which account is more accurate? Together, the two texts present complicated yet differing accounts of passion and acceptance.

In the first entry for April, Ernaux describes a dream in which she meets 'B', a young man who she has recently rejected. This episode is completely omitted in *Passion simple*, which features no mention of 'B' throughout the text. In the last sentence of the entry, she describes her distaste for a piece she is writing for the teaching journal *Les cahiers pédagogiques*. Again, there is no mention of this episode in *Passion simple*.

The second entry follows a similar structure: Ernaux begins by describing a dream, this time of her lover S, and ends with a note about her progress writing. Interestingly, the reference to the postcard does feature in *Passion simple*, except that Ernaux sends a postcard to A. from Copenhagen (see Appendix 3, pp. 39–40), not Abu Dhabi. The description in *Passion simple* highlights Ernaux's yearning, whereas the diary entry brings the reader a sense of closure and feels more intimate – at least S. will reply in her dream.

¹²⁶ Ernaux, *Écrire*, 686.

The third entry records another dream, this time, her account of June 1952 where her father tried to kill her mother. On Friday 6th April, Ernaux describes a trip to Annecy, her childhood home, and Grenoble. While this trip is omitted in *Passion simple*, her description of playing her public self mirrors her reticence about publishing what will ultimately be *Passion simple* (see Appendix 3, pp. 43–44).

The concluding entry, dated to 9th April 1990, signals Ernaux's return to writing. Ideas of childhood and innocence are reflected in the passage near the end of *Passion simple* (see Appendix 3, passage from pp. 43–44). Unlike the triumphant return to writing that is illustrated in *Passion simple*, which echoes the form of a manifesto, this final entry is still bleak and wanting.

Micro- and Meso-level Analysis

This section employs the categories put forward by Hewson to identify linguistic features and describe their potential interpretative effects. At the micro-level, these are syntactic choices, lexical choices, grammatical choices, stylistic choices and addition and elimination, which contribute to voice effects and interpretational effects at the meso-level. For each pairing, only the most relevant choices and effects will be discussed, to avoid presenting a list of all the choices and effects for each pair.

Passion simple and *Se perdre*

The most obvious syntactic difference between *Se perdre* and *Passion simple* is that the former is divided into diary entries, headed by the date (see Appendix 1), while the latter is divided into paragraphs with no chapters, headings or subheadings. *Se perdre* is organised chronologically, in contrast to *Passion simple*, which frequently refers to events seemingly as they occur to the author. Double spaces between paragraphs signal breaks in the narrative in *Passion simple*, although this is not evident in the passages selected. The second syntactic difference is the notation-like form of the *Se perdre*'s prose compared with that of *Passion simple*. Phrases are presented in their contracted form, such as 'Je rêve que' which becomes 'Rêve que'. The informal nature of the prose and the layout of *Se perdre* give the reader the impression that they are reading an 'authentic' diary by conveying a sense of immediacy and intimacy. In contrast, the layout and structure of *Passion simple* echoes other autobiographical works, such as the autofictional narrative *L'amant* by Marguerite Duras. Whether or not this was an intentional decision on Ernaux's part, or Éditions Gallimard (which was also Duras's publisher), this connection is likely to be present in the mind's of French readers. Ernaux is often linked to Duras in criticism, placing *Passion simple* in an established canon of autofictional experiment in France.¹²⁷ This also signals that the organisation of *Passion simple* would not be as shocking or novel to French readers as perhaps it would be elsewhere.

It is interesting to consider whether the contracted, note-like syntax of *Se perdre* contributes to a particular interpretational or voice effect when compared with *Passion simple*. The diary features a number of instances of juxtaposition, for example, 'Vision neutre, sans émotion, d'Annecy', which contribute to the relatively informal register of the text. The

¹²⁷ Alex Hughes, 'Recycling and Repetition in Recent French 'Autofiction': Marc Weitzmann's Doubrovskian Borrowings', *The Modern Language Review* 97, no. 3 (2002): 566.
Jordan, 'Autofiction', 76.

immediacy of the prose is achieved by fronting, with Ernaux frequently moving the object of the sentence to its beginning: 'Ce besoin que j'ai d'écrire quelque chose dangereux pour moi'. Yet, *Se perdre* does not feature grammatical or spelling errors and the syntactic composition of the text reveals itself to be rather deliberate. Contracted phrases are often placed at the start of a sentence or diary entry, such as the repetition of 'Rêve que' and 'Rêve' in the first three entries for April, serving as an introduction, with the rest of the sentence then proceeding in standard prose. By contrast, Ernaux is often the subject in *Passion simple* and the continual use of 'je' lends her voice a sense of self-assuredness, reducing the scope for interpretation (contraction). In *Se perdre*, sentences tend to get longer throughout the entry, creating an effect of rhythmic expansion, enveloping the reader in Ernaux's world:

Rêve : mon ex-mari est dans mon bureau et me dit : « Tu laisses à vue de tout le monde tous tes papiers, tu ne ranges plus rien, des choses aussi... (quel mot ? « terribles »?, « traumatisantes »?) que ça. » (*Se perdre*, p. 874, Appendix 1)

In this passage, alliteration and assonance contribute to the sharp, pointed rhythm mirroring the accusatory tone of her ex-husband.

Ernaux often makes use of parenthetical asides throughout her work, which signal a break in time or point of view. There are a total of six parentheticals in the passages selected from *Se perdre*, and five in those from *Passion simple*. In *Passion simple*, entire paragraphs are sometimes framed by brackets, particularly at moments where Ernaux is sharing her intimate or complicated thoughts and feelings. The effect is similar to free indirect discourse. However the use of parentheticals in *Se perdre* is often jarring. Ernaux ends the diary entry for 3rd April with an explication of the phrase 'Je vais gagner malheur'. After describing an intense dream which prompted her to remember the moment her father tried to kill her mother, the explication takes the reader out of the scene and raises questions as to who Ernaux is writing

for. Perhaps this is an instance of the editor intervening in the text? This has a voice effect of deformation. Another instance can be found in the first diary entry. Ernaux describes her dream using the imperfect then reflects on it in the present in a parenthetical aside. This has the effect of situating the reader in the mind of Ernaux – they are reading as she is writing and reflecting. This draws attention to the text’s creation but it is not as jarring as the previous example.

Se perdre and Getting Lost

Strayer has included a number of additions in the text, such as adding ‘overalls’ to help make clear the working-class connotations of ‘en bleu’ to the reader when Ernaux revisits her childhood home:

Des hommes en casquette, en bleu, se chauffaient au soleil sur des chaises, dans les jardinets. (*Se perdre*, p. 875, Appendix 1)

Men in caps and blue work overalls were sunning themselves on chairs in these little gardens. (*Getting Lost*, p. 240 Appendix 2)

She has also removed much of the punctuation to make the sentence more direct and condensed in English, contributing to a reduction of voice effect. One notable explication is Strayer’s inclusion of a footnote in the first diary entry to explain the significance of the journal, *Les cahiers pédagogiques*. The explanation seems unnecessary as Ernaux frequently refers to her writing and teaching work throughout *Se perdre*. Even if the reader has no knowledge of French, the explanation that Ernaux is writing a piece for a teaching journal adds very little to their appreciation and understanding of the text. Moreover, Strayer’s footnote simply lists the content the journal publishes and how often. While she states that it is published by the *Cercle de recherche et d’action pédagogiques*, if she assumes that the reader needs an explanation for the purpose of the journal, then it is strange that she adds no further contextual information that

could help them interpret the significance of Ernaux having been commissioned to write for them. However, the following line reveals the purpose of this footnote, making clear the connection between the educational and teaching journal and Ernaux's comment: 'nothing about it lends to new knowledge' (*Getting Lost*, p. 238, Appendix 2).

Tense is also an important factor to consider:

<i>Se perdre</i> , p. 874 (Appendix 1)	<i>Getting Lost</i> , p. 238 (Appendix 2)
Rêve que le petit B. m'appelait, infiniment tremblant comme l'autre fois. Mais il me reprochait violemment mon geste de l'autre jour. Je pense qu'en effet il n'a aucun désir à mon égard, puisque ma dernière lettre est restée sans appel. (En fait, j'écris cela en espérant le contraire, qui est aussi possible : il ne sait pas comment procéder, « s'avancer ».)	Dreamt that little B called me, infinitely trembling like the last time I saw him. But he violently reproaches me for my gesture of the other day. And indeed, I don't think he feels any desire for me, my last letter to him having gone unanswered. (Writing this, I hope things are otherwise, and that too is possible; maybe, for instance, he doesn't know how to go about things, 'make his move'.)

Here, Strayer has located B's action in the present tense, while Ernaux has used the imperfect. This has the effect of attributing some knowledge on the part of Ernaux into B's present state of mind, whereas the French text locates this action in the past and merely describes it. However, she counters this by introducing commas into the parenthetical aside and the word 'maybe' to highlight Ernaux's uncertainty.

Rewriting and the translation of autobiography

Passage	Accretion	Reduction	Deformation	Expansion	Contraction	Transformation
1		1	1	1		
2					1	
3		1			1	
4		1		1		
5	1			1		
TOTAL	1	3	1	3	2	

Strayer's translation reveals a delicate balancing of reduction voice effects with expansion interpretational effects, allowing Ernaux's subjectivity and style to shine through.

Passion simple and *Simple passion*

In *Simple Passion*, Leslie has modified the syntactic order and punctuation which results in a text that is more direct, self-assured, even forceful at times, compared to *Passion simple*. For instance, let us compare the first passage:

<i>Passion simple</i> , p. 679 (Appendix 3)	<i>Simple Passion</i> , p. 37 (Appendix 4)
Dans mes rêves, il y avait ce désir d'un temps réversible. Je parlais et me disputais avec ma mère (décédée), redevenue vivante, mais je savais dans mon rêve – et elle aussi – qu'elle avait été morte. Cela n'avait aucun caractère extraordinaire, sa mort était derrière elle,	In my dreams was the desire to reverse time. I spoke and argued with my deceased mother, alive once more, although in my dream both of us knew that she was dead. There was nothing extraordinary about this, her death was behind her now; somehow it was 'out of

comme « une bonne chose de faite », voilà tout. (Il me semble que ce rêve m'est venu souvent.)	the way'. (I believe this dream recurred several times.)
--	--

Leslie has removed much of the punctuation, commas, dashes and brackets, which introduce moments of pause into the French prose and serve to emphasise certain aspects of the narrative. This is marked in the second sentence. While the reveal that Ernaux's mother is deceased is delayed in *Passion simple*, this information is immediately conveyed to the reader in *Simple Passion*. Ernaux does not mention her mother or the fact that her mother has died anywhere else in the text before this moment, which suggests that the delaying of this information and placing it in brackets was deliberate. The total number of parentheticals in the passages selected from *Simple Passion* is four, compared to five in *Passion simple*. Moreover, Leslie has removed the dashes that set off 'et elle aussi', choosing to contract the phrase and integrate it into the sentence. This is a general trend throughout Leslie's translation – many of the commas, brackets, hyphens that impart a sense of rhythm to the text have been removed. Leslie has introduced a number of possessives where the French text uses indirect personal pronouns. Overall, this has a voice effect of reduction and interpretational effect of transformation, as Leslie's changes reduce the sense of Ernaux's subjectivity coming through the prose and streamlines its uncertain, halting rhythm for the sake of grammatical clarity.

Passage	Accretion	Reduction	Deformation	Expansion	Contraction	Transformation
1		1				
2		1				1
3				1		

Rewriting and the translation of autobiography

4		1				1
TOTAL		3		1		2

Simple Passion and Getting Lost

Comparing the two English translations, I am struck by Strayer's use of the present tense. Although *Getting Lost* is a diary, and the use of the past tense to record events would otherwise be more expected, Strayer interjects the present tense at moments the reader would not expect. For example,

I see 'La Roseraie' and it seems to me that I could simply push the gate open, go up the steps, enter the glassed-in porch, that is, act and *be* as if sixteen years had not passed and the same life were carrying on as then. I walked down rue Sainte-Claire: the Vidon tripe shop, little cafés, Le Fréti, and the Crémérie Pollet are still there, but not the bar run by Arabs, nor the Alsatian charcuterie (from long ago), nor the perfume counter whose owner may have earned her living from trysts with men. (*Getting Lost*, p. 239, Appendix 2)

The use of the present tense for 'I see' instead of 'I saw' suggests to the reader that she is still reflecting on her trip, that perhaps this is something she experiences each time she returns home. This also helps the flow of text, which, as a series of diary entries, would otherwise feel quite choppy and disjointed. The use of the present tense here refers to the previous diary entry in which Ernaux describes her dream of her ex-husband that prompted her to reflect on her parents. 'I see' suggests that Ernaux is still thinking about this episode and affords the text a sense of cohesion. However, this begs the question as to whether Strayer is interpreting what she thinks Ernaux is feeling and/or if she has presented the text as more cohesive than it actually

is, ready for publication, rather than a list of thoughts and reflections without an overriding narrative structure.

VII. Conclusion

This study has been able to show that perceptions of genre as well as the interlinguistic difference of translation impacts how Ernaux's *écriture plate* is perceived and received. While this study has been able to draw some conclusions at the micro- and meso-levels of the text in reference to the critical framework, it is limited by its small sample size and is unable to provide a comprehensive or conclusive answer to the question as to how translations differ from other types of rewriting and how different types of rewriting interact. As Hewson and Tymoczko note, translation criticism cannot be exhaustive. For Tymoczko, this is due to the inherent metonymy that characterises translations and indeed all texts.¹²⁸ For Hewson, translation criticism involves a high degree of subjectivity regarding the choice of passages, the critical framework, the relevant features identified, the definition of categories to construct the metalanguage and the presumptions of the critic at the outset of analysis.¹²⁹

Nonetheless, I hope to have shown the rich potential for rewriting as a framework for translation analysis. It could easily be combined with computer-assisted qualitative data analysis tools and corpus analysis methods to provide quantitative data to supplement translation criticism and systematically identify patterns in the texts. The use of concordance software could help overcome the time-intensive process of translation criticism, readily identifying linguistic anomalies and features that form the basis for describing the meso-level effects. I believe this would be especially helpful in the study of rewriting and autobiography, as I was unable to cover the breadth of features while maintaining an in-depth level of analysis. I would have liked to extend my analysis of the *Passion simple* and *Se perdre* to the surrounding

¹²⁸ Tymoczko, 'Connecting', 15.

¹²⁹ Hewson, *Approach*, 257–259.

works in *Écrire la vie*, and consider the anthology as a whole, including both text and photos into my analysis. Scholarship on women's autobiography frequently discusses the use of photography by authors such as Ernaux who have written extensively on the importance of photography in their work, either as a metaphor or a medium.¹³⁰ I would have also liked to have spent more time developing my critical framework and enriching my understanding of Ernaux's oeuvre.

While there are inherent weaknesses in my study, there is also the potential to adapt the weaknesses into avenues of potential research. I think that exploring the translation of autobiography in relation to rewriting requires researchers to be more self-reflexive because it asks us to confront our own biases and expectations as a reader. As Lefevere demonstrates in his analysis of the rewriting of Anne Frank's diary, the stakes are always high in the rewriting of autobiography because it concerns real people's real lives. Regardless of how 'true' or 'faithful' an autobiography is to the facts of lived experience (if this is even possible for anyone to discern for themselves), they are an expression of a real person's subjectivity and will be the only such expression to remain after the author has died. What is the literary value of a person's life in textual form? And who are we, as researchers, to decide that? So, while I think that rewriting is ripe for exploration with corpus-based approaches, I think a balance of qualitative methods and translation criticism is important because it acknowledges the fundamental subjectivity that characterises processes of cultural construction and consumption and language use, especially in relation to autobiographical literature.

¹³⁰ Jordan, 'Autofiction', 84.

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Appendix 1: Extract from *Se perdre in Écrire la vie*, pp. 874–875

avril

dimanche 1er

Rêve que le petit B. m'appelait, infiniment tremblant comme l'autre fois. Mais il me reprochait violemment mon geste de l'autre jour. Je pense qu'en effet il n'a aucun désir à mon égard, puisque ma dernière lettre est restée sans appel. (En fait, j'écris cela en espérant le contraire, qui est aussi possible : il ne sait pas comment procéder, « s'avancer ».)

Horreur de ce texte pour les *Cahiers pédagogiques*. Du temps gâché, de l'écriture perdue, rien qui débouche sur la connaissance.

lundi 2

Rêve que S. m'écrivait, en français, je n'arrivais pas à déchiffrer facilement. Il me remerciait pour ma carte d'Abu Dhabi, évoquait la difficulté de cette année de retour en URSS pour lui. Dans ce rêve, je me disais : « Et dire que je m'imagine rêver ! Alors que je suis bien éveillée. »

Je reprends aujourd'hui mon début de travail en espérant, après une interruption de plus d'un mois, évaluer lucidement la possibilité de continuer.

mardi 3

Rêve : mon ex-mari est dans mon bureau et me dit : « Tu laisses à vue de tout le monde tous tes papiers, tu ne ranges plus rien, des choses aussi... (quel mot ? « terribles »?, « traumatisantes »?) que ça. » Le papier en question est le récit de juin 52, que j'ai fait hier pour la première fois : « Mon père a voulu tuer ma mère. » Sorte de récit initial, préalable à tout. J'ai eu des larmes venues de 52. Trente-huit ans bientôt – et puis rien. Surprise de ne pas tout me rappeler, juste quelques paroles de ma mère : « Le père Lecœur est aux écoutes ! » De mon père à moi : « Je ne t'ai rien fait à toi ! » De moi : « Vous allez me faire rater mon examen ! Je vais gagner malheur ! » (l'expression normande pour dire que plus jamais les choses ne seront comme avant, qu'on est tombé dans l'horreur).

vendredi 6

Retour de Haute-Savoie et de Grenoble.

Vision neutre, sans émotion, d'Annecy. Je vois « La Roseraie » et il me semble qu'aussi bien je pourrais pousser la barrière, monter les marches, entrer dans le pas carré vitré, c'est-à-dire agir et *être* comme si seize ans ne s'étaient pas écoulés. La même vie se poursuivant. Je marchais rue Sainte-Claire : la triperie Vidon, les petits cafés, le Fréti, la crèmerie Pollet, mais le bar arabe, la charcuterie alsacienne (il y a longtemps), la parfumerie dont la propriétaire vivait peut-être de rendez-vous, « Le lézard vert » maroquinier, ont disparu, ainsi que Saveco rue Filâterie. D'Aix à Grenoble, on voit des jardinets derrière les maisons. Des hommes en casquette, en bleu, se chauffaient au soleil sur des chaises, dans les jardinets.

Je rentre accablée (par le rencontre de Grenoble, où je suis comédienne de moi-même, dans le rôle de l'écrivain sympa, expliquant ses textes) et il n'y a rien, il n'y aura rien, de S., au courrier, et non plus du petit B., affaire classée.

lundi 9

Pour la première fois depuis le 6 novembre (dernière fois où j'ai vu S.) je m'éveille avec une sensation inexplicable de bonheur. Malgré tout, le fait que ce bonheur soit sans motif me désenchante, mais à peine. Il faudrait pourtant que je me décide à écrire une chose plutôt qu'une autre, à cesser d'hésiter.

Ce besoin que j'ai d'écrire quelque chose de dangereux pour moi, comme une porte de cave qui s'ouvre, où il faut entrer coûte que coûte.

(573 words)

Appendix 2: Extract from *Getting Lost*, translated by Alison L. Strayer, pp. 238–240

April

Sunday 1

Dreamt that little B called me, infinitely trembling like the last time I saw him. But he violently reproaches me for my gesture of the other day. And indeed, I don't think he feels any desire for me, my last letter to him having gone unanswered. (Writing this, I hope things are otherwise, and that too is possible; maybe, for instance, he doesn't know how to go about things, 'make his move'.)

Am repelled by this piece I have to write for *Les cahiers pédagogiques*.¹³¹ Ruined time, a waste of writing time – nothing about it lends to new knowledge.

Monday 2

Dreamt that S wrote to me in French. It wasn't easy to decode. He thanked me for my card from Abu Dhabi, mentioned the difficulties he's had since his return to the USSR. In this dream, I said to myself: 'Look at me, imagining that I'm dreaming when I'm actually awake!'

Today, I'll pick up where I left off working on my book, hoping after more than a month away to realistically assess the possibility of continuing.

Tuesday 3

¹³¹ *Les cahiers pédagogiques*, a teaching and educational sciences journal founded in 1945, published eight times a year by the Cercle de recherche et d'action pédagogiques.

I dream that my ex-husband is in my study and says, ‘You leave your papers out for all the world to see, you no longer put away any of it away, these things that are so–’ (what word does he use? ‘terrible’? ‘traumatic’?). The paper in question is my account of June ‘52, which I wrote down yesterday for the first time ever. ‘My father tried to kill my mother.’ A sort of initial narrative, a prelude to all the rest. Tears rose to my eyes from ‘52, thirty-eight years ago, soon – and then nothing. The surprise of not remembering everything, only a few words of my mother’s, ‘Father Lecœur is listening.’ My father’s addressed to me: ‘I didn’t do anything to you!’ My own: ‘You’ll make me miss my exam, you’ll breathe disaster on me’ (a Normandy expression which means that things will never be the same again, now that we have sunk into horror).

Friday 6

Return from Haute-Savoie and Grenoble.

A neutral, emotionless view of Annecy. I see ‘La Roseraie’ and it seems to me that I could simply push the gate open, go up the steps, enter the glassed-in porch, that is, act and *be* as if sixteen years had not passed and the same life were carrying on as then. I walked down rue Sainte-Claire: the Vidon tripe shop, little cafés, Le Fréti, and the Crémèrie Pollet are still there, but not the bar run by Arabs, nor the Alsatian charcuterie (from long ago), nor the perfume counter whose owner may have earned her living from trysts with men. Le lézard vert leather goods has disappeared, as well as the Saveco supermarket on rue Filâterie. From Aix to Grenoble, little gardens can be glimpsed behind the houses. Men in caps and blue work overalls were sunning themselves on chairs in these little gardens.

I get home shattered (by the event in Grenoble, where I played my public self, the nice lady writer explaining her books), and there is nothing and never will be anything from S in the mail, nothing from B either, end of story.

Monday 9

For the first time since 6 November (the last time I saw S), I waken with an inexplicable feeling of happiness. However, the fact that this happiness is unfounded dampens my enthusiasm, if only a little. Still, I know I'll have to decide to write one thing and not another, to stop wavering.

There is this need I have to write something that puts me in danger, like a cellar door that opens and must be entered, come what may.

(667 words including footnote. *NB* The footnote number is 'thirty' in the text)

Appendix 3: Extracts from *Passion simple* in *Écrire la vie*

p. 679

Dans mes rêves, il y avait ce désir d'un temps réversible. Je parlais et me disputais avec ma mère (décédée), redevenue vivante, mais je savais dans mon rêve – et elle aussi – qu'elle avait été morte. Cela n'avait aucun caractère extraordinaire, sa mort était derrière elle, comme « une bonne chose de faite », voilà tout. (Il me semble que ce rêve m'est venu souvent.)

(64 words)

pp. 680–681

Mais je continuais à vivre. C'est-à-dire qu'écrire ne m'empêchait pas, à la minute où j'arrêtais, de sentir le manque de l'homme dont je n'entendais plus la voix, l'accent étranger, ne touchais plus la peau, qui menait dans une ville froide une existence impossible à me représenter – de l'homme réel, plus hors de portée que l'homme écrit, désigné par l'initiale A. Donc je continuais d'utiliser tous les moyens qui aident à supporter le chagrin, donnent de l'espérance quand, raisonnablement, il n'y en a pas : faire des réussites, mettre dix francs dans le gobelet d'un mendiant à Auber avec un vœu, « qu'il téléphone, qu'il revienne », etc. (Et peut-être, au fond, l'écriture fait partie de ces moyens.)

Malgré mon dégoût de rencontrer des gens, j'ai accepté de participer à un colloque à Copenhague parce que ce serait l'occasion de lui envoyer un signe de vie discret, une carte postale à laquelle je me persuadais qu'il devrait forcément répondre. Dès mon arrivée à Copenhague, je n'ai pensé qu'à cela, acheter une carte, recopier les quelques phrases que j'avais composées soigneusement avant de partir, trouver une boîte aux lettres. Dans l'avion

du retour, je me disais que je n'étais venue au Danemark que pour envoyer une carte postale à un homme.

(208 words)

pp. 682

Maintenant, c'est avril. Le matin, il m'arrive de me réveiller sans que la pensée de A. me vienne aussitôt. L'idée de jouir à nouveau « des petits plaisirs de la vie » – parler avec des amis, aller au cinéma, bien dîner – me cause moins d'horreur. Je suis toujours dans le temps de la passion (puisque'un jour je ne constaterai plus je n'ai pas pensé à A. en me réveillant) mais ce n'est plus le même, il a cessé d'être continu.¹³²

(204 words including footnote. *NB* The footnote number is 'one' in the text)

pp. 683–684

Je n'arrive pas, pourtant, à le quitter, pas plus que je n'ai pu quitter A. l'année dernière, au printemps, quand mon attente et mon désir de lui étaient ininterrompus. Tout en sachant qu'à l'inverse de la vie je n'ai rien à espérer de l'écriture, où il ne survient que ce qu'on y met. Continuer, c'est aussi repousser l'angoisse de donner ceci à lire aux autres. Tant que j'étais dans la nécessité d'écrire, je ne me souciais pas de cette éventualité. Maintenant que je suis allée au bout de cette nécessité, je regarde les pages écrites avec étonnement et une sorte de

¹³² Je passe de l'imparfait, ce qui était – mais jusqu'à quand ? –, au présent – mais depuis quand ? – faute d'une meilleure solution. Car je ne peux rendre compte de l'exacte transformation de ma passion pour A., jour après jour, seulement m'arrêter sur des images, isoler des signes d'une réalité dont la date d'apparition – comme en histoire générale – n'est pas définissable avec certitude.

honte, jamais ressentie – au contraire – en vivant ma passion, pas davantage en la relatant. Ce sont les jugements, les valeurs « normales » du monde qui se rapprochent avec la perspective d'une publication. (Il est possible que l'obligation de répondre à des questions du genre « est-ce autobiographique ? », d'avoir de se justifier de ceci et cela, empêche toutes sortes de livres de voir le jour, sinon sous la forme romanesque où les apparences sont sauves.)

Ici encore, devant les feuilles couvertes de mon écriture raturée, illisible sauf pour moi, je peux croire qu'il s'agit de quelque chose de privé, de presque enfantin ne portant pas à conséquence – comme les déclarations d'amour et les phrases obscènes que j'inscrivais en class à l'intérieur de mes protège-cahiers et tout ce qu'on peut écrire tranquillement, impunément, tant qu'on est sûr que personne ne le verra. Quand je commencerai à taper ce texte à la machine, qu'il m'apparaîtra dans les caractères publiés, mon innocence sera finie.

(263 words)

Appendix 4: Extracts from *Simple Passion*, translated by Tanya Leslie

p. 37

In my dreams was the desire to reverse time. I spoke and argued with my deceased mother, alive once more, although in my dream both of us knew that she was dead. There was nothing extraordinary about this, her death was behind her now; somehow it was ‘out of the way’. (I believe this dream recurred several times.)

(58 words)

pp. 39–40

Yet I went on living. In other words, the act of writing didn’t lessen my grief. As soon as I had set down my pen, I felt pangs for the man whose voice and foreign accent I could no longer hear, whose skin I could no longer touch, living an unknown life in some cold city – the real man, far more inaccessible than the written man designated by the letter A. And so I went on doing things that help alleviate sorrow, offering hope when, theoretically, there is no cause for any: playing solitaire, slipping a ten-franc coin into a beggar’s paper cup at Auber Métro station, making the wish that ‘he’ll call, he’ll come back’. (Perhaps writing is one of these things too.)

Despite my aversion to meeting people, I agreed to attend a seminar in Copenhagen because it was an opportunity to send him news of me discreetly, a postcard I felt he would have to answer. As soon as I arrived in Copenhagen, I thought of nothing else: buying a card, copying out the few sentences I had carefully written before leaving, finding a letter box. On

the plane, on the way back, I reflected that I had travelled to Denmark simply to send a postcard to a man.

(213 words)

p. 42

Now it's April. Sometimes I wake up in the morning without immediately thinking of A. The prospect of rediscovering 'life's little pleasures' – meeting friends, going to the cinema, enjoying a good meal – has become less horrific. I am still living in the time of passion (one day I will no longer be aware that I wasn't thinking of A. when I woke up) but it has changed, it has ceased to be continuous.¹³³

(217 words including footnote. *NB* The footnote number is six in the text)

pp. 43–44

Nevertheless, I cannot resolve to part with it, just as I was unable to leave A. last spring, when my waiting and desire for him was continual. I know full well that I can expect nothing from writing, which, unlike real life, rules out the unexpected. To go on writing is also a means of delaying the trauma of giving this to others to read. I hadn't considered this eventuality while I still felt a need to write. But now that I have satisfied this need, I stare at the written pages with astonishment and something resembling shame, an emotion I certainly never felt when I

¹³³ For want of a better solution, I have switched from the past to the present, although it is impossible to establish the demarcation line between the two tenses. I am incapable of describing the way in which my passion for A. developed day by day. I can only freeze certain moments in time and single out isolated symptoms of a phenomenon whose chronology remains uncertain – as in the case of historical events.

was living out my passion or writing about it. The prospect of publication brings me closer to people's judgement and the 'normal' values of society (Having to answer questions such as 'is it an autobiography?' and having to justify this or that may have stopped many books from seeing the light of day, except in the form of a novel, which succeeds in saving appearances.)

At this point, sitting in front of the pages covered in in the indecipherable scrawlings, which only I can interpret, I can still believe that this is something private, almost childish, of no consequence whatsoever – like the declarations of love and the obscene expressions I used to write on the back of my exercise books in class, or anything else one may write calmly, in all impunity, when there is no risk of it being read. Once I start typing out the text, once it appears before me in public characters, I shall be through with innocence.

(268 words)